Between Shanghai and Mecca:
Diaspora and Diplomacy of Chinese Muslims in the Twentieth Century

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
History in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

While China’s recent Belt and the Road Initiative and its expansion across Eurasia is garnering public and scholarly attention, this dissertation recasts the space of Eurasia as one connected through historic Islamic networks between Mecca and China. Specifically, I show that eruptions of unpredictable wars and political turnovers across Asia in the twentieth century sparked a sector of Chinese Muslim militarists and scholar-politicians to constantly reformulate extensive networks of kinship, scholarship, patronage, pilgrimage and diplomacy between China, the Indian Ocean world and the Arabian Peninsula. In these endeavors, Mecca represented a hub and mediator of mobility, a diplomatic theater filled with propaganda and contestations, and a fictive homeland that turned into a real home which absorbed streams of exiles and refugees.

Each chapter adds a layer of Chinese Muslims’ engagements with Mecca as a locale and a metaphor – from old little Meccas in Linxia (southern Gansu) and Canton (Guangzhou), to the new logistical hub of Shanghai that hosted Mecca-bound pilgrims from across China in the first half of the twentieth century, and to Mecca where competing pilgrimage diplomatic delegations and refugee settlers asserted their belonging. By doing so, the dissertation unleashes Chinese Muslims’ sphere of activities, imaginaries, space-making, and historiographical reconfigurations from the confines of the territorial state of China, revealing the creation of sacred places and logistical hubs across regions, and channels of circulations that went through them. I draw from a wealth of pilgrimage and diplomatic travelogues, interviews with living communities in Saudi
Arabia, mainland China and Taiwan over multiple generations, archival documents, memoirs and biographies.

While the protagonists in this dissertation represent only a portion of the diverse groups of Chinese Muslim populations, they present an indicative view of Chinese Muslims as a collective — as a people for whom real and imagined connections with external places have been central to their self-understandings and social mobility in multiple locales. At certain moments when inter-state relations were about to take off, they undertook roles as diplomatic mediators in official and unofficial capacities. Their spatial configurations, in turn, show the role of Mecca as a physical site and a symbolic center in assembling inter-Asian circulations -- giving rise to little Meccas and infrastructural hubs elsewhere, attracting competing diplomatic missions, and offering a haven for pilgrim sojourners and diaspora communities who have constituted the diverse social make-up of Saudi Arabia.
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Figure 1 Map of Important Places in this Study
Introduction

Mecca contains the footprints of countless numbers of pilgrims, scholars, merchants, exiles and refugees from across the world who have traveled to and settled in the city throughout history. Among them was Hussein Ma Bufang, a powerful Chinese Muslim warlord who had been affiliated with the Nationalist Party of China in the first half of the twentieth century. It was in Mecca that he was buried in 1975.

Of the multiple meanings that Mecca held for him, above all, the city offered Ma Bufang consistent means to escape from unexpected political turnovers. This was so in the summer of 1949, when the imminent victory of the Communist Party forced him to abandon battlefields in northwestern China and flee to Mecca with two hundred of his familial and political associates. Gone were the days when he and his clan had reigned over military affairs and the political economy of northwestern China for half a century as governors of the Qinghai Province. Again in 1956, Mecca provided him a way out of Cairo, where his hopes of permanent settlement were shattered with the full rise of Nasserite socialism and Egypt’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China. That same year, he returned to Mecca as the leader of the anti-communist pilgrimage delegation from Taipei and settled in Jeddah as the first ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to Saudi Arabia. Born as a son of a soldier in Linxia of southern Gansu Province in 1903, Hussein Ma Bufang died as one of the Chinese Muslim muhājirīn (escapees from religious persecution) in the western coasts of Arabia.
Mecca has stood at the center of extensive networks that can be traced back to radically diverse geographies. Among the many strands of peoples and places connected to Mecca, this dissertation enters the city through an eclectic group of Chinese Muslim communal leaders who emerged prominent through the course of the Opium War, Taiping Rebellion, the two World Wars, and the Cold War. Beyond Hussein Ma Bufang himself, this dissertation unpacks the flexible yet durable networks of religion, kinship and patronage that diasporic Chinese Muslims built, which empowered them socio-politically in their respective local societies. Instead of being confined to a single social position, protagonists in my dissertation performed overlapping roles as scholars or entrepreneurs, writers or politicians, diplomats, pilgrim hosts or militarists in the course of the twentieth century. As a portion of these leaders pulled in support from multiple states, often with a loosely defined idea of Islamic unity, they changed dynamics of power among Chinese Muslim communities dispersed within and outside China by assuming positions as religious or political representatives of Chinese Muslims as a whole. At moments of war or peace-making, their networks turned into channels of expedient diplomacy, which in turn strengthened their status further.

Of the many places where my dissertation’s protagonists unfolded their agendas and aspirations, Mecca was the hub that constantly mediated their mobility. I show the dynamic trans-regional networks that Chinese Muslim militarists, scholars, diplomats and pilgrims and their descendants constructed in the twentieth century across different sites, from Linxia of southern Gansu to Canton and Shanghai, to Mecca and Taipei. I do this by
using each chapter to unravel and reassemble layers of their engagements with Mecca, as a metaphor and as a locale. The lives and writings of characters in this dissertation bring into the spotlight the real and symbolic significance of Mecca as an imagined homeland, assemblage of communities from multiple geographies, haven for refugees, center for diplomatic encounters and contestations, and a re-connector of transnational kinship ties that activate new opportunities for diaspora communities who are embedded within the Hejaz. Through the small number of Chinese Muslim travelers, sojourners and settlers in the Hejaz in my dissertation, we also see the impact of Mecca and its interconnected spaces in instigating formations of other hubs away from the Arabian Peninsula. Outside the city, Mecca spurred the growth of regional pilgrimage sites – or little Meccas – and prompted transitional points to become central nodes of their own.

This dissertation thus breaks new ground in the growing field of China’s Islam by illuminating the vast spatial constellations that Chinese Muslims have constructed and reconfigured at different points in time, built out of circulations that went through sacred places and logistical hubs across China and Arabia, and in-between places in the Indian Ocean. The prisms of Mecca and Chinese Muslims provide one another angles from the outside to disassemble the fabric of societies of each -- societies that have evolved through long histories of engagements with external places.

Approaching Chinese Muslims outside-in through Mecca allows us to recognize the space, breadth and implications of Chinese Muslims’ transnational networks. Indeed, the twentieth century that I primarily focus on represented a transformative era of sorts in
terms of generating global connectivity through infrastructure, media, and standardization of inter-national relations. Still, the lens of Mecca and a view into the creation of little Meccas in China offer potentials to uncover pre-twentieth-century modes of real or imagined connectivity that have been overlooked. I shed light on such older connections especially in the first parts of Chapters 1 and 2, as I explicate the making of Linxia and Canton as sacred places in China’s Islam, processes that unfolded over long centuries of history. In the twentieth century, the far-flung Chinese Muslim networks that had previously been segmented were brought into explicit convergences. Only in the past few years, scholars have started to explore the intertwining between Chinese Muslim communities and transnational networks of scholarship and migration in the twentieth century. 1 In the rest of the chapters, I align multiple axes of Chinese Muslim mobility that revolved around Mecca in the twentieth century, while recognizing the particularities of diverse individual actors.

While scholars have tended to concentrate on the pilgrimage to Mecca and the politics of the pilgrimage, Mecca has long represented the culmination point where the most diverse populations from across Eurasia have converged through travel routes over

oceans, lands, and air. While being a shared destination, the city again pumped back persons, things and ideas to circulate across borders. More than a destination for the annual pilgrimage, then, Mecca has performed as a *connective hub* that mediates and sustains wide horizons of trans-regional circulations and imaginations. Simultaneously, Mecca as the House of God has represented a *collective* of communities who trace their origins to places away from the Hejaz but preserve a sense of historic connection with the sacred cities.

Mecca and the travels to it turned evermore important for Chinese Muslims in the long twentieth century not only as a site for the pilgrimage but as a source of alternative religious authority, theater for diplomacy and a haven for escapees from political turmoil. Prior to the twentieth century, a handful of Sufi pilgrim scholars from the northwestern provinces of China had already been a part of the traffic to Mecca. They also made connections to the city indirectly by forming scholarly lineages with saintly figures from present-day Xinjiang Province (East Turkistan) who had well-developed connections with the Arabian Peninsula through Central and South Asia. For a greater number of Chinese Muslims especially in the eastern provinces, on the other hand, Mecca and Medina were sites inscribed on mosque steles or circulated texts, or direction of prayers. Rather than destinations reachable, the sacred places represented abstract sites in “western regions” where Islam and Muslims in China had originated.²

² Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China.*
Although Sufi pilgrims continued to make their way into Mecca in the twentieth century, in more vibrant ways than has been uncovered so far, it was nontraditional elites among Chinese Muslims who took the most advantage of access to it and of the routes connected to the city. Through the course of the Opium War, Taiping Rebellion, the World Wars, Chinese Civil War and the Cold War, Chinese Muslims from more diverse geographic and social domains than before actively made inroads into Mecca and the cities connected to it compared to the past -- as pilgrims, students, traders, local warlords, diplomatic representatives, exiles and refugees. Even Chinese students based in other important centers of modern Islamic education, most notably Cairo, were consistently drawn to Mecca as pilgrims, translators or Chinese state emissaries.

The diversification of people and the routes who accessed Mecca coincided with events within the city -- incorporation of the Hejaz into Saudi Arabia, the religious-political establishment’s gradual endorsement of Mecca as a symbol of Islamic solidarity and a center for hajj diplomacy (exemplified by the World Muslim League), and the tightening of citizenship and residency restrictions throughout the country that impacted whole diaspora populations within Saudi borders. Riding on overlapping waves of events, Chinese Muslims formed central points of congregation, encounters, sojourns and settlements in not only Mecca but also in places in between – including Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong and Chiangmai. Through these pathways, they circulated donations, texts and diplomatic goodwill, while creating ties of kinship and leaving enduring physical structures for gathering.
The next generation, dispersed in between China and Arabia both physically and conceptually, live with legacies and the many homes of their predecessors after the Cold War’s retreat. Depoliticization of Chinese Muslim networks following the unraveling of the Cold War order externally, and the sanitization of Islam in China internally, has again left the time-old institutions of kinship, religion, trade and pilgrimage at the core of the next generation’s diaspora connections dispersed between China and Saudi Arabia, as they had always been. Although political turnovers of the twentieth century frequently turned the lives and transnational connections of Chinese Muslim diasporas upside down, both the individuals and their networks changed locational centers time and again, containing within them potentials to quickly reconnect or create new bonds with persons at distant places.

Despite the explicit political affiliations that my dissertation’s protagonists sometimes kept, the dynamic world that this dissertation portrays is left unrecognized by the conventional dyadic framework that categorizes Chinese Muslims as a domestic ethnic minority and binds them into a relationship vis-à-vis the Chinese national state. Rather, at the heart of this dissertation is the question of how religious diasporas whose ideas of homes (or belonging) and physical and social spheres of activities are spread out between conventional categories of analysis in social sciences have adapted, re-shaped or lost their networks in the twentieth century, an age known as one driven by forces of nationalism and secularization. As I show through a collective of Chinese Muslims, diasporic actors have constructed centers that have carried renewed significance for
bondages of commerce, religion and kinship, sites that have been interconnected with one
another and with other subsidiary places. At certain moments when inter-state relations
were about to take off, they undertook roles as diplomatic mediators in official and
unofficial capacities. They have constructed spaces outside the confines of the nation-
state, or the regional divisions of area studies in interaction with changing trends, with a
rhythm invisible if seen as a bounded ethnic minority.

**Mecca in China and China in Mecca**

It is useful here to provide a brief historical and historiographical sketch on Islam
in China. The very evolution of variegated Muslim communities in China was closely
related to the rhythms of interactions between China and Eurasia. The history of Islam in
China extends back to the seventh century when Muslim sailors and merchants from
different parts of Arabia and Persia who dominated the Indian Ocean trade started settling
in China’s urban and coastal centers. The impact of interactive trade networks across the
Indian Ocean in creating initial communities of Muslims in China is well-researched.³

The expansion of Muslim networks across China was particularly pronounced during the

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³ Angela Schottenhammer, “Transfer of Xiangyao from Iran and Arabia to China: A Reinvestigation of
Entries in the Youyang Zazu (863),” in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: From the Persian Gulf to the
Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of
Research Department of the Tokyo Bunko* 7 (1935): 1–104; John W. Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of
Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750-1400*, New Approaches to Asian
History 17 (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 2018.,
2018); Donald Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China: A Short History to 1800* (Belconnen, A.C.T.: Canberra
College of Advanced Education, 1986).
Mongol Yuan Empire that stretched from Beijing to Baghdad, the court of which placed Muslim merchants, astronomers, tax collectors and soldiers (or semuren 色目人, foreigners that included Muslims) in high-ranking positions above Han populations.4

Muslim communities in coastal and central China have generally been characterized as having lost their positions in international commerce following the official ban on maritime traffic after the mid-Ming period and its assimilationist policies. This viewpoint has been accepted in the Indian Ocean literature as well.5 The end of seven massive maritime expeditions led by the Yunnanese Muslim admiral Zheng He across the Indian Ocean and East Africa in the first half of the fifteenth century – or the early years of the Ming Dynasty – marked the turning point. Since then, descendants of variegated Muslim settlers in China have referred to themselves and their belief system as “Hui (回)” or “Qingzhen” (清真 purity and veracity), and have built mosques and enclaves across China and outside its territories, up to the present.

Scholarship on Islam and China for past the fifteenth century has moved in two main directions: Muslim Confucian literati in the eastern interior of China, with an

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emphases on the dual identity of Chinese Muslims as reflected in their writings; and the sociocultural history of present-day Xinjiang that had been incorporated into Qing China in the mid-eighteenth century, which, until less than a hundred years ago, had mostly been inhabited by Turki Muslims, or the Uyghurs. Overall, on Chinese Muslims, we see less of trans-local and trans-regional exchanges that characterize scholarship on earlier periods, and more emphasis on syncretic belief systems or practices, specificity of local contexts in understanding Islam and Muslims in China, and ethnic identity in PRC China. Historians Jonathan Lipman and Zvi Bendor-Benite, and anthropologist Dru Gladney have pioneered the study of “Sino-Muslim,” “Chinese Muslim” or “Hui” populations – each centering on pre-twentieth century Islam in northwestern China, the Han Kitāb literature in Ming-Qing China in the Jiangnan region in southeastern China that combined strands of Islamic and Confucian understandings, and distinctive ethnic markers of the Hui in different regions of the post-socialist PRC. Other studies delved further into

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6 The rich scholarship on Xinjiang is too vast to list here. For the making of the concept of “Uyghur” nationality through émigré networks between Xinjiang and Russian/Soviet Central Asia in the early twentieth century, David Brophy, *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016). For historical consciousness based on tazkira manuscript culture in Altishar (southern part of present-day Xinjiang) that both gave a shape to and was reinforced by local oases and pilgrimage-shrine networks that crossed them, Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014).


8 Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA.; London: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2005).

philosophies of specific Han Kitāb intellectuals, and contemporary Hui people’s strategies of adaption and resistance to the state’s treatment of them as second-class, non-Han citizens in domains such as consumption practices and legal hybridity.

Emphasis on specific local contexts around Muslim communities in China is a major rebuttal against the conception of Muslims in China as fierce and rebellious, which takes into account the vast differences between regional landscapes in China. The focus on the specificity of regions in China is evidently important, especially for the purpose of avoiding the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in China as a monolith. Yet, this perspective also limits investigations on Islam as an organizational force that crosscuts territorial, denominational and linguistic borderlines, as well as religious and commercial interactions between Chinese and Turkic Muslims.


13 In his study on the political economy of Xinjiang following the Qing conquest, James Millward notes that Chinese Muslim populations from Gansu/Shaanxi region (also known as “Tungans” or “Dungans”) who migrated to Qinghai, Tibet and Xinjiang in the aftermath of eighteenth and nineteenth-century rebellions acted as commercial intermediaries between Han and East Turkistani merchants -- engaging in long-distance trade, setting up small businesses as wool traders or butchers, and trading tea on governmental license. James A. Millward, Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Jonathan Neaman Lipman, Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 169-70. The
In widening the social space and imaginaries of Chinese Muslims, Mecca as an analytic lens allows us to view Islam and Muslims in China beyond the confines of the minority nationality category and the territorial limits of the People’s Republic of China. Under the contemporary policies of the PRC, Chinese-speaking Muslims have been categorized as one of the 55 ethnic minorities (Huizu, 10 million) that make up the supposedly harmonious Chinese nation-state with the dominant Han ethnicity. The rest of the nine, linguistically-classified “Muslim minorities” include Uyghur (9 million), and Kazakh, Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Salar, Tajik, Bonan, and Tatar who together constitute about 2 million.

Historians have criticized the minzu paradigm in politics and research for its arbitrariness and monolithic representations that characterize the “minorities” as backward. An intensive focus on a single locale or region that emerged as a solution, however, presents limitations on capturing the vibrant trans-local networks and imaginaries that Chinese Muslims have woven. Anthropologists of Chinese Muslims have produced pioneering research that reveals relations between the PRC and Muslim

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populations in China and the agency of minority populations in circumventing various cultural and structural restrictions, but have tended to take the framework of the state vs. minorities, or the Han vs. the Hui (vs. the Uyghurs) as the ultimate category of analysis. Moving forward, a network-centric view will reveal fresh insights into their transnational and trans-regional mobility in the past and present.

Surpassing the limitations of the ethnic minority paradigm requires adopting an alternative category of analysis, and in the context of the twentieth century, asking a different set of questions than the role of Muslims in building the Chinese nation-state. In doing so, the approach from Mecca enables us to disaggregate Chinese Muslims’ physical and conceptual travels through a perspective that is not pre-imposed. The characters in my dissertation lived and constructed worlds far richer than the confines of a minority, a single nation-state or even a region as clearly delineated in area studies. The exchanges and interactions across regions that they facilitated and took advantage of come into view only by recognizing Muslims in China as a historic diaspora rather than an ethnic minority. Such alteration in the category of analysis not only unbinds an insular understanding of Islam in China from the national straitjacket but does so for the history of modern China itself, in which politics and diplomacy have regularly operated through
mid-level religious and diaspora networks situated between conventionally bounded understandings of state and society.  

Concentrating on the mobility of Chinese Muslims in Mecca throws a new light on Saudi Arabia through the perspective of travelers and diaspora communities in the Hejaz. My reading of the pilgrimage and diplomatic travelogues to Mecca, as well as my conversations with the multi-generational community of Chinese Muslims in the Hejaz – many of whom are related to the group of two to three hundred individuals who had accompanied Hussein Ma Bufang to Mecca in 1949 – exposes the Hejaz, and Saudi Arabia in which it has belonged, as sites of overlapping diasporas.

With the relative opening of Saudi Arabia to foreign researchers since 2000, several scholars have conducted direct and extensive fieldwork. Instead of stereotypical and sensational depictions, researchers have illustrated the intricate workings of religion and politics in the Saudi society that have inserted formidable, homogenizing top-down pressures onto its populations. At the same time, they have portrayed the various voices of social groups that perpetuate, resist and negotiate these restrictions. They have done


this by showing the fragmented nature of the Saudi state apparatus;\textsuperscript{17} the complexities of dissent;\textsuperscript{18} women’s autonomous spaces;\textsuperscript{19} urban performativity;\textsuperscript{20} and the politics of genealogy.\textsuperscript{21} On the other hand, studies on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca have tended to focus on the organization, significance and routes of the hajj for imperial interests and for anti-imperial/colonial Islamist resistance at a specified fragment of time, rather than the diaspora communities who utilized the hajj as a medium for network building and left legacies in forms of social structures or multi-generational families.

Notwithstanding its particularity, my study is an invitation to bring into light the social lives of other communities from disparate parts of Asia who turned western Arabia into permanent homes throughout history, and the thick, autonomous trans-regional nexus they have constructed in past and present.

\textsuperscript{17} Steffen Hertog, \textit{Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).
\textsuperscript{20} Pascal Ménoret, \textit{Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
The Many Faces and Resurgences of Mecca

Mecca offers a powerful lens for recognizing the ebb and flow of vibrant trans-regional ties that Chinese Muslims have constructed in history. These connections were cut off at times due to domestic or international factors, but have consistently been able to reconnect when barriers to mobility were lifted. Furthermore, Mecca in this conceptual portrayal is not a framework imposed from the outside, but a figurative reality and a concrete sphere for travels, sojourn, settlement and diplomacy that has been discursively articulated so prominently by various groups of Muslims in China. It has been neglected in scholarship on China’s Islam, however, thought of as a simple destination for the annual ritual of the pilgrimage, through which various trends from the rest of the Islamic world flowed into China, particularly the northwestern provinces.22

Yet Mecca for Chinese Muslims was more than an endpoint of the pilgrimage that exported different waves of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula. It has conjured up fascination even for those who have not been able to reach the city (which constitutes the majority of Muslims in China until the present), and hopes and disappointments for those who could. Paired with diplomatic journeys across the Islamic world, Mecca provided a symbolic and real source of further authority for the leaders who constituted Chinese Islamic Pilgrimage Missions. At times of war, Mecca attracted refugees and exiles,

thereby becoming not only a new home, but a hub that came to have enduring potentials to serve as the meeting ground between different diaspora communities within, and between them and their acquaintances outside.

Outside the scholarship on Islam in China, the position of Mecca at the center of inter-regional networks protrudes implicitly in works that deal with circulations of scholars, pilgrims and Sufi itinerants in the Ottoman-Indian Ocean world. The Ottoman conquest of the Hejaz in 1517, in particular, blew life to scholarly circles in Mecca. Mecca in the sixteenth century attracted scholars from regions around it -- both Hanafi (which the Ottomans aimed to promote) and Shāfi‘ī (scholar exiles from former Mughal Egypt wrought by warfare and economic downturn, and from Safavid Persia where Sunnis underwent persecutions).23 The Ottoman court itself had symbolic interests in safeguarding pilgrimage routes and providing donations to Mecca as custodians of the holy cities for four hundred years.24

Simultaneously, historians have revealed that for over four centuries of Ottoman dominion, Mecca and Medina served as the center of Naqshbandiyya Sufi networks that spanned Central Asia, South Asia, Persia, and other Ottoman territories. Such space periodically turned into outlets for external political outreach. In the Haramayn (Mecca

24 Suraiya Faroqhi, Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans, 1517-1683 (London: St. Martin’s, 1994).
and Medina), different Naqshbandiya orders’ initiators sojourned for decades or died as mujāwir; attracted students from across expansive geographical realms; built lodgings and schools; and dispatched successors to elsewhere. The Mughal emperor Akbar utilized such emerging space to increase his clout at home, by sending lavish hajj caravans to Mecca four times, two of which were led by Naqshbandi khojas of the Ahrari lineage. Later in the nineteenth century, through the multiple routes leading to Mecca that had already been established, envoys of newly independent Bukhara and Khoqand khanates on the verge of Russian conquest in the late nineteenth century had utilized the pilgrimage to seek Istanbul’s support. 25

Roads to Mecca and Medina also spurred the building of physical structures on the way and networks that rested upon them. Along the routes to Mecca and Medina, Sufi travelers, scholars and merchants built lodges in “feeder destinations” -- such as Istanbul,

25 In 1576, Sultan Khwaja Abd al-Azin Naqshbandi (or ‘Abdul ‘Azim) was given six lakhs of rupees and 12,000 robes to distribute to the populations in the Haramayn and to construct khanaqa in Mecca. A number of Central Asians who joined the caravan were given separate funds. The next year, hajj caravan carried with it 500,000 rupees for residents of Haramayn, and 100,000 for the Sharif; it was headed by Mir Abu Turab Wali, who was a grandson of a Shiraz immigrant. He brought back a supposed footprint of the Prophet that was installed in Agra with ceremony. In 1578, Khwaja Muhammad Yahya (Ahrari Naqshbandi), a respected figure among rulers of Transoxiana, headed the pilgrimage caravan, bearing 400,000 rupees as sadaqa. He was tasked with bringing back the ladies of the royal household who had been staying since the first pilgrimage. In 1580, Akbar dispatched the last of his hajj caravan (headed by the physician Hakim al-Mulk Gilani). After Akbar’s death, hajj caravans from the Mughal Empire continued, but none were headed by Naqshbandis. Alexandre Papas and Thierry Zarcone, Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and the Hejaz (Berlin: Schwarz, 2012). P. 56-8. Alexandre Papas and Thierry Zarcone, Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and the Hejaz (Berlin: Schwarz, 2012). Especially 73-77. For pilgrims from Central Asia caught in the limbo between the Ottoman caliph-sultan’s proclaimed protection of “spiritual citizens” and the hardening of political boundaries through structures of the passport, nationality, quarantine etc., Lale Can, “The Protection Question: Central Asians and Extraterritoriality in the Late Ottoman Empire,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 48, no. 4 (November 2016): 679-699.
Konya, Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Jerusalem. These establishments provided more than services and hospitality to guests. In Istanbul, they became political sites where high-ranking dignitaries from South Asia stopped by, communal representatives were appointed, and where petitions to the Ottoman court were drafted. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anti-imperial imaginations that filled the interconnected destinations between the Haramayn and the Indian Ocean world took British surveyors aback.  

The picture of Mecca that emerges from the works above gives us firm grounds to place the city at the conceptual forefront – as a site where inter-regional interactions of various kinds unfolded, and that mediated such connections across Asia, and across time. Mecca and the Hejaz at large, in other words, has derived its material, symbolic and cultural sustenance from connections to outside places, and also changed landscapes of sites interlinked with it. In the words of the anthropologist Judith Scheele, it is akin to a half-world that, “by the revenue it generates, helps to make and maintain places elsewhere, while remaining tributary to the various outside places and routes it

While Scheele designated such characteristics to the border town of al-Khalil between northern Mali and southern Algeria to highlight connectivity in trans-Saharan Africa, Mecca has assembled and depended on circulatory channels that have spanned across even more far-reaching routes.

The unique aspect of Mecca is that the revenues it has produced and received across borders has not been limited to the material domain. Undergirding circulations of persons, goods and ideas that have revolved around the city has been its symbolic value as the ultimate homeland of the faithful worldwide. Herein lies the difference that distinguishes Mecca from other cosmopolitan ports, oases, or frontier towns at cultural or geographic crossroads that have hosted various kinds of exchanges. States governing the Hejaz may change, as do policies on citizenship and residency requirements that systematically exclude certain populations whose social lives have been long embedded in western Arabia. Yet the timeless idea that settlement in proximity to sacred cities represents a return to a blessed homeland has enabled sojourners and diasporas within Saudi Arabia to make meanings out of their experiences and imaginations that are not grounded in a single locale. Regardless of failed expectations on the ground, be it on equal treatments of all Muslims or international Islamic solidarity, Mecca grants a sense of belonging that is theoretically open to all.

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In this sense, Mecca, despite its incorporation into the nation-state of Saudi Arabia, has constituted an indispensable side of the dual or multiple homes that dispersed Chinese Muslims have kept -- whether within the city or far away from it. When societies turned them into ethnic minorities, on paper or in more subtle ways through cultural formations, identification with other homes offered them possibilities to reverse the equation and voluntarily remain outsiders in localities that refused to accept them as full members. Activating tangible connections with other homes, on the other hand, could potentially turn into social capital that they could utilize to lift their statuses on both ends.

**Multiple Homes and their Potentials**

Conceptual connections to Mecca cut across time and space. As such, Mecca and Medina figured historically as symbolic homelands for Muslims in China, especially prior to the twentieth century when transmitted historiographical narratives came under increasing scientific scrutiny. The numerous mosques dispersed throughout China, for one, face westwards towards Mecca, though the angles may not be exact.\(^\text{28}\) Transcriptions of mosque inscriptions throughout China up to the turn of the twentieth century are replete with references to Mecca and Medina as the origin place of followers of “Hui (回)” people or “Qingzhen (清真; purity and veracity)” teachings. Appearing in different

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versions of transliterated characters, or as the vaguely defined “Heavenly Square/ Abode” (Tianfang; 天方/天房), Mecca and Medina were the places where their beliefs and practices had originated, where the Prophet had been born and built a polity.

Jonathan Smith has characterized almost every religion in Late Antiquity as having occurred in both homeland and its diasporic centers. For the native religionist, he observes, “homeplace, the place to which one belongs, was the central religious category. One’s self-definition, one’s reality was the place into which one had been born – understood as both geographical and social place.” To the new immigrant in the diaspora, however, “nostalgia for homeplace and cultic substitutes for the old, sacred center were central religious values. For the thoroughly diasporic member, who may not have belonged to the deity’s original ethnic group, freedom from place became the central religious category. Projecting the group’s diasporic existence into the cosmos, he discovered himself to be in exile from his true home (a world beyond this world)…Diasporic religion, in contrast, to native, locative religion, was utopian in the strictest sense of the word, a religion of ‘nowhere,’ of transcendence.”

For Chinese Muslims positioned worlds apart, Mecca and Medina likewise lay at the heart of their understanding of the self and the cosmos, and continue to do so until the present.

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On the flip side, adhering to a religion of “nowhere” and thus being free from place has meant that Chinese Muslim diasporas have harbored more than one home in their minds. During their periods of residence in China, diverse communities of Chinese Muslims have memorialized their immediate places of residence as permanent homes to which their ancestors have made various kinds of contributions, while also considering themselves in exile from the sacred center. Celebration of external origins, in other words, could coexist with equally ardent if not stronger desire to continue their livelihoods in places where they had already been settled. For those who initiated new lives in the Hejaz itself, living in close proximity to Mecca granted the exceptional ability to frame exile as a return to origin. Yet, this does not mean that past connections with China were entirely forgotten. In each locale, whether close to or far away from the birthplace of Islam, Chinese Muslims have narrativized their presence as a homecoming without forsaking identification with distant other home places, many of which remained unvisited. Their ideas of homes have been dispersed between many places rather than one, blurring the distinction between living and dying in a “homeland,” or “foreign lands.”

Historians and anthropologists who have approached Chinese Muslims as subjects of study have tended to focus on the question of whether, and how, they have been able to “reconcile” the dual identities as “Chinese” and “Muslims.” This is particularly so for scholarship on post-fifteenth century Islam in China, after the passing of periods that had seen vibrant commercial and political exchanges across East and West Asia during the
Tang, Song, Yuan and early Ming Empires. Whether in domains of textual production, legal and commercial transactions of the everyday, or casual articulations about the self, the enigma has been how they have preserved distinctive literary worlds, beliefs and practices within Chinese society once they were integrated into different parts of it. This question lies at the core of the debates on how to define and name them. Are they Sino-Muslims, which deconstructs rigidity of “Chineseness” and also puts more emphasis on Islam? Do they keep hyphenated identities as creolized “Chinese-Muslims”? Are they Chinese Muslims or Muslim Chinese without hyphens? Or should we simply refer to them as “Hui” people, a term that had kept a much more expansive and fluid meaning, but has been narrowed down in the post-1949 PRC to indicate an ethnic minority with religious overtones? Should they, then, be understood as an ethnic or religious group?

There are, however, myriad forms and meanings that constitute being either a Chinese or a Muslim, whether inside or outside the perceived centers of China or the Arab-Islamic world. This point that has been made time and again in fields of both Chinese Studies and Islamic Studies for the past three decades renders contradictory the question of compatibility between the categories that assume the difference between the two. A more productive approach to understand the scope and breadth of worlds that Chinese Muslims have constructed would be to ask how they have negotiated formulations of multiple local and foreign homes through cultivation and transmission of words, social relations, and physical mobility in diverse locales, and at which points such acts of stretching out became a liability or a source of empowerment.
Although lives and practices of Chinese Muslim communities are radically diverse according to their places of residence, we may conceive of them collectively as local cosmopolitans who, in the words of Engseng Ho, “while embedded in local relations, also maintain connections with distant places.” For Chinese Muslims, there have been different shades and ways of being local cosmopolitans. Sometimes ties across regions have been imaginary linkages to undefined territories of Arabia or Mecca, forged out of different genres of genealogy that have been passed down from generation to generation, despite individuals’ immobility. Other Sufi scholars and saintly figures in northwestern and southwestern China had been more visibly connected to other Islamicate societies by way of Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and West Asia even after the waning of maritime trade routes in the mid-fifteenth century, until the mid-twentieth century when political and ideological barriers in the post-World War II, Cold War international system of nation-states hijacked their mobility.

The protagonists in my dissertation, on the other hand, were individuals from mixed geographic and social backgrounds who grasped onto vacuums and opportunities created by the many wars of the long twentieth century. They expanded existing networks by grafting segmented ones with one another; produced new connections through concerted travels to cities such as Mecca, Cairo, Istanbul and ports of the Malay

Archipelago; created meanings out of distant histories that extended back centuries; framed travels as reconnections and returns; and opened new channels of religious and political exchanges from which they derived power in dispersed places.

For the past three decades of the post-Cold War order, the lifting of ideological, commercial and geopolitical walls have liberated different groups of Chinese Muslims who were based in diverse geographies, enabling them to resume knitting cross-border networks of religion, kinship, and commerce, some of which are continuations of the old and others entirely new. State surveillance is undoubtedly present, but not all forms of transnational activities create problems – as long as the travels remain apolitical. Religious practices differ widely amongst their extended families or coreligionists in general in dispersed locales, but in most cases are not significant enough to turn the atmosphere cold and break social bonds. On issues regarding politics and religion, they tread on carefully.

The many homes of Chinese Muslims, then, have not remained only in concept despite restrictions on the things that can flow between them. As this dissertation shows throughout the chapters, keeping real connections with distant homes intact, whether from the base in China or in Saudi Arabia, has offered diasporas positioned in between these places (both physically and culturally) social capital to break out of the boundaries conferred on them as foreigners or ethnic minorities in the twentieth century. In fact, it was by “coming back” to China through unknown relatives in the 1990s and 2000s that many of the second-generation Chinese Muslims in Saudi Arabia, without Saudi
citizenship, rediscovered pasts and found opportunities to uplift their families’ circumstances back in Saudi Arabia. Having kin members or acquaintances in Ta’if, Mecca or Jeddah, on the other hand, smoothened the entries of Muslims from mainland China headed to Saudi Arabia as pilgrims or entrepreneurs.

**Diplomacy and Networks of Religion and Diasporas**

Until globalization of the late 20th century, the pattern of Chinese Muslims turning external networks into local socio-political resources appears most prominently in the realm of diplomacy. Upon gaining independence after WWII, states in Asia needed to form relations with one another based on the idea of sovereign nation-states, but they lacked agents and agencies of modern diplomacy. As such, individuals who had kept networks spanning across geographies were recruited to perform the roles of cultural emissaries, carriers of letters and initial icebreakers.

Chinese Muslims had the unique advantage of having access to Mecca during the pilgrimage season and the transit points along the way. We see these passages being used during World War II, as a portion of them traveled between China and Arabia as informal religious representatives of the Nationalist Party of China, and upheld arguments for solidarities between weak nations against imperial powers. Again during the Cold War, the same group of people (with additions) mediated relations between Saudi Arabia and Taiwan, armed with propaganda on Islam against communism during their pilgrimage missions. In mainland China itself, a number of people who had undertaken roles as representatives of the Nationalist Party, on the other hand, switched sides to the
Communist Party in mainland China, and became cultural ambassadors to the PRC’s allies in the Middle East during the 1950s and again in the 1980s. The appointment of Hussein Ma Bufang as the first ambassador from Taiwan to Saudi Arabia in 1956, although representing his rapid fall in status from that of a warlord to a replaceable ambassador following his escape from northwestern China, is still telling of the niche that Chinese Muslims could find as diplomats when inter-state relations were being ignited.

From the perspective of protagonists in my dissertation, performing roles as diplomats was another layer to their travels for pilgrimage, scholarship, and reunions with kin members. Divisions between these multiple purposes often remained ambiguous. For instance, pilgrimage delegation leaders from Taipei to Mecca in the 1950s and 60s, who aimed to conduct anti-communist propaganda in its ally countries in the Middle East, were often chosen on the basis of the fact that they had relatives or former political subordinates among the “overseas Chinese” populations in Saudi Arabia.

The realms of networks and diplomacy tend to be treated separately in anthropology, sociology, political science and international relations.\(^{31}\) The importance of non-state individuals and entities in facilitating international relations has been noted for some time.\(^{32}\) Such persons, in fact, have been embedded in larger networks that come into

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\(^{31}\) A recent innovative attempt in anthropology to bridge the divide appears in Magnus Marsden, Diana Ibañez-Tirado, and David Henig, “Everyday Diplomacy,” *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 34, no. 2 (September 1, 2016): 2–22

\(^{32}\) Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 15-22. An important source of inspiration for Bonnefoy’s points out the limitedness of state-centric approach to international relations and instead focuses on movements of
view only by unearthing bonds between seemingly isolated actors. Works in history have shown entries of cross-border merchants, captives or sojourning religious figures into dealings between states, but without necessarily engaging with the concept of networks.\textsuperscript{33} For the idea of networks tacitly implies rigidity with clearly definable nodes and quantifiable transfers of goods and persons, and is often used as a lens to analyze globalization in tandem with recent technocratic development that historians do not feel comfortable projecting back onto the past.

Networks, however, can also be understood as fluid, flexible, adaptable, open to different actors who are not a part of a solidified social group, and with their durability, able to fill in disorders created in situations of turnovers and uncertainties. In recent studies on politics in East Asia and Southeast Asia, networks with such attributes are beginning to be taken as a serious analytic category for political analysis in the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{34} The intertwining of diaspora networks with the Chinese states’ external engagements have also received much attention, especially in the context of the former’s economic contributions to their other home places (\textit{qiaoxiang}) in mainland China.

Indeed, Deng Xiaoping in the late1980s and 90s repeatedly emphasized the

exceptionality of China’s advantage, owing to the presence of tens of millions of “patriotic compatriots living abroad.”

China’s economic rise post-1980s on backs of foreign direct investments from diaspora populations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and different places in Southeast Asia has been described as “cosmopolitan capitalism,” “diaspora capitalism,” and through more essentialist terms such as “guanxi (relationship) capitalism,” “bamboo capitalism” or “Chinese capitalism.”

In the sphere of diplomacy, we find examples of Chinese states leveraging emigres collectively for cultural diplomacy since the eve of the Qing Empire’s disintegration. Reflective of the importance of diaspora populations and interpersonal networks at large in China’s external political engagements, there has recently been a push to establish “Chinese schools of International Relations,” which can even be theorized or serve as a heuristic device in other areas of international relations.

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A stronger focus on human individuals themselves who mediated flows of persons and goods, especially between China and Southeast Asia, have come from historical studies. Long before the ascent of networks into the purview of political scientists, historians of Chinese diasporas have shown the far-flung linkages of kinship, religion, dialect groups, labor, associational groups and remittances that bind communities outside China’s political territories with different home places or economic centers within China in different historical epochs. Prasenjit Duara has recently proposed, “has never been much more than a networked region.” Networks in Asia have enabled “historical circulations that led to the exchange of goods, knowledge, technologies and, not least, religions that transformed entire civilizations.” Historians have, in fact, had the unique advantage of being able to access workings beneath networks hidden from public view and untangling their relations with states, by patiently sifting through written traces of the past.

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40 Traffic of smugglers between coastal China and Southeast Asia that both evaded and strengthened bordering of colonial Dutch and British authorities, clandestine international and local communist networks based in Shanghai in the inter-war period that collapsed in 1931 due to arrest of key members in Singapore’s Straits Settlements Police, and Buddhist diplomatic missions to India sponsored by the Nationalist Party during World War II, have all become subjects of intricate studies. See: Eric Tagliacozzo, Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). Tansen Sen, “Taixu’s Goodwill Mission to India: Reviving the Buddhist Links between India and China,” in Buddhism in Asia: Revival and Reinvention, ed. Nayanjot Lahiri and Upinder Singh (New Delhi: Manohar, 2016), 293–322. Onimaru Takeshi, “Shanghai
In historical studies, chronological division within linear time constitutes a central element of analysis. What if I were to follow or trace actors throughout the progression of time, while considering the critical importance of historical events that punctuate a period? Do the individuals disappear, and what of the connections of personal affinities, patronages, scholarly or religious lineages, and political agendas that they had built across locales?

My dissertation evolved in the process of answering these questions with regard to Chinese Muslim writers who composed travelogues to Mecca and Cairo in the 1930s. The accounts themselves, I believed, would show connections between different parts of Asia that are conventionally studied in separation from one another due to the orientation of each towards a Euro-American metropole. Intrinsic in travelogues are mobile actors who come from different social and geographic groups, modes of travel, encounters across regions, and sentiments of expectations, realizations and reflections.

Tracing the backgrounds of the writers, persons interconnected with them, and the afterlives of them all, which started out of simple curiosity, soon revealed the recurrent pattern of their networks merging with diplomatic journeys. Accounts of travel to Mecca from China soon turned into reports about Islamic diplomatic missions during World War II (or the Sino-Japanese War, or the War of Resistance), continuing onto the Cold War.

Islamic networks and states’ diplomatic operations complemented and strengthened one another when Chinese states needed to jumpstart relations with countries perceived to be belonging to the Islamic world. During these synchronic periods, the world of networks and that of diplomacy converged, despite their separation as different subjects of study in the social sciences.

That Mecca regularly appeared as the destination for diplomatic travels undertaken by different groups of Chinese Muslims not only shows their attempts to muster networks revolving around Mecca, but suggests that Chinese states were not exceptional in utilizing religious and diaspora networks as modes of inter-state engagement. Indeed, pan-Islamist projects propagated by the Ottoman court in the mid-nineteenth century until its fall were efforts at mobilizing networks across polities in the Indian Ocean, Africa and Central Asia that had looked up to Istanbul for military support against British, Dutch, Russian and Portuguese expansion even before the Ottoman push for Islamism as the unifying factor.

Even after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, religious and political figures from different parts of the world actively created spheres of trans-local exchanges that took place under the rubric of the idea of the Islamic world -- on the fringes of imperial infrastructure networks, and under their surveillance. Biographies, individual journeys, means of travel and anti-imperial networks forged by Muslim cosmopolitans
across regions have been illustrated in rich detail. The importance of pilgrimage for mediating such trans-Islamic encounters has also been elaborated.

The gap in research falls after the conquest of the Hejaz by the House of Saud allied with the Wahhabi establishment, portrayed mostly as a destructive break with the past. With it fade away discussions on networks connected to Mecca. Relations between pilgrimage to Mecca and diplomacy in the twentieth century is discussed in terms of the impact of transnational Islam on organization of ties between nation-states, with states as the primary unit of analysis. Outside the field of international relations, Saudi Arabia’s religious engagements outwards is analyzed through the spread of radical Islamism that supposedly is mediated through the World Muslim League and transnational charities from Saudi Arabia, save for a few exceptions. Analyses on other aspects of its foreign relations are heavily focused on that between the Kingdom and the United States, united


42 Nile Green, “Spacetime and the Muslim Journey West: Industrial Communications in the Making of the ‘Muslim World,’” *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 401–29. For Russian Muslims’ use of the pilgrimage as a means of diplomacy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Norihiro Naganawa, “Russia’s Muslim Mediators in Arabia, 1890s-1930s: Some Thoughts on a Research Agenda,” Unpublished manuscript presented at Muslim Identities and Imperial Spaces: Networks, Mobility, and the Geopolitics of Empire and Nation (1600-2011), The Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Stanford University (7 April 2011). I am grateful to Norihiro Naganawa for the permission to cite the manuscript.


by economic, political and military pacts, or its friends and foes in the region. King Faisal’s pan-Islamic agenda as a mode of foreign engagement has been noted, but the persons and networks that converged in Mecca in accordance with it still require investigation.

Have Mecca’s networks of diplomacy died out in the wake of Saudi nation-building and twentieth-century international system, leading them to dissipate also in scholarship? Or is it the case that the question has not been asked? Pilgrimage delegations consisting of Chinese Muslim religiopolitical leaders in the twentieth century point towards the latter. As we see through their descriptions of Kings’ banquets during the pilgrimage season that invited top members of the pilgrimage delegations from different countries, the annual hajj continued to serve as a tool for the new rulers of the Hejaz to arrange meetings with dignitaries from foreign polities in the first five decades after the Kingdom’s establishment. Even in recent years, Saudi states have leveraged the pilgrimage in severing ties or negotiating with other states, notably with Russia and Iran. The role of pilgrimage networks and pilgrim delegates in facilitating diplomacy between the Saudi states and others, however, awaits further investigation.

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46 Following rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Russia in 2003, Chechnyan president Ramzan Kadyrov started making the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca since 2007, when he participated in the ka’ba washing ceremony with then-King ‘Abdullah. Since then, Saudi has supported Russia’s position over Chechnya and increased the number of pilgrims from Russia from 13,000 in 2006 to 25,000 the next year. Julien Nocetti, “From Moscow to Mecca: Russia’s Saudi Arabian Diplomacy” Russia/NIS Center (June 2010), 10. Discontinuation of the Hajj from Iran as an indicator of severance in Saudi-Iranian diplomatic
The terms “networks,” “diasporas” or “cosmopolitanism” have come under attack, on the grounds that they are overused, ambiguous and free-floating. Yet their potentials as analytical lens, I argue, have not yet been fully exhausted. Tracing networks over time with a historic eye, through mixed uses of texts and oral sources, and going so far as to delineate their entanglements with states and in inter-state relations, shows not only traffics of persons, charities, ideas and goods across places and regions, but also intertwining of politics and religion, and that among networks, states and diplomacy previously unseen.

Discovering Textual Communities and their Time Travels (Research Methodology)

My uses of texts and interviews in multiple geographies were facilitated smoothly, ultimately because Chinese Muslims constitute textual communities that have kept inscribing histories in changing contexts through productions and reproductions of different textual genres. The travelogues, diplomatic pilgrimage reports, and periodicals published between the 1920s and 60s, which follow conventions of modern historiographical writing, were crystallizations of networks and histories that are shared by Chinese Muslims who are now dispersed across mainland China, Saudi Arabia, relations, or conflicts during the Hajj instigating halts in relations between the two, has been noted in: Awadh al-Badi, “Saudi-Iranian Relations: A Troubled Trajectory,” in Security and Bilateral Issues between Iran and its Arab Neighbors eds. Gawdat Bahgat, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Neil Quilliam, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 189-209.
Taiwan, and places in between. Being public figures who actively engaged in the publishing industry and in politics in the wake of World War I, the individuals whom I had encountered through historical texts were far from absent in memories of the following generations, who personally knew or grew up hearing about them.47

My entry point in Saudi Arabia was through living communities of first or second generation of settlers who trace their hometowns to different places in China, yet have formed a tightly-knit community within the Hejaz in the latter half of the twentieth century. Their contemplations about printing self-histories started only recently, and cautiously. Although conversations were open-ended, wherein my interviewees narrated their stories of migration, settlement and livelihoods, texts that I had acquired beforehand also served as leads. Besides Hussein Ma Bufang, a well-known figure among them all, names of other people who had appeared in textual records as visitors to or settlers in the Hejaz unleashed stories among the elderly. Mentioning of historical figures led to introductions of more acquaintances, and sometimes, gifting of private documents that they kept under wraps or books that had been published in mainland China or Taipei and now lay in their hands. When they pointed me to kin members back in mainland China or Taiwan, the latter presented me with their own textual collections in addition to their personal recollections when I later visited them there.

47 In most cases, I have changed the names of my interviewees to pseudonyms to protect their identities.
In mainland China to which the persons in Saudi Arabia directed me, different groups of Chinese Muslim populations were circulating written narratives in much more open and diverse domains than the space of the private home. In the 21st century, biographies and legacies of Chinese Muslim notables from different time periods are disseminated through unofficial self-publications, memoirs, online blog posts, commemorative buildings, and also professional academic history books and encyclopedias written by “Hui” or other Muslim ethnic minority historians and ethnographers who are based in university institutions. Such productions are far from inventions of traditions, as they are re-narrations of genuine pasts, which often accompany primary sources to verify them.

What propels productions and circulations of narratives on collective histories? Surely, as Uradyn Bulag has shown for Mongol historiography in the twentieth century, the surge of publications by China’s ethnic minorities in the age of print can be interpreted as their urgent investments to certify belonging to the nation through genealogical narrations that confirm their long-standing affinity and contributions to the polity of China. Yet at the same time, leaving records about themselves and about their pasts was an endeavor that Chinese Muslims had made long before the advent of nationalism, ever since they blended into local areas of settlements. On gravestones and

mosque steles, in Han Kitab collections in eastern and southwestern China, and on handwritten manuscripts jotted down in a mix of Persian, Arabic and Xiao-er-jing (local dialects transcribed in Arabic and Persian scripts) languages in the northwest, various writers among Chinese Muslims had composed hybrid textual corpuses that incorporated all aspects of scriptures, law, religious rituals and historical narratives.

Moreover, the locales of textual inscriptions were not limited to the domestic sphere of mainland China, but have followed trails of persons moving across regions. Certain sets of pre-twentieth-century texts were reprinted throughout the twentieth century, along with complete translations of the Quran and Islamic periodicals that were culminations of new collective endeavors. Writers, entrepreneurs and warlords like those in my dissertation circulated such books and journals mostly across different cities within China, but also outside, in places like Hong Kong and Singapore. Their exiles post-1949 further prompted textual production centers to relocate to locales such as Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Rangoon, and Jeddah and Ta’if. Those who remained in mainland China now disseminated books and articles as a Hui ethnic minority.

Nationalism, printed books or online posts represented new linguistic and communication media for transmitting narratives on the collective, an act that Chinese Muslims have engaged in since the fourteenth century. As Andrew Shryock tells us through tribal historiography in Jordan in the 1990s, “the very act of affirming one’s genealogical connection to the past is an attempt to retain possession of it, prolong its reality, and impose it again on others,” in the face of the “sense that their own reality is
slipping away.” Chinese Muslims have shown a similar urge, but across time, and across regions. Even against the formidable pressure of nationalism, narrating a history that incorporates places far apart is an endeavor to discover the self, and to transmit corporate pasts from generation to generation. The narratives that have been carved in different forms, although not of interest to everyone in the community and not without contestations, stimulate identifications with a place and a time far away from one’s own immediate surroundings. They simultaneously create linkages between an imagined place of origin and one’s settled places of residence, thereby embedding the community within the local society.

In some fortunate cases, the active venues of textual production in contemporary mainland China made it possible for me to connect with kin members, former acquaintances, and even entirely unrelated local researchers who were familiar with the figures in published writings. By following a travelogue from Shanghai to Cairo composed by ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi in 1934, for instance, I was able to meet his kin members in Yunnan Province. ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi had been a native of Shadian who studied in Cairo’s al-Azhar University in the 1930s and 40s after studying in Shanghai’s Islamic Teachers School. He had been a member of the anti-Japanese Chinese Islamic Delegation in 1939, and upon return to China in the mid-1940s, briefly served as a

magistrate of Aksu Prefecture in Xinjiang Province. The victory of the Communist Party forced him to go into exile in northern Burma, and ultimately settle in Jeddah following an exile pilgrimage to Mecca. In Jeddah, he spent the latter half of his life as an affiliate of the Taiwanese Embassy to Saudi Arabia and of the World Muslim League in Mecca. In the course of contextualizing his writings, I realized that his surviving nephew had posted the entire travelogue to Cairo (published in 1937) online. I emailed him and visited Lin’s relatives in Kunming and Shadian. They relayed to me recollections, photos, their own publications without official publishers, and contacts in Saudi Arabia.

Taipei, on the other hand, provided accessible archives and a library that housed recordings of pilgrimage delegation reports through the course of the Cold War. Periodicals published in the central mosque added to the abundant amount of resources on the course of Islam in postwar Taiwan, as it turned into another important political and religious center for both Chinese and Turkic Muslims. I used these partially as data on the pilgrimage missions and the “overseas Chinese” populations in Saudi Arabia, and as sources to identify more figures to search for on my return trip to Saudi Arabia.

My archival and fieldwork therefore meant traveling constantly back and forth between Saudi Arabia, mainland China, Taiwan, and places in between, guided by my interlocutors who introduced descendants of people in the texts, kept producing oral or written historiographies of their own, and pointed me to yet other places. The process of gathering oral and textual sources itself meant shifting between progressions of genealogical time and linear chronological time, a distinction that was nonexistent for
dispersed Chinese Muslims. Whether I set the starting point as the present or the past, for them, the past was an inherent part of the self, sometimes extending back to the very start of Islam. For Chinese Muslims, as for other tribal peoples or other religious diasporas, “history is now as it happened then.” Meetings with living communities not only yielded further textual data but revealed bonds of kinship, commerce and pilgrimage that were spread out across regions that are invisible in textual accounts. Such ties were radically severed at times, remolded, in some cases passed onto the next generation, and reconnected back again at apt times even after decades of inactivity.

Chapter Organization

The dissertation is divided into two sections that are organized chronologically and thematically. Part I, Wars and Travels, shows how a series of wars across China and the world empowered the kinds of actors who had not necessarily held communal authority prior to the wars. Assuming positions as religious, political, or military leaders with representational power, they forged and expanded networks with one another across China and different centers of the Islamic world through travels, regional commerce, patronage, and circulations of texts. The routes of pilgrimage itself served as spaces of encounters and a unifying force that brought persons from different regions of China into contact with one another. At the time of the international war of World War II, a portion

50 Andrew Shryock, Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination, Kindle location 554.
of actors in Chapters 1 and 2 or their progeny expediently mobilized the networks and the pilgrimage to Mecca as an outlet for diplomacy, with the support of states.

In Chapter 1 (*The Making of ‘Little Meccas’: Wars and Kings in China and Arabia, 1900-1937*), we discover a place which transformed from a regional node for commerce and spirituality into a religious and political center on a national level, in the wake of multiple wars that overturned social orders in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This is Linxia in southern Gansu of northwestern China, situated at the crossroads of Sino-Tibetan and Sino-Central Asian trade routes. Since the early eighteenth century, Linxia had developed tighter connections with Mecca through Sufi pilgrim scholars than other places in China. It is also the hometown of Hussein Ma Bufang and other Muslim warlords who had risen from being soldiers without names in the books of gazetteers to the ranks of governor-generals, and occasionally formed kinship relations with one another. The entry point to Linxia in the chapter is through my encounter with an elderly first-generation settler in Jeddah who traces his home to the outskirts of Linxia, and upon our first encounter, handed me biographical accounts of Ma Bufang and Ma Fuxiang written in Chinese.

The chapter shows the rise of the Muslim “warlords” based in Linxia, from peddling traders to domineering governor-generals following the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64) and the “Muslim rebellions” in the northwest (Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia Provinces, 1862-77; 1895-96). I argue that they tapped into and expanded Islamic networks from their base in Linxia -- eastwards to the political and commercial centers of
Beijing and Shanghai, and westward to Mecca, through their activities of patronage. The symbolic value that Linxia gained in the period as a religious and political hub, along with the real historic connections it had with the perceived centers of the Islamic world, would later bolster its branding as a “little Mecca” in mainland China after the Cultural Revolution.

Concurrently, the wars and increased traffic between China and Mecca carved out a new center for Muslim communities in coastal China. Chapter 2 (*Mapping Routes to Mecca in the Ports of Shanghai and Canton*) shifts the scene to Canton, the historic maritime entrepot and the supposed burial site of the Prophet Muhammad’s Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās. Similar to Linxia, the old logistical commercial hub of Canton harbored its own little Mecca, made possible through the burial of the Companion Waqqās who forged immediate spatial and temporal linkages between Mecca and Muslims in China. The chapter investigates the manifold imaginations of Mecca as a non-place in Canton and elsewhere prior to the twentieth century, and the actual circulations of pilgrims and donations that refashioned Canton’s Muslim enclaves as a sacred site on their own.

Turning to Shanghai, the worldly city that pulled in travelers from across all parts of China and mediated international travels from the conclusion of the Opium War, the chapter then highlights the transformation of Mecca from a non-place to a point of destination reachable, once again, from the far eastern corners of China in the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. Whereas the Opium War and the
Taiping Rebellion instigated sets of wars in northwestern China and gave birth to the warlords, in Shanghai, Chinese Muslims settled in the city as scholars, wartime refugees, entrepreneurs and seekers of new opportunities, and received traveling guests heading towards Mecca through Shanghai. Consciously portraying Shanghai as the successor of the port of Canton, they constructed mosques and schools, printed texts, re-narrated pasts of Islam in China, and collected monies from donors in dispersed places that included the warlords of the northwestern provinces.

Besides showing the shifting locational hubs and the vast space of travel and imaginaries between Mecca and little Meccas in southeastern China, the chapter argues that the turning of Mecca from a figural to literal place not only prompted the building of new congregation structures in pivotal transit points along the way, namely in Shanghai, but also strengthened the appeal of ideas of Islamic unity that circulated together with the travels of persons across transit points.

Chapter 3 (Diplomatic Journeys, 1937-1947) examines travelogues and diplomatic pilgrimage reports of the 1930s and 40s to argue that World War II expanded and politicized existing conduits of Sino-Islamic networks on an unprecedented scale. Politicization of the space between China and Arabia following the outbreak of World War II further turned Mecca into a diplomatic battlefield, where competing groups of Chinese Muslims each made arguments about Islamic solidarity against empires, Japanese or British. Through the travelogues that detail the cultural emissaries’ reflections on past and present, meetings with coreligionists, and propaganda, the chapter
shows how some of the actors in Chapter 1 and 2 mobilized their networks as expedient conduits for diplomacy with the outbreak of the War, in close collaboration with state entities.

From the perspective of the Nationalist Party of China, Islamic networks served as a means of diplomacy not only towards external states perceived to be Muslim majority but also towards northwestern borderlands. The loose forms of connection that militarists and scholars had made with one another through multiple associations now came under the umbrella organization of the Chinese Islamic Association for National Salvation, which later metamorphosed into the Chinese Islamic Association in both mainland China and Taiwan. The creation of a bureaucratic religious entity in the middle ground between the state and society, which bound together its sub-branches across China, streamlined the processes through which Chinese states interacted with or exert influence on Muslim societies within their domains. The Association furthermore would come to serve as the agent for modulating official external travels of Muslim populations, in the PRC (People’s Republic of China) and the ROC (Republic of China).

Part II, *Re-Routings*, traces the re-makings of Sino-Islamic networks of Part I in the new context of the post-World War II nation-states, but now from the vantage point of Mecca as a physical site. Between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s, a period of turmoil and reshuffling, Chinese Muslim scholar-officials, militarists, businessmen and their families examined in previous chapters became political exiles; some switched allegiances and allied themselves with the Communist Party, or became
apolitical in the Mainland. The escapees fled to places such as Hong Kong, Chiangmai and Mecca, or to Taipei along with the Nationalist Party. In this process, the hajj to Mecca became a means through which migrants could flee mainland China, leading to the formation of the initial community of Chinese Muslims in diasporic exile in the Hejaz.

With their hometowns and relatives left behind, life moved on for escapees to the Hejaz. Chapter 4 (Routes and Re-Routes: Making New Homes in the Hejaz) delves into the processes through which newly arrived Chinese Muslim settlers made Mecca and cities adjacent to it into permanent homes, by initiating small businesses and becoming members of Saudi educational or bureaucratic institutions. The chapter is a historical ethnography of the Chinese Muslim diaspora community in Jeddah, Ta’if, and Mecca, who became a part of Saudi society following their collective migration from different parts of China. The Hejaz, while representing a longstanding homeland by being the origin place of Islam to which Muslims from across the world could lay claim to, also posed challenges to the new migrants -- from settling down and learning the language, to gaining citizenship and facing homogenizing pressures, not to mention making a living.

Through interviews, archival records and pilgrimage accounts from Taipei, the chapter traces Chinese Muslims’ routes of travel and reformulations of sociocultural networks from the new base in the Hejaz. The diverse pathways and modes of transport that led them to Mecca, explored in the chapter’s first section, show arrivals in Mecca as a part of prior overland, maritime, and air travel routes through which different regions
between Arabia and China had been interconnected. The subsequent sections unfold their many stories of changing occupations and adopting different surnames; finding positions in the Saudi or Taiwanese religious and educational bureaucracies; imagining multiple homelands; building institutions of collective gathering; and re-arranging external ties of religion, kinship and political affiliation. The narratives recounted in the chapter embody not only the homogenizing impulses of the newly founded Saudi nation-state, but the cosmopolitan potentials inherent in its pasts defined by overlapping diasporas in the Hejaz, and hints at its potential for conduction of its mid-level international diplomacy through migrants, the pilgrimage, and educational and religious institutions.

Chapter 5 (*Cold War Re-Routings of Diplomatic Channels*) shows the layers of diasporic and diplomatic networks between Mecca and China that realigned in the course of the Cold War, through a focus on mobility of strands of Chinese and Turkic (Turkistani) Muslim sojourners and residents in the Hejaz. Progression of Cold War politics instituted two axes of alliances in both East Asia and West Asia and injected renewed significance to Mecca and Islam as a foreign policy strategy in Saudi Arabia.

It was by riding on intersections of Cold War politics in West Asia and that in East Asia that individuals among dispersed Chinese and Turkic Muslim communities reassembled pilgrimage and diaspora networks into channels of diplomacy and propaganda. Starting from 1954, the Nationalist Party based in Taipei dispatched annual pilgrimage delegations to Mecca. What appears most prominently in the pilgrimage missions between the 1950s and early 1970s is a narrative of Islamic struggle against
communism as proposed by Taiwan’s pilgrimage delegations, which they propagated in associations such as the World Muslim League. The case of Saudi-Taiwan relations shows that a small number of Muslim diaspora communities situated in between the two countries utilized the rhetoric of anti-communist Islam and international Islamic associations to strengthen cultural diplomacy in the early years of the Cold War. From anti-imperial Islamism highlighted in Chapter 3, Chinese Muslim religious and political leaders quickly switched to the language of anti-communist Islamic unity.

The make-up of pilgrimage delegations from Taipei and the overseas Chinese populations that assisted them emerged out of extensive diaspora networks beneath such ideological propaganda and diplomatic agendas. From discussions of previous chapters (1,2,3,4), and a close look into the individual make-up of delegations, we will see how Muslim diaspora networks based in Taiwan and western Saudi Arabia found their niche within the outward cultural diplomatic strategies of both countries. The language of Islamic jihad against communism offered a universal narrative that they could draw from to expand their external contacts, from their bases in Taipei or Mecca.

Sharing the space of Mecca and the language of anti-communist Islamic solidarity were former Turkic Muslim intellectuals and politicians who were dispersed between Istanbul and the Hejaz, garnering monetary and sentimental support of Central Asian diaspora communities. Forming transregional spaces of pilgrimage and diplomacy that Taipei’s formal and informal representatives could not access, they formed a conceptual state of East Turkistan without a territorial state of their own, mobilizing interpersonal
ties and anti-communist propaganda through print media and associations like the World Muslim League. The chapter thus highlights the convergences and contestations that unfolded in Mecca, as it once again turned into a diplomatic battlefield where competing delegations sought to appeal to both religiopolitical dignitaries and diaspora populations in the Hejaz.

The concluding Chapter 6 (The Many Homecomings) follows the various returns back and forth between Mecca, Linxia, Canton, Shanghai and Taipei in the aftermath of the opening-up of mainland China, the establishment of the PRC-Saudi diplomatic relations, and the waning of the Cold War that rendered diplomatic battles in Mecca more or less meaningless. Here we return to some of the characters and families who had been introduced in previous chapters. Through them, we see reknitting of ties of trade, kinship, and religious authority, often mediated through the pilgrimage, across Mecca, Linxia, and prominent commercial centers of Shanghai and Canton. The developed infrastructure in roads, planes and communication over the decades has further diversified and thickened the networks.

The Conclusion, while recapping major themes of the dissertation, once again highlights Chinese Muslims’ far-reaching networks and geographies as captured by the famous anthropologist Fei Xiaotong. Fei Xiaotong, visiting Linxia in 1986, recognized the historic positionality of Chinese Muslims as cultural and commercial intermediaries between China and West Asia, and proposed policies to designate Linxia and eastern Qinghai as a special economic zone that would specialize in trade with countries in West
Asia. This was a part of the overarching vision to revitalize ancient maritime and overland silk roads. While bearing remarkable similarities to the recent PRC’s scheme of the Belt and the Road, Fei Xiaotong’s articulations offer a critical view on the importance of transnational networks of religion and kinship and the necessary autonomy of minority nationalities for expanding ties between China and Eurasia. His conceptualizations not only aid us in foregrounding mobility as a central component of Chinese Muslims’ pasts and presents through the perspectives of an insider scholar, but suggest an important corrective to the contemporary PRC’s outlook towards connecting geographies across China and Eurasia without a regard for the socio-cultural matrix that is spread out throughout the regions westward.
Part I: Wars and Travels
1. The Making of Meccas: Wars and Kings in China and Arabia, 1900-1937

Linxia city in the summer of 2016 was bustling with restaurants, street vendors and honking taxis. I stood across from the landmark Southern Gate Mosque (nanguan qingzhensi), somewhat anxiously waiting for a phone call from Musa. A crowd of men who had attended the Friday jum’a poured out from the mosque’s gate. I had gotten in contact with Musa through the family of ‘Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu (馬經武 1933–2019) in Jeddah, a cousin of Musa. When Musa appeared from the other side of the Southern Gate Mosque, we together made several twists and turns on the backstreets of the city and reached a slightly run-down three-story hotel building run by his family.

Hanging on the wall of a hotel room was a short poem written by ‘Abd al-Majid in 2006, as he reflected on his emotions on the eve of the departure to Jeddah.

Home Sentiments (guxiangqing 故鄉情)

“Taizi Mountain is high, Xiahe River is clear. Hezhou’s sky is blue, Linxia’s moon is bright. Words in Xixiang and sounds in Dongxiang feel intimately close. Bafang’s delicious food is well known, near and far. High mountains and clear waters, blue skies and bright moons. Dear words that continue without an end, and familiar sounds of home. They uplift the heart, move and comfort the mind. A sentiment rises again. Tomorrow I will leave you, heading out to a distant place. I do not know whether I will be able to come back to your bosoms — endearing, beautiful home garden.”

Linxia for ‘Abd al-Majid represented an old hometown (guxiang 故鄉), despite the relatively short number of years he actually spent in the place. When he was barely

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1 Until 1928, Linxia city was referred to as Hezhou (河州), and briefly, as Daohe (導河).
four years old, he had left Linxia and headed farther north to Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province. This was to accompany his father, who worked in the cabinet of his distant relative Ma Bufang (馬步芳 1903-1975), the then-governor of Qinghai Province who was allied with the Nationalist Party in Nanjing. In the face of the imminent final victory of the communist People’s Liberation Army in 1949, sixteen-year-old ‘Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu and his family boarded an airplane secured by Ma Bufang and followed him in the hurried escape to Mecca. For the next half-century, the families of both ‘Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu and Ma Bufang would spend most of their lives in Ta’if and Jeddah on western coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, with no access to mainland China until the 1980s. His short return home to Linxia in 2006 at the age of seventy-three would turn out to be the last one.

My encounter with Chinese Muslim families in the Hejaz initiated spatial and temporal travels that directed me to reach present-day Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, located between southern Gansu and the highlands of the Tibetan Plateau. To the first-generation settlers in Saudi Arabia who experienced the events of the early twentieth century, Linxia not only carried personal importance as a distant home place but also represented an iconic Muslim zone in China imbued with religious and political significance. When I first visited ‘Abd al-Majid in Jeddah in 2014, he gifted me materials relating to prominent Chinese Muslim warlords who trace their hometowns to Linxia. One was a small picture of Ma Qi (馬麒 1869-1931), the father of Ma Bufang, who served as the first governor of Qinghai Province. The position was succeeded first by his
younger brother, then his son. Another was a biography of Ma Fuxiang (馬福祥 1876-1932), written in a laudatory tone by a Hui author in 2001. Ma Fuxiang was another “warlord” from a different lineage, which had governed Ningxia Province east of Qinghai. Ma Fuxiang had funded, as we will see later in the chapter, a small lodge house in Mecca to accommodate pilgrims from China in the inter-war period, as well as Islamic socio-religious institutions in places such as Beijing and Shanghai.

Approached from the outside, then, Linxia stands in the middle of regional, national and trans-regional layers of mobility that span from the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula to central plains of China, and farther east to China’s political and commercial centers. From a silk road entrepot to a regional sacred center, and the home base of militarist governors at the turn of the twentieth century, Linxia has evolved to symbolize “China’s little Mecca.”

2 How has Linxia come to represent a little Mecca, and who were the warlords from Linxia that piggybacked off the circulatory channels between Linxia, Mecca, and cities in eastern China?

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Through the lens of the militarist rulers, this chapter repositions Linxia as a hub for inter-Asian circuits, and by doing so, traces the making of intermediary-level horizontal linkages between Mecca and “little Mecca” that changed social landscapes on both ends. Doing so shows the space between Linxia and Mecca as that constituted by layered mobilities and overlapping networks, which, as we will see in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, change shape and locational centers over time through historical events. The first part of the chapter outlines the geographic landscape of Linxia – a commercial hub at crossroads of different topographic zones – and the historical flows of scholars, pilgrims and saintly figures between Mecca and Linxia that turned Linxia into a regional Islamic center. The rest of the chapter argues that the eventful wars and rebellions of the mid and late nineteenth century led to the emergence of a particular group of rebels-turned-warlords from Linxia who utilized and expanded cross-regional religious ties while cultivating political alliances in Beijing or Nanjing, thus strengthening the political significance of Linxia and overturning hierarchy of leadership among Chinese Muslims.

While conversations with a Chinese Muslim family in present-day Jeddah led me to Linxia, traveling back in time to Linxia will reveal its manifold linkages with Mecca through different waves of history, from inside-out. Ma Qi and Ma Fuxiang were two of the several powerful military commanders who had initially gained power by fighting the Qing court’s wars in the late nineteenth century. All of them traced their homes to different parts of what had then been known as Hezhou (河洲), the area around present-
day Linxia city within Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in southern Gansu. They rose to power by becoming a part of the Qing armies in the late nineteenth century and preserved it until the victory of the Communist Party armies in 1949. For half a century they virtually controlled the politics and economy of Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai, the regions that lie between “China Proper” and the farther western borderlands of Xinjiang and Tibet.

What was unique about the Ma-surnamed warlords was that they utilized Muslim networks to expand support bases both within and outside their provinces as a part of their cultural and educational projects. Besides wars and armies, they sponsored religious scholars, mosques and Islamic associations inside and beyond their own provinces. ‘Abd al-Majid’s maternal uncle who conferred him the religious name, for instance, was a well-known Imam belonging to the “Yihewani” (translation of the Arabic term ikhwānī, or brotherhood 伊赫瓦尼) teaching school that Ma Bufang’s clan strongly patronized in Qinghai Province.

In having access to a pool of scholars and entrepreneurs in the domestic sphere and abroad, Ma-surnamed militarists were not entirely different from other military generals in post-Qing China who, as overpowering components of “military-gentry coalitions,”3 undertook sociocultural projects to gain civilian support. The “Ma” warlords

3 I borrow the term from Jerome Ch’ên, The Military-Gentry Coalition: China under the Warlords (Toronto: University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre on Modern East Asia, 1979), who contrasted
and the dispersed Muslim scholars, however, were different in that they formed much wider and loose networks of interpersonal relations and donations, proactively forming relations of patronage with itinerant scholars especially after the fall of the Qing Empire that opened up a host of possibilities. Little known is the fact that their patronages reached Mecca and Cairo, either through their own pilgrimage or sponsorship of teachers and students who actively sought “reconnection” with co-religionists. Islamic networks outside provincial and domestic boundaries provided a unique source to bolster their prestige, or to change the internal dynamics of their provinces. For the clan of Ma Bufang who had governed the Qinghai Province, outside pathways to Mecca even provided a route of later political exile when they lost to the Communist Party’s armies.

The “Ma” warlords occupy a marginal position in English-language scholarship on China’s warlords, let alone in China studies. The Gansu-Qinghai-Ningxia region has been a neglected frontier geography, perceived as neither the core of China nor independent borderlands as in the way of Xinjiang, Tibet or Inner Mongolia. In the Chinese language, however, there has been abundant historiographical production on the concept with that of "gentry-military" coalition in which the gentry, rather than the "military," takes upper hand in governance.

Ma-surnamed militarist governors since the 1980s, in the aftermath of open-up-and-reform policies that revitalized the scholarly sphere. These have come in the form of memoirs collections, semi-scientific historical accounts that are based on a combination of personal experiences, interviews and available governmental texts, academic studies on the history of the region that incorporate evaluations on the role of Ma warlords in political, socioeconomic and religious arenas, and biographical accounts that build on these publications, as that given to me by ‘Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu in Jeddah.

I should note that in general, the motifs behind my interlocutors’ sharing or gifting of textual or graphic sources in different places would have been multi-faceted. In some instances, texts had been passed down to them without them necessarily comprehending the literal meanings of the words inside, whereas others had actively

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5 These are collections of *wenshi ziliao* 文史资料, or literary and historical materials. The compilation was initiated first in 1959 by Zhou Enlai as a major publication project of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Zhou’s aim was to urge older citizens who had experienced historical events during the late Qing, Beiyang government and Republican Chinese periods to write down their recollections, as references for later studies on modern Chinese history. Annie K. Chang, “The Wenshi Ziliao Collection of the Center for Chinese Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley,” *Twentieth-Century China* 26, no. 1 (September 2013): 103–8.

6 These include Chen Bingyuan (陈秉渊), *Mabufang jiazu tongzhi Qinghai sishinian* (The forty years of Ma Bufang’s rulership in Qinghai 马步芳家族统治青海四十年) (Xining Shi: Qinghai ren min chu ban she, 2007); Wen Fei (文斐), *Wo Suo Zhi Dao de Ma Bufang Jiazu* (Ma Bufang clan that I know 我所知道的马步芳家族) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2004).

7 Yang Xiaoping(杨效平), *Ma Bufang Jiazu de Xingshuai* (The Rise and Fall of Ma Bufang Clan 马步芳家族的兴衰) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1986); Xu Xianlong(许宪隆), *Zhu Ma Junfa jituan yu Xibei Muslimin shehui* (The Ma Warlords and Muslim society in the Northwest 诸马军阀集团与西北穆斯林社会) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 2001); Wu Zhongli (吴忠礼) and Liu Qinbin(刘钦斌), eds., *Xibei Wu Ma* (The Five Mas of the Northwest 西北五马) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1993).

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collected materials pertinent to individual or family histories and showed them to me out of trust. The politics of commemorations of the Ma warlords by their relatives more narrowly and by Chinese Muslims more broadly has been particularly convoluted.  

Therefore, I utilize a combination of recollections from different sources, academic studies, and reports and articles that circulated within Chinese Muslim writer circles in the early twentieth century. In doing so, the aim is to bring into light the social backgrounds of the militarist governors in the context of regional, domestic and international wars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to extract the intertwinements between their local operations and building of external relations.

1.1 Hezhou as a Regional Mecca

The Ma-surnamed warlords emerged out of a geography where different religious networks and topographical zones intersect. Remarkably, they all traced their hometowns to the outskirts of Hezhou, the historic name for the present-day Linxia City. The old

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8 As influential political figures who were engaged in religious and cultural work, they have represented, at different points in time, power and might of Chinese Muslims in ways that overshadow internecine conflicts and violence in Sino-Tibetan borderlands. Furthermore, while modern Chinese Muslim historians portrayed “Muslim revolts” of the nineteenth century as righteous anti-Qing, anti-Manchu, anti-dynastic uprisings –forces that the Republican and Communist regimes of twentieth-century China that replaced the empire glorified – the Ma militarists who crushed the rebels and became loyalists of the Qing Empire can also be interpreted as evidence of the overall loyalty of Chinese Muslims to whichever state that is in power. In the initial years of the PRC, Ma warlords had been condemned as feudal residues and anti-communist villains, whereas in the recent two decades, they have received new scholarly attention and figured as representative figures of Hui minority. This can be seen in the refurbishment of Ma Bufang’s house in Xining in the early 2010s as a museum, which has become a tourist destination.
name “Hezhou” itself is telling of its positionality. The name “Hezhou” came about during the Sui Dynasty (581-618), deriving from the character “he,” meaning river. The present name “Linxia” also connotes its proximity to Daxia River, a tributary of the Yellow River. The central location of Linxia in between Shaanxi to the east, Ningxia-Gansu-Qinghai to the north, and Tibetan-majority grasslands to the south made it a regional trading center in pre-Communist China, and after the “Open Up and Reform Policy” in 1979.⁹

The fathers of Ma Qi and Ma Fuxiang, as we will see in the later section of this chapter, also had started their careers as caravan traders traveling between Linxia and the pastoral Tibetan regions to the south. Trade traffic on foot coexisted with that on river pathways. Linxia contains around forty small and larger streams that enter the Yellow River, which stretches from farther western part of the Qinghai Province into the very eastern coasts of China.¹⁰ Following the entries of western firms post the Opium War, merchants based in Linxia traversed on these riverways between Linxia and Baotou in Inner Mongolia on lambskin rafts to sell wool and fur that had been purchased from

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⁹ Linxia scenery in the 1980s will be dealt with in the Conclusion, through visits of the renowned anthropologist Fei Xiaotong.

¹⁰ Ma Xiaorong (马效融), Hezhou Shihua Zhuanji (Historical Narratives on Hezhou 河州史话专辑) (Linxia Huizu Autonomonomous Prefecture Committee for literary and historical materials (Linxia Huizu Zizhizhou Wenshi Ziliao Weiyuanhui); Internal Publication, 1994), 3.
Tibetan grasslands around the Labrang monastery, which would once again be transferred from Baotou to Tianjin.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=1\textwidth]{linxia-gansu.png}
\caption{Map of Linxia/ Gansu in Northern China}
\end{figure}

Long before the Opium War, the strategic location of Hezhou had made it one of several commercial hubs and military posts in western China at different points in time. The routes that went through southern Gansu in pre-Tang times, starting from Xi’an or Luoyang (in western Henan) along the Wei River Valley, have been termed “southern silk road” in the recent four decades or so. From Xi’an or Luoyang, after passing through Qin’an, Longxi, and Weiyuan in southern Gansu, the trade routes would arrive at Lintao,

which lies 175 km southeast of Linxia. Tao River that runs between Lintao and Linxia, as well as several other streams, would flow through Hezhou and merge with the Yellow River that flows eastwards or continue westward to enter Qinghai boundaries, turning Hezhou into a trading station prior to Sui-Tang times. Local scholars on Linxia conjecture that during the cosmopolitan Tang Empire that had its capital in Xi’an, Hezhou would have constituted one of several centers for the historical trails between Tang-China and Tufan-Tibet – a prelude to its later designation as an official tea-horse trade station. When administrative units were established during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty, which brought together China, Central Asia, Persia, and the Levant all the way to Baghdad, Pacification Commission for Tufan was established in Hezhou in 1254, responsible for managing military and civilian matters for Tibetan regions.12 From the sixteenth century, Hezhou became an official tea-horse trade station where horses from the borderlands were exchanged with produces from farther eastern China under governmental supervision.13

The landscape to which Hezhou belongs is at the crossroads of not only trade routes but also of different religions and ethnicities. Present-day Gansu Province itself is shaped like a dumbbell that connects China with Xinjiang and onward to Central Asia.

12 Ma Xiaorong (马效融), *Hezhou Shihua Zhuanji (Historical Narratives on Hezhou 河州史话专辑)*, 87. Tufan Xuanweisi (吐蕃宣慰司都元帅府)
13 Ibid., 88.
The long, elevated path within Gansu Province is known as “Hexi Corridor (Hexi Zoulang),” bounded between snowy Qilian mountains to the south and high deserts of Alashan Plateau on the north. Hezhou lies at the south of Hexi Corridor. The stretch of land runs for more than 1,200 kilometers at 1,500 meters above sea level and measures about 150 kilometers in width. While the Gansu climate is arid, the Hexi Corridor has been called the “grain belt” of the northwest. Despite the low annual precipitation (50-200mm), melting snow from the Qilian Mountains on the south supports the irrigation of farmlands, as well as the supply of irrigation water from the Qinghai Plateau. Grasslands in northern and southern Hexi corridor have been home to cattle and sheep (5 million cattle and 9 million sheep as of 1987).\textsuperscript{14} To the east, Hexi Corridor overlaps with the northeastern part of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau and reaches the Yellow River basin around Lanzhou. The westward path leads to the Jade Gate (Yumen Pass), the western end of the Great Wall that had opened ancient silk road routes, and on the northern fringes are Mazong and Heshou mountains. From this northern end, roads can continue onto the Tarim Basin to the south, or the Tianshan Mountain to the north, in present-day Xinjiang Province.

As first proposed by the Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005), the Hexi corridor also represents an “ethnic corridor” where multiple Muslim, Tibetan, and

\textsuperscript{14} China (U.S.), Ellis, and Affairs, Grillands and Grassland Sciences in Northern China, 21.
Mongol ethnicities have crossed their paths. While Fei Xiaotong framed the region in ethnic terms, the area’s inhabitants have constructed diverse Buddhist and Muslim religious sceneries and political alliances that cross-cut ethnic boundaries. As for Islam, Yuan Empire was the time when Muslim communities in the Shaanxi-Gansu area at large expanded, as Muslim soldiers, craftsmen and traders from Central Asia, Arabia, and Persia, collectively known as *semuren* under Yuan social system, occupied high official administrative positions throughout the Empire. During the 90 years of the Yuan Dynasty, 46 Muslims are known to have assumed central governmental positions in Shaanxi Province after assisting the court in conquests of the region, leading to formations of settled Muslim communities in Gansu and Shaanxi.

Muslim communities in Hezhou evolved in interaction with its position as a regional commercial center, located in a place open to flows of religious movements outside of China. ‘Abd al-Majid’s poem hanging on Linxia’s hotel room refers to the delicious street foods of Bafang. Bafang, located in the outer city near what used to be the south gate of Hezhou’s imperial city walls, has been the key Muslim neighborhood where different teaching schools, mosques and tomb complexes (*gongbei*) of different Sufi

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17 Ibid., 88.
orders are densely concentrated. The neighborhood measures about 1.24 square kilometers, and now contains twenty-seven mosques and a number of tomb complexes in and around the district. Since roughly the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the middle of the Qing Empire, Muslims, especially merchants but also religious leaders, flocked to Bafang.

The name of the district derives from “ba,” meaning eight, and “jiaofang (教坊),” which refers to the organizational unit among Chinese Muslim communities. Every “jiaofang” consisted of 1) mosque’s manager (xuedong 學懂) who takes care of the property, amends the mosques, takes care of students’ grain fees, and prepares religious activities; 2) the helper of the manager (xianglao 鄉老); and 3) mosque’s religious leader (kaixue ahong 開學阿訇) who gives lessons and leads religious practices. Both the mosque manager and helper were selected by jiaofang’s Muslims after consultations, whereas ahongs (imams) were invited by jiaofang with no particularly predetermined period of stay. Around the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Hezhou’s mosques gradually increased to the extent that within about 10 square meters there were 8 jiaofang and 8 mosques (which increased to 12), and hence creating the name “Bafang.”

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18 Ninety-eight percent of Bafang’s 4,507 households (14,383 people) were Hui Muslims as of 2010, within the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture where 1.1 million of its 1.95 million population are Hui. Matthew S. Erie, China and Islam: The Prophet, the Party, and Law (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 92.
19 Ma Xiaorong (马效融), Hezhou Shihua Zhuanji (河州史话专辑), 134.
From the eighteenth century onwards, individuals from Bafang and its outskirts undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca in growing numbers, totaling a dozen to as many as 30 every year.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.png}
\caption{Contemporary Linxia, Photo by Author, June 2016}
\end{figure}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 133-4. Ma Xiaorong cites “Gansusheng minwei zuzhide Linxia shehui diaoche tongji” from 1950.
The scholar Ma Tong conjectures that Hezhou turned into a pivotal regional center for Muslims in the middle of the Qing Empire in the late seventeenth century when maritime travel bans were selectively lifted. The increase of Muslims’ pilgrimages to Mecca from China coincided with the rapid spread of Sufi teachings in West Asia and

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21 Ma Tong (马通), Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu Shilüe Di 3 ban (History of China’s Islamic sects and menhuan structure, 3rd edition. 中国伊斯兰教派与门宦制度史略第三版) (Yinchuan: Ningxia ren min chu ban she, 2000), 85. The maritime travel bans were instated during 1644-55, 1655-84. Ma Tong explains that the travel bans were loosened following the Qing court’s occupation of Taiwan and extermination of Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong)’s political base. Ma Tong was able to conduct oral interviews in pre-Cultural Revolution China as a part of Linxia’s survey commission and later published the results of his research.
Central Asia, through the scholars in Hezhou who became students of traveling saintly figures from present-day Xinjiang. Most important of them was Afaq Khoja (d.1694) from Kashgar, who traces his descent to the Prophet Muhammad over twenty-five generations. Facilitated by travels across Central Asia, Persia, and Arabia over land and sea, Sufi orders spread in the larger Gansu region, centered around Hezhou and Didao (狄道). As Ma Tong explains, the Sufi “menhuan” orders first developed in these places because they had fertile lands with water and grass, suitable for both agricultural and pastoral living, which also served as garrison points. As religious leaders’ savings increased by collecting alms, they eventually purchased land and rented it out to farmers that turned them into affluent communal leaders. Their positions turned hereditary, engendering a unique form of menhuan Sufi socio-religious organizations that is specific to northwest China.

Moreover, the influx of upper strata of the religious community meant that opinions diverged and competitions intensified. The number of religious scholars and caretakers increased from the sixteenth century onwards when the scripture-hall education system was adopted in Xi’an and spread across China.

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23 Jonathan Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 60-71; 85-102. Didao refers to present-day Lintao 临洮 100 kilometers east of Linxia, besides the Tao River.
people engaged in religious affairs in Bafang and elsewhere stirred different interpretations and rivalries, generating not only divergent branches of Sufi orders (Qadriyya, Khufiyya, Jahriyya, and their offshoots) but also regional scholarly branches (i.e. Shaanxi scholarly lineage, Hebei scholarly lineage).  

1.2 Local Kings and Their Armies

In 1936, the influential journalist Fan Changjiang (范长江, 1909-1970) based in Tianjin’s Da Gongbao newspaper surveyed the northwestern provinces. After Labrang in present-day Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southern Gansu, he headed along the Daxia River’s valleys to reach Hezhou the next day. Referring to Hezhou as a “sacred place (shengdi 聖地)” in China’s northwest, he continued:

Many of the northwest region’s important religious, military and political figures are from Hezhou. The city is not necessarily large; it is situated on the plains and

24 Ma Tong, Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu Shilüe, 81-5. According to a survey conducted in 1950 in Linxia, between the times of Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors, about a dozen people undertook the pilgrimage each year, both men and women. From Bafang, Yangwa mountain and Qiezang, Hejia and Dongxiang regions alone, those who became “hajjis” during Kangxi and Qianlong period numbered about one hundred. Between 1933 and 1949 from Linxia city, three groups numbering 69 people undertook the pilgrimage (1933:11; 1932:21; 1937:30. Among them there were 14 “laojiao” (12 men and 2 women); 37 from different menhuans (34 men and 3 women); 18 “Yihewani.” 61 people returned, and 8 did not. Ma tong, Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu Shilüe, 87.

25 For Fan Chiangjiang’s new style of journalism based on first-hand eyewitness accounts and the significance of his reports on border regions in the 1930s, Chang-Tai Hung, “Paper Bullets: Fan Changjiang and New Journalism in Wartime China,” Modern China 17, no. 4 (October 1, 1991): 427–68. Da Gongbao for which he worked as a correspondent, founded by Ying Lianzhi (英聰之, 1867 – 1926), a late Qing aristocrat of Manchu descent who had converted to Catholicism, was a major newspaper that continues to operate today as a political mouthpiece. Zheng Liangen(鄭連根), Qianshijing: Zhongguo Jindaide Xinwen Wangshi (Understanding the Past Today: The History of News in Modern China 前事今識：中國近現代新聞往事) (Taipei: Xiuwei Chubanshe, 2009).
is without precipitous steeps. But Hezhou’s fame shakes eardrums of the northwest’s every ethnicity (zu 族). When Muslims (huiren 回人) hear the name Hezhou, they are particularly joyous; this is their old home (laojia 老家), the place where their properties and peoples are concentrated; and where every kind of movement originates from. Although Hezhou belongs to Gansu, because of reasons of religious and ethnic (zhongzu 种族) relations, it serves as the garrison point of Qinghai’s armies. Hezhou’s people not only take upon the burden of taxes and levies to be paid to Gansu but also meet Qinghai’s various needs. The area within the city tends to be occupied more by Han people, whereas almost all of the outer city’s residents are Muslims. The vestiges of the wars in 1928 between the Guominjun (Nationalist Army) and Muslim armies in Hezhou can still be seen very clearly. 26

As the journalist insinuates, Hezhou after the break-up of the Qing Empire assumed a pivotal center for Muslims in China as both a real place where the military governors traced their origins to, and as a representational site where religious movements and politicized uprisings commenced.

If the Opium War and the subsequent Taiping Rebellion overturned the worlds of eastern and central China, pushing for the rise of entrepreneurs and politically active religious leaders out of the wars that claimed twenty million lives (Chapter 2), out of battlefields in the Qing Empire’s western borderlands emerged clan-based regional commanders who acquired autonomous military control, at times managing opium trade to keep their armies running. Qing Empire’s society underwent constant processes of

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26 Fan Changjiang (范长江), Zhongguo de Xibei Jiao (China’s Northwest Corners 中国的西北角) (Beijing: Xin hua shu dian, 1982), 54.. Reprint of 1937 version published in Shanghai.
militarization especially during the Taiping Rebellion when local gentry organized military units to counter the Taiping fighters.27

The northwestern provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai, as well as other borderlands of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Yunnan, were not directly affected by the Taiping Rebellion. Yet the Taiping Rebellion impacted the break-out of a series of armed rebellions in these regions by significantly weakening the Qing court’s military and fiscal power in the borderlands which could keep their collaborating appointees in control, and prompting exploitation of supplies from these regions to feed the troops. Furthermore, the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion not only militarized the societies that were directly impacted by the Taiping adherents but also strengthened the imperial armies and their commanders. The process drew manpower from Shaanxi and Gansu borderlands, and simultaneously reinstated imperial control over these regions, incorporating the Ma clans into the court’s orbit. Taiping Rebellion, though researched mainly in terms of its impact in Han-majority areas in coastal China, had major repercussions in catalyzing a series of revolts in Muslim parts of northwestern China.28


28 For a poignant historical study on the suffering, loss and deaths in southeastern Jiangnan region during the Taiping Rebellion, Tobie S. Meyer-Fong, What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013). A recent Ph.D dissertation by Yang Zhang, to which I refer to in this chapter, skillfully analyzes the Taiping Rebellion, Nien Rebellion and “Muslim revolts” in Shaanxi, Gansu and Yunnan region in juxtaposition to one another from the perspective of historical sociology using a wealth of primary sources. Yang Zhang, “Insurgent Dynamics: The Coming of the Chinese Rebellions, 1850-1873” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2016).
“War-lords” in post-imperial China, including the Ma militarist governors, emerged out of a society where governance by military was a norm rather than an exception. Between 1912 and 1928, according to S.C.M. Paine, more than thirteen hundred individuals qualified as warlords in China, commanding their own territory and soldiers.\textsuperscript{29} When reformist and revolutionary gentry of different strata turned their backs against the imperial court, the critical forces behind the Revolution that toppled the Qing monarchy in 1911 were modern army officers who had emerged out of imperial China’s army training program (1907) and Japan’s military schools. While they had initially been tasked with strengthening the empire, modern armies became the critical force behind overthrow of the empire.\textsuperscript{30}

When the new Republic was established, bankrupt and without financial capability of filling the coffers of provinces to manage armed forces, each regional commander sought to control territories that could yield revenues to support his troops. They further needed to allocate territories to subordinates in return for military service and loyalty. Post-Qing China thus was divided into virtual fiefdoms or quasi-independent states — fed by ceaseless and destructive warfare, increased taxes on necessities such as


salt, opium growing, and printing of warlords’ own monies.\textsuperscript{31} Recently, scholars have begun to draw comparisons between the warlords in Republican China and the contemporary rise of warlords in Afghanistan and Somalia.\textsuperscript{32}

The gradual rise of the Ma clan, then, was a part of larger structural processes. Below, I trace the rise of Ma warlords in Hezhou together with rebellions of the mid-nineteenth century and their dispersal to different parts of the larger Gansu region as they built individual power bases. Spanning from the period of the 1860s to the 1930s, they expanded regional military bases through war after another, while switching alliances with political centers from imperial to Republican China.

1.2.1 Initial Rise as Borderland Traders

The series of wars and political turmoil offered lineages of Ma Qi and Ma Fuxiang, whose fathers initially accumulated moderate amounts of wealth through peddling trade, opportunities to rapidly rise to the top military and political positions in their localities. Rather than coming from already established Sufi orders in the northwest region, the families gathered fortunes first by conducting cross-border trade between


\textsuperscript{32} Kimberly Zisk Marten, “Warlordism in Comparative Perspective,” \textit{International Security} 31, no. 3 (2006): 41–73. With a negative view on warlords, Marten argues that bringing together groups that have most to lose from the warlords’ taxation and infrastructure blockage, and raising literate educated class who can circulate external ideology would be a way to eliminate them.
Hezhou and Tibetan grasslands. The core of the lineages’ power, which would last until the victory of the Communist Party, came from defecting to the Qing imperial court during the “Muslim” revolts (huimin qiyi) of the late nineteenth century.

Whereas the rebellions of the late nineteenth century ravaged the Gansu region, they simultaneously produced new groups of military leaders based in Hezhou who opportunistically changed allegiances to state entities in eastern China and came to establish autonomous fiefdoms in present-day Qinghai, Gansu and Ningxia provinces. A recent biography on Ma Qi describes how his father Ma Haiyan, like tens of thousands of others in the region, was carried away in waves of battles in the middle of undertaking peddle trade enterprise. Ma Haiyan was born in 1837, in Monigou on the western outskirts of Linxia city in present-day Linxia County, under a family known to have engaged in agriculture in front of Monigou’s rivers. At the age of 12 or 13, Ma Haiyan learned horse-riding and hunting skills, and in private, of using an iron chain weaponry that has two iron balls fixed on its end.

To make a living, Ma Haiyan initiated peddle trade, transporting medicinal products between Hezhou and Tibetan-majority regions in the south. Hezhou at the time, particularly Bafang where Muslim communities had been concentrated, was a flourishing trade center. Lambskin and wool from the south would transit in Hezhou and reach Beijing and Tianjin through the Yellow River; Beijing and Tianjin’s imported western products, such as satin and silk, as well as Sichuan and Hunan’s tea bricks, handwoven cloth, and cotton would arrive in Hezhou and move onward to Tibetan region.
Such an environment provided Ma Haiyan an arena to test out his entrepreneurial skills. Ma Haiyan sojourned between the Hezhou area and Tibetan grasslands for a long time and undertook long-distance trips between Shaanxi and Gansu as a trader traveling with animal packs. He frequently came in contact with Han, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan merchants, and became a well-known figure in the region who supposedly undertook philanthropic works for the community. He established timber mills in Linxia and Lanzhou, employed workers to dig rhubarb (dahuang), and sold medicinal plants. When his first son Ma Qi was born in 1869, he was 32 years old.\(^{33}\)

Likewise, Ma Fuxiang’s father Ma Qianling (1826-1910) from “Hanjiaji” close to Monigou was a peddle trader who transported goods between Hezhou and the Tibetan plateau, following Hezhou’s trade guilds (shangbang). Before then, the family had engaged in agriculture and commerce for several generations, without any involvement in governmental positions or literary production. From Hezhou they brought necessities for Tibetans, such as iron products, clothing pieces, syringe needles, matches, flaxen threads, porcelain, and tea leaves. From Tibetans, they purchased medicinal products, fur, horses, and animals such as horses, lambs and cows. While many merchants accumulated wealth through this regional trade, Ma Fuxiang’s biographer writes that Ma Qianling’s business picked up only after he acquainted himself with a Mongolian chief named “Youwu,” on

\(^{33}\) Fan Qianfeng (樊前锋), *Ma Qi Zhuan* 马麒传 (*Biography of Ma Qi*) (Xining: Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2013), 6-7.
the account of saving Youwu’s wife from bandit attacks on the way from Hezhou to Haixi of southern Qinghai. Youwu introduced to Ma Qianling trade partners, mediated conflicts, and provided him with lodging and protection. The family gradually turned wealthy in the locality.34

1.2.2. From Peddle Traders to Military Men

At the reception room of the home of Sarah Mohī al-Dīn al-Ṣīnī in Jeddah, a descendant of Ma Qi’s youngest brother, hangs a banner with Empress Dowager Cixi’s drawing and calligraphy that had been composed in 1890. The reception room is filled with resplendent Chinese vases and paintings that Sarah has collected over nearly seven decades of residence in Ta’īf and Jeddah, after her migration to the Hejaz in 1949 at the age of thirteen. A gift that dates back to more than a century ago, the banner presented by Empress Cixi occupies a side of the wall in the corner, barely noticed by Sarah’s children who have adopted Arabic as their native language and communicate with their parents in hybridized dialects of Gansu and Qinghai Provinces.

34 Ding Mingjun (丁明俊), Ma Fuxiang Zhuan 马福祥传 (Biography of Ma Fuxiang) (Di 1 ban. Yinchuan Shi : Ningxia ren min chu ban she : Jingxiao Xinhua shu dian, 2001), 3–4.
The presence of Empress Dowager Cixi’s calligraphy in a home of Ma Bufang’s extended family tells of the opportunities that select lineages in Hezhou grasped onto in the highly militarized world of the late nineteenth century. In the middle of rebellions and wars in northwest China and in the capital city of Beijing, they turned from traders to rebels, and to loyalist leaders of armies that guarded the imperial state. Ma Bufang’s grandfather Ma Haiyan started his military career when he joined Ma Zhan’ao, a quite influential scholar of the Naqshbandiyya-Khufiyya order from the same village of Monigou, whose family is known to have conducted money-lending business. Ma
Zhan’ao in his youth studied in Xi’an Daxue Xigang mosque, and upon return home, initiated a school of his own.35

Ma Zhan’ao and Ma Haiyan, along with thousands of others, occupied Hezhou in 1863, an event that changed their fortunes. This was one of the series of rebellion that broke out one after another across Yunnan (1856-1873), Shaanxi (1862-1873), Gansu (1862-1873) and Xinjiang (1864-1877), in periods that overlapped with the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). While these rebellions are frequently referred to as “Muslim” revolts, they erupted out of independent catalysts, and depending on local contexts, produced different forms of “rebel” groups and their relations with state authorities.36 In southern Shaanxi, Han and Hui populations had jointly formed local defense militias against encroaching Taiping rebels but continued to be militarized even after the latter’s defeat. Spontaneously brawls between Han and Hui individuals and communities turned into intensely violent, ethnicized killings fueled by fear and revenge, and evolved into vertical confrontations between Hui rebels and state armies represented by Han militias.

35 Ibid., 8.
36 The uprising in Yunnan (known as “Panthay Rebellion”), for instance, was initially catalyzed by three-decades-long conflicts between established local Hui miners and influx of Han migrants, and Han militias’ “preemptive” massacre of 3,000-1,000 Hui populations in the provincial capital of Kunming in 1856. However, subsequently, Hui rebels split into two forces that counterbalanced one another; one was the anti-Manchu Dali regime to the west led by Du Wenxiu, who proclaimed himself a sultan while recruiting 90 percent of its officials and soldiers from non-Muslim populations. To the east, the military leader Ma Rulong and the religious scholar Ma Dexin led another autonomous force, attempting to play the broker role between the Qing court and the Dali regime while keeping their own turfs. Yang Zhang, “Insurgent Dynamics: The Coming of the Chinese Rebellions, 1850-1873” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2016), 220-231. See also David G. Atwill, The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).
The rebellion devastated Shaanxi and generated waves of refugees westward to Gansu and Xinjiang, and all the way to Central Asia who, since then, have formed “Dungan” diaspora communities in Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Uzbekistan while keeping traumatic memories of the Shaanxi rebellion.\(^{37}\)

When news and refugees of Shaanxi hurriedly reached Gansu, a third of regular soldiers had been drafted to fight against Taiping and Nien forces in the east, thus weakening imperial military control.\(^{38}\) Triggered by the events in Shaanxi, religious leaders with social influence quickly filled up the vacuum to set up political-military bases in the Gansu region – the Jahriyya spiritual leader Ma Hualong in Ningxia’s Jinjipu and Lingzhou, the Khufiyya leader Ma Guiyuan in Xining, and finally, Ma Zhan’ao in Hezhou. In contrast to Shaanxi where the court expediently dispatched forces to crush the Hui rebels, the politicized Sufi rulers in Gansu enjoyed relative autonomy and even cooption from the state for several years, partly owing to the Qing forces’ preoccupation with rebellions farther east.\(^{39}\)

While Ma Zhan’ao may not have been the most influential religious leader with organizational capabilities, perhaps for that very reason, he ultimately emerged to

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\(^{38}\) Zhang, “Insurgent Dynamics,” 251.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 250-265.
become the only regional ruler to successfully coopt with the Qing state. This was a deal that others such as the Jahriyya leader Ma Hualong had attempted to strike, only to be brutally denied through execution of the whole family. Eight years into the rebellion, general Zuo Zongtang, after whom the well-known dish “General Tso’s Chicken” is named, led 30,000 troops and entered Hezhou’s Taizi mountain region in the spring of 1871. At the time Zou and his Hunan Army, which had formed as counterinsurgents against Taiping rebels, had already “pacified” rebellions undertaken Ningxia (led by Ma Hualong) and remaining rebels in Shaanxi (led by Bai Yanhu). Battles in Taizi Mountain in southern Hezhou ended in victory of Ma Zhan’ao’s forces. Despite his success, knowing that his victory would not last long, Ma Zhan’ao decided to surrender and negotiate, thus becoming a part of Zuo Zongtang’s troops. Ma Haiyan followed his lead. Now working on behalf of the Qing armies, they gained more trust from the Qing court by repressing subsequent uprisings by their former allies that unfolded in Xining.40

The Ma families’ political and military careers continued and expanded in the next generation. Ma Fuxiang’s father Ma Qianling also participated in the rebellion in 1863 at the age of 36 and likewise defected to the Qing side. Under the instruction of Ma Zhan’ao, he dismissed tens of thousands of rebel escapees from Shaanxi who had been camped near his hometown. Although he didn’t gain a political post, his private

40 Fan Qianfeng, Ma Qi Zhuan, 11-13. The rebellions were led by Muslim generals such as Bai Yanhu (白彦虎) and Ma Guiyuan (马桂源).
properties remained intact.\textsuperscript{41} Ma Qianliang’s son Fulu passed the imperial examination in Beijing in 1880 for the military branch. Upon coming back to Hezhou, he passed on martial skills onto his younger brother, Fuxiang. Ma Haiyan’s son Ma Qi quickly became embroiled in the wars of different scales that he would continue and launch throughout his lifetime. In 1886 he joined the Zhennan army (Zhennan jun) based in Hezhou, led by his own father Ma Haiyan and Ma Zhan’ao.\textsuperscript{42}

The waves of battles that once again ravaged the Gansu region in 1895 further solidified the status of “Ma” loyalists. When the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894 over the question of suzerainty over the Korean Peninsula, the Qing court summoned armies in Gansu for protection of the capital. In December, Ma Qi, his father Ma Haiyan, and Ma Anliang (Ma Zhan’ao’s son), followed general Dong Fuxiang to Beijing. Military vacuum in the Gansu region coincided with sectarian conflicts within Muslim communities among the Salars (Turkic-speaking Muslims who trace their origins to Bukhara) in Xunhua west of Linxia, which led to local authorities’ biased interventions in favor of the “new teachings.” This led to the outbreak of what is termed “He Huang shibian,” or “He-Huang” Incident in 1895. The governor-general of Shaanxi Province called back Ma Anliang, Ma Haiyan, Ma Qi, and Dong Fuxiang to crush the rebels. After violent killings and looting that again forced flee of streams of refugees, Ma Anliang, Ma

\textsuperscript{41} Ding Mingjun, \textit{Ma Fuxiang Zhuan}, 5-7.

\textsuperscript{42} The army’s aim was to “pacify” Longyou 隰右 area, or the area between the Yellow River to the East and Mount Long to the west.
Haiyan and his son Ma Qi, and Ma Qianling (the father of Ma Fuxiang) received promotions from the Qing court.

In the words of Ma Qi’s biographer, in assisting the Qing court grasp onto the Hehuang border region, the figures such as Ma Haiyan, Ma Qi, and Ma Anliang killed numerous Hui co-religionists but became representative figures in Hui political world. Leaving 100,000 casualties, the battles of 1895 also led to further empowerment of the new elite in northwest, now fully incorporated into Qing China militarily. As the series of reform movements shook Beijing, and secret societies and exiles harbored their revolutionary sentiments, generals of Muslim lineages in the northwestern borderlands raised autonomous armies and the cash to fund them.

Rise in the Ma-surnamed generals’ positions as Qing loyalists continued until the very fall of the Qing Empire, a history that is narrated in abridged versions among the three generations of Chinese Muslim settlers in western Saudi Arabia. Some second-generation Sino-Saudis told me that their great-grandfathers had assisted the Empress’s escape from Beijing to northwestern China. Indeed, the Gansu Muslim warlords became de-facto allies of Empress Dowager Cixi, as she called upon their guard against Kang Youwei’s Hundred Day Reform Movement. Ma Haiyan, his sons Ma Qi and Ma Lin, as well as Ma Qianling and his son Ma Fuxiang, accompanied Gansu-based military general

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42 Fan Qianfeng, *Ma Qi Zhuan*, 22.
Dong Fuxiang to the capital. Shortly afterward, at the face of the Boxer Uprising in 1900, Hezhou’s Muslim generals were the ones to attack the coalition of eight foreign legations and their armies. At the military superiority of foreign arms and their soldiers, however, which forced Empress Cixi herself to flee from the capital, the lineages of Ma Haiyan and Ma Qianling hastened to accompany her temporary exile to Xi’an. Ma Qi and Ma Haiyan are said to have escorted the Empress as she crossed the Yellow River on lamb-skin rafts when entering Xi’an. Although Ma Haiyan passed away on the way, the Empress awarded commander status to Ma Haiyan in his absence and had his elder son Ma Qi assume the post. Upon her arrival at Xi’an, Ma Anliang (son of Ma Zhan’ao) in Hezhou was summoned to protect the imperial carriage against fears of anti-Qing Muslim rebels in Shaanxi area. As a reward, Ma Anliang was granted 150 shi of grain and was made into a commander of Xinjiang’s Ili.  

During the decade between the Boxer Uprising and until the fall of the Qing Empire (1911), the Ma-surnamed military commanders assumed leading positions as commanders of different localities. Ma Anliang, the most influential of all, continued to be based in Hezhou and was appointed as the commander of Yili and Balikun (Barkol Kazakh autonomous county in Kumul Prefecture, Xinjiang), and of the Zhennan army. With his assistance, Ma Qi became the divisional commander of Zhennan army, and of

\[45\] Fan Qianfeng, *Ma Qi Zhuan*, 24-5.
the present-day Hualong prefecture in Qinghai Province, which later became the base for his rise as the governor of Qinghai Province.46

Until the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War (World War II) in 1937, the Ma-surnamed warlords, while negotiating their place first with the Beiyang government headed by Yuan Shikai (1912), then with the expanding Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kaishek (1928), maintained fiscal and military autonomy in their respective provinces. While they first helped the Qing Empire crush the sporadic revolutions in Shaanxi and Ningxia Provinces, within one year of the Empire’s fall, Ma Anliang and his collaborators pledged allegiance to the Beiyang government. In 1912, Ma Qi was subsequently appointed as the Xining garrison commander (Xining Zhenzongbing) and Ma Fuxiang as the Ningxia garrison commander (Ningxia Zhenzongbing). These were now their political seats, away from the home place Hezhou.

1.2.3. Building Armies and External Ties

The “war-lords” in any place or time would be powerless without their soldiers and arms. In September 1912, Ma Qi finally marched into Xining together with his family, including his brother Ma Lin and uncle Ma Haiyuan, as well his two sons Ma Buqing and Ma Bufang. Upon arriving in Xining, Ma Qi is known to have said that: “The revolution has failed in its early years, and warlords (junfa) have risen in swarms. From

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*Ibid., 27.*
the center to regional peripheries, this is a world of soldiers. Promotion depends on the army; making a fortune depends on the army; expanding territorial domains also depends on the army. Without the army, we cannot establish a foothold in Qinghai.”

Qinghai became an official province only in 1928 under the Nationalist government, together with Xikang (Kham) and four provinces (Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, and Ningxia) that were carved out of Inner Mongolia. Under the Qing Empire, Xining had belonged to westernmost Gansu Province. Yet, before his assumption as the governor of Qinghai Province in 1930, Ma Qi had already built up his political and military power base in Xining.

During the 1910s, the five points that Ma Qi proposed to Yuan Shikai as the future course of Qinghai included “establishing prefectures and stationing troops to open up mines; training soldiers and building schools; developing industry and commerce; fixing roads to facilitate easy transport; increasing the size of military; establishing administrative branches and horse stations to the south; and building schools and educating sons and brothers of Tibetan and Mongolianchieftains, as well as intelligent students from China Proper, to enhance mutual linguistic communication.” The number of Ma Qi’s Ninghai army quickly expanded from 700 to 3,000 within three months, and

47 Fan Qianfeng, *Ma Qi Zhuan*, 47. Fan quotes from *Cong Ma Qi dao Ma Jiyuan* (1960) kept in Qinghai Provincial Library.
49 Ibid., 46.
began to be equipped with new style military clothing and arms modeled upon the Japanese military system, as opposed to its haphazard organization in the beginning. Staffing the high positions of the military were Ma Qi’s own family members from Hezhou, including sons of his brothers and sisters, sons-in-law, and the two sons Ma Buqing and Ma Bufang. The Ninghai army had a special branch also referred to as “mobile cavalries” that were managed by Ma Qi’s nephews.50

The extensive modernization programs in military, infrastructure and administration eased the Ma Qi clan’s encroachment on pastoral Tibetan regions to the south, from which they extracted taxes and resources that partially financed these projects. The advantages in modern military power, traffic and communication (i.e. radio transmitter) that Ma Qi and his lineage held gave them insurmountable upper hand in attacks against Golok Tibetan tribes in Amdo (Tibetan region in present-day Qinghai Province), especially during the reign of Ma Bufang in the 1930s and 40s as he secured supplies from the Nationalist central government. While attempting to form alliances with Tibetan tribal leaders, Ma warlords crushed armed resistance that erupted in the process of collecting taxes, requiring corvee labor, setting up a military post or mining gold and coal in territories that the Goloks regarded sacred.51

50 Ibid., 48-9.
51 Bianca Horlemann, “Chapter 7. Victims of Modernization? Struggles between the Goloks and the Muslim Ma Warlords in Qinghai, 1917-1942,” in Muslims in Amdo Tibetan Society, Multidisciplinary Approaches ed. Marie-Paule Hille, Bianca Horlemann, Paul K. Nietupski (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2015), 153-177. Golok tribes, on their part, attempted to seek support from different centers such as the
If the soldiers recruited by Ma Qi were akin to mercenaries, his son Ma Bufang, who rose to the position as the governor of the Qinghai Province in 1936 after marginalizing his uncle who had been in the position, systematically conscripted eligible males in the province. “Let everyone who is able become a soldier,” he had proclaimed. Under Ma Bufang, the size of the Qinghai Army tripled in size during the 1930s and 40s; from 25,000 men in 1931 to 80,000 by 1949. Such expansion was tacitly approved by the Nationalist Party’s central government,\(^{52}\) for which Ma Bufang’s presence was necessary as a countermeasure against Japanese, Soviet and Communist influences.\(^{53}\)

Simultaneously, Ma Qi and his successor Ma Bufang seem to have kept channels open to western and Japanese agents and merchants in order to secure weapons to arm their soldiers, and monopolized Qinghai’s inter-provincial and international trade. According to Cheng Bingyuan, a former official in the Xining cabinet who wrote an extensive account of the Ma Bufang family in the 1980s, in 1919, a German priest named Hieronymus Haberstroh of the Catholic Church in Xining handed a telescope and two pistols to Ma Qi. These were handed down to Ma Lin and Ma Bufang and were used in the battles against Golok Tibetans. Over the years, the German priest provided to the Ma family modern weapons and daily commodities such as saber, electric stove, radio,

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\(^{52}\) Hunsberger, “Ma Pu-Fang in Chinghai Province, 1931-1949,” 72, Footnote 12.

electric generator, spring bed, and cooking and household utensils. On multiple occasions, Ma Qi and Ma Bufang hosted American geological or agricultural survey teams in Qinghai, such as the botanist and anthropologist Joseph Rock from Harvard in 1925. In 1946, an American “Bai En Shi” led an agricultural research team, through whom Ma Bufang had hoped to secure arms in exchange for Qinghai’s wool and leather. The plan, however, failed.

In 1919, Ma Qi reportedly sent a few of his advisers to Beijing to buy arms and bring them back to Xining through Suiyuan and Ningxia. He purchased 1,300 guns (zapaiqiang) and 8 pieces of machine guns. In 1921, another adviser made a journey to Beijing and came back with 1,200 rifles. From the 1930s, the Ma Bufang lineage started purchasing arms in large numbers, and from 1933 onward sold opium to pay the price for buying them. A Salar official named Han Qi Gong frequently brought guns to Ganzhou area, through the way of Alashan, Baotou, Suiyuan in Inner Mongolia from the treaty port of Tianjin. There were processing points in Beijing, Shanghai, Shaanxi, and Gansu. Weapons acquired through successive wars, and those provided by the Nanjing government also constituted a significant portion of the army. Chiang Kaishek, while at

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first reluctant to provide military funds to Ma Bufang in order to restrict his power, in the end, utilized Ma lineage’s armies for his ends.  

Seventy percent of Qinghai Province is characterized by rugged terrain and pastoral economy, except the agricultural parts in the northeast that include the provincial capital Xining. Abundant wool and hide produced in the province thus provided a critical source of trade both before and during Ma Bufang’s reign. In 1941 Ma Bufang established a company named De Xinghai through which about 2,000 tons of Qinghai’s and wool and leather were transferred to Tianjin via Baotou in Inner Mongolia. Under the mediation of Qinghai’s merchants in Tianjin, Ma Bufang attempted to exchanges these products for arms. This, however, was uncovered by central authorities and blocked.

Similarly, in the neighboring Ningxia and Suiyuan regions northeast to Qinghai, Ma Fuxiang clan expanded its armies both in number and organization through the first half of the twentieth century. His military forces had initially been composed of fighters organized around village units during the uprisings in the 1860s. While the trained men would have went back to their previous occupations, the 1895 Rebellion again brought them together in a more systematic way, which formed the bases for Ma Fuxiang clan’s military power in Ningxia. When Ma Fuxiang became the governor of Suiyuan (1921-
25), which now constitutes a part of Inner Mongolia, his nephew’s seven battalions remained in Ningxia, and the rest relocated with him to Guisui (Hohhot).\footnote{59}

Similar to Qinghai’s governing family, the clan of Ma Fuxiang funded their armies and secured modern weapons at least partially through opium sales. Suiyuan included cities such as Hohhot (formerly Guisui), Baotou, Wuhai, and Ordos. These were important centers of trade along the Yellow River where commodities from the northwestern provinces transited to the treaty port cities of the east, most notably Tianjin, on lamb-skin-rafts. By 1921, the railway line connected Beijing to Hohhot, which reduced the length of the trip from Hohhot to Beijing or Tianjin to about half a day.\footnote{60} To meet the financial needs of the army, Ma Fuxiang reportedly encouraged the cultivation of crude opium to increase tax revenue, taking half of the crops as taxes. Soldiers belonging to his son Ma Hongkui whose salaries were embezzled, on the other hand, engaged in furtive narcotics trafficking. They would purchase crude opium Gansu, bring it back on lamb-skin-rafts via Baotou, and sell it at a higher price in Beijing when they followed Ma Fuxiang and Ma Hongkui’s entourage to Beijing.\footnote{61}

\footnote{Justin Tighe, \textit{Constructing Suiyuan: The Politics of Northwestern Territory and Development in Early Twentieth-Century China} (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 82.}

At one point during his governorship in Suiyuan, Ma Fuxiang reportedly purchased 2,000 pieces of rifles (buqiang 步枪) from an Italian company in Tianjin, and several hundred cartridges. He also frequently sold opium in Beijing in exchange for rifles and cartridges. In 1920 when Ma Qi sought to buy weapons in Suiyuan for his suppression of the Golok pastoral Tibetan population, Ma Fuxiang sent him two pieces of machine guns of new technology and cannon that were used against Tibetans. He is said to have sent his son Ma Hongkui to head to Shenyang (Mukden) and using personal relations with Zhang Zuolin, the warlord in Manchuria with a proclivity towards Japan, to acquire 2,000 rifles.62

1.3 Networked Patronages

Patronages build prestige and make allies without guns. In raising their independent armies, imposing tax systems within areas of control, and undertaking modernization programs, the Ma warlords in Qinghai were not necessarily different from other warlords in China in the same period. What was distinctive was that with their political and financial influence, the “Ma” warlords had the capacity to pull into their orbit the dispersed networks of religious scholars, writers and journalists whose reach extended across China and abroad. Unlike their contemporaries, northwestern China’s

warlords formed a nexus with itinerant scholars, expanding multi-layered networks of patronage and scholarship that operated on regional, national and transnational levels. Within this space circulated multiple, competing doctrinal branches that were simultaneously malleable. Ma Fuxiang’s affiliation with religious scholars and institutions leaned closer the Islamic-Confucian scholarly tradition that had passed down from the sixteenth century onwards, but without necessarily distinguishing between different sects.\(^3\) By contrast, in the neighboring Qinghai Province, Ma Qi’s lineage sponsored the “Yihewani” (Ikhwānī; brotherhood) movement that had been initiated by a returning scholar from Mecca, who argued for purification of Islam in China from Chinese local customs and practices.

Let us begin with Ma Fuxiang, who involved himself more intimately with politics in Beijing or Nanjing compared to Ma Qi. Until his death, Ma Fuxiang advanced to upper echelons of the political world by going along with different parties who were likely to lend him support. Prior to Chiang Kaishek’s victory over warlord factions, Ma Fuxiang sided with different cliques who were competing for power in Beijing. Allying with the Zhili clique headed by Wu Peifu (1874-1939), in 1921 he was able to assume the position as the governor in Suiyuan while leaving his nephew Ma Hongbin as the governor of the Ningxia. In Suiyuan, Ma Fuxiang consolidated the administrative system

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by adding the Department of Education and Department of Industry, and oversaw “land reclamation” projects which converted pastoral lands into agricultural ones.\footnote{Tighe, \textit{Constructing Suiyuan}, 82-3.}

The collapse of the Zhili clique from the war with Fengtian clique in 1924 cost Ma Fuxiang his governorship in Suiyuan, as he had been allied with the Zhili clique. Shortly afterward he joined hands with Feng Yuxiang who, after switching sides from Zhili to Fengtian clique himself in 1924, eventually joined forces with Chiang Kaishek’s Nationalist Party. As Chiang Kaishek was about to win over other warlords during the Northern Expedition, Ma Fuxiang also pledged his alliance to the Nationalist Party (KMT) in Nanjing in 1928. Others such as Ma Qi followed suit. He was able, therefore, to assume positions as the Mayor of Qingdao and governor of Anhui in 1930, and Chairman of the Mongolian-Tibetan Commission.\footnote{Song, “Zai Junfa Hunzhanzhong,” 9.}

Ma Fuxiang’s patronages of Islamic institutions followed the geographies of his political trajectory, from his regional base in Hezhou and Ningxia, and to Beijing and Shanghai. In 1918, he established Mongolian-Muslim Normal School in Ningxia city, inside which was housed Advisory Committee for Mongolian-Muslim Education.\footnote{The School consisted of seven classes, and included a few Han, Mongol and Manchu students as well besides the Hui (Muslim) majority. Tuition, as well as uniforms, textbooks and monthly living expenses of 3-5 yuan was provided. Ning Wen (宁文), “Xingban Huimin Jiaoyu (Setting up Muslim education 兴办回民教育),” in Ningxia Huizu Zizhiqu Zhengxie and Wenshi Ziliao Yanjiu Weiyuanhui, \textit{Ningxia san Ma}, 21.}

The School operated based on donations, a large amount of which came from Ma Fuxiang.
himself. Over the two years (1918-20), 59 lower and upper-level schools were initiated in Ningxia’s several prefectures, with the students numbering about 1,230. For these regional schools, Ma Fuxiang contributed 60 silver liang and more. Over his trip back to Linxia via Lanzhou in 1919, Ma Fuxiang reportedly encountered two students who had been facing economic difficulties; he took out 1,500 yuan, and collected donations amounting to 2,500 yuan and gave them to Lanzhou’s branch Association for Islamic Educational Progress to be distributed as scholarships and funds to travel to other provinces for further studies. He also built similar schools in Linxia; in his hometown of Hanjiaji alone, a primary school established by Ma Fuxiang had 243 students on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, with 6 branch schools where 500 students studied.

In the 1920s, as he navigated between divided political factions in eastern China, Ma Fuxiang stepped up the support for mosques and schools in Beijing and Shanghai. He and his son Ma Hongkui were the most important financial contributor to the operation of Chengda Normal School in Beijing, and to the publication of the Yuehua.

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67 Ibid., 20.
69 Telling of the political agendas that undergirded patronage relations between the militarists and religious writers was another school that Ma Fuxiang helped to found in Beijing. This was the “Xibei” or “Northwest” school on Beijing’s Niujie street in 1928, a historical area where Muslim community in the city had been concentrated. An important aim of the school was to “lead” Muslim populations in China and to “manage” the northwest regions where Muslims were concentrated. Sitting as the president of the school was Sun Shengwu, who, though a religious scholar, was a Nationalist Party member like Ma Fuxiang.
magazine in Beijing, the longest-running Islamic periodical written in Chinese in the first half of the twentieth century. The building behind the Dongsi mosque in Beijing where Chengda Normal School relocated to had been refurbished by a local imam of Suiyuan (Li Zongqing 李宗庆) whom Ma Fuxiang had dispatched for the purpose of building a Muslim school. The plan did not materialize, and instead, the space was offered to the imams who of Chengda Normal School who had relocated the school from Shandong.\footnote{Ning Wen (宁文), “Xingban Huimin Jiaoyu,” 23.}

In Shanghai, Ma Fuxiang funded the Islamic Teachers School housed in the Xiaotaoyuan mosque.\footnote{The case of Xiaotaoyuan mosque in Shanghai will be dealt more closely in Chapter 2.}

Ma Fuxiang’s sponsorships shaped the mobility of those who did not necessarily have direct relations to him. He provided partial funding of students going abroad to Al-Azhar University in Cairo, many of whom were graduates of such modern-style schools in Beijing or Shanghai. These schools combined religious curriculum with secular subjects such as geography, literature, history, mathematics, English, and “national language.” Ma Fuxiang’s son Ma Hongkui utilized a part of his father’s inheritances to continue to fund Islamic schools and study-abroad students, while his wife Ma Shucheng 馬書城 contributed 3,000 yuan to be used for Beijing’s Xinyue Girls Middle School for Muslim girl students.\footnote{Ibid., 25.}
In the neighboring province of Qinghai, on the other hand, the “Yihewani” (Ikhwan) movement gained stronghold owing to the patronage from the Ma Qi clan. The Qinghai governors’ protection gave momentum to the spread of the Yihewani in the northwestern region and beyond, while it provided socio-religious bases that the militarists did not have.

The founder of the Yihewani movement in Gansu and Qinghai Provinces, Ma Wanfu (1853-1934), is better known as “Guoyuan Hajji,” named after his hometown Guoyuan which is located in Dongxiang county on the outskirts of the Linxia City. He was the founder of the movement to “abide by the scriptures and reform customs” (zunjing gesu 遵經革俗) that heavily criticized everyday rites of Chinese Muslims in the 1890s, especially those of Sufi orders in the Gansu region. The only basis for Islamic beliefs and practices, he argued, needed to be the Quran and the Sunnah.73

The turning point for Guoyuan Hajji’s career had come from his pilgrimage to Mecca. Before his pilgrimage, Guoyuan Hajji, in fact, had initially belonged to the “Beizhuang” Sufi order.74 He became an imam of the order in 1875 at the age of twenty-

74 Beizhuang order traces its origins to Dongxiang Hui Ma Baozhen (1772-1826) of the Khufiyya (Huasi) order who had studied in Yarkand in Xinjiang, and came back to Dongxiang after a pilgrimage to Mecca. Ma Tong, Zhongguo Yi-Si-Lan Jiao Pai Yu Men Huan Zhi Du Shi Lüe, 96.
two, after which he went around different villages and taught lessons for twelve years. He then undertook the pilgrimage in 1886 through the overland route through Xinjiang, Afghan, Iran, and Iraq. He is said to have studied under a scholar by the name of “Hariri Pasha” in Mecca for four years, and then with the scholar “Ai-bu-gai-le” for another year.75 Leaving Mecca in 1892, he returned to Linxia through the sea route via Canton; midway, he spent one year teaching in Hubei’s Lao Hekou mosque.76 When he returned to Dongxiang in 1894, he was no longer an imam of the Beizhuang order, but the initiator of the movement to purify Islam in China of Sufi and Chinese elements, a line of thought that had been influenced by ideological currents in the Arabian Peninsula at the time.

According to Ma Tong, upon returning to his hometown Dongxiang, Guoyuan Hajji was expelled from the Beizhuang order due to his radical arguments against local religious practices. Guoyuan Hajji thereupon mobilized several other imams of the Beizhuang order to spread his ideas against embedded practices that were judged to be *bid’a* (innovations), including “Han” influence in funeral rites. Then, in lieu of the tumultuous events that characterized the period, Guoyuan Hajji seems to have vacillated between participating in the rebellion in 1895 and joining the loyalist forces who suppressed them. After the revolt’s end, he went into exiles and sojourns back and forth.

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75 According to Mohammed al-Sudairi’s interview with the grandson of Guoyuan Hajji, Ma Wenren, Hariri Pasha (or Hailibashi) may have been a Turkish mystic. Another source identifies him as a Wahhabi scholar. See Mohammed Turki A. Al-Sudairi, “Adhering to the Ways of Our Western Brothers: Tracing Saudi Influences on the Development of Hui Salafism in China,” *Sociology of Islam* 4 (2016): 27-58, 34.
in different parts of Hezhou, Xi’an, Pingliang in eastern Gansu, Hami of eastern Xinjiang, and finally, Xining that later became the capital of the Qinghai Province.

Guoyuan Hajji’s continuous relocations were caused by the stout resistance that his movement met from Sufi orders’ leaders even as it gathered followers. In particular, his book “Buhuali zande (布華里咱德),” which openly criticized menhuan (Sufi orders) and gongbei (shrines for saintly figures) and argued for the need to “abide by the scriptures and reform customs,” stirred fierce criticism from the orders.\footnote{Ibid., 14-15.} Menhuan leaders in Linxia’s Bafang went so far as to file a lawsuit to the governor-general in Lanzhou against Guoyuan Hajji for charges of heresy and disobedience. Although he came back to Hezhou in 1911 after taking refuge in Ankang of Shaanxi Province, in the face of formidable opposition from different orders, he relocated to Hami in eastern Xinjiang in 1914. When Guoyuan Hajji was to be transferred from Hami to Lanzhou for execution in 1916 due to conflicts with the Hami King Masqud Shah and Xinjiang’s governor-general Yang Zengxin, the Ma Qi and Ma Lin brothers intercepted on the way. They brought him to Xining and offered protection.\footnote{Ma Tong, Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu, 98-100.}

The patronage from Ma Qi in the following years of the late 1910s and 1920s served as a turning point for Guoyuan Haji and the Yihewani movement. Ma Qi appointed him as the Grand Imam of the Dongguan Grand Mosque in Xining city. In

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1922 Association for Propelling Islam in Ninghai (Ninghai Huijiao Cujinhui 寧海回教促進會) was established within the Dongguan Mosque. From here, Guoyuan Hajji expanded his support base as the religious leader of the mosque under the rubric of the Association. While the arguments of Guoyuan Hajji were toned down under the Qinghai governors, Ma Bufang who assumed governorship in 1936 continued to staff Islamic association branches and schools in Xining with Yihewani adherents who were sympathetic to the Ma lineage.\(^79\)

In the Ningxia Province, Ma Hongkui, the son of Ma Fuxiang who assumed the position as the governor in 1933 following his father, likewise sought to utilize Yihewani as a source of his support in the province, unlike his father who had patronized Sufi and Confucian Muslim scholars without a clear preference for a particular branch. This may have been due to the strength of the Sufi orders in Ningxia, especially the sub-order Jahriyya, which held tracks of land that prevented him from collecting taxes to its fullest extent. To reduce the influence of powerful clerical authority, he tried the indirect approach of sponsoring his own support group.\(^80\) He staffed Islamic scholarly centers and

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\(^{80}\) Topping, “Chinese Muslim Militarist,” 55-57. According to Topping, citing statistics collected shortly after the fall of Ma Hongkui that Mian Weilin (勉维霖) cited, the group of Ma Zhenwu (grandson of the Jahriyya leader Ma Hualong) "owned nearly 99 acres of irrigated land in Jijin county, with over 9400 sheep, more than 600 cattle, over 120 horses, and 200 camels. In 1936, the American missionary Claude Pickens noted the glass enclosure of the premises for prayer at Zhenwu’s residence: ‘glass in Ningsia is more than a luxury, it is a sign of great wealth.’" Topping, “Chinese Muslim Militarist,” 55.
associations in Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia Province, with Yihewani scholars and imams, the most representative of which was the Imam Hu Songshan.

The widespread of the Yihewani movement, either autonomously or on the backs of militarists’ patronage, did not mean discontinuation of the Sufi orders that its followers condemned. Continuous strong opposition from the various orders that had already taken root across northwestern provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia signals that the Yihewani remained a fraction of the broad array of Muslim communities in the region. According to a survey in the 1950s in which Ma Tong also took part, Gansu’s eastern parts such as Pingliang and Jingyuan remained primarily Gedimu (299 mosques), and southern part continued to be dominated by Jahriyya followers (343 mosques). In the 1954 survey of Zhang Jiachun located in southern Gansu, there were 150,000 “Huizu” in total; Jahriyya were more than 65 percent (163 mosques), and Gedimu 20 percent (83 mosques). Yihewani occupied 15 percent (53 mosques); they had most switched their orientation from Jahriyya to Yihewani.81

Notwithstanding its limited scope of reach, the Yihewani was a politically useful branch of thought. Crystalized in the Yihewani movement was the idea that scriptures and the Sunnah offered a direct and accessible guideline for Muslims, and therefore united Muslims worldwide without regard to hierarchy or geography. Unlike charismatic spiritual Sufi leaders, Ma Bufang or Ma Hongkui were not figures who had allegiances of

81 Ma Tong, Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Yu Menhuan Zhidu, 105.
tightly-knit, hierarchical socio-religious organizations. As we will see in the next Chapter 2, the idea of unity and purity contained within Guoyuan Hajji’s Yihewani movement was something that mobile scholars, entrepreneurs or patrons of educational institutions could pick up regardless of the locations where they were based, and modify or promote according to their own individual or political agendas.

1.4 Making Presence in Mecca

So far, we have seen the topographic position of Linxia at the connecting middle point between China and Central Asia to Arabia that turned it into a silk road entrepot and a regional sacred center, and the emergence of powerful military commanders in and around Linxia who, as they augmented political and military power in both the northwestern region and vis-à-vis the central states, expanded Islamic socio-cultural networks across regions. While pilgrims had traveled back and forth Linxia and Mecca prior to the warlords’ times, the emergence of the nexus between militarists and itinerant pilgrim-scholars that spanned China to the Arabian Peninsula was a product of events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What kinds of traces, then, did this transnational nexus leave in Mecca?

Ma-surnamed militarist governors extended their reach to Mecca both directly by undertaking the pilgrimage themselves, and indirectly by sponsoring pilgrim scholars near and far. As “sultans” and “princes” representing Muslims in China, they forged personal relations with the royal family of the newly established Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that brought the Hejaz into domination in 1924. Assisting the militarists were
scholar-pilgrims who were familiar with the geographies between different parts of China and Arabia, or the politically-active Chinese Muslim gentry who aspired to thicken transnational connections.

In the light of the preexisting connections between Linxia and Mecca, the appearance of Ma Bufang’s uncle Ma Lin (馬麟, 1873-1945) in Mecca in 1937, an event that was reported in its newspaper, does not appear surprising. Umm al-Qurā summarized the visit of “Jalāl al-Dīn Ma In [Lin],” the “ruler” (sultān) and “lord” (‘amīr) of Qinghai Province. The article explained that Jalal al-Din’s Qinghai Province consisted of sixteen cities and had a population that reached two million, and that his entourage to Mecca included his second son Ma Buyuan and twelve others, some of whom were his staff and followers. Umm al-Qurā reported that Ma Lin visited many facilities and lodgings, and “made a great amount of donations that is much appreciated.” He was now scheduled to leave for Medina; may God increase the number of Muslims possessing wealth and influence like him, the article concluded.82 Ma Lin, in fact, had undertaken the hajj at the time when he was on the brink of losing his position after power struggles with his nephew Ma Bufang.83 Pilgrimage to Mecca offered a convenient way out of the situation and an eventual retirement upon return.

82 “Amīr Sīnī (أمير صيني),” Umm al-Qurā, no. 631, 1335/10/25 (1937/01/08), p.4. The scrapped page of the article has been widely circulated among the second and third generation Chinese community in Saudi Arabia on social media such as Whatsapp and Facebook.
Acting as the guide of Ma Lin in Mecca was the maternal uncle of ‘Abd al-Majid who opened this chapter, Ma Shuntian (馬順天 1899-1970). Ma Shuntian had been a religious scholar who, like Ma Lin and his father Ma Haiyan, was born in Monigou village in Linxia. The imam’s grandfather was the younger brother of Ma Zhan’ao, the military commander who had surrendered to the Qing army after Ma Haiyan’s initial victory in the 1871 clashes. Ma Shuntian’s family was tied with Ma Bufang’s clan through elaborate marriage relations. Although Ma Shuntian had studied under the Khufiyya (Huasi) order, upon hearing the news of Ma Qi’s patronage of Guoyuan Haji in Xining, he decided to relocate to Xining to be his student. He has been referred by Long Ahong, a well-known twentieth-century imam of the Qadriyya order, as one of the ten representative Yihewani imams of the period.

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Figure 6: Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu’s poem hangs on a hotel room wall. Photo by Author, June 2016

The pilgrimage routes of religious and political leaders such as Ma Shuntian and Ma Lin converged in the entrepot of Shanghai, a pivotal hub that mediated flows of pilgrims and donations between different parts of China and Mecca in the first half of the twentieth century. During the 1930s and 40s, Ma Shuntian undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca three times; the pilgrims would ride on mules to Lanzhou, board the open big truck for three to five days to arrive at Xi’an, where they would take the train to Shanghai. They were lodged at Shanghai’s Xiaotaoyuan mosque where their visas and
other documents were processed, and where they would board steamships to Jeddah. The whole journey lasted for about half a year to one year.

The time when Shuntian accompanied Ma Lin in 1936-7, on their way back, Ma Lin and his companions were greeted by Shanghai’s Muslim community. Shanghai’s *Islamic Youth Monthly* reported that Ma Lin had returned from Mecca with a delegation composed of 126 persons from the northwest provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia (6 of them women) and that they had departed through the way of Shanghai, Singapore, Penang, Colombo, and Jeddah. The article added that Ma Lin received a warm welcome from the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl-Sa‘ūd, with the help of Chinese Azharite students from Cairo as translators. After an excellent treatment from the King, to whom Ma Lin reportedly warned against Japan’s Islamic propaganda, he toured around “Hadramaut, Yemen, Oman, Najd, and Medina” before returning to Shanghai, where Muslim notables of the area and five hundred elementary students greeted him at the dock.

Kainan Yusuf Ma, the grandson of Ma Lin in Taipei, recounts that Ma Lin developed close ties with the Sa‘ūd family through the pilgrimage in 1936. He had

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86 In 1956, Ma Shuntian became the vice chairman of Linxia’s Political and Commercial Committee when Linxia became a Hui Autonomous Prefecture. In two years, however, he was imprisoned in the storm of the anti-rightist, anti-feudal and anti-religious propaganda movement and passed away in prison in 1970. Ma Wenpi, “Huiyi Ma Shuntian Ahong,” 173, 175.

brought a considerable amount of money with him, originally intending to build a hostel for Chinese pilgrims in Mecca. Yet, discovering that such hostel previously established by Ma Fuxiang and his son Ma Hongkui had been badly maintained, decided to contribute “two-hundred-thousand silver dollars (equivalent to some 2,400 ounces of pure gold)” to “relieve those poor Muslim brothers in the locality as well as those from other countries…. [which] caused a sensation throughout the kingdom.” As Kainan Yusuf Ma put it, friendship was established between the Ma Family and Royal Family of Sa‘ūd, which “has been everlasting.”

About a decade before Ma Lin’s meeting with the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in Mecca, donations from Ma Fuxiang and Linxia’s Muslims that were carried in the hands of a Sufi pilgrim scholar had left a modest hajj lodge house, a seed that would be cultivated later by the Chinese settlers in the Hejaz in following decades. The earliest pilgrimage lodge house for “Chinese” pilgrims was built in the mid-1920s with funding from Ma Fuxiang. The processes through which the first lodge house in Mecca was built for pilgrims from China emerge through the memoir of a prominent Sufi leader whose father had been delegated to transfer Ma Fuxiang’s contributions. The memoir’s writer was Long Ahong

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88 Kainan Yusuf Ma, “Foreign Relations between the Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: The Process of Establishing and Sustaining Relationships (1936-1986)” (University of Miami, 1988), 25. The writer who recollected on Ma Shuntian on the other hand claims that Ma Lin during his pilgrimage actually purchased a two to three story building to be used as waqf for Chinese pilgrims, but similarly points out that the donations from Ma Lin laid the ground for Ma Bufang and others who later moved to Saudi Arabia and settled.

89 The property was later claimed by overseas Chinese community based in Ta‘īf in the 1950s and has recently been rebuilt in Mecca. The process will be further elaborated in Chapter 4.
(Qi Mingde, 1883-1984), or the “Deaf Imam” of the Qadriyya order, who traces his genealogy to Qi Xinyi (1651-1742) from Hezhou’s Bafang. Versatile in Persian and Arabic, Qi Xinyi is said to have studied face-to-face with Afaq Khoja and received the texts "Maktab" originally composed in Persian by Ahmad Sirhindī (1563-1624).

According to Long Ahong, his father Qi Huan Tang (祁煥堂, 1852-1933) was entrusted by Ma Fuxiang with the task of passing on donations to Mecca. When Qi Huantang set out for his pilgrimage again, Ma Fuxiang handed him 200 liang and asked him to give one third to “Sheikh Man-su-mu,” whom he had known to be a respectable scholar through the words of mouth; one third to Mecca's poor; and to use the remaining one third to construct a housing place in Mecca. When Qi Huantang passed on Ma Fuxiang's goodwill to Sheikh Man-su-mu, he refused the money, asking every amount to be used for the housing instead. After some search, Qi Huantang purchased a lodging not far from the Haram in a region called “Bab al-Umrah.” Out of the cost of 300 liang, he first paid 200 liang given by Ma Fuxiang and left the remaining 100 liang to be paid later. Yet due to miscommunication between Qi Huantang and Ma Fuxiang, Ma Fuxiang grew suspicious as to whether Qi Huantang indeed purchased the building in his stead. Indignant, Qi Huantang solicited donations from Muslims of Bafang. He quickly

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90 According to Long Ahong, his father had gained the trust of Ma Fuxiang for translating the book “Maktab” from Persian to Arabic, after visiting a chain of scholars residing as far as Jawa to receive permissions for the translation. This point has been disputed by local scholars.
gathered 300 liang, and prepared to pay back Ma Fuxiang's 200 liang and pay the remaining 100 liang for the lodging during his next pilgrimage.

By then Ma Fuxiang had resolved his misunderstanding after hearing reports from the governmental official La Shijun (喇世俊 1865-1946), who returned from his own pilgrimage and confirmed the existence of a lodging house for Chinese. Following a discussion between La Shi Jun and the leaders of Bafang’s Muslims, it was decided that Ma Fuxiang would take a portion of the money that Hezhou’s Muslims collected, and the remainder of their donations would be used as maintenance funds for the lodge house. The rights to the lodging was thus split three ways: Ma Fuxiang would have a third of the lodging’s shares; Hezhou’s Muslims would have another third, and use the space during their pilgrimages; and Sheikh Man-su-mu would have the last third, in the name of Hezhou’s Muslims.91

When Ma Mingdao, a graduate of Beijing’s Chengda Normal School undertook his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1936, he came across the housing.92 As Ma Mingdao had been

91 “Yigao Jilu.” Sheikh Kamal al-Din Qi Mingde. Internal document, electronic file. The section can also be found in the physical copy of Long Ahong (聋阿訇) (Gansusheng Linxiashi Mingde Qingzhensi, 2004), 20-22.
92 Ma Mingdao, originally from Beijing, had studied philosophy in Istanbul University for eight years (1926-1932), and when his elder brother was appointed as the secretary of the newly established Chinese Embassy in Ankara in 1935, followed him to the capital. In Istanbul’s Ankara University Ma Mingdao studied law, and later changed his concentration to military affairs. In early 1936, Ma Mingdao undertook the pilgrimage from Istanbul to Mecca, accompanying dozens of pilgrims from Xinjiang who had journeyed from various places of Kashgar, Kucha, Aksu and Tarbaghatay. While Ma Mingdo could not speak Uighur, a “Donggan” person named “Yang Mazi” assisted him in translating between Ma Mingdao and Xinjiang pilgrims.
based in Istanbul as a student of Ankara University, he assisted the pilgrims who had arrived from Xinjiang in communicating their needs to the ship captain. He also helped them book tickets for passages back from Mecca to Istanbul, and attempted to resolve difficulties in passport and visa issues through the Turkish Consulate in Jeddah.\footnote{Ma Mingdao (馬明道), “Cong Yisidanbu Dao Maijia (From Istanbul to Mecca 從伊斯擔堡到麥加）,” Chenxi (晨熹) 2, no. 8 (1936): 15, February 24. The group that he accompanied constituted one of two groups who had arrived in Istanbul from Xinjiang; the others would take the train from Istanbul to Beirut, where they could take a ship to Jeddah.}

Ma Mingdao tells that there were four “Chinese” pilgrim lodge houses in Mecca at the time of his arrival. Out of four, one had been for the use of “Dungan” (Chinese Muslims in northwest China) people, another for Kashgar people (for those coming through southern route of Xinjiang), one for Yili (for travelers taking the northern route of Xinjiang), and one for Hami. Although the housings were divided in this way, Ma Mingdao noted, in fact, the boundaries were not clear on the ground.\footnote{Ma Mingdao (馬明道), “Cong Yisidanbu Dao Maijia (從伊斯擔堡到麥加）,” Chenxi (晨熹) 2, no. 9 (1936): 19, March 1.} When he visited the “Dungan” housing that had been built through the assistance of Ma Fuxiang, he observed that it was being managed by a certain Hassan, and encountered several sojourners in the building who had arrived through the way of Shanghai. Inside the lodging’s office were Ma De (馬德), the brigade commander for the general Ma Zhongying; Qinghai’s minister of transportation Ma Chaoru (馬朝儒); Ma Zhongliang (馬忠良) from Ningxia; Li Xiangfu (李相甫) from Henan; and Xi Jingxian (希敬賢),
who had stayed in Mecca for two years. While staying in Mecca during the hajj season, Ma Mingdao met pilgrims from China who had come through different routes, some through Shanghai and others via India.

Hussein Suleiman Omar, who had been serving as the “watcher” of the newly built Chinese ribāt in Mecca as of 2017, encountered the old ribāt near the Gate of Umrah when he arrived in Mecca towards the end of World War II. Now aging close to ninety, he identifies himself as a Salar and lives in Mecca’s outskirts. Hussein had made the journey to Mecca with his family and his uncle's two families roughly 80 years ago at the age of eight, by following caravan traders into Lhasa, and moved onto Kalimpong, Calcutta, and Bombay where he stayed in musāfir khāna and boarded a steamship to Jeddah.

Hussein recalls that when he arrived in Mecca after disembarking in Jeddah and riding a camel for a day or two, there were less than ten Chinese families. He came across one waqf for Chinese close to the Haram, the Gate of Umrah, which he learned to have been constructed by a “rich person from China” two decades before his own arrival. Because there lived no Chinese people in Mecca, the waqf’s founder entrusted an “Indian” scholar to manage it; the scholar, God knows, built a tall building that was four to five stories high which his family took, and a small waqf next to it that had two floors.

On the ground floor was a store, and a small room in the back. The second floor had two small and big rooms. A “great scholar” from China named Ramadan and his family had been living on the second floor. This was the one and the only waqf for Chinese pilgrims in Mecca during the period and was not properly registered. With the expansion of the Haram during the reign of King Sa‘ūd, the waqf was demolished.⁹⁷

In Mecca, then, had coalesced the threads that the warlords in northwestern China and mobile pilgrim-scholars interweaved, which culminated in a loose form of diplomatic ties (between Ma Lin and the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz) and a small yet concrete physical structure (waqf for Chinese pilgrims). Through direct travels, or patronages of Muslim scholars and politicians who had kept their own networks of education and pilgrimage, the governor-cum-generals utilized external connections to strengthen positions in their own localities around the Gansu corridor. The coalitions between Chinese Muslim militarists and scholars that spanned across and in between Shanghai and Mecca left presence in both locales in the form of social and religious institutions, thereby constituting strands of Mecca’s diverse mobility assemblages.

**Conclusion**

The “Ma” families were several of the many “warlords” across Eurasia in the inter-war period within the “Islamic world” and beyond, between the break-up of empires

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⁹⁷ Author interview, April 26, May 2, 2017. The afterlives of this ribāt will be discussed in Chapter 4.
and the making of nation-states. Out of domestic and international battlefields, former military commanders established their regional bases from the fringes, some of whom later took over control and built recognized states of their own. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Saʿūd himself was a figure who consolidated his own military bases (Ikhwan fighters) and rose to the top by successfully launching a series of warfare in the Arabian Peninsula and mobilizing tribes around Saudi chieftaincy through revivalist Wahhabi tenets.98

The Ma warlords nevertheless did not attempt to topple the Empire or the Republic or fully impose Islam as the governing ideology of their provinces, let alone the Yihewani interpretations with puritanical bent. They had been incorporated into the Qing and Republican China militarily, kept vested commercial and political interests in eastern China, and sat as military governors on contested borderlands where diverse groups of Tibetans, Mongols, and Muslims coexisted and battled against one another along political cleavages. Their patronages of different sectors of Muslim scholars and Islamic social and educational institutions were a part of broader attempts to build alliances in their own regions and outside, by pulling religious strings that transcended provincial, national and regional boundaries.

The convergences of Chinese Muslim militarists and networks of mobile scholars thickened the circulatory channels of pilgrimage, education, and patronage between

Mecca and Linxia (Hezhou). In the aftermath of the rebellions in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hezhou served as more than a magnet for pilgrims and merchants from the region. It now represented the hometown of the warlords who established their bases in the capital cities of the neighboring provinces of Qinghai, Ningxia, and Suiyuan, who also extended their military and monetary influences on Muslim communities in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing. Westwards, Mecca itself now hosted not only individual scholar pilgrims from the greater Gansu region who had previously traveled and studied as parts of Central Asian and Southeast Asian circles, but pairs of military generals who were likened to princes and kings, and scholars who accompanied them.

This chapter set out from the Hejaz to so-called “China’s little Mecca” Linxia through the present-day Sino-Saudi community, and traveled back in time to delineate circulatory flows between Linxia and Mecca in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Doing so revealed the linkages between Mecca and its miniature Linxia, which formed mid-level space between the “local” and the “global” that changed social landscapes in both sites. The eclectic group of militarist-cum-governors and pilgrim-cum-scholars whom we saw in this chapter were far from remaining a marginalized or insular minority. The overlapping networks that they forged, as we will see in subsequent chapters, would change shape and locational centers over time.

In the next chapter, I turn to the southeastern coasts of China to shed light on its own regional Mecca in Canton, and the ways through which Mecca was conceptualized and articulated from farther east. In Chapter 2, we will also observe the making of
Islamic enclaves in Shanghai, the intermediary node where traffic between northwestern China and the Arabian Peninsula converged through the seas.
2. Mapping Mecca in the Ports of Shanghai and Canton

Shanghai for many in the first half of the twentieth century represented the place of the last parting. On the dock and shipboards, travelers who were headed to different destinations bid farewell to their relatives and friends, neither side knowing the timing of possible reunion. ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi (林興智, 1913-1991), a native of Shadian (沙甸) in Yunnan Province who had been heading to Cairo in 1934, held back tears as his colleagues and teachers grew distant from sight. “The ship slowly left the dock, and we raised and waved handkerchiefs more and more. The ship headed onward, and the crowd also followed its way – going, going, until they could not go anymore. They were all red-eyed! We had already gone to the rear end of the ship long ago – going, going. Everything became far, gradually farther away.” Not long after, “the other side had already become a dot, and soon became completely invisible. In my head was engraved the sight of the waving banner and the indistinguishable crowd.”¹

Created as an international port largely through external forces, as was Singapore and Hong Kong, Shanghai post the Opium War represented the central congregation point where different pathways from the corners of Beijing, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan converged and dispersed westward through the sea routes. The arrivals of Muslim merchants, scholars and Mecca-bound pilgrims in the magnet of Shanghai generated

¹ Lin Xingzhi (林興智), Dao Aiji Qu (Going to Egypt 到埃及去) (Shanghai: Zhongguo Huijiao Shuju 1937), 69.
institutions in which persons and patronages flocked, and a space of exchanges that extended outward on board the steamships.

In Chapter 1, we observed the rise of Muslim “warlords” in Linxia (Hezhou), empowered by a series of wars and uprisings in the latter half of the nineteenth century. These militarists, while operating in the context of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic landscape of the Gansu corridor, patronized sojourning Muslim scholars and their institutions in the early decades of the twentieth century. Their networks of politics and religion stretched to Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai to the east, and to Mecca and Cairo to the west. Their home base Linxia, a commercial hub that had gained religious significance through three-centuries history of hosting traveling saints and scholars, now turned into an icon of the political power of Muslims in post-imperial China.

In this chapter, we shift the gaze to Shanghai in the early decades of the twentieth century, and Canton (Guangzhou) that preceded it as the port for foreign trade and transport. These were two well-known port cities that, through their roles as connective points between China and the maritime world at the eastern termini of the Yangzi River and the Pearl River, came to house little-researched Islamic social and religious institutions. Such enclaves deserve our attention not only because they are absent in scholarship, but because they bring into sharp focus the convergences of persons, donations and ideas that were regulated by imaginaries of sacred geographies and logistics of travel.
The graveyard in Canton between the fourteenth and twentieth centuries shows how genealogical historiographies that traveled back to Mecca and Medina created a sacred place in the southeastern coasts of China, sustained by trans-local circulations of texts and endowments. In post-Opium War Shanghai, on the other hand, we observe an expedited version of the influx of persons and donations in an infrastructural hub that led to the establishment of networked mosque-school complexes which, in turn, mediated their flows across the Indian Ocean, but without the religious significance that had accrued for Canton.

In the words of Peter Bishop, “places are produced by a dialogue between cultural fantasy-making and geographical landscape.” How have Chinese Muslims produced enclaves in the cities of Canton, Mecca and Shanghai, and webs of connections and meanings between them in tune with changing events and modes of mobility? How do their changing forms of spatial configurations as a dispersed diaspora society challenge our perceptions of Chinese Muslims as a place-bound ethnic minority?

The first section of this chapter offers snapshots of Canton’s dual aspects as a logistical hub and a regional sacred center, or a little Mecca in southern China. Canton has held critical significance for Chinese Muslims’ histories and perceptions of history, both as a pivotal port and supposed burial site of Prophet Muhammad’s Companion Sa‘d

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ibn Abī Waqqās. The aforementioned ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, too, had stopped by in Canton when he was traveling from his home province Yunnan to Shanghai. When he did, he also paid respects in front of his tomb. Through his death in Canton in the 7th century, whether real or mythical, Waqqās created direct spatial and temporal linkages between Muslims in China and the abstract locales of Mecca and Medina. Down to the twentieth century and arguably up to the present, the physical remains of the Companion have offered both a symbolic asset for Chinese Muslims’ historiography and an actual site of pilgrimage that has attracted visitors, patronages and transiting scholars from within and outside China. I rely mostly on printed collections of stele records that “Hui” scholars post-1980s have carefully transcribed and published, which have not been previously examined.

As I show in the middle two sections of the chapter, Shanghai in the early decades of the twentieth century inherited the position of Canton as an international hub, and functioned as the new intermediary node where entrepreneurs, scholars, mosque managers, pilgrims and patrons in the city mapped out Mecca as a more reachable destination. I first illustrate the flows of new groups of merchants, refugees, scholars, and pilgrims into Shanghai in the decades after the Opium War, which culminated in the establishment of multiple mosques, schools inside them, and Islamic periodicals. Global steamship and railway networks of which Shanghai became a part in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed the pace and accessibility of mobility within China and beyond, across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Concurrently, the fall of the
Qing Empire in 1911 hastened the urge for dispersed Muslim leaders to formalize networks of mosques into associational organs, to claim collective political or communal rights of Muslims vis-à-vis post-imperial Republican states. Intensified convergences, whether caused by political motivations or increased infrastructural connectivity, engendered sharp conflicts regarding righteous religious practices and political definitions of Muslims in China (Hui). I argue that the slogan of Muslim unity by returning to the origin of Islam emerged as a remedy, with an added stress on the Companion Waqqāṣ as not only the initiator of Islam in China but as the carrier of the Quran. The stated aim of unity, while belying the actual divisiveness and heterogeneity among dispersed Muslims in China, provided the mobilizers of such rhetoric the basis to act as representatives of Muslims in China as a unified body.

In the final section, I return to ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi who opened this chapter, with a focus on his reflections on Mecca as he passed through the Red Sea. The condensed space of travels across China, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea pinned down Mecca to a physical site, bringing to fore the contradictions between Mecca as an ideal and its territorial realities. The crises of governance that the Hejaz underwent following the Ottoman fall revealed a paradox on Mecca – the discrepancy between the geopolitical significance that Mecca came to have in the inter-war period as the leader of Muslims worldwide, and the internal wars in the Arabian Peninsula between political contestants. Lin, as we will see, was one of Chinese Muslim writers of the period who carried sociopolitical aspirations, and flexibly interpreted political models and religious doctrines
to their benefit. For Lin, the incorporation of the Hejaz into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represented a resolution to the paradox on Mecca. With that, Saudi Arabia as a stable sovereign state was expected to not only guard the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina but march together in the anti-imperial alliances of weak nations, which included China, as the leader of the abstractly defined Muslim world.

Turning to the southeastern coasts of China and its fictive and real connections to Mecca, I am adding another layer to the intermediary space between Mecca and China’s little Meccas. A multi-sited approach through Mecca reveals the diverse yet overlapping spatial configurations that Chinese Muslims have forged through different periods and places, and the multiplied meanings that Mecca came to have as it turned into a more accessible place through oceanic transport. The “return” of hybrid Muslim communities in Canton and Yiwu that we observe today may be in fact the latest wave of long-lasting trans-regional Islamic circulations that the port cities have hosted.³

2.1 The Graveyard of Canton: Genealogical Histories, Sacred Geographies

When Lin stopped by in Canton and visited the tomb of Waqqās in 1934, he noticed the tombs of forty “sages” (先賢 xianxian) who had arrived from the “country of Medina” (Medina guo). He would have seen their epitaph, dated 1802, which etched the legend that they had come together with Waqqās as envoys of Prophet Muhammad. They had been slaughtered by a thief who tested their faith by drawing a sword in the middle of their prayers. After murdering them, out of regret and respect, the robber himself committed suicide. The stele described the forty “sages” as martyrs (舍希德, shahīd).

Lin stood in the middle of the graveyard. And he pondered:

“Facing death in an alien land (異域), for ordinary persons, is thought to be very painful.” Yet, “the spirit of religion is so firm” – persons living for another world “regard all of those places as home places (家鄉), and those other places as alien lands (客地).” What constitutes a home place for religious diasporas, Lin tells us, is ambiguous. Little would he have known that he himself would later be buried in Jeddah.

The few scholars who have written on the figure of Waqqās in China have focused on the manuscripts that unknown authors composed in the seventeenth and

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4 Zhong Yuanxiu (中元秀), Ma Jianzhao (马建钊), and Ma Fengda (马逢达), Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu (Research on Guangzhou’s Islamic Relics 广州伊斯兰古迹研究) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1989), 103.
5 Lin Xingzhi, Dao Aiji Qu, 36.
eighteenth centuries. *The Origins of Huihui (Huihui Yuanlai 回回原來)*, most representative of such texts, contains mythical narratives that trace the origin of Muslims in China to Tang Emperor Taizong’s dream that led him to dispatch emissaries to the “western regions (xiyu 西域).” Upon receiving the envoys, Prophet Muhammad sent Companion Waqqās to China in his stead. Zvi Bendor-Benite considers that such origin texts sacralized the presence of Islam in China, and configured relationships between Muslims in China and the “core Muslim world” as “one of simultaneous displacement and belonging.”  

While feeling China as their “true home,” Chinese Muslims in the Jiangnan region (lower reaches of the Yangzi River) whose ties had been cut off from the heartlands of Islam “retained the cultural memory of ‘another home’” through writings of “communal biography.”  

I would like to take Benite’s proposition a step further to delve deeper into how genealogical historiographies on Muslims in China created many homes, here and elsewhere, embedding Islam not only in the Jiangnan region but in the very soil of Canton and across China. I also question how Mecca was conceptualized in such imageries, thus exploring how we may perceive of a space-time created through horizontal linkages between multiple imaginary centers, rather than through the spatial

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7 Ibid., 105.  
8 Ibid., 108.
hierarchy that consists of a core and an isolated zone. Furthermore, more focus on the materiality of the tomb of Waqqās reveals that such narratives were transported back and forth between different textual media and produced community and pilgrims around the tomb of the Companion beyond the textual realm.

2.1.1. The Making of a Little Mecca in Canton

The burial of Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās in Canton in the 7th century, regardless of its veracity, has left enduring potentials for the Companion’s graveyard to become a symbolic site for collective genealogical narratives. Such historiography extends back to the times of the Prophet temporally, and to the ambiguous location of Mecca, Medina, or the “western lands” spatially. Canton had been one of the very first ports in China where the first generation of seafaring Persian and Arab merchants settled down and formed Muslim enclaves within the domains of imperial China in the 8th century. While their fates waned in the mid-14th century, when the port returned as a commercial hub in the late 17th, genealogical historiographies that had been imprinted on stele and paper led to the making of a sacred place in southeastern China. Rather than remaining stationary, such historical narrations turned the supposed graveyard of the Companion into a pilgrimage destination by the mid-18th century, maintained by confluences of donations, sojourners and visitors from places near and far.

The formulation of narratives on Waqqās in Canton was grounded in historical realities in which the port had performed as the pivotal entrepot for Muslim trade diasporas. An inland river port, Canton stands at the intersection between the Pearl River
and the South China Seas. Between the 8th and 14th centuries, which correspond to years of the commerce-oriented Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) and Tang (618-907)-Song (960-1279)-Yuan (1279 -1368) China, Canton had been a major emporium for maritime Muslim diaspora trade networks, along with the other important ports of Quanzhou (Zaytūn), Yangzhou and Hangzhou. Also known as Khanfu to Arab and European travelers such as Suleiman al-Tājir (851), and 13th-century travelers Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, Canton hosted a lively community of Muslim merchants who formed their own enclaves (fanke 番客, foreign quarters) with their own headmen.⁹

In the 9th century and onwards, the oceans between the Persian Gulf and Canton was an animated arena where Muslim merchants traversed between Basra, Sirāf, Muscat, the ports of south India, the Straits of Malacca and Canton, carrying with them products such as silks, ceramics, and copper from China, and bringing in rhinoceros horn, pearls, spices, medicines, perfumes, and incense. This is well reflected in Account of China and India (Akhbār al-Hind wa al-Ṣīn, 916), a collection of merchants’ accounts compiled by

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Abu Zayd al-Sirāfi. However, rebellions or dynastic changes periodically subjected Muslim communities in Canton and Quanzhou to violent repression and forced exiles, and the ban on private maritime trade in the late fourteenth century severed the external wing of Muslim trade diasporas.

Huaishengsi 懷聖寺, or “remembering the Prophet mosque,” has borne physical witness to the Muslim quarters that had flourished in Canton. Although the date of the mosque’s construction is disputed, it has existed since at least the 12th century. Positioned near the banks of the Pearl River, its 35-meter tall minaret, called Light Tower (Guangta 光塔), may also have functioned as a lighthouse for incoming ships.

In the imaginary of Chinese Muslims, it was the Prophet’s Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās who had constructed the mosque upon arriving in Canton. Such imagery has circulated since at least the middle of the 14th century, the final years of the Mongol

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11 The Huangchao Rebellion in 879 had a dramatic impact in Canton, in which Muslims, Christians and Zoroastrians were massacred. See Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China*, 48-9. The other radical example was the anti-government Ispah (Yisibaxi) Muslim regime in Quanzhou (1357-1367) on the eve of Yuan’s fall. The regime was defeated due to internal divisions, but the arrival of Ming forces that ensued and the bans on private maritime trade (1371) ended the Muslim diaspora trade networks and possibly led to their dispersals to Southeast Asia. Although maritime trading offices were closed in Quanzhou and Mingzhou (1422), the Guangzhou office did continue to operate until the late sixteenth century. Chaffee, 157-163.
Yuan Empire. The bilingual Arabic-Chinese stele commemorating the reconstruction of the Huaisheng Mosque, dated 1350, celebrates the “Ṣahāba (الصحابي; 撒哈八)” (Companion) who built the mosque, as well as the Yuan officer “Mahmud” who contributed to the mosque’s rebuilding. Although this stele does not mention the specific name of the Companion, a mosque inscription in Quanzhou that had been written in the same year contains an explicit reference to Ṣahāba Waqqās and his overseeing of the construction of the Huaisheng Mosque.

This is a stele that celebrates the reconstruction of Quanzhou’s Qingjing mosque清淨寺 in 1350, which had been built in 1131 by a merchant from Siraf. The words had been composed by Wu Jian吴鑒, a scholar from present-day Fuzhou who had been asked to write a text to be inscribed on stone. Although Wu Jian’s original stele had

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15 Zhong Yanxiu et al, Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu, 3-6.
16 The Qingjing mosque was built later than the better-known Ashab mosque (1009-1001), and was likely destroyed during the Ispah rebellion of the mid-fourteenth century. For a discussion on the construction of the Qingjing Mosque and its stele, John Chaffee, The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China, 108-109; Chen Dasheng, Quanzhou Yisilan Shike, 14.
17 This mosque is no longer present in Quanzhou, and since the Ming period, has been confused for the famous Ashāb mosque that still stands in the city today. Dasheng Chen (陳達生), Quanzhou Yisilanjiao Shike (Islamic Inscriptions in Quanzhou 泉州伊斯蘭教石刻), trans. Enming Chen (Ningxia, Fujian: Renmin Chubanshe, 1984), 16-18.
been effaced, the text was re-inscribed onto a tablet in 1507, copied from the words in the gazetteer *Annals of Quanzhou* (*Qingyuan Xuzhi* 清源續志) that Wu Jian had edited.\textsuperscript{18}

The inscription tells that the narrative on Waqqās had been circulating between the ports of Quanzhou and Canton in the mid-14th century, two decades before the fall of the Yuan Empire. The Yuan period represented the peak of commercial and cartographic Sino-Islamic exchanges across Eurasia when Muslims within China also dispersed across all directions.\textsuperscript{19} Wu Jian’s description of beliefs and practices of Muslim communities gives a particularly illuminating portrayal of the extent to which Islam had been embedded in Quanzhou and elsewhere in China at the time:

“In the beginning, the king of Modena (*Medina guowang* 默德那國王), Purghambar (Payambar, “prophet” *Biepubaer* 別譜拔爾) Muhammad (*Mohanmode* 謙罕薩德), was born…governed with kindness and commanded the respect of all the Western Countries (*xiyu zhuguo* 西域諸國), who called him the sage (*shengren* 聖人). Purghambar was an honorary title meaning ‘apostle’ (*tianshi* 天使). His religion (*qijiao* 其教) considers that everything originates from Heaven. Heaven is incomparable; therefore, there is no image for Heaven for the most devoted. There is one month of fasting every year when one must change clothes and bathe oneself, chance for a quiet place to live in, prostrate..."


\textsuperscript{19} For the upsurge of geographic surveys written in Quanzhou in the 13th and 14th centuries, Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 91-123. Quanzhou’s Lingshan hill has its own sacred tombs that date back to the Yuan period. *Min Shu* (閩書 the Book of Fujian) of the Ming period (1612) by He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1558-1632), and *Min Shu Chao* (閩書抄 Extracts from the Min Shu) (1629) by anonymous author describe that Lingshan hill was the burial site of two disciples of Muhammad who had come from Medina. Of four disciples, one preached in Canton, another in Yangzhou, and two others in Quanzhou. *Min Shu Chao* states that the two persons buried in Quanzhou were “Sayyid” and “Waqqās.” See Chen Dasheng, *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao Shike* (Islamic Inscriptions in Quanzhou 泉州伊斯蘭教石刻), trans. Enming Chen (Ningxia, Fujian: Renmin Chubanshe, 1984), 95–102.
towards the west every day, cleanse heart and pray (songjing 誦經). The scripture was handed down by the Heavenly Father (tianren 天人). It consists of 30 volumes, 134 chapters, or 6,666 sections, all of which contain profound and subtle ideas. The gist of the doctrine is justice, unselfishness, regulation of heart and cultivation of virtue…In practice, the aims of life are: going on pilgrimage (zhusheng 祝聖), helping the needy and saving the miserable from danger, ever thinking of repentance and self-reform, behaving well, dealing with oneself properly and others modestly, being mindful of one’s own conduct at home and abroad. No going astray in the least degree is permissible. It is over 800 years since the rise of this religion…firmly adhered to the faith so that generations of his descendants have never reneged even in foreign lands (shuyu 殊域).”

Wu Jian then makes a note about Waqqās in Canton: “In the reign of Emperor Kai Huang of the Sui Dynasty, a Sahabat Sayyid Waqqas (Saḥaba Sanade Wogesi 撒哈八撒阿的斡葛思) reached Guangdong (廣東) by sea from Tajiks (大實 dashi; Arabia) and erected a mosque (建禮拜寺 jian libaisi) at Canton (Guangzhou 廣州) which the emperor soon gave the honorary title of Huaisheng Si. Then in the first year of the reign of Emperor Shao Xing of Song Dynasty (1131), a Najīb Muẓhīr al-Dīn came from Quanzhou on board a trading ship from Sirāf. It was he who founded the mosque in the South City of Quanzhou. He installed silver lamps and incense burners to worship Heaven, bought land and built houses for those who were interested in the religion.”

20 The translation comes from Chen Dasheng, Quanzhou Yisilanjiao Shike (Islamic Inscriptions in Quanzhou 泉州伊斯兰教石刻), trans. Enming Chen (Ningxia, Fujian: Renmin Chubanshe, 1984), 14. For the original text, I referred to Yu Zhenggui (余振贵) and Lei Xiaojing (雷晓静), Zhongguo Huizu Jinshilu (Chinese Muslim Stele Records 中國回族金石錄) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 2001), 68. Compare with Hyunhee Park, Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds, 119-121.
21 Chen Dasheng, Quanzhou Yisilanjiao Shike, 14.
After explaining the mosque’s recent reconstruction that resulted from petitions from the leaders Shaikh al-Islan and Burhan al-Din, an event that left everyone satisfied, he writes:

“I have once heard the elders say that when the people of Dashi (Arabs/Muslims) first began to enter China, their customs and education were greatly different from other countries. Consulting all the gazetteers like [Record of an] Embassy to the Regions in the West (Xish, 西使 1263) and [Shortened Account of the] Non-Chinese Island Peoples (Daooyi Zhilue 島夷志略 1339) confirmed that assertion. Therefore, I have the following to say…When the Han and Tang Dynasties made contacts with the Western Countries, the ‘restraint’ policy did not prove quite successful. Nevertheless, mosques had been set up in Min (Fujian) and Guang (Guangdong) for some time already. Now we know about half a dozen mosques in the Quanzhou Prefecture. Although the restoration of this one took several years, yet the fact that so many distinguished personages pooled their resources and experience to make it a success showed that this religion has found its successors.”

Wu Jian’s inscription is captivating not only for the pieces of information it gives on Muslim communities in Quanzhou and Canton, which he had retrieved from conversations with them and by consulting gazetteers, but also for the afterlives of his writing. Whereas Wu Jian noted the presence of several mosques in Quanzhou and Canton, in the centuries that followed, narratives that linked Waqqās with the non-places of “Heavenly Square” (Tianfang 天方), Medina, or western regions traveled well beyond Canton and Quanzhou. This may be due to the fact excerpts of Wu Jian’s composition were rewritten in the Records of the Unity of the Great Ming (Da Ming Yitong Zhi 大明...

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22 Ibid., 15, Hyunhee Park, Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds, 121.
一統志), an imperially-commissioned geographic survey of the Ming Empire and outer domains that was published in 1461.\textsuperscript{23}

The compilation’s section on “the country of Medina” not only repeated Wu Jian’s characterization of the Prophet Muhammad and the Heavenly Scriptures, but critically, described Medina as the “homeland” (zunguo) of the “Huihui”\textsuperscript{24} people, from which “Ṣaḥaba Sa’d Waqqās” had come during the Sui Dynasty. The Medina description also added that it was adjacent to “Heavenly Square” (Tianfang), or Mecca. While separate entries had existed for Mecca in geographical treaties or travelogues of the 13th and 14th centuries – either as transliterations or as “Heavenly Abode/Square” (Tiantang天堂, Tianfang) – both Muslim and non-Muslim referred to Mecca and Medina interchangeably as the homeland of Muslims in China.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the decline of trans-

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\textsuperscript{23} The 90-volume collection recorded geographies, environs, persons, customs, academies and histories of provinces of Ming China mainly, but also devoted the last two books to foreign countries.
\textsuperscript{24} The term “Huihui” first started to be used during the Yuan Empire, probably originating from the term Huihe 回纥 or Huihuihu 回回鶻, indicating Turki Muslims in present-day Xinjiang and Central Asia.
\textsuperscript{25} Lang Ying (1487-ca. 1566), a Confucian scholar, for example wrote that “The Shishi zenggang (1481) says that the Muslims’ homeland is Dashi (Arabia), whereas the [Daming] yitong zhi (Records of the Unity of the Great Ming) says that it is the country of Mochuona. Based on the fact that their religion worships in a mosque (libaisi), and among the barbarians only Tianfang (Mecca) has such a mosque, it may be that [their homeland] is actually Tianfang.” Cited from Shao-yun Yang, “Facing West to Worship Heaven: ‘Confucianizing’ Representations of Islam in Yuan and Ming Literati Writings,” paper presented at AAS in Asia, Academia Sinica, Taipei (2015). Accessed on denison.academia.edu/ShaoyunYang. I am grateful to Shao-yun Yang for the permission to cite the paper.
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regional networks of Muslim diasporas following dynastic overturn from Yuan to Ming China, perceptions of figurative home places in distant lands remained in textual forms.  

If the arrival of Waqqās in Canton turned everywhere into potential homes for Muslims in China, on the western end of the spatial conception lay the non-places of Heavenly Square, Medina, and western regions. Such sites were distant homelands elsewhere that emerged out of transmitted understandings on ancestral pasts, rather than places that corresponded to geographic or temporal reality. “Heavenly Square” (Tianfang) in particular connotes a worldview that the transliterations of the place “Mecca” does not capture. Especially prior to the twentieth century, the “Heavenly Square” could refer broadly to the Ka’ba, Mecca, Arabia, or Islam.

Perhaps through textual references or through word of mouth, different versions of imageries on Sa’d Waqqās and the Heavenly Square were written onto mosque steles in eastern and central parts of China. The reconstruction inscription for the Fuzhou mosque in Fujian Province (1549), for instance, starts by stating that “the construction of the mosque was to worship the teachings of the Heavenly Square (Tianfang).” It then describes Sa’d Waqqās as having sailed through the seas and reached Fujian (Min),

26 For the ban on maritime trade during the early years of Ming China and the mandate that directed *semuren* who had assisted the Yuan to adopt Chinese attire and names, and to marry Chinese populations, Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China*, 11, 162-169.
instead of Canton; from then, “the teachings spread out and permeated China, and mosques (סִי) were constructed everywhere.”²⁸ Hebei’s Dingzhou mosque stele, which most likely dates back to the 15th or the 16th century (rather than its proclaimed date of 1348), adds a twist by stating that “Sahāba Sa’d Waqqās who started to transmit the teachings into China,” and instructed “forefathers to regard ten thousand countries as homes (yi wanguo wei jia 以萬國為家), worship the heavens as the roots, and not construct any images.”²⁹

The utopic places that lay somewhere in the west did not even have to bear specific names. An intriguing example comes from a tablet for a mosque in Beijing (1624). Without giving any geographic denomination, it portrays a place where “human ancestor” Adam appeared, followed by the Sage Muhammad. “This country” was a place “that has scriptures consisting of 30 volumes and 6,600 chapters” – where “peace, quietude and noninterference (qingjing wuwei) constitute the law...Sincerity makes up the mind, loyalty for the sovereign and filial piety constitute the Way...people live and work in peace and contentment, and no evil plots and punishments for crimes exist.” From there, “Sahāba Sa’d Waqqās started to transmit the teachings into China (zhonghua)

²⁸ Yu Zhengui and Lei Xiaojing, Zhongguo Huizu Jinshilu, 70.
²⁹ Ibid., 15. “隋开皇中国人撒哈伯撒哈的斡葛思始传其教入中国，是知祖宗以万国为家，录善不遗，其曰以事天为本而无像设”

during the Kaihuang reign of the Sui dynasty. Thereupon, China had mosques of worship
(libai qingzhensi).”  

Whereas nonlinear historiographical narratives bridged the distance between the
origin place of Islam and the dispersed communities of Muslims in China, on the most
local level, mosques acted as substitutes of Mecca, from which the Heavenly Square
could be revered. The stele that commemorates the reconstruction of Hebei’s
Zhangjiakou (1523), for instance, describes the duty of the hajj as “paying homage to
(zhanli) the five-colored jadeite square in the west.” This, however, could be substituted
by constructing mosques. A similar notion is repeated in the Shanxi’s Datong mosque
reconstruction stele (1622), which, after explaining four pillars of Islam, writes that since
China could not “pay homage (zhanli)” in multitude to the west, mosques would be
constructed instead.  

The different genres of texts on Waqqās that described him as the origin point of
Islam in China generated actual flows of visitors and donations, refashioning his
supposed burial site as a sacred site on its own from an unknown point in time. The

30 Ibid., 6. Different versions of the narrative were reiterated on stelae throughout the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries. Interestingly, the stele of “Babasi 巴巴寺” in Sichuan’s Langzhong 阆中 (1747) that
celebrates the arrival and teachings of the well-known Afaq Khoja writes that Afaq Khoja, “whose ties
extend to the ancestral country of the Heavenly Square (Tianfang),” had arrived in the Central Plains
(China) following the footsteps of “Sahāba Sa’d Waqqās .” Yu Zhengui and Lei Xiaojing, Zhongguo
Huijiao Jinshilu, 489-90.
31 Ibid., 19.
32 Ibid., 31.
graveyard of the Companion Waqqās itself is situated approximately 2.5 miles north of the old Huaisheng mosque, near what had been the old north gate of Canton city. One of the earliest epitaphs that have been unearthed from the cemetery dates to 1349. It had belonged to a person named “Ramadan,” a daruhaci from Korea who had been stationed in Guangxi Province. Within the graveyard stands a mosque, Sages Ancient Mosque (Signalian Qingzen Gusi 先賢清真古寺), most likely built in the 17th century to accommodate daily religious needs of the graveyard’s caretakers and visitors.

The reconstruction stele for Sages Ancient Mosque (1815) dates 629 as the time when the tomb of Waqqās was constructed and describes Waqqās as “Sage” (xianxian) from the Heavenly Square (Tianfang). “Among believers from within and outside who visited the grave,” the narrative continues, “there was none who did not recite the scriptures out of respect.” The situation had not changed for over a thousand years. Strikingly, the stele refers to the visitors’ arrivals as “hajj” (hanzhi 罕知). The course of the “hajj” was such that the believers had, from a variety of texts, found out the presence

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33 Broomhall, 111
34 This Sino-Arabic reminds us of the extensive reach of the Mongol Yuan Empire from Korea to the east and Baghdad to the west. Ramadan had been living in Wanping 宛平 in present-day Beijing and serving as a daruhaci in Rongzhou 荣州 in southeastern Guangxi Province, which borders Guangdong to the east and had served as an important gateway into Vietnam via the western South China Seas. He died at the age of thirty-eight and was buried in Guangzhou. Zhong Yuanxiu et al., Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu, 91-2.
of Islam and scriptures in China that had started from the Sage (Waqqās). These texts, according to the stele, included *Records of the Most Venerable Sage from the Heavenly Square* (天方至聖實錄), which is a biography of the Prophet Muhammad (1721), “various geographical surveys written during the Sui-Tang dynasties, collections on history, and books such as *Records of the Unity of the Great Ming.*”

As we see from the stele, repetitions of genealogical historiographies had generated traffic of visitors to the Companion’s grave. The *Records of the Unity of the Great Ming*, as I explained earlier, used excerpts from Wu Jian’s Quanzhou mosque inscription, referring to Medina as the homeland of “Huihui” people from which Waqqās came. On the other hand, the biography of the Prophet that the stele mentions (*Records of the Utmost Sage from Heavenly Square*) had been composed in 1721 by an influential Chinese Muslim scholar from Nanjing, Liu Zhi (劉智 1660-1739). Liu had included in his textual corpus the widespread legend on the arrival of Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās in Canton and his construction of the Huaisheng Mosque. His references would have included the *Records of the Great Ming* published three centuries before him.37

In the biography, Liu Zhi narrates a legend in which a Chief Astronomer noticed a strange star in the west in the sixth year of Kaihuang reign (586), leading the Tang Emperor Wendi to dispatch an envoy to investigate. Although the Prophet refused to

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travel the East himself, he dispatched Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās and three others to head to China. Meanwhile, the imperial envoy secretly made a portrait of the Prophet to take back with him. When the Emperor Wendi opened the scroll and worshipped it, however, the image had disappeared, which prompted Waqqās to explain the Prophet’s forbidding of worshipping images.\textsuperscript{38} The Emperor, in awe, commanded the construction of the Huaisheng Mosque in Canton. Liu Zhi writes: “The account of the entry of the religion of the Prophet into China in the seventh year of the Kaihuang reign, following the sending of an envoy to the West, is given in detail in several Chinese histories, so it can be proved. The story of the worshipping of the portrait is not recorded in histories; but it has been handed down by tradition, and may be seen recorded in stone tablets, so must not be rejected.”\textsuperscript{39}

The backdrop behind the coming of streams of pilgrims to the Companion’s tomb after their reading of various geographic and biographic texts, noted in the 1815 reconstruction stele of the Sages Ancient Mosque, now becomes clear. For five centuries, Chinese Muslims had transported, circulated and reconfigured historiographies on Waqqās and the distant places in the west on stone and paper. Both before and after Liu Zhi’s composition of Prophet’s biography, as we have seen, Waqqās as a symbol

\textsuperscript{38} In a different version, the Prophet himself had his portrait drawn, but in colors that would fade away from canvas. Chieh-lien Liu and Isaac Mason, \textit{The Arabian Prophet: A Life of Mohammed from Chinese and Arabic Sources} (Shanghai, 1921), p. 93, note 2.

\textsuperscript{39} Liu and Mason, 94.
appeared in different versions, forging spatial, temporal and genealogical linkages between dispersed communities of Muslims in China and the origin place of their beliefs and practices.

The narrative inscribed on the stele itself was a reproduction of such compilations. After introducing Waqqās who had come from Heavenly Square (Tianfang), it states that “Heavenly Square was the homeland (zuguo) of Muslims (Huikui), where] the light Adam had been passed on for fifty generations. The noble saint Muhammad was born, his spirits (shenling 神靈) were sincere and agile, the western regions submitted [to him] in earnest, and venerated him as the Heaven’s messenger.” The legend in Liu Zhi’s book follows: in the sixth year of Kaihuang reign of Sui dynasty (586), a court astronomer noticed the birth of an unusual person (yiren 異人) in the west (xifang 西方) upon gazing the stars. This led to the sending of messengers to investigate the truth. The following year, the Prophet dispatched four sages, who, upon arriving, constructed the Huaisheng mosque and continued to reside in the city. The stele further denies the claim that the purpose of Waqqās’ coming was to conduct trade, thereby elevating the nature of his travel to the sacred and politically authoritative realm.

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*Zhong Yuanxiu (中元秀), Ma Jianzhao (马建钊), and Ma Fengda (马逢达), *Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu 广州伊斯兰古迹研究 (Research on Guangzhou’s Islamic Relics)*, 107.
In this way, Chinese Muslims continuously appropriated and reproduced previous writings on Waqqās, Heavenly Square (Mecca), Medina and the western regions, thereby creating multiple homes and imaginary centers that constituted their creative worldviews. Doing so positioned them conceptually in the space between local societies of residence and abstract points of collective origin. The mixture of secular and legendary narratives created a repertoire that could be transferred between and modified in different sites. This raises a question on the interplay between formulations of sacred imageries and a physical locale. What consequences did re-inscriptions of Waqqās as a symbol have on his graveyard in Canton itself?

2.1.2. Donations and Travelers

Records from Canton’s Muslim enclaves – epitaphs, or steles that celebrate donations, construction or refurbishments of communal buildings – show that during the 18th and 19th centuries, the graveyard stood as the center of communal activities and as a pilgrimage destination. Donations, scholars and visitors from within and outside the city flowed into its mosque-education-tomb complexes, creating a space of congregation, veneration and historiographical reconfigurations. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Canton resurged as the focal point for oceanic exchanges. In 1682, Qing China that succeeded the Ming selectively lifted the imperial ban on foreign trade following the defeat of Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) in Taiwan that had threatened the empire in the maritime realm, and in 1757, restricted external trade with Europe to Canton. Throughout the 18th century
and up to the end of the First Opium War (1842), Canton functioned as the clearinghouse where British, Portuguese, Swedish and Dutch companies paid dues and underwent custom checks, through a set of extensive arrangements known as the “Canton System.”

In a 1785 stele that commemorates granting of donations, we find out that a person named “Tani ﺗﻨﻲ” who had been “residing abroad”(ju haiwai 居海外) came to Guangdong (Yue 粵) by chance. His son, in accordance with his father’s suggestion, purchased a building to the ownership of the Huaisheng Mosque. Every year, portions of the rent were to be used for death anniversary ceremonies of the “highly sage” (gaoxian 高賢), or Companion Waqqās, for da’wa (du-a 睹阿) in front is tomb. By then, the tomb of the Companion had been known as “Xiangfen (響墳),” which has been translated as “Tomb of the Echo” for the sound that is believed to reverberate from the tomb, or as “Tomb of Offering.”

For the building that Tani’s son bought and endowed, the

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mosque’s leaders and elderly (shizhang, xianglao 師長, 鄉老) were entrusted to discuss and decide the exact amount to be taken each year.\textsuperscript{44}

Visits to the graveyard, then, instigated gifting of donations. The endowments that were thus pulled in sustained religious practices around the Companion’s tomb, and as we will see, social institutions that hosted traveling scholars and pilgrims.

Tani (or his son) was not the only person who indicated that a part of his endowment be used for holding the death anniversary ceremony of Waqqās. In 1825, “Ma Chaosong, a Muslim (mumin 穆民) of Canton’s Nancheng” bequeathed a building, the rent of which was to be used for communal purposes. He specified that the monthly rent from the building be directed to the joint coffer of the city’s four mosques, to be handled by the manager-by-turn. One condition, however, was that portions of the money would be used to burn incense on every death anniversary of the Sage (Xianxian 先賢, referring to Waqqās), for which “both the living and the dead will be grateful.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} Zhong Yuanxiu et al., \textit{Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu} (Research on Guangzhou’s Islamic Relics), 102.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 111.
That the donors designated their alms to be used for burning incense in front of the tomb of the Companion during his death anniversaries, often alongside other wishes, tells how Chinese Muslims developed grave rituals for a symbolic figure whose scope of relevance far exceeds that of ancestors of a particular lineage group. Funeral rites have been a central aspect of Chinese society, through which potentially volatile spirits are comforted and tamed into ancestors to protect the living. On the other hand, grave rituals,
in the words of anthropologist Ruby Watson, have been “part of the process in which new orders, new status, and new power arrangements, are created.”46 Whereas “the dead continue to be individuals” in the funeral rites, “the longer the ancestor remains in the grave…the more depersonalized he becomes…in the end he becomes a symbol not a person.”47 In contrast to ancestors who fall into oblivion after generations, the Prophet’s Companion Waqqās as a symbol regenerated continuities beyond one property-holding kinship group.48

To maintain the graveyard, the religious leaders and elderly of four mosques (sisi zhangjiao xianglao 四寺掌教鄉老) in Canton established a joint coffer in 1779.49 They had initially collected donations from the whole community of believers (wojiao zhongqin 我教眾親) in order to handle desolate graves and fallen walls. After discussions, they decided to purchase a building with the mustered money. The building’s rent would be used to repair collapsed graves and fill in dikes. For attending to the grave of the Sage and its wall enclosing, four mosques’ managers (sisizhishi 四寺執事) would

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47 Ibid., 205.
49 While the text does not name the four mosques, they would have been Huaisheng 懷聖, Haopan 豪畔, Nansheng 南勝 and Dongying 東營 mosques.
take turns to handle the property. The stele was etched in order to “pass on expenses ever after,” and erected beside the wall of the Companion’s grave lest “the virtuous thoughts” be forgotten. At its end, the stele recorded the details of the purchase and reaffirmed the collective acquisition of the building by four mosques, thereby not only celebrating the repair of the tombs but also engraving on stone the sales receipt and collective ownership.\textsuperscript{50} In establishing a public coffer that combined partial assets of the four mosques, Canton’s Muslim leaders were following a practice that had been shared by other non-Muslim social groups organized around schools and literati circles.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Zhong Yuanxiu et al., Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu (Research on Guangzhou’s Islamic Relics 广州伊斯兰古迹研究), 101.

\textsuperscript{51} Shaodan Zhang, Chinese Muslims in the Qing Empire: Public Culture, Identities, and Law, 1644—1911 (Masters thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015), 51.
Other intentions for making donations included supporting schools and lodgings and ensuring that the souls of the deceased families or friends would not remain in solitude. In 1815, a nephew established a stele for his uncle from Changsha of Hunan Province, who passed away in Guangdong at the age of 71 after spending twenty years in Guangdong (Yue) for his studies. As the nephew was residing in Changsha and could not stay longer in Canton, he purchased a store in the city. He entrusted its monthly rent (one silver yuan) to be handled by the manager who was in charge of the four mosques’ public coffer for the Tomb of the Echo that year (xiangfen sifang zhinian gongxiang 響塚四方執年公箱). He asked that on every death anniversary of the Sage (Xianxian), one silver yuan be drawn from the public coffer to burn incense for the ceremony. He also solicited
with respect, that on the death anniversary of his own uncle, another one silver yuan to be drawn from the joint coffer for the manager of the year (zhinian shizhang) to visit his uncle’s grave, read scriptures and perform dawah.\textsuperscript{52}

Women who had lost their husbands or children gave endowments for the upkeep of Islamic social institutions and the performance of grave rituals for their families. In 1840, Mrs. Yu Ma endowed two buildings left by her late husband to the Nancheng mosque and the Sages Ancient Mosque to be used for education and various communal purposes. This was to reminisce how before he had passed away, her husband had admired persons who had given their properties for mosques and the Sages Ancient Mosque.\textsuperscript{53}

Similarly, the next year, Mrs. Jin Zhang combined properties left by her late husband and her own savings to purchase a building, and designated the monthly rent of two silver yuan to be directed to the Sages Ancient Mosque, to be handled by the manager-by-turn. She requested that every year, two silver yuan to be drawn to be used as money for incense for her late husband’s birthdays and death anniversaries.\textsuperscript{54} In the late nineteenth century, a widow who had lost her married daughter endowed an inherited building to the public coffer of the four mosques. She ordained that the monthly rent be used for the Companion’s death anniversary ceremonies and other kinds of communal

\textsuperscript{52} Zhong Yuanxiu et al., \textit{Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu}, 113.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 117
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 120.
expenses. Furthermore, because her husband had passed away without a son, she asked that after her own passing, the donations also be used to visit graves and burn incense on death anniversaries of her husband, parents in law, her daughter and herself.\(^5\)

The mosques also received donations that were made for the sake of absent persons who, or whose bodies, remained distant from the site itself. Zhang Fengchun, for instance, erected a stele in the memory of a Yunnan merchant Xiangmao in 1864, whom he had represented in Canton. Zhang writes that Xiangmao was a wealthy Muslim (\textit{huishi 回氏}) merchant from Yunnan’s Tengyue, present-day Tengchong in westernmost Yunnan that borders Burma, who had been conducting trade in Guangdong for several decades. His two collaborators, however, passed away on the way to Guangdong and were buried in the city’s outskirts. As Zhang put it, their “graves were solitary, and spirits [had] nowhere to be attached to.” Worse, there had been “no news from Xiangmao whatsoever due to disturbances at hometown,” potentially referring to the Panthay Rebellion (1856-1873) in Yunnan. Met with grief, Zhang gifted Xiangmao’s silver money in his keeping to mosques in the city – 380 liang to Haopan mosque, 200 liang to Huaisheng mosque, 100 liang to Dongying mosque, and 100 liang to the Sages Ancient Mosque. He hoped that the money would be used for dawah and reading out of scriptures for the three persons, and for cemetery-related expenses.\(^6\)

\(^5\) Yu and Lei, \textit{Zhongguo Huizu Jinshilu \textit{(Chinese Muslim Stele Records \textit{中国回族金石录})}, 284.
\(^6\) Ibid., 135.
The mosques, schools and the graveyard that had been maintained through endowments from within and outside the city, in turn, served as resting places for itinerant scholars and pilgrims throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. A 1751 trilingual Sino-Arabic-Persian epitaph, for instance, commemorates a certain “Hajji Mahmud ibn al-Hajji Muhammad Afandi Rumi.”57 The epitaph begins with the Quranic verse: “Every soul will taste death. Then to Us will you be returned” (29:57). A hadith follows: “whoever dies a stranger or in a strange land dies a martyr.”58 We find out that Hajji Mahmud Rumi, a traveler from Ottoman domains, fell ill while performing the pilgrimage (ziyāra) to Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās, and thus stayed in “Masjid Darkahah” in the following year. He passed away two years after arriving in Canton. The short one sentence in Persian writes that “Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās (may God be pleased with him) deceased in the month of Dhul Hijjah, on the twenty-seventh.”59

57 Zhong Yuanxiu et al., Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu, 97.
58 قال النبي عليه السلام من مات غربا فقد مات شهيدا
The specifics of his biography and journeys are not clear. Yet, the epitaph of “Hajji” Muhammad suggests the presence of segmented routes between west Asia and coastal China, or between Mecca and Canton. In fact, Ma Laichi (1681~?) from Hezhou (Linxia) is known to have had departed to Mecca in 1728 through Canton – traveling to Siam, Malacca, Aden, Mocha, Jeddah, and Mecca over the course of two years. Upon
return, he founded the Sufi Khufiyya-Qadriyya order (Huasi menhuan). He did not, however, leave a detailed account of his travels.\textsuperscript{60}

While Canton would have hosted scholars and pilgrims heading to and from Mecca in the 18th century, the two Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860) radically transformed the routes and accessibility of travels between Mecca and different parts of China. Following the Opium Wars and the opening of multiple treaty ports, Canton, together with the newly built Hong Kong, became a part of British imperial shipping networks along coastal China and the Indian Ocean. Here, the pilgrimage account of the famous scholar Ma Dexin (馬德新 1794-1874) from Yunnan merits our attention. It is the first known account that shows the position that Canton came to hold as a major node for travel networks to Mecca immediately following the first Opium War (1839-1842). Ma Dexin’s course of journey, mostly along Ottoman territories and British suzerainties, was transcribed and published by his disciple in Chinese, with Arabic names for proper nouns (1861). The account provides information on the points of transit, dates of travel, and the costs over the sea route to Mecca, followed by a brief explanation of overland routes through Xinjiang, suggesting the beginning of the popularization of pilgrimage travels.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{60} Ding Shiren (丁士仁) and Ma Bin (马斌), “‘Tianfang Xixingji’ yu Ma Laichi Chaojin qiu xue guocheng zhong de jige wenti (Records of westward journey to Tianfang’ and a few issues concerning Ma Laichi’s course of pilgrimage and pursuit of learning),” unpublished manuscript.

\textsuperscript{61} For a brief summary of Ma Dexin’s pilgrimage account and its significance as an indicator of wider availability of the pilgrimage from China, Kristen Petersen, \textit{Islam in China}, 111-121; For the impact of Ma
Ma Dexin had left Yunnan in 1841 in the middle of the first Opium War and returned in 1846 after its end, using a mix of old and new routes. He traveled through Sipsongbanna (southernmost tip of Yunnan province) with caravan merchants and sailed along the Irrawaddy River, transiting in Ava and Yangon (Rangoon). From Yangon he proceeded to Calcutta, Ceylon, Malabar, Socotra, Aden, Mocha, Hodeida, Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina; after the pilgrimage to Mecca, he sojourned in Cairo, Alexandria, Istanbul, Cyprus, and Jerusalem. It was only in Istanbul in 1845 that he learned of the outbreak of the First Opium War (1839-1842) in Canton, through British news relayed to him by an Ottoman minister. The next year, he took the sea route to Canton from Mecca to return to Yunnan.

Although British commercial interests and military power played critical roles in regulating maritime mobility in the nineteenth century following the defeat of Napoleon (1815), British imperial presence in the Indian Ocean also stimulated new networks of exchanges while amplifying existing ones. The hosts of Ma Dexin’s sojourns, when he

Dexin’s travels on his espousal of orthodoxy and criticism of Shi’ism and Sufi practices China’s Islam after his return, as well as his involvement in the Panthay Rebellion after the pilgrimage, Jianping Wang, “The Opposition of a Leading Akhund to Shi’a and Sufi Shaykhs in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China,” Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review E-Journal No. 12 (September 2014).

62 Ma Dexin (馬德新), Chaojin Tuji 朝觐途記, trans. Ma Anli 馬安禮 (Unidentified: Unidentified, 1861), copy kept in Princeton Library, 10.

mentioned them, were local dignitaries and institutions. In Rangoon, for instance, he had to unexpectedly spend five months (February to July 1842), waiting for the storms in the Indian Ocean to subside before he could board a ship bound for Jeddah. He stayed in the house of a Surat person named “Mawla Hāshim” which hints that he briefly became a part of the longstanding community of Gujarati Muslims in Rangoon that had forged extensive mercantile networks between western coasts of India and Burma before and after British colonial rule after the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26).

Similarly, during his second visit to Mecca for ‘umrah in 1846, he stayed in the house of a Jāwi (zhuowei 卓威, جاوى ) person named Ahmed Mushfa’ near the Gate of ‘Umrah in the middle of a deadly cholera in Mecca, thereby tapping into historic networks of pilgrimage and scholarship between the Hejaz and Southeast Asia. And Ma Dexin was not alone. A Shaanxi person “Ayub” had stayed together in the same place. Ayub had wanted to accompany him back to China but fell gravely ill and in the end, lost his life to the cholera. Leaving him behind, Ma Dexin headed to Jeddah with the


assistance from Ahmed Mushfa’, and sailed eastwards by the way of Hodeida, Karachi, Kerala (Alappuzha), Aceh, Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and Canton.66

While the formation of Singapore was intimately tied to British commercial interests in China and Southeast Asia in competition against the Dutch, it also offered Ma Dexin and future Chinese Muslim pilgrims a space of encounters with Ḥadrāmi Arab diaspora in the emporium. In Singapore, Ma Dexin stayed in the house of “Syed Omar ﺳﯿﺪ ﻋﻤﺮ” whom he noted as the son of “ہارون جنید” from the family of Junayd ﺗﺤﺮﺮ. Ma Dexin described Sayyed Omar as a wise man from Hadhramaut who had lived in Singapore for three decades, who was engaged in prosperous trade and possessed abundant religious scriptures.67 From this portrayal, Ma Dexin most likely sojourned with Syed Omar al-Junayd (1792-1852), who had been a part of vast diaspora networks between Hadhramaut of southern Yemen and across the Indian Ocean as an established trader. Al-Junayd family had been based in Palembang for business in Dutch East Indies since around 1750 and had quickly relocated to Singapore soon after its founding in 1819 by Stamford Raffles as a British trading post.68 For about nine months in Singapore, Ma Dexin read the books in Syed Omar’s possession and studied astronomy.

66 Ibid., 16.
67 Ibid., 17.
Transit in Canton was an extension of the chains of ports and social institutions that had mediated Ma Dexin’s pilgrimage journey. Canton lay at the midpoint of the circulations between Mecca and Yunnan, connecting the ports of the Indian Ocean with those of the Pearl River. In 1848, Ma Dexin left from Singapore to Canton on board the ship named “Dayaram Mayaram١٨,١٨” the shipmaster of which he specified as a non-Muslim Bengali.١٨ During the month-long sojourn, he stayed in Haopan mosque, one of the five main mosques in the city. Near the mosque was a foreign firm (yanghang 洋行) headed by a person named Ja’far جعفر, an “Anbayi ﯽانپایی” person who had lived there for one hundred days. He then returned to Yunnan through tributaries of the Pearl River (Zhaoqing 肇慶, Wuzhou 梧州, Xunzhou 潟州, Nanning 南寧 and “Beisai” 北賽/白色).٢١٧ Ma Dexin identified two sea routes for the pilgrimage to Mecca: one through Ava and Yangon, through which he sailed westwards; and another from Beise (Baise in

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١٨ Ma Dexin, Chaojin Tuji, 18
١٨ Ibid., 18
westernmost Guangxi Province), traversable to Canton through the Pearl River, through which he returned eastwards.\footnote{Ibid., 18-9.}

**Figure 10: Pilgrimage route of Ma Dexin, 1841-1846.**

Did Ma Dexin notice the tomb of the Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās? It is impossible to know. But what is clear from the steles of the late 19th century is that after winding down of the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), sojourning scholars between Mecca and western China from different geographic and religious backgrounds utilized the religious institutions in Canton as places of temporary residence. ‘Abdullah ibn Sha’bān al-Makkī was a “follower of Shāf‘ī madhab and a propagator of Ṭarīqah Shādhiḥī (Sufi order),”\footnote{Zhong Yuanxiu et al., Guangzhou Yisilan Guji Yanjiu, 149.} who passed away in Canton in 1889 at the age of 46 and was buried in the
graveyard of the Companion Waqqās. He was a student of (al-‘azīz al-rāshid) Muhammad Qāsim al-Makki. The epitaph states: “The place of his birth and home had been in honorable Mecca, and the place of his death and burial was in the strange land of China.” The Arabic inscription states that he had arrived overland, and reached Canton, Nanjing, and Gansu to spread his teachings; the Chinese version describes him as a “sage (xianxian)” from “western lands of Mecca (xiyu manke)” who arrived from “western lands (xiyu)” in Canton in 1886 through the seas, and having traveled around Jiangnan, Henan, Shaanxi, and Gansu to spread the tariqa. Returning to Canton in 1888, he is said to have garnered great respect and welcome from his students, teaching them tirelessly day and night at a school. Unfamiliar soil, water, and food, however, made him fall ill.

Also buried in the Companion’s graveyard were scholars from Hezhou, perhaps as they were returning from the pilgrimage journey through the sea route. Ma Xiaoxian was a scholar from Hezhou’s Yayou village who had undertaken the pilgrimage “to the House of God (beit Allah),” and passed away in a school in Canton in 1899 at the age of eighty. His son and nephew together erected a Sino-Arabic epitaph in his honor. Similarly, Fa Mingdao or Muhammad Omar of Hezhou was a “scholar of law (fiqh),” a

References:

73 Ibid., 149.
74 Ibid., 152.
75 Ibid., 157.
76 甘肅河州牙由人
77 156.
“hajji” and a “murshid.” An epitaph was written in 1911, expressing hopes that God would make his tomb the highest place in paradise. We find out that he had been born in 1854, and that Hezhou’s elderly, the leaders of the Haopan mosque, and his two sons established the epitaph in his honor.

2.2. Shanghai: Convergences and Divergences of Entrepreneurs, Scholars, Politicians

Thus far, we have examined the makings and re-makings of Canton as a regional sacred place, or a little Mecca, rendered possible through confluences of merchants, patrons, sojourning scholars and local mosque and graveyard managers. Formulations of historiographical narratives on the arrival and burial of the Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, which were transferred back and forth between paper and stelae, were critical for keeping the Companion as the symbol of Muslims in China. The icon of the Companion established temporal and genealogical connections between them and the Prophet, and spatial ties with the abstract locale of the “Heavenly Square,” or the seat of his governance, the “country of Medina.” These were processes that unfolded through long centuries of history, which were intimately tied to the ebbs and flows of Canton’s position as an infrastructural hub. With the return of Canton as the mediator of maritime networks across South China Seas and the Indian Ocean in the 18th and 19th centuries,
the city’s social and religious institutions served as resting places for the traveling scholars and pilgrims who had undertaken journeys to and from Mecca.

We now move to Shanghai, the new transport hub of the late nineteenth century. While Canton continued to retain its infrastructural and religious significance, twin transformations in transportation and sociopolitical order in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fundamentally reshaped the routes and meanings of travels across China and the Indian Ocean. British victory from the two Opium Wars, backed by new artilleries, steamships, the logic of free trade and opium from India, crumbled the Canton system through which Qing China had controlled foreign trade. After the First Opium War (1839–42), the Treaty of Nanjing (1843) designated Canton, Amoy (Xiamen), Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai as five treaty ports. Most of these ports had been historic centers of maritime commerce and migration, but they now constituted bridgeheads for European businesses’ navigation and trade that were protected by extraterritoriality.

Critically, the Treaty of Nanjing (1860) following the Second Opium War (1856-1860), besides adding more treaty ports, opened the Yangzi River for foreign trade and navigation (1861). In anticipation of the shipping boom, all kinds of ships, especially steamships, flocked to Shanghai.\(^80\) Externally, the regularization of steamship routes in

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\(^{80}\) Anne Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-Colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-Building in China, 1860-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 64. British and U.S. firms such as Jardine, Matheson & Company and Russell & Company, which had exported Indian opium and European textiles to China and imported high-value commodities such as teas and silk under the Canton system and the years after the First Opium War, established steamship companies.
the latter half of the nineteenth century culminated in the opening of the Suez Canal (1869). Furthermore, post-1895 railway projects that connected north and south, which intersected with the Yangzi River at Hankou, expanded the range of places to which Shanghai was connected, streamlining and expediting travels across networks of treaty ports on board steamships. Shanghai, situated in the eastern terminus of the Yangzi River, came to serve as the key intermediary node that interlinked different parts within Asia, including inland China.\textsuperscript{82}

As such, Shanghai instigated confluences of merchants from the neighboring regions who sought new opportunities post the Opium War, refugees from the Taiping Rebellion, gentry whose career prospects were lost with the abolition of the imperial examination system (1905), and persons arriving in the city as a gateway to abroad – including the increasing traffic of pilgrims bound to Mecca. Expedited flows of merchants, pilgrims, and donations to Shanghai led to the construction and re-

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{82} While numerous works have studied Shanghai as a place and a prism for observing interactions between China and the west, or semi-colonialism and modernity in various realms, the role of Shanghai in interlinking different parts of China with geographies across the seas has garnered less attention. Recent research, however, has recast the city as a critical trans-local or transnational node where different populations from Asia such as Sikh and Korean diasporas dwelled for extended periods of time and harbored their passion for arts, films, and revolutions back home. Han Inhye, “The Afterlives of Korean An Chunggyun in Republican China: From Sinocentric Appropriation to a Rupture in Nationalism” Cross-Currents E-Journal No.17 (December 2015). Cao Yin, From Policemen to Revolutionaries: A Sikh Diaspora in Global Shanghai, 1885-1945 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017). Cao Yin builds on a body of literature on Sikh diaspora in Shanghai, most notably Madhavi Thampi, “Indian Soldiers, Policemen and Watchmen in China in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” China Report 35 (1999): 403-438; Claude Markovits, “Indian Communities in China, 1842-1953” eds., Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Madhavi Thampi, Indians In China 1800-1949 (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2005).
construction of mosque-education complexes which, in turn, mediated and amplified the channels of circulations.

2.2.1. A Pilgrim’s Journey

An account of pilgrimage by Ma Lü’an (馬履安 1843-1932), who undertook the pilgrimage journey from Chengdu to Mecca in early 1924, offers rare glimpses on the changed modes and duration of mobility between western China, Mecca and Shanghai and the layers of networks that connected these sites. A painter and a calligrapher, and a founder of the Girls’ School in Chengdu’s Huangcheng mosque 皇城清真寺, Ma Lü’an began the nine-month-long journey from Chengdu at the fragile age of eighty-three in January and returned in August, a month before the victory of the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl-Sa‘ūd over the Hejaz.

Despite his anxieties, when he set out, Ma Lü’an conceived of himself to be living fortunate times when the roads to Mecca were not as treacherous as several decades ago. He had been familiar with the travel accounts of Ma Dexin who, as I mentioned earlier, had departed from Yunnan Province through the Irrawaddy River and returned through the way of Canton. Ma Lü’an reflected that “the hardships written in the pilgrimage account of Ma Dexin had stirred in its readers awe and respect for him.” Yet, the account had also “intimidated him about the prospects of leaving for the pilgrimage.” Back then, the “high heavens and deep seas were poles apart.” The situation was now different. While Ma Dexin at times had to sleep in the open and bear frosty weather, and
reach his destination in nearly three years, the “ban on maritime travel was now lifted, and exchanges with places abroad became much more convenient. At every port, co-religionists came to welcome them, which also let them draw comparisons between one another.” Later, he arrived in al-Saqāf mosque in Singapore managed by the Saqāf family from Hadramaut of Southern Yemen, who assisted pilgrims from China with lodging and ship tickets. This led him to reflect that “Ma De Xin, too, had formed bonds of brotherhood with the ancestors (zuren 祖人) of Saqāf on his way back home from Mecca, nearly a hundred years ago.”

In post-imperial China divided into warlords’ fiefdoms, the path from Chengdu to Chongqing was a familiar but unpredictable one. Chongqing had become a treaty port in 1890 and became regularly connected with downriver ports through steamship transport in 1914. Ma Lü’an and his friend Shoushan 壽山 headed to Chongqing in

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86 By the time of his departure in the 1920s, Chengdu's neighboring city of Chongqing had constituted a critical node for the “Golden Route” in Upper Yangzi, over which British, Japanese, American and Chinese competed for greater shares of freight. Chongqing had been officially declared a treaty port in 1890, yet due to difficulties of navigation, it became a part of regular steam communication with Yangzi River’s downriver ports only in 1914. Anne Reinhardt, “‘Decolonisation’ on the Periphery: Liu Xiang and Shipping Rights Recovery at Chongqing, 1926–38,” The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 36, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 259–74, 263.
order to board a steamship to Shanghai, but until then, traveled on postal sail ships, stopping by multiple towns adjacent to the River for different lengths of time.

Turbulences from wars and bandits and levels of water and wind frequently delayed the arrival in Chongqing. Just before the very departure from Chengdu, the Sichuan provincial warlord Yang Sen had attacked the city. Ceaseless sounds of firing had terrified the residents. Ma Lü’an and Shoushan managed to leave only after Yang Sen’s takeover of the city, which ensured temporary peace. Less than halfway, when the ship temporarily docked in Nanxi 南溪 due to unexpected wind, a night telegram informed the passengers of a war in Luzhou 瀘州, the town situated midway between Chengdu and Chongqing. They had to stand by for about a week before sailing again. Upon reaching Luzhou, where Ma Lü’an offered food in front of his maternal grandmother’s grave, it was decided that it would be best to “wait for the path ahead to quiet down.”

Ma Lü’an was once again stuck, for almost a month. He and Shoushan temporarily stayed in a mosque, passing time and making friends using their skills in

<ref>Ma Zhentai (Lu An), “Tianfang Jicheng,” 431.</ref>
calligraphy and painting, and medical treatment. When they finally reached Chongqing, two months had passed since their departure from Chengdu.

The story was different once boarding the steamer in Chongqing. In twelve days, they were in Shanghai. Through the tunnel of Shanghai, Ma Lü’an and other passengers would enter the vast oceans, watching the color of the waters change into jadeite green.

The whole space of his travel between Chengdu, Chongqing, Shanghai, and Mecca had been connected through persons and institutions whose social ties extended beyond a single locality. Midway in the river port of Yichang in Hubei Province, upon hearing about the construction of a mosque in the outer city, he made a donation and

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88 以應酬字畫為事壽老診脈延請亦多. Ibid., 432.
gifted calligraphic writing. In Shanghai, greeting Ma Lu An were figures such as Ma Yitang (馬乙堂 1869-1930) and Jin Ziyun (金子雲 1869-1937) who helped him move his luggage to the western mosque (qingzhen xisi 清真西寺). Before beginning the journey, Ma Lü’an had exchanged letters with Jin Ziyun, a merchant and funder of Shanghai’s mosques, to inquire about the necessary transport costs. While staying in the mosque, the cohort took small pictures to complete passport applications. From Shanghai they would again board a ship, this time to head westward, via Fuzhou, Xiamen, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Colombo, Perim Island, onward to Jeddah and Mecca. Joining Ma Lü’an in Shanghai were two batches of pilgrims coming from northwestern Gansu and southwestern Yunnan Provinces, each numbering around forty, led respectively by the imams Hu Songshan (虎嵩山 1880-1955) and Yao and Sai Ahongs (姚阿洪 賽阿洪 – Yao Guangwen, Sai Wenhua 姚廣文, 賽文華), whom Ma Lu An could communicate with linguistically.

The sites of transit and travel were spaces of encounters and exchanges, wonders and discoveries. During the brief transfer in Hong Kong, Ma Lü’an stared in awe the island city’s wharf, botanical garden and amusement park. He climbed up a hill to gaze down the whole city, reflecting on the incredible transformation of the island from emptiness to the present state under British hands. For three days, he received the

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*Ibid., 430.
*Ibid., 440. The names of the pilgrims are listed in pages 465-468.
assistance of coreligionists Liu Yaoqing 劉耀卿 from Guangdong, who had managed his lodging’s kitchen and purchased in his stead the clothing for the hajj. Ma Lü’an also attended the reception held by the Xiexing Company 協興公司, an import-export business operated by Shanghai’s Muslim entrepreneurs that had branched out to Hong Kong and Colombo. He boarded on a third-class cabin from Hong Kong to Singapore, which made him observe the ill-treatment of Chinese (huaren) by foreigners (waiguoren), as well as modern toilet facilities for which he gave a lengthy description. In Singapore’s Saqāf mosque, he purchased the ticket for a hajj steamer, thereby becoming a part of the traffic from Southeast Asia to Jeddah that had been monopolized by the Saqāf family. Penang’s three-meter-long pinang trees, temperate climate, and fine water and soil surprised him, as did convenience of transport and the widespread use of Cantonese and Fujianese in the ports of the South China Seas. On the way to Ceylon, he listened to the Ningxia Imam Hu Songshan lecture about the need to standardize the monthly salary of religious imams and for them to not undertake any outside work, following the model of Shanghai’s western mosque. The desolateness of Perim Island on the way to Jeddah struck him, as did the scorching sun in Jeddah and Mecca.

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*Ibid.,* 444
Despite the unknown language and weather in Mecca, Ma Lü’an found resemblances of home in the city. The vendors around the gates of the Ka’ba that sold all kinds of things like dates, eaglewood, rice, vegetables, and toothbrush reminded him of the markets of Qingyang 青羊市 in Chengdu. The female and male schools in Mecca that students attended in the morning and afternoon, he remarked, were not unlike those of old-style private schools in China.96

His visceral experience of Mecca as a timeless place was independent of all other geopolitical circumstances of the Arabian Peninsula. “The Creator established the Heavenly Palace (Tianque 天闕) and the Heavenly Abode (Tianfang 天房),” or the Ka’ba, to have “ten thousand places to face towards and return to this place, from the start to the end,” he wrote. Mecca (Moke 墨克) was “the ancestral country (zuguo) of all under the heaven (Tianxia), and the Heavenly Hall (tiantang) was in the middle of the city of Mecca. All places faced it, akin to all parts of the body being directed towards the heart.”97 A temporary visit to Mecca, then, was a long-awaited homecoming.

Ma Lü’an was one of several dozens of persons from western China who transited in Shanghai on the way to Mecca, benefitting from the availability of mass transportation that simplified routes of travel. His entries bring to the fore, among other things, the contact zones that physical journeys to Mecca generated on the way and back,

96 Ibid., 448.
97 Ibid., 451-2.
which occupied most of the travel time. While the whole space of travel can be conceived as an interconnected zone, zooming into a central convergence point allows us to grasp the shape of the networks in the process of its formation. As we recall, Ma Lü’an had briefly stayed in the “western mosque” in Shanghai and encountered individuals clustered around it who mediated the flows of persons who congregated in Shanghai. ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi who opened this chapter, too, had not only transited in Shanghai but also studied in the western mosque. How did the individuals based in Shanghai interpret and utilize the circulatory channels of which they were part?

2.2.2. Western mosque: Convergences

In the words of Clifford Geertz, “the mosque, the market, and the school” in Muslim societies formed an “indissoluble triad, religious, economic and social at once, around which, in this place or the other, at that time or the other, a recognizably Muslim community, an ummah, could crystallize.”98 Mosques dispersed across China shared such functions and characteristics as communal and religious spaces. The western mosque in Shanghai, however, offers particularly evocative case to observe how a mosque in an international hub, rather than a stand-alone entity, was embedded in the trans-local and trans-regional circulations in terms of its construction and reconstruction, and production of ideas and historiographies within.

Behind the western mosque’s initial construction (1917) and expansion (1924) were confluences of merchants from the neighboring cities who sought opportunities in post-Opium War Shanghai, refugees from the Taiping Rebellion, and the increasing pilgrimage traffic to Mecca that Shanghai came to mediate. The mosque was also a site of scholarly activities, where its religious leaders and managers initiated a discussion group, a program for modern schooling and a short-lived publishing industry. Articles that resulted from such engagements, in turn, suggest that the expanded connectivity across China to Mecca generated local controversies, which strengthened the argument on the need to return to the Quran and the hadith.

The initial construction of the western mosque, like others in the city, depended on donors who acquired wealth by conducting small to mid-scale trade, with Shanghai as their base. Shanghai’s Muslim communities by the turn of the twentieth century consisted mostly of immigrants from neighboring cities, such as Yangzhou, Zhenzhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing. This reflected the overall demographics in Shanghai, where, by 1927, residents born outside the city accounted for 72 to 83 percent of its population. With the aim of protecting their common interests, the migrants constructed or rebuilt several

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mosques through collective donations; established Boards of Trustees and schools inside the mosques; and managed public cemeteries for the city’s Muslim populations. The first mosque to be built in the municipal of Shanghai was the Caoxiewan mosque, where many from Nanjing gathered (1852). Subsequently, Zhejianglu mosque, also known as “Foreign” mosque (1870), started as a cemetery for foreign Muslims and was erected under the leadership of “Ali” from India who raised funds from Hebei and Hubei Provinces. Built in the same year, Fuyoulu mosque 福佑路清真寺, located in the northern part of the old city, attracted the largest number of gatherers and became a vibrant transit place for pilgrims. It drew three to four hundred people for Friday prayers, becoming the biggest mosque in Shanghai during the late Qing.101 The aim behind the establishment of the Board of Trustee in 1910 inside it, whose members were elected into their positions, was explicitly to promote common interests of coreligionists who increasingly gathered in Shanghai for commerce, and to manage religious affairs.102

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101 Wang Jianping (王建平), Jindai Shanghai Yisilan Wenhua Cunzhao: Meiguo Hafo Daxue Suocang Shangguan Ziliao Ji Yanjiu (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 85.
102 This was repeatedly emphasized in the preface of the book that the Board of Trustee published in 1910. Wang Jianping has transcribed the entire text, which he found in Harvard University Yenching Library’s Claude Pickens collection, as an attachment to his book. See “Shanghai Qingzhensi Chengli Dongshihui Zhi 上海清真寺成立董事汇志 (1910),” in Wang Jianping (王建平), Jindai Shanghai Yisilan Wenhua Cunzhao: Meiguo Hafo Daxue Suocang Shangguan Ziliao Ji Yanjiu (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 110–83, 114. The backdrop behind the establishment of the Board of Trustee for Islamic Affairs inside the Fuyoulu mosque was the conflict between Suzhou and Nanjing merchants regarding assumption of responsibility over defunct merchandises. Adding to the tension were the monetary contributions that Nanjing traders, almost half of them Muslims, were requested to make to local gods. Wang Jianping, Jindai Shanghai Yisilanjiao wenhua cunzhao, 79.
The western mosque (qingzhen xisi), also known as the Xiaotaoyuan mosque 小桃園清真寺, was built in 1917 to complement Fuyoulu mosque in hosting the increasing number of pilgrims and merchants in Shanghai. The important funder for the mosque was the merchant Jin Ziyun (1869-1937), with whom Ma Lu An had communicated before the onset of his journey. Originally from Nanjing, Jin Ziyun had followed his father to Shanghai at a young age and managed business, specializing in selling jewelry items made of jade and pearl. Since the first decade of the twentieth century, he made periodic monetary contributions to Muslim communities in the city. In 1909, Jin Ziyun had participated in establishing the Board of Trustee housed inside Shanghai’s Fuyoulu mosque and donated to initiate a school inside it. He made a greater amount of donation.
to the community several years later in 1917, when he paid 12,000 silver yuan to purchase 2.4 mu and endowed land to build the western mosque. Those coming from northwestern provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, and Xinjiang in particular frequently stayed in the western mosque. ¹⁰³

Although the western mosque started by drawing in persons from nearby institutions in the city, it expanded by pulling in more resources from faraway places within and outside China. The mosque managers collected donations for its expansion in the 1920s and erected a stele as a record. A few years later, they transferred the rubbings of the stele into a short booklet and included a handwritten transcription of the stele, in order to distribute it to the donors. ¹⁰⁴

This book opens a window into both the geographic reach of the charities that the mosque leaders managed to collect horizontally and the narrative framings on the mosque that established vertical historiographical connections between the western mosque and the spatial-temporal starting point of Islam. Re-discoveries of history offered a symbolic language and a real source of material assets for the western mosque’s managers to garner support across dispersed geographies. The conceptual positioning of the western

¹⁰³ Ibid., 16-30.
¹⁰⁴ Jiang Guobang (蒋国榜), Shanghai Qingzhen Xisiji Yi Juan (Shanghai Western Mosque Records, First Volume 上海清真西寺記一卷) (Shanghai, 1933), copy kept in Shanghai Municipal Library.
mosque, a relatively newly built one, occurs within the spectrum of the centuries-old mosques and the cities in which they had been situated.

The narrative on the western mosque taps into the piece of history on the Companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās in Canton, with whom we are now familiar. The text on the stele begins by referencing “Sage Waqqās (Xianxian Wan Ge Shi 先賢宛葛士)” who had come from “western lands” (xiyu) in the period of the Sui Dynasty, bearing with him the scriptures of the Quran (Gulan Zhenjiang 古蘭真經). His arrival, and the establishment of the Huaisheng Mosque in Guangdong that followed were starting points of Islam (huijiao) and of mosque construction in Eastern Soil (dongtu). Also written in historical records, it emphasized, were “other famous mosques such as Jingjue mosque (淨覺禮拜寺 Nanjing) and the Xi’an Ancient Mosque (長安古寺).” The existence of these centuries-old mosques testified to the long presence of Islam and the practice of mosque building in China, a point that the narrative did not neglect to stress.

In this context, Shanghai’s western mosque comes to represent a reproduction of longstanding practices of building and re-building mosques in China’s dispersed geographies, and simultaneously, a haven for Muslim communities in coastal China in times of social fragmentation during what is known as the warlord period in post-imperial China. The booklet explains that while the northern mosque (meaning Fuyoulu mosque) had been present in the city, the increasing number of people who sojourned (qiao) for trade (shang) and for travel (lü) made its space insufficient. The western mosque was
thus constructed, with gracious contribution from Jin Ziyun, who made additional donations for its refurbishment. To make up for lacking funds, the two leaders Ha Guanjin 哈觀津 (Ha Shaofu 哈少夫, 1856-1934) and Ma Yitang (1869-1930) – who had helped Ma Lu An carry his luggage into the western mosque – went around different places to collect more money. With such a “great responsibility upon their shoulders,” they arrived Jiangning (Nanjing) and Hankou, and sought to head over to Henan and Beijing; their plan was overturned, however, due to military blockage. They thus went to all directions in and outside China for three years, “places of worship and sanctuaries in Islam, [and]…old mosques/temples written in historical records.” Because Shanghai “directly succeeded Guangdong, with similar oceanic climate and patterns of tide, and is prosperous,” many who had accumulated wealth in Shanghai “aspired to bestow their properties for posterity.”

While a sense of continuity pervades the narrative in the western mosque’s self-description, the organizers of the mosque were a part of a new, eclectic group of people between state and society. As economic circumstances became lucrative for local businesses especially during and after World War I owing to decreased competition from western firms, a social class of Chinese entrepreneurs and professionals turned themselves into vibrant commercial and political actors in Shanghai during their “golden

105 Ibid., 1
106 Ibid., 1.
According to Jean Chun Oi and Nara Dillon, such people in Shanghai and other cities in China were “too heterogeneous to be usefully considered a social class.” This “elite,” in other words, was “composed of local gentry, government officials, compradors, banks, merchants, industrialists, gangsters, intellectuals, artists, professionals, and partisan cadres, to name just a few of its constituents.” Such figures maintained their social networks through wealth and social prestige, which could lend support to state projects, contrary to the notion that views state and networks as diametrically opposed to one another.

Chinese Muslim entrepreneurs in leadership positions, such as Ha Shaofu and Ma Yitang who went around different cities in efforts to gather donations, may be conceptualized as a part of the group described by Oi and Dillion. Ha Shaofu, for instance, was a merchant in jade/pearl crafts and an expert collector of antiques and arts. In 1910, he had started to serve as the Vice-Chairman of the Board inside the Fuyoulu mosque and made multiple monetary contributions for communal use both during and after his tenure. In the 1910s and 20s, he utilized his social networks to introduce about four hundred newly settled Muslim migrants from Hubei, Anhui, Shandong and Henan provinces to jobs in various fields. These posts included positions as workers in a Japanese-owned cotton factory; drivers for trams; ticket-sellers; and constables at patrol

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stations in the International Concession Settlements. He made donations to the Fuyoulu mosque; Board of Directors inside it; Dunhua Elementary School and Shanghai Islamic School in the western mosque; and Program for Han-Hui Common Interests.109

Similarly, Ma Yitang (1869-1930)'s sphere of activities crossed geographic and social boundaries. Ma Yitang engaged in import and export of handicrafts and light industries between the port of Shanghai and inner China along the Yangzi River. Originally from Nanjing, Ma Yitang ran a trading enterprise in various goods such as fans and silk products.110 He had assisted the opening of the Ma Yulong department store in Chengdu in the early 1900s, the first of its kind in the city. The store’s founder Ma Yulong, originally from Nanjing, had started the business in the 1890s by selling hand-made fans in Chongqing and Chengdu, which were produced in his hometown in Nanjing and brought to Chongqing — first on wooden ships then on steamships along the Yangzi River, with Yichang of Hubei as a transitional point. The enterprise expanded, and three branches in Chengdu started selling all kinds of products brought from Shanghai.

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110 Yang Rongbin, Minguo Shiqi Shanghai Huizu Shangren Qunti Yanjiu, 21.
On the other hand, his collaborator Ma Yitang was responsible for managing the business in Shanghai and transporting the goods to Chengdu. In Shanghai, Ma Yitang also founded and headed the Commercial Association of Shanghai Sojourners (Lu Hui Shang Bang Xie Hui). Like others of his cohort, Ma Yitang not only conducted commerce but was invested in religious and communal work. He played an important role in preserving the Chengdu Mosque and signing the contract for the land for Chongqing Jiangnan mosque. He is recorded as having contributed 30 yuan to Fuyoulu mosque in 1910 and served as a member of its Board of Trustees. Besides funding the western mosque, as we saw above, he also donated to the Muslim cemetery in Shanghai and helped found Hanximen Muslim (Qingzhen) Girls School in Nanjing.

Native-place associations in Shanghai that sojourners from other provinces established critically shaped urban society and national identity. For entrepreneurs and scholars of Islamic background who coalesced to promote common commercial and religious interests, however, belonging to a trans-local religion in both imagined and concrete ways could cross-cut and surpass attachments to native home places, thus

112 Yang Rongbin, 21. Ma Yitang’s epitaph that narrates these works is currently kept in Jingjue mosque in Nanjing.
113 “Shanghai Qingzhensi Chengli Dongshihui Zhi,” 132.
114 Bryna Goodman, Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
opening new vistas of connections and networks within and outside the tenuous, war-stricken territories of China.

Recurrent congregations of sojourners create religious and social institutions that are sustained by individual donations, which in turn facilitate channels of circulation between places that are far distant from the location of the institution. This has been a feature not unique to Muslims in China, but a historic one shared between Muslim societies across vast geographies in Asia. Islamic endowments of varying scales and forms “have created or converged with infrastructural networks,” and “provided circuits of mobility among different social, political and geographical spaces.”

The list of patrons who contributed donations for the refurbishment of the western mosque in 1924 shows the confluence of previously segmented Islamic networks across China in the inter-war Shanghai, in which a much greater number of people could partake. As the mosque was based in Shanghai, about half of the total donations came from individuals based in the city. Where did the other half come from? The very first person to be written on the list of patrons, and one of the biggest donors, was Ma Yunting (Ma Fuxiang). As we saw from Chapter 1, Ma Fuxiang and the other Chinese Muslim

\[\text{116 Jiang Guobang, Shanghai Qingzhen Xisiji Yi Juan, 2-10. Besides Jin Ziyun who initially endowed the land and provided additional funding for the mosque’s expansion, Ha Shaofu and Ma Yitang donated around 3,000 silver yuan respectively. The two figures also gathered 3,000 silver yuan in Hankou. Ibid., 7.}\]
\[\text{117 Ibid., 1.}\]
clans with “Ma” surnamed had risen to prominence from their hometown in Hezhou, taking control over Gansu, Qinghai, Suiyuan and Ningxia Provinces following a series of “Muslim uprisings” in mid to late-nineteenth century. Ma Fuxiang, in line with several other religious projects and publications that he sponsored in eastern urban centers following the fall of the Qing Empire, contributed a total of 1904 yuan and 70 silver liang to Shanghai’s western mosque. By then, he had been serving as the governor of Suiyuan Province (1921-1925) under the Beiyang government, before joining the Nationalist Party in 1928. His calligraphies still hang on the walls of the western mosque.

As important a political figure as he was, Ma Fuxiang was nevertheless only one among the long list of contributors from diverse regions. In sum, the individuals from different places in Gansu Province (in places such as Ningxia, Ningbao, Daohe (Linxia) and Lanzhou) donated roughly 5,400 yuan and 2,506 silver liang, which likely came through the hands of pilgrims passing by Shanghai. Other regions of donations’ origin included Beijing, Shandong, Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Zhejiang, Yangzhou, Suzhou, Songjiang, Wuhu (芜湖 Anhui), Canton, Jiaxing, Sichuan (Chengdu and Wanxian), Chongqing, and Hankou. Ma Yitang’s partner Ma Yulong, the initiator of the department store, collected a couple hundred silver yuan in Chongqing and Chengdu. The

118 As a point of comparison, Ma Lu An stated that the round trip pilgrimage journey from Chengdu cost him 600 yuan plus 20 yangyuan for the fare between Chengdu and Shanghai. Ma Lü’an, Tianfang Jicheng, 430.
aforementioned pilgrim Ma Lü’an, who journeyed to Mecca in 1924 from Chengdu, also donated twenty yuan.\textsuperscript{119}

Portions of the donations came from across the South China Seas. Anonymous contributors in Hong Kong handed 1,667 yuan. In Singapore, Ali Kaf, Saqāf E-Mo-Mu (Imam), “Ban-De-Li Yanghang,” Saqāf Omani, and in Penang, Mr. “Pinang,” Qadar and Ali donated 783 yuan in total. The travel expenses to Hong Kong, Singapore and Penang itself were paid for from the western mosque’s coffer, amounting to 966 yuan.\textsuperscript{120}

\subsection*{2.2.3. Controversies}

An explicit aim behind the reconstruction of the western mosque was precisely to accommodate the growing traffic of religious travelers. The splendidly expanded mosque, it writes, could accommodate students, and travelers heading to the “Heavenly Square” (\textit{Chao Tianfangzhe} 朝天方者) -- now used to refer to Mecca in its literal place. The mosque would also “ensure the wellbeing of persons who were going to southern oceans (Hainan) in reverence for the Huaisheng mosque and the Fragrant Tomb (\textit{Xiangfen} 香墳, referring to the Tomb of the Echo),” suggesting that some of the travelers passing through Shanghai were making their homage to the burial site of Waqqās in Canton. Other mosques in Hangzhou and Quanzhou were in sorry states, to the extent that there were rumors that “the Qilin mosque (麒麟寺, Ashāb mosque) in Quanzhou was being

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 9.
used to raise livestock” and the parts of Hangzhou’s Fenghuang mosque 鳳凰寺 had fallen down. In this period of “breakdown of social and legal order” wherein mosques were being used to “house soldiers and feed horses,” religious faith (xinyang 信仰) could prompt an evildoer to have fear, and for a fool to have drive (mian 勉); one would revitalize morality day by day (rixin qide 日新其德).121

At the same time, the narrative on the stele insinuates the divisions within the heterogeneous communities of Muslims in China. The task of the western mosque in times of crises, it wrote, was to “not hold onto differences” between “the old and new” teachings (buzhi xinjiu 不持新舊) that would invite attacks from other religions, but rectify religion, promote education and cultivate persons of talent to safeguard the world in times of its rise and fall (zhengjiao changxueye zhibei dan rencai weishi 正教昌學業植倍誕人才為世). This would prevent the disintegration of the “foundation that Waqqās had built by coming to the east and establishing teachings.”122

The point about not holding onto differences between the “old and new” in fact shows protrusion of clashes between the preceding generation of religious leaders and the new ones, fueled by trans-local and trans-regional mobility. A1926 article published under Shanghai’s Chinese Muslim Scholarly Society explicitly addressed this issue. The

121 Ibid., 1.
122 Ibid., 1.
person who had started the periodical in 1925 was Ha Decheng (哈德誠 1888-1943) from Shaanxi, a founding member of the Xiexing Company enterprise and also a scholar-educator who established the Islamic Teachers School in the western mosque in 1928.

I quote the article at length to show the simultaneity of figurative and real linkages between Mecca and different parts of China that it reflects, the problems that increased physical connectivity caused, and the perceived role of the Quran and the hadith that would offer a guideline for heterogeneous Muslim communities in China:

“…Undesirable customs are an obstruction to the righteous teachings. This impediment harms the righteous religion, as the clouds muddle the day and night and the mud clogs the rivers…Recall that the ancient teachings [Islam] began with Adam’s reception of orders. The Way was then transmitted onto Isa, continuing without substitution. Six hundred years following Isa’s death, the righteous religion declined, and heresies began to spread. The True Lord had the Prophet Muhammad be born, to rid of heterodoxies and clarify the righteous Way… The Way took a stronghold in Arabia (A-la-bo) and was gradually transmitted to eastern lands afterward, and entered China starting from the Tang period. From the time of Waqqās who received the order of the Prophet to come to China to spread the teachings, it has been more than a thousand years…Because the times were distant and far, Muslims [in China] did not lack of errors. Even the country is distinct within itself, customs are different from one another, and people are scattered; it is difficult to abide by exemplary teachings…Previously, navigation did not connect [different places]; those going back and forth Arabia were extremely little; and nothing could be transmitted. [People] were limited to preserving habits of the local area…afterward, navigation became convenient, interactions relatively increased, and things heard and seen became comparatively exact.”

The article then moves on to describe the vehement debates that followed the re-
connection of Sino-Arabian ties. “…When one desired to change the ways that things
were done in the past, many clung onto previous ways and thought that changing to the
new was wrong. If A went onto a pilgrimage and devised imitations of the rules of the
holy lands, B who resided in one area aspired to conserve that area’s precedents. B
considered A to be new, A considered B to be old, and thence started the two persons’
contestations. And the many people who followed the two parties each held onto what
they considered to be right…It was not possible to resolve the division between the old
and the new; the ‘new’ had went onto a path not undertaken by his predecessors, whereas
the ‘old’ followed the ways familiar to the people in that locality.”

The way to resolve the imminent conflicts across the country, according to the
author, was to follow the scriptures to clarify the teachings – like a “steamship would
adhere to sail guidelines.” The writer concludes: “Recently in Xinjiang, because of
contestations between the old and the new, there was a serious case of massacre.
Presently in every province, there is a similar trend, and it is difficult to avoid the fire of
calamities…If the old and the new talked and discussed with one another in private, and
the legal codes were not sufficient, they would only need to rely on the heavenly
scriptures (the Quran) and have the Hadith as a source of verification. The standards of
Islam are all there. The heavenly scriptures are like what a line of course is for a
steamship. Steamship goes to all kinds of seas, but without a course, it would not be able
to settle its direction. Islam is dispersed in all locations and directions; if it is not for the heavenly scriptures it cannot display the paths to be followed.”

The analogy between the course of directions for steamships and that for divided Muslim communities in China shows the impact that steamship navigation had on accelerating mobility between different parts of China and Mecca, and on shaping the perceptions of people who inhabited the space of transit and travel. Moreover, it brings to the fore the perceived role of the Quran and the hadith in straightening, and therefore eliminating, differences and disputes amongst Muslim communities in China that arose due to generational shift and increased connectivity within and outside China through pilgrimage travels and circulating print media.

The proclaimed middle ground, as hinted by the article above, was to do away with the division between the “old” and “new,” promote unity and rely on the Quran as the source of truth. It is not a coincidence that the 1920s witnessed full-scale attempts on the part of Chinese Muslims to translate the Quran into Chinese from the start to the end. Open access to authoritative texts transforms knowledge from an esoteric to a public one, and as hinted in the article, overturns the preceding hierarchy of social relations. If the map for steamships facilitated horizontal travels across different ports, primary reliance on the Quran and the hadith, approachable to all, was to unify dispersed Muslim communities across geographies horizontally and across time vertically, to the period of

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124 Ibid., 17-18.
the Prophet. The task of rectifying religion and shedding heterodoxies also dovetailed well with the series of anti-superstitious campaigns that the states of late imperial and Republican China undertook.

What were the issues of debate at hand? Open attacks pervaded the periodicals that were published in Canton in the 1920s when state censorship on published materials was not pervasive. These evolved around previous imams’ credentials and practices – their knowledge of the Quran and linguistic skills (whether that be Arabic or Mandarin Chinese), the customs of accepting compensation for reading out the Quran in family homes, designating a set amount of salary for religious scholars, and old imams’ (un)awareness of the tremendous social change that had been unfolding.¹²⁵ The articles were often directed against the preceding generation of scholars, and the extent of controversies even led to the closing of some of the periodicals. The mainstream religious leaders and writers could use the simple logic of basing scriptures as the standard of judgment and ridding heterodoxies could be framed flexibly to downplay intra-group differences.

Demands for political representation in new regimes were another factor that strengthened the rhetoric on the unity of Muslims in China. With the fall of the Qing

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¹²⁵ These issues are prominent in articles that were published in Canton’s Islamic periodicals, collected in Ma Qiang(马强), ed., Minguo Shiqi Guangzhou Musilin Baokan Ziliao Jilu (Collection of Articles from Guangzhou’s Muslim Periodicals from the Republican Period 民国广州穆斯林报刊资料辑录) 1928-1949 (Yinchuan: Ningxia ren min chu ban she, 2004).
Empire in 1911, the revolutionary leader Sun Yatsen proclaimed the principle of the “Republic of Five Nations” – Han, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Muslims. This was an ideological gesture to keep the Qing borderland territories, which had been undergoing semi-colonial occupation by the British, French, Japanese and Russian Empires. The proclamation also raised expectations on the legal protection of the borderland populations through parliamentary representation and the constitutional guarantee of religious and communal rights.126 Ever since the establishment of the Republic, the ambiguity of the concept of the Hui stirred confusion and intense controversies among Chinese Muslim writers in eastern urban centers about the definitions and boundaries of the Hui, or Huizu (Hui ethnicity) more specifically. The three lines of argument that emerged were 1) that only people in Xinjiang should constitute Huizu as a separate ethnicity, and Muslims east to Xinjiang were Han believers of Islam; that religion cannot be the criteria for defining an ethnicity, which would engender unprecedented divisiveness; 2) that all Muslims in China regardless of region or language were a part of the larger Islamic nationality worldwide; 3) that Muslims in Xinjiang and Muslims in China’s interiors (neidi) constituted separate ethnicities. The third line of argument would ultimately be adopted by the Chinese Communist Party after its victory in 1949, but

before then, the criteria or definition of the Hui, or whether the term should be used at all, was by no means clear.  

In Beijing, already in 1912, politically astute Muslim scholars led by Wang Kuan (王寬 1848-1919) immediately began the movement to forge loose cross-regional linkages through the Chinese Islamic Progressive Association. Wang Kuan’s role as the Association’s Deputy Minister aroused criticism from other circles of Chinese Muslims who interpreted Huizu to mean inhabitants of Xinjiang, and attacked Wang Kuan for pretending to be their representative when he was actually a Han believer of Islam; a proper Huizu from Xinjiang needed to assume the post, and two separate organizations needed to exist for Muslims in Xinjiang and those outside it. Despite the oppositions, mosques across China served as seats of the Association’s branches and educational institutions (xiehui 協會; jama’īyah). Operated on civil donations, and without political

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127 For a fascinating and careful discussion that draws on Islamic periodicals published in Beijing and Shanghai between the 1900s and 1930s, see Wlodzimierz Cieciura, “Ethnicity or Religion? Republican-Era Chinese Debates on Islam and Muslims,” in *Islamic Thought in China: Sino-Muslim Intellectual Evolution from the 17th to the 21st Century*, ed. Jonathan Lipman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 107-146. Even today, I have come across many Hui people in the PRC who liberally use the term Huizu as a general reference for Muslims.

128 Ibid., 120-122.
oversight, the Association had constituted an “organization resembling a political one.”
By 1924, it had three thousand branch associations under its umbrella.

There were also divisions between the leaders in Beijing and those in Shanghai. A rare insight into the conflicted relations between the associations in Beijing and Shanghai comes into view through a historical survey on Islam in China written by Hai Weiliang (海维谅, 1912-2006), a graduate of the Shanghai Islamic Teachers School in western mosque who studied in Delhi and Cairo. His account suggests that the rise of the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kaishek complicated relations between the state and the overlapping networks that Chinese Muslims had assembled. The Nationalist Party started state-building processes in Nanjing after winning over regional warlords and driving out members of the Communist Party to the north in 1927. According to Hai, the Nationalist Party did not look favorably at the increasing influence of the Association in Beijing and its political clout. In order to decrease its stance, the Nanjing government annulled the association and supported the establishment of an alternative organization in Shanghai (Ithād al-Muslimīn) in 1929. The leaders of this association in Shanghai were the very scholars and entrepreneurs who had been at the forefront of religious institutional


Ibid, 110-111
building and trade operations – such as Ha Shaofu, Ma Yitang, Sha Shanyu, Wu Tegong, Sun Yanyi, and Da Pusheng. With the rise of a new political center, they now ventured out to become state associates.

Despite the potential factional divisions and self-criticisms within, having religion rather than race as the basis for political definition of Muslims in China allowed the scholar-politicians in Shanghai to blur geographic, linguistic and ethnic distinctions amongst Muslim populations who were residing in contested territories of Xinjiang and those who were dispersed across the rest of China, and claim rights of political representation and religious freedom of Muslims in China as a collective. Hai notes that initially, Chinese Muslims initially had not realized the significance of the Nationalist Party’s change of national flag in 1928, from a five-colored one to the one with the blue sun and red sky. As the five colors had corresponded to five ethnicities, the eradication of that flag was a symbolic act that denied the multi-ethnic composition of China. For a handful of concerned Chinese Muslim leaders, however, their heated discussions revolved around two questions. The first was on the status of Xinjiang, and the second was on how to secure representative rights for Muslims in political committees. These were two issues that were interlocked with one another. Were residents of Xinjiang to be considered as a separate minority people in the constitution of the Republic of China?

Ibid., 117.
And what was to be the proportion of Muslim representatives in legislative or central political committees?

One argument drew a clear division between Xinjiang residents and Chinese Muslims (Hui). Jin Jitang, a major proponent of this argument, proposed that Muslims in Xinjiang were not a part of China racially, as they were composed of Kirghiz, Kazak, Uighur, and Turkic elements. Muslims in inland China (including Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan), on the other hand, were a different ethnic group due to their foreign origins in the first generation. This, he argued, could be identified by their surnames and genealogies that could be traced to Persian and Arabic names. Through narratives of “discent”—which turn understandings of descent (or origins) into dissent, thereby transforming soft, unnoticeable boundaries between a community and the rest into hard ones as a way of mobilization of the group—Jin Jitang and others demanded constitutional and parliamentary rights for Chinese Muslims in inland China (outside Xinjiang) proportionate to their numbers based on their ethnic difference.

A related but different vein of thought, put forward by the organizers of the Shanghai association, placed all Muslims in former-Qing territories under a single


category based on religion. They held that Muslims in China had already “sinicized” (taṣīnū; Quotations from Hai) from time immemorial, and that those in Xinjiang who were distinguished by race needed to be united with Chinese Muslims in inland through cultural incorporation, especially with regards to shared political issues. They thus viewed discussions on categories of Muslims in China as unnecessary and unproductive, as there clearly existed a religious community whose beliefs and practices were different from those of mainstream Chinese society. What Muslims in China only needed, in their proposition, was to have a constitutional guarantee for freedom of religious belief and practices. According to Hai Weiliang, based on such religious claims, the leaders of the Shanghai association asked the Nationalist government to have the Beijing association replaced. They also negotiated a deal with the Nationalist Party to gradually increase the number of Muslim representatives in political committees, and to enlarge opportunities for Muslim students from northwestern provinces to come to Nanjing, Shanghai, and Beijing and enroll in institutions of higher education.134

Religious and political unity of “fifty million Muslims” in China thus went hand in hand. The two stated aims of the Association in Shanghai were forging linkages between dispersed Muslim communities in China, and actualizing Sun Yatsen’s revolutionary spirit. In an article that proclaimed the establishment of the Association, its founding member Wu Tegong (伍特公), English translator and later the editor of

Shanghai’s influential *Shenbao* newspaper who had been at the forefront of the movement to translate the Quran, stressed “unitedness in one mind” as an inherent aspect of Islam. He cited shared rituals as an example: “believers residing in the same town worship together once every week and participate in the two annual ceremonies.” During the time of the hajj, “believers from around the world gather in Mecca’s Ka’ba like a hundred rivers entering the ocean. In ordinary times, there is none among them in all locations who do not face the Ka’ba.” This, he emphasized, evinced Islam’s unitary spirit. The Prophet, he wrote, also had said that Muslims are like one body.

The task ahead according to Wu Tegong was to forge linkages and collaborations between scattered “fifty million Muslims” in China to advance common interests. As an integral part of the Republic, they would contribute to recovering the degenerated statuses of both China and Islam. This would be achieved through the elevation of common education for Muslims and the cultivation of patriotic sentiments and morality, all of which were encouraged by the Quran and the words of the Prophet.

The eclectic group of dignitaries, therefore, attempted to merge the heterogeneous communities and networks of Muslims in China into a single unit and conjoin it with the state. Faced with the emergence of a central party-state, they claimed to belong to Republican China through intense investments in revolutionary nationalism,

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136 Ibid., 4-5.
and as we will see, to the Muslim world through the language anti-western Islamism. Propelling them were expanded circuits of mobility, a sense of societal crises and worldwide transformation, and an urge to claim the social and political status of China’s Muslims in the new state entity. An emphasis on the Quran, hadith, and rituals that had been shared by Muslim societies across time and space was a way to strengthen the collective representation of Muslims in China as a religiously and politically unified body. While conflicts and contestations lay beneath, such argument, which they expressed on print media, offered a means to attract students and scholars from different places and to assert representative rights in domestic politics.

2.2.4. Between Shanghai and Mecca

From the graveyard of the Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās and mosques in Canton, to the scholars, entrepreneurs, and patrons in Shanghai, we have thus far observed makings and re-makings of religious enclaves within logistical hubs of trade and transport. In interaction with tides of events that changed the status of these two ports, pockets of Muslim communities within them drew in travelers and monetary support from near and far. As they built and reconstructed socio-religious institutions, the communal leaders refashioned historiographical narratives on Islam in China through the symbolic figures and places that established temporal and spatial linkages between Muslims in China’s dispersed places and the abstractly defined regions of the west.
If reinterpretations of historiographies and the presence of mosques/tombs offered Chinese Muslims across diverse geographies enduring means to sustain individual community and corporate identity, infrastructural transformation post the Opium War and political upturns represented a new current that needed to be reconciled and utilized. Networks of steamship and railway transport generated convergences of routes of mobility across China and the Indian Ocean, intensifying and expediting channels of circulation as well as confrontations. This process turned Shanghai into a critical node for travelers of all kinds, including Muslim scholars, merchants, and pilgrims who were connected to distant places across China, and expanded their networks of commerce and scholarship across the oceans. A part of them joined hands with the rising party-state in nearby Nanjing while trying to ensure minimal religious autonomy.

Such gravitational force pulled in ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, with whom I began this chapter, from his hometown in Shadian of Yunnan Province to Canton and Shanghai, and onward to the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in 1934. His jottings on the journey, published as a diary in Shanghai in 1937, show hopes and disappointments on the unity of Muslims in China and worldwide, symbolized by the twin cities of Canton and Mecca. A student of the Islamic Teachers School that had been founded within the western mosque in 1928, Lin was an aspiring student whose career had been shaped by the wars of the first decades of the twentieth century and the Republican state in the making. And although he did not set foot in the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula during this trip, his jottings show the multiple meanings that Mecca held for a traveler like him – as a
pilgrimage destination previously visited by his own acquaintances, and the site of Islam’s origin that aroused both expectations and disappointments in international geopolitical contexts after World War I.

Lin’s life had been shaped by voluntary sojourns and forced exiles. “Travel, for me, is something that I am very used to,” he reflected on his last night in Shanghai, packing luggage for the departure next day. He contemplated how, for the second half of elementary school and throughout middle school, he had left to study in Yunnan’s capital city (Kunming), which had been a two-day train ride from home in Shadian. He had then entered the Yunnan Military Academy in Kunming (雲南陸軍講武堂), which had been built in late Qing China as a part of self-strengthening movement. Matriculation in this school made him go down to fight in Guangxi Province in the 1920s along with the rest of the students, making him spend much of his time in an “alien town” (taxiang 他鄉).

Additionally, archival records show that he became a Nationalist Party member in 1929, though he reported losing the Party membership card in the middle of wars in Guangxi.138

Lying ahead of him now at the age of twenty-one was the journey to Cairo, where he would spend nearly a decade at al-Azhar University. Since the late 19th century, al-Azhar University had attracted students from across the Indian Ocean, diverting the

137 Lin Xingzhi, Dao Aiji Qu, 66.
138 “Liu’ai Xuesheng Jiuji (Providing Relief to Study-Abroad Students in Egypt 留爱学生救济,” 1943-1948 (1943). MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 0983.25/7743.01-02. 001-100, 010. Academia Historica (Guoshiguan 国史館), Taipei.
center of religious education from Mecca and Medina to across the Suez.139 Batches of Chinese Muslim students, most of whom were graduates of Islamic educational institutions in Shanghai, Beijing, and Kunming, became a part of the flows to Cairo in the 1930s and 40s.140

“In the course of these journeys,” he recounted, “I spent little time at home. I saw the family merely once a year, or even once in several years. Every time I parted with the family, I was not without the thought that the joys of reunion will surely exceed the bitter and painful sentiments of parting…But when embarking on travels to faraway places, and leaving the hometown...my heart was wounded again and again, that it could hurt any time upon contact (yichu shengtong 一觸生痛).” On this last night in Shanghai before leaving “the ancestral homeland” (zuguo), Lin Xingzhi vowed to ingrain its fragments in memory – “the water of this place, the persons of this place, a piece of memory on the war-ravaged Zhabei (Chinese-administered district in Shanghai), the changed scenes outside the gates.” At the same time, he wrote, he “must remember the turbidity (hunzhuo

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139 Multiple factors contributed to the shift – the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; the appeal of puritanical and nationalist readings of Islam in Cairo that scholars have termed modernist and reformist; and the decline of Shafi‘i and Sufi scholarly networks in the Haramayn following the conquest of the Hejaz by the Sa‘ud family in 1924. See Yuki Shiozaki, “From Mecca to Cairo: Changing Influences on Fatwas in Southeast Asia,” in Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role of al-Azhar, al-Medina and al-Mustafa, ed. Masooda Bano and Keiko Sakurai (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press in association with The Aga Khan University, 2018), 168–85.

140 For a survey of Chinese Azharite students in Egypt during this period, Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, “‘Nine Years in Egypt’: Al-Azhar University and the Arabization of Chinese Islam,” Hagar 8, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 1-21; Chen, “Re-Orientation.”
混濁) of the society, what encircles all living things, and a series of intolerable phenomenon.” 141

Of the many things that troubled him within China’s domains – such as the ill-treatment of Chinese passengers by the French personnel in Yunnan’s railway stations, and Japanese occupation of Manchuria – was what he perceived as rampant divisiveness within Muslim leadership in China. Ironically, he expressed this most clearly in the middle of his transit in Canton, where lay the very symbolic figures who signified the start of Islam in China. Lin had boarded a train from Kunming to Haiphong that had been built by the French (1904-10), and a steamship from Haiphong to Canton to head to Shanghai. In Canton, he visited the grave of Waqqās and the tombs of forty sages from Medina; a legend told that these forty sages had been slaughtered by a robber while performing collective prayers. Lin compared their deaths to the sacrifices of the seventeen revolutionary fighters who had been killed in Canton while initiating the anti-imperial Revolution, to be buried in the city. Both, in his words, were martyrs.

Yet, also in Canton, disillusionment overcame him with regards to the organizational efforts of Muslims in China. As he conversed with two dozen dignitaries in Huaisheng mosque, everyone acknowledged the “backward and rotten” state of Islam

in China that was in dire need of reorganization. No one, however, had dared to speak honestly about the specifics. The shared attitude was to purposefully disengage themselves from research or criticism on religious affairs, opting for impromptu solutions when issues came up.\textsuperscript{142}

The brief stay in Canton led Lin to write an implicit criticism of the annulation of the Chinese Islamic Progressive Association that had been based in Beijing, branches of which still remained influential in different provinces. He noticed that the branch of the Association was still housed in the Huaisheng mosque. This sub-organization, he observed, was Guangdong’s only operational all-provincial association. He mocked, without naming them, the opportunistic individuals who, in establishing an alternative all-inclusive body of Muslims in China, acted in order to satisfy schemes of others without any ambition or hard considerations on ways to obtain the best solution. “On the eve of propagating the great unity of Islam in China,” he lamented, “purity still lies in the middle of divergences. Those who are tolerant certainly keep on being tolerant; those who refuse to comply do so indefinitely; and those who confront one another try utmost to continue the confrontations.” In this kind of situation, he wrote, “there is no telling where it will stop ahead.”\textsuperscript{143} The most promising way forward, in his opinion, was to revitalize the structure and connections that had been forged by the Beijing Association.

\textsuperscript{142} Lin Xingzhi, \textit{Dao Aiji Qu}, 42.  
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 43-44.
Mecca was no different from Canton in stimulating both admiration and dissatisfaction. The magnitude of reverence and disenchantment that Mecca stirred, in fact, was even greater. For Lin, Mecca signified a site of the pilgrimage and the origin place of Islam that inspired timeless wonder. His own paternal aunt had traveled to Mecca five years prior to his own trip, only to never return. It was in the flowing waters of the Red Sea that she had been buried. Passing by Ceylon, he reflected:

Looking at the vast sea from afar, I recollect what happened five years ago. On the way home after completing her pilgrimage, my (paternal) aunt fell sick on the ship and was buried in the middle of the sea. The day before undertaking the voyage she had visited our house to bid farewell...[and] I had also shed a few drops of tears...Alas, her voice and smiles are still with me. Indeed, the one who leaves never comes back; a single parting has turned out to be an eternal separation. Five years have already passed, and the body is still buried in this sea...In these unbounded oceans, what direction would I turn to find her smallest traces? Where am I to turn to grieve? My aunt, you have truly left completely clean, without a remnant. When people shed tears for you, have you ever known? The saltiness from tears of grief and condolences has already seeped through the waters of the entire sea.144

While following her footsteps in the oceans, Lin himself only glided across the Red Sea. As the ship passed by the location of Jeddah, he gazed upon Mecca, “where all sacred relics are. I can only revere it from distance as if looking out on the clouds. Mecca is the place that must be visited, but I do not know what time in future I may see it again.”145

Mecca, however, represented more than the religious center for the pilgrimage. Lin’s comments are filled with a sense of disappointments on the city’s capacity to

144 Ibid., 100.
145 Ibid., 115.
perform as the uniting force for Muslims worldwide. Passing through the Red Sea, he recorded a short poem entitled “Where is Peace?” In it, Mecca stands on the same ground as Geneva and Moscow, the two symbols of universal solidarity in the interwar period. The League of Nations in Geneva which had “become the appealing ground for nations around the world,” he wrote, failed to “invite the god of love,” who had been threatened by “brutal god of war and demons” to “disappear without a trace or shadow.” Moscow, referred to as “the palace for the poor,” had “turned humanity into cows tilling soil, and people into hunters like dogs.”

At last, Mecca was “the sacred ground that gathers reverence and admiration. Twenty-three million people pay respects towards it.” He writes:

They all say: “It is in that land where, at last, exists true human sympathy. True peace. Red men, black men, poor men and rich men; emperors and lords, commoners and servants, although their lives are different, assume responsibilities of different weights! All follow the commands of the great Lord. They come to build spirits of cooperation and bring about a human world of comfort. I would have wholly trusted. Yet, this sacred city does not have the courage of Moscow to experiment, or “the structure of Geneva to assemble. The rich do not do anything, the poor falter! Those who have power, and those who do not, all do not connect with one another.

A sense of despair looms. “Life is so painful, society does not have stability! I again dare to ask, is this really complete?” These “three mysterious places” kept “spiraling in [his] head.” One place was “only a statue, without peace”; another was “only an ideal, not

146 Ibid., 116-7.
suitable for humanity.” He concluded: “Unfortunate! This city of Mecca! Who will come again to revive it? Outsiders look at it superciliously, and it is again trampled by people from within.”

Lin’s comments reflect the mood towards third world internationalisms of the inter-war period. Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 and abolishment of the caliphate by the Republic of Turkey’s National Assembly in 1924, Mecca came to symbolize a potential new center for Muslim unity against western empires in the eyes of activist Muslims in British and Dutch colonies. For offering an alternative vision of world order and anti-imperial solidarity, Mecca was on par with the cities that represented international liberalism and socialism – Geneva, with its League of Nations established by the victors of World War I that simultaneously offered expectations on national liberation, and Moscow, with its march towards international communism through the Communist International. All three places had signified potential rallying points for intellectuals and activists in (semi-)colonized parts of the world.

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147 Ibid., 118-9.
148 The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the end of the caliphate led to conflicted debates on the status of the Hejaz, and a potential new caliph that could lead the Muslim world, instigating a series of world Islamic conferences in Cairo (1926), Mecca (1924, 26) and Jerusalem (1931). Mona Hassan characterizes the post-World War I as “an internationalist era,” in which conferences that debated the issue of new caliphate are comparable to “new models of international order rooted in liberalism and socialism that intellectually challenged the European imperial legacy and contributed to the creation of the League of Nations and Communist International,” inspired by Wilsonian principles and the Bolshevik revolution. Mona Hassan, Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History (Princeton ; Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2016), 186.
The hopes raised by all three, however, left Lin dejected. Japan withdrew from the League of Nations after its occupation of Manchuria in 1931, whereas the calls for world revolution in Moscow had faltered by 1930. The Hejaz, on the other hand, had become grounds for contestations. Until the twentieth century, the Hejaz had been co-governed by the Ottoman-appointed wazirs and Hashemite Sharif of Mecca. With Ottoman fall, the Hejaz became a battleground between the Saudi-Wahhabi coalition based in Central Arabia and the government of Sharif of Mecca Husayn Ibn ‘Ali, who had led the British-sponsored Arab Revolt against the Ottomans with ambitions of gaining independent governance over the Hejaz. His ties with the British drew criticisms from anti-colonial intellectuals. In vague yet strong terms, Lin denied the utopic visions that the three places had upheld.

In this context, in the eyes of Lin, the victory of the King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Āl Sa‘ūd in the Hejaz in 1924-5 over the Sharif of Mecca and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, signaled the potential rise of the Hejaz as the organizational force for the Islamic world. As he gazed upon the sacred lands without landing, he merged the significance of Mecca as a figurative center from which Islam emanated, which cut across the temporal divisions between the present and the Prophet’s times, with the events and languages of his own era. He first juxtaposed the conception of the sacred cities as a homeland of Islam, and the dominant discourses of the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries – degeneration, survival and revival of Muslims, and anti-imperial alliances of weak nations.\textsuperscript{150} “The plains of Arabia are sacred lands that we hold in deep respect. It is the hometown (\textit{jiaxiang 家鄉}) of the noble saint (\textit{guisheng 貴聖}), where the heavenly scriptures (\textit{tianjing 天經}) descended; it is related to Islam to the greatest extent,” he wrote. Yet, the “awareness of Muslims as a \textit{minzu (huijiaode minzu yishi 回教的民族意識)},” he remarked, was too philosophical (\textit{daguan 大觀}), naïve (\textit{youzhi 幼稚}), unclear about the trends of times, and unconcerned for the future. For the sake of survival (\textit{shengcun 生存}) and revival (\textit{fuxing 復興}), he claimed, it was necessary to “combine (\textit{jiehe 結合}) the capabilities of the world’s Muslim \textit{minzu}, reconstruct the sacred lands (\textit{jianshe shengdi 建設聖地}), and organize a center.”\textsuperscript{151}

Despite past weaknesses and dormancy, “hope lies in the future.” King Ibn Sa’ud had “shook off the fetters of strong powers,” and grasped onto the “national power (\textit{guoshi 國勢}) that had been at its last breath” to establish a completely independent country, by “successfully undertaking bold and decisive actions at the face of formidable adverse circumstances.” The “revival of Arab \textit{minzu (Alabo minzu de fuxing 阿拉伯民族 revival)}...

\textsuperscript{150} Aydin, \textit{The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia}.
\textsuperscript{151} Lin Xingzhi, \textit{Dao Aiji Qu}, 122.
復興)" was just around the corner, but it was also hoped to be an assisting force for weak nations (dan hai xiji yu ge ruoxiao minzude bizhu 但還希冀於弱小民族的臂助).\(^\text{152}\)

Surely, the incorporation of the Hejaz into the Saudi regime that was backed by the Wahhabi puritanical religious establishment had aroused alarm from Muslim societies around the Indian Ocean rim, in lieu of Wahhabi scholars’ condemnation of widespread visits to tombs of saints and companions.\(^\text{153}\) However, the event also elicited support from intellectuals who interpreted Ibn Sa’ūd’s campaign as genuine religious revivalism as in the case of ‘ulama from West Africa,\(^\text{154}\) or as in the case of British Malaya, a challenging force to foreign powers, in contrast to the supposedly corrupt Sharif of Mecca Husayn ibn ‘Ali who succumbed to western imperial interests.\(^\text{155}\) Moreover, once the conquest was complete, Ibn Sa’ūd aimed to strike balance between satisfying demands of Wahhabi scholars to purge the Hejaz of what they viewed as idolatry, and accommodating

\(^\text{152}\) Ibid., 122.
\(^\text{153}\) The House of Saud had risen to prominence in Najd (central Arabia) through alliances with the scholar Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab in the late eighteenth century. Following its defeat by Ottoman forces led by Egypt’s Muhammad Ali in the early nineteenth century, and collapse of the second Saudi emirate in the late nineteenth century due to internal strife and war with the rival Rashidi tribe, the Saudi-Wahhabi coalition succeeded in taking control over central Arabia at the turn of the twentieth century, proceeding onto the Hejaz in mid-1924. The Wahhabi establishment, which has provided the House of Saud the necessary theological backing, traces its scholarly genealogy to Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) of the Hanbali School and espouses scriptural and puritanical understanding of Islam as a measure to return to the traditions of pious ancestors – or salaf al-salih, the first three generations of the Prophet Muhammad. David Dean Commins, The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).
\(^\text{154}\) Ahmed Chanfi, West African ʿulamāʾ and Salafism in Mecca and Medina, 2015.
sensibilities of wider Muslim, by tacitly condoning Sufi orders and practices in the Hejaz.\textsuperscript{156} For strands of activists who had been involved in national politics, the unitary impulse in and flexibility of Salafi doctrine that would supposedly eradicate intra-group differences and debates among Muslims provided an appealing, however controversial, political force in different contexts.\textsuperscript{157}

Similarly, while the attack on Sufi networks and sites of ritual in the Hejaz must have dealt a blow to the various Sufi orders in the larger Gansu region, for Chinese Muslim scholars who were involved in public sphere through print media and kept interests in domestic political engagements, prospects of sociopolitical stability in the Arabian Peninsula through the emergence of a strongman leader represented a welcome development. Shortly after the victory of ‘Abd al-Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd in the Hejaz, for instance, the periodical \textit{Chinese Muslim Scholarly Society} in Shanghai printed a message from ‘Omar Saqāf in Singapore, who relayed announcement from the new King that the pilgrimage routes were now safe.\textsuperscript{158}

In the middle of wars and disintegration of continental empires, Chinese Muslim scholar-politicians like Lin were pushed to move around different places across China

\textsuperscript{156} Commins, 77-80
\textsuperscript{158} 守愚 (Shouyu), “Hanzhiwang Sahedezhi Tonggao (Announcement from the King of Hanzhi [the Hejaz], Sa-he-de,” \textit{Zhongguo Huijiao Xuehui Yuekan} 1, no. 3/4 (1926): 38.
and the Indian Ocean. Driven by newfound impulse to unite Muslims in and outside China as one religious and political entity, they reassembled cross-regional networks in the space between Shanghai and Mecca while being fully aware of the divisions within. For them, the incorporation of Mecca into the sovereign nation-state of Saudi Arabia strengthened its symbolic significance as a geopolitical center of the Muslim world, in addition to its longstanding religious and historiographical importance as the metaphoric home of Muslim diasporas.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored Chinese Muslims’ articulations on and direct travels to and from Mecca, bringing into light the layers of meaning that they added to the iconic home place from afar through the progression of time. Through multi-directional literal and figurative travels between the triangle of Mecca, Canton and Shanghai, which incorporated inland towns and ports in between, they constructed worlds that a pointed focus on a single place and time fails to grasp. Circulations of persons, donations, and historiographies left physical vestiges in forms of the graveyard, mosques and textual inscriptions on stone and paper, which in turn generated and redirected cross-regional flows of individuals, ideas and patronages.

The burial of the Companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās in Canton, and continued narrativizations that memorialized him as the Prophet’s messenger to China, created direct linkages back and forth between China and abstractly defined places of Mecca across time and space. Lying at the center of the sacred geography of Chinese Muslims,
Canton’s Muslim enclaves constantly mediated real and conceptual connections between China’s Muslims and distant lands in the west, represented by Mecca and Medina. Such conceptions of other homelands coexisted with the sense of embeddedness of Islam in China, as it was transmitted through the arrivals and burials of the very sages who had personal or locational connections with the Prophet. This process simultaneously turned Canton’s graveyard into a pilgrimage destination and a site of accumulated burials. Local residents, as well as sojourners from near and far who had been in the city for different purposes and faced unexpected deaths, were laid to rest beside the Companion, in some cases prompting their families and acquaintances to establish donations that could not only be used for the upkeep of Canton’s religious institutions, but also for forging connections between the deceased and the Companion.

Post the Opium War, new opportunities and wealth acquired by the opening of the treaty ports and steamship transport, the socio-political vacuum left by the Qing Empire’s fall, and expanded commercial opportunities during World War I for local Chinese businesses accelerated the pace of interactions between dispersed Muslim populations in China. Shanghai thus provided a fascinating node for us to observe the transitional phase in which entrepreneurs, scholars, mosque managers, and pilgrims and patrons in the city mapped out Mecca as a destination reachable through tangible travels, thereby actively materializing conceptualizations on the city into a specific locatable place within a very compressed time.
We have observed the convergences of scholars and entrepreneurs in the city, which led to the establishment of mosques, commercial associations, educational institutions and a center of textual dissemination. By tracing their circulations that converged in Shanghai and extended to Mecca, the chapter delineated the shape of networks in the process of formation, and the flows of persons, monies and texts across internal and external spheres that build a hub.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the actors who had the ability to assemble the segmented trans-regional networks between Mecca and Shanghai into full coalescence, at least on the outset, rose to become political and religious representatives of Muslims in China vis-à-vis the Chinese states and Muslim societies outside. Possessing an external leg that fellow countrymen did not, a portion of Chinese Muslim entrepreneurs and religious leaders who were in proximity to Shanghai expanded sphere of interactions with co-religionists, through the pilgrimage, commerce, or transport of religious texts, which were oftentimes combined with one another. With an emphasis on unity and simple tenets of Islam that understated the differences within, they grafted political meaning onto the networks of religion and education across China and the Indian Ocean. Mecca in this sense embodied the religious and political unity of Muslims worldwide, which belonged to yet simultaneously lay above the emergent state of Saudi Arabia.

World War II and the waves of exile that followed in the middle of the twentieth century would further politicize the space between Shanghai and Mecca, as we will see in
Chapter 3, and turn the routes to Mecca into pathways of escape and homecoming, as will be shown in Chapter 4. ‘Uthman Lin Xing Zhi too, as we will see in subsequent chapters, would eventually settle in Jeddah following his escape from mainland China and live there for four decades, to be buried in the city – raising the lingering, perhaps unanswerable question of whether he died at home, or in an alien land.
3. **Diplomatic Journeys, 1937-1947**

In Chapters 1 and 2, we have traced both real and mythical linkages between Mecca and China’s little Meccas over different periods of history. We also observed how new groups of religiopolitical actors who emerged out of wars and revolutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thickened circulations across these sites, aided by intensification of infrastructural connectivity and the political movements for republicanism. From Linxia to Mecca, to Canton and Shanghai and again to Mecca across the Indian Ocean, we followed the extensive, overlapping networks that Chinese Muslims interwove in the interstices of empires and nation-states.

Focusing on engagements with Mecca from cities afar exposed the intermediary space that lies in between the “local” and the “global,” thereby pushing the limits of a territory-bounded understanding of society that conceals the worlds constructed by individuals who are now framed as minorities. Approaching diverse Chinese Muslim communities through the conceptual lens of Mecca, in turn, showed the physical reach of Mecca as a hub for the pilgrimage, patronage and religious movements, and the creative historiographical imaginaries that it helped formulate as a timeless symbol.

This chapter turns to the political significance that Mecca and the space of pilgrimage travel came to hold for Chinese Muslim scholar-politicians as a diplomatic theater, as World War II rapidly politicized Islamic networks across China and the Indian Ocean. Internally within China’s tenuous borderlines, the War tightened connections between dispersed Islamic associations and institutionalized them into a semi-governmental body. Externally, imperial Japan’s uses of Muslim networks as foreign
policy became both a source of alarm and of imitation for leading Muslim dignitaries of Republican China. Japan’s utilization of Muslim networks as channels of ally-making and market penetration traced origins to its pan-Asianist ideology and rivalry against Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, and evolved in the 1930s as imperial Japan studied Germany’s alliance with the Ottoman Empire and Italy’s approach to north and east Africa.¹

In response, the aim of the pilgrim delegates coming in the name of Republican China was no longer to pursue education or profit, or to fulfill a religious obligation. Outwardly, it was to represent the interests of the state that directly sponsored them, make connections with socio-political dignitaries in dispersed transit points in the name of anti-imperial Islamic solidarity, and mold state’s image to audiences both inside and outside China. Islamic delegations from Republican China combined pilgrimage routes with projects of diplomatic outreach, thereby establishing a practice for both the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party that would outlast the War itself. Participation in the pilgrimage enabled not only encounters with dignitaries present at the largest Islamic congregation in Mecca, but also with religious and political authorities residing in wide-ranging geographies that lay in between China and Arabia. In forging interpersonal

connections through the journeys, the idea of the Muslim world, however obsolete it had become following Ottoman disintegration, offered a formulaic language to frame their travels to the audience in China and outside. Because they received monetary backing and supervision from state agencies, pilgrim diplomats left textual trails to announce their accomplishments, some open to the public readership.

A subtler agenda of the pilgrimage missions was to develop contacts with diaspora populations from China’s volatile borderlands in hopes of securing their support against Japanese outreach. Chinese Muslim pilgrim delegates who traveled through the Indian Ocean in the late 1930s and 40s repeatedly encountered escapees and exiles from Xinjiang and Russian Central Asia in Mecca and cities in India, some of whom had leaned close to Japanese propaganda. In the eyes of Chinese Muslim pilgrim writers, these individuals were “floating around/wandering” (liuwang 流亡).

Tracing mobilization and politicization of Islam across China and the Indian Ocean thus brings into full view the changing shape and functions of the networks between Mecca and Shanghai, constituted by the pilgrimage, mobility of diasporas and diplomacy. The framing of the Chinese Islamic delegations as patriotic fighters poses constraints in recognizing the width of social worlds that they inhabited and constructed. Even as they departed as representatives of the state of Republican China, the delegates were traveling along multi-layered space that had been shaped by competing empires, and diasporas that had resisted, co-opted and preceded imperial players. Japan’s aggressive invasion into China during World War II, and escalated contestations between
Soviet Russia, Republican China, and Japan in China’s borderlands gave Chinese Muslim scholar-politicians leverage to claim their significance in both external and internal spheres – using the languages, practices and geographic routes that had been sedimented over time.

In this chapter, we begin the journey with the Chinese Muslim Goodwill Mission of 1937-8, proceed through the pilgrimage delegations of 1939 and 1947, and end it by tracing biographies and itineraries of the Goodwill Mission’s members after its dissolution. The account of 1937-8 Goodwill Mission illustrates the geographic reach of diplomatic pilgrimage networks and the repertoire of the united Islamic world against empires that they mobilized for both internal and external audiences. The 1939 delegation, on the other hand, consisted of Chinese Muslim students in Cairo who had been studying at al-Azhar University, including ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi whom we saw in Chapter 2. They left for Mecca upon receiving the news that a “fake” Chinese Muslim delegation sponsored by Japan had set out on a pilgrimage mission from northeastern China. The confrontations between the two pilgrimage delegations who had divergent state affiliations show the accessibility of the shared space between Mecca and China, and the language of anti-imperial Islam that could be appropriated for different ends.

We observe in these accounts the protrusion of Central Asian diasporas who had been dispersed between Xinjiang (East Turkistan) and the Hejaz and had formed patronage relations with imperial Japan. The refugees and activists from Xinjiang whom Chinese Muslim diplomatic delegations encountered outside China’s tenuous territories
prompted them to write descriptions of the livelihoods of disenfranchised diaspora populations who had escaped Xinjiang in the 1920s and 30s, and the dangers of Japan’s outreach to them through propaganda and material support. These observations that appear in Chinese Muslims’ published travelogues and governmental reports show the autonomous networks interwoven by Central Asian pilgrims and exiles, of which emigrants from Xinjiang had been part, that Chinese Muslims representing Republican China could not penetrate. The texts by pilgrim diplomats, in other words, unwittingly reveal pictures of diaspora networks between China and Arabia that preceded them.

The report of the 1947 pilgrimage delegation, which visited Singapore, Karachi (now the capital of Pakistan) and Mecca two years after Japanese defeat that brought World War II to end, shows the impact and continuities of the practices and institutions that had been formed during the transformative War. Internally in China, the bureaucratic religious institution that emerged out of the War streamlined and mediated mobility of religious travelers, whereas externally, pilgrimage diplomacy that combined contacts with state dignitaries and appeals to China’s diaspora populations constituted the kernel of second-tier diplomacy between Republican China and Muslim societies in the Indian Ocean rim. Together, the pilgrimage delegations’ journeys open vistas into the changing shape of the contested space between Mecca and Shanghai in lieu of the very political and diplomatic significance that Mecca and its interconnected sites came to have, and also point to preexisting diaspora networks in and around the Hejaz that invite further research.
3.1 Trans-Imperial Contexts

In undertaking diplomatic journeys, Chinese Muslim pilgrimage delegates were tapping into two-layered transnational networks that Mecca had assembled – on the level of states and diasporas. On the one hand, long before the entry of Republican China into the scene, the Hejaz in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a trans-imperial zone where competing European powers attempted to increase their influence by assisting the pilgrimage, setting up consuls in Jeddah and dispatching their own Muslim diplomats or information collectors. Behind such maneuvering was an awareness of connectivity and mobility that Mecca facilitated. Networks that went through Mecca could potentially pose security threats by circulating epidemics or supposedly subversive anti-colonial pan-Islamist ideas, especially under Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876-1909)’s endorsement of pan-Islamism for geopolitical interests of the Ottoman Empire.

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4 Ottoman pan-Islamism, in turn, had taken cue from Russian, French and British interventions in Ottoman domains based on reinterpretations of Capitulations, which had granted extraterritoriality to European empires since the sixteenth century, as “international contracts that extended to Christian Ottoman citizens under European protection.” Cemil Aydin, The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 96.
If used well, however, pilgrimage and Muslim networks could also advance the prestige of British, Dutch, Russian, French, and later Japanese empires as defenders of Islam, for the purpose of securing the loyalty of their own Muslim subjects and possibly provoking resistance from those residing in rival colonial domains. British rule over most of Muslim societies in the Indian Ocean rim, for instance, provoked its rivals such as the Ottoman Empire, Germany, and later, imperial Japan to try to mobilize Muslim populations against it. Furthermore, access to Mecca could serve as circuits for spying on local sentiments and making diplomatic contacts with emerging leaders in the Hejaz, and involvement in pilgrimage transport could offer commercial opportunities. Not coincidentally, only one year after the conquest of the Hejaz, the incumbent King ‘Abd al-‘Azîz held an Islamic Congress in Mecca in 1926 during the pilgrimage season. He had been well-aware of the significance of the pilgrimage networks in leveraging foreign relations and filling in state coffers.

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piggybacking off of imperial Japan’s Islam policy, were latecomers in entering Mecca as state envoys with the intention of anchoring footing in both the newly established state in the Hejaz, and those that fell within the orbit of pilgrimage journeys.

On the other hand, already settled in Mecca and Medina were pilgrims, merchants, scholars and refugees who had traveled from diverse territories of Southeast Asia, Russia, India and different parts of Africa. Forming a geography of overlapping diasporas that were influenced by yet remained autonomous from European imperial expansion, they kept disparate scholarly circles and social networks through pilgrimage lodge houses and guides who were responsible for taking care of specific communities. Strands of these trans-local ties later provided channels for circulating anti-imperialist agendas. The pilgrim delegates from China tapped into the diaspora networks that extended between the Hejaz and across Eurasia and made contacts with Jawi (Southeast Asian), Bukharan (Central Asian), and Indian communities in Mecca.

Of special interest to them were escapees from Xinjiang who had been incorporated into groups of independence activists and exiles from Soviet Russia, who since the turn of the twentieth century had developed alliances with imperial Japan

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against their common enemy Russia/Soviet Union. Post-imperial Xinjiang became de-facto autonomous, and fragmentation of power ravaged the region in the 1920s and 30s. The wars in Xinjiang, seemingly regional, were enveloped within “nested wars” between Japan, China, and Russia. Soviet Union, fearful of Japanese dominance over the borderlands of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang, quickly stepped into the region to use it as a buffer zone against Japan, backing client Han warlords such as Jin Shuren (1883-1941) and Sheng Shicai (1897-1970) and expanding Soviet influence in Xinjiang by tightening economic relations. Uighur/Turkic Muslim writers and fighters who had been antagonized by downgrading of local populations by Han governors and managers waged rebellions, and Hui militarists who had nominal affiliation with the Nationalist Party joined them or created their own repressive fiefdoms.

With incessant social-breakdown, pilgrimage routes from Xinjiang to Mecca turned into pathways of escape. Joining them in Mecca were exiles from Soviet Russia

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9 S. C. M. Paine has used the concept to show the continuum between the Chinese Civil War (1911-1949), the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) and World War II (1939-1945) in the context of inter-imperial rivalries. Paine, *The Wars for Asia, 1911-1949*.


who had escaped from Stalinist purges of Tatar intellectuals and nationalists.\footnote{Bayram Balci, “Central Asian Refugees in Saudi Arabia: Religious Evolution and Contributing to the ReIslamization of Their Motherland,” \textit{Refugee Survey Quarterly} 26, no. 2 (April 2007): 12–21.}

Concurrently, imperial Japan once again courted Turkic-Tatar refugees from Russian territories in the 1930s, making them the centerpiece of Japan’s own Muslim networks emanating from Tokyo. Access to both Turkic Muslims and the Nationalist government would place Chinese Muslim scholar-politicians in a unique position to portray themselves as mediators between the two, an ideal that never was realized.

\section*{3.2. Politicization of the space between Shanghai and Mecca}

In a cemetery in Istanbul stands an epitaph of Jelāl al-Dīn Wang Zengshan (王曾山 1903-1961), described as a native of Linqing 臨清 in Shandong Province. It lists the several posts he had assumed – a member of the Legislative Yuan of China, civil minister of Xinjiang Province, and professor at Istanbul University.\footnote{“On my late father-in-law Wang Zengshan (我所知道的先岳父王曾善先生)” (2009), composed online by Wang Zengshan’s son-in-law, available at: \url{https://blog.xuite.net/makbule.wang/ugur/21752277-%E6%88%91%E6%89%80%E7%9F%A5%E9%81%93%E7%9A%84%E5%85%88%E5%B2%B3%E7%88%B6%E7%8E%8B%E6%9B%BE%E5%96%84%E5%85%88%E7%94%9F} Accessed July 11, 2019.} In the face of imminent victory of the Communist Party in 1949, he had fled from Urumqi to Karachi with his family across the icy Pamir Mountains. They eventually settled in Istanbul, where Wang Zengshan had studied for several years in the 1920s shortly after the founding of the Turkish Republic. Wang Zengshan had left China as a student in the 1920s; as a pilgrim
to Mecca in 1930, accompanying the Ningxia warlord Ma Hongkui; and as a political refugee in 1949. In between, during World War II, he journeyed across the Indian Ocean as a leader of the diplomatic delegation “Chinese Muslim Goodwill Missions.” The account of the travels, which was initially published in Chongqing in 1942, was republished in Kuala Lumpur in 1991 by his son. It was by connecting with Wang Zengshan’s daughter, Rosey Wang Ma in Kuala Lumpur, that I came to examine his writings in her keeping together with the published travelogue.

In his draft proposal for the diplomatic delegation, Wang Zengshan outlined the team’s mission in two succinct sentences: “On the surface: to conduct visits as China’s Muslim believers. In reality: to proclaim Japan’s violence in China and sell nation-saving bonds.” His draft plans, which included expected fees of 17,323 yuan and a duration of seven months, proposed to visit 7 countries and 26 cities. According to the schedule, the itinerary would start with the departure from Shanghai, followed by transition in Hong Kong; the delegation would then enter India and proceed to Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and return to Shanghai through the South Seas (Nanyang). Scholars have noted pronounced circulations of both material and immaterial things between China and Southeast Asia during the Sino-Japanese War – relief funds, blood donations, medical

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14 In 1930, a short article in the Umm al-Qurā newspaper wrote that it welcomed the pilgrims “Nūr al-Dīn, the prince of the Gansu Province (likely the Ningxia governor Ma Hongkui, the son of Ma Fuxiang) and Jelāl al-Dīn Wang Zengshan… who had studied in universities in Turkey and Europe and represented China’s Muslims.” “Min al-Sīn (From China).” Umm al-Qurā, May 23 1930, p.3.
15 Wang Zengshan Collection, Singapore: National University of Singapore, Uncatalogued.
personnel, and propagandas – on the hands of diaspora populations who had different motivations.\(^{16}\) Wang Zengshan’s delegation was thus extending the reach of wartime circulations of donations and cultural diplomacy, farther west into the Indian Ocean.

To make his case for the Goodwill Mission, Wang Zengshan combined overlapping strands of universalisms between East and West Asia to appeal to the idea of solidarity between “weak nations” to which both China and countries in the Islamic world belonged. Wang Zengshan reasoned in his draft proposal:

> The world’s weak nations (minzu 民族) are dispersed in the two continents of Africa and Asia. What is most important to me is tying those in Asia together with our nation (minzu) to form relations that are tight as lips and teeth. Their struggles have already produced fruitful results, and hope lies in the future. For instance, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Arabia, and Africa’s Egypt are all weak nations but are now breaking away from the yoke of imperialism. One after another they are annulling consular jurisdiction and are seeking to acquire complete autonomy.

Wang Zengshan stressed that whereas conventional diplomats regard Europe and America most important for conducting productive propaganda work, the more promising and important actors resided in countries in the Near East (Jindong 近東). This vast arena, he stressed, could not be overlooked.

His major example that demonstrated the power of Islamic solidarity came from the post-World War I Khilafat movement between the fallen Ottoman Empire and South Asia from two decades ago. Wang Zengshan continued: “In 1918, when Turkey sought for independence yet was consumed by warfare, there was no one in the whole country who did not take it upon oneself to save the country and nation (jiuguo jiuzu 救國救族).

The most important thing that I noticed is that during the period of the most severe fighting, representatives were dispatched to go to every Islamic country to disseminate propaganda through unofficial means. Due to the bonds of shared faith and sentiments (tongyi xinyang ganqing zhi weixi 同一信仰感情之維繫), it aroused every country’s sympathies. India, where Muslim populations reach 90 million, aided 500,000 rupees. As for the material support from people of other countries, where a majority were Muslim believers, [one would] know even without asking.” Turkey of the present existed, he argued, thanks to its power to draw assistance from Islamic countries at such a tremendous pace. The tight liaisons between countries in the Near East were like “a structure made of solid iron” (jiantie zhi jigou 堅鐵之機構), which made even the Soviet Russia hover between them. “Imperialism cannot dare to look at them lightly,” (diguozhuyi bugan qingshi zhiye 帝國主義不敢輕視之也) he concluded.

The next step, then, was to bring together Muslim notables and intellectuals in China and dispatch them to Islamic countries in the name of Islamic organization, which would enable them to visit various countries in the East to conduct propaganda work and
sell nation-saving bonds. Ibrahim Ma Tianying (馬天英 1900-1982), Wang Zengshan believed, could visit Ceylon, Bombay, Hyderabad, Delhi, Calcutta, Karachi, and others, and sell at least 5,000,000 yuan’s worth. The original plan was to have five members: Ha Decheng (哈德成 1888-1943), Zhang Zhaoli (張兆里 1906-1997), and Xue Wenbo (薛文波 1909-1984), in addition to Wang Zengshan and Ma Tianying. Yet because Ha Decheng could not resign from his responsibilities in Shanghai, he could not participate. Instead, Wang Shiming (王世明 1990-1997) who had been studying al-Azhar University in Cairo at the time would join them in Suez.17

The members of the Goodwill Mission represented an amorphous class of mobile cosmopolitans who emerged in urban locations in China on the eve of the Qing Empire’s fall and built internal and external linkages of religion, scholarship, philanthropy, commerce, and interpersonal contacts. The leader Wang Zengshan, who traced his hometown to Linqing 臨清 in Shandong Province, had ceaselessly relocated between different cities within China and outside. Linqing had been a hub of transport that connected the north-south axis due to its proximity to the Grand Canal, prior to the construction of the Tianjin-Pukou railway (completed in 1912). While Wang’s family had been engaged in both agriculture and commerce, as Linqing gradually declined due to [17]

obstruction of waterways, Wang Zengshan’s father (Wang Baoqing 王葆卿) migrated to Beijing together with his family and became the leader of Linqing Commercial Association in Beijing.\(^{18}\) He also presided over Beijing’s Sheep Association and served an elderly manager of the Dongsi mosque 東四牌樓清真寺 where the Chengda Normal school, a pivotal Islamic educational institution in Republican China, was housed.\(^{19}\)

Wang Zengshan’s travels to West Asia had begun before his joining of the Goodwill Mission. In 1924 he graduated from Beijing’s Yenching University founded by Christian missionaries and subsequently studied in Istanbul University with his own funding between 1925 and 1930. Upon return from Istanbul, he served as a part of the Legislative Yuan as a representative of Muslim populations in China between 1932 and 1946. When he assumed the position as the Mission’s leader, he had been serving at the Legislative Yuan and as a professor at Shanghai’s Jinan University.

Like his colleague Wang Zengshan, Ibrahim Ma Tianying who served as a core member of the Goodwill Mission traced his hometown to Linqing of Shandong Province. By the time he set out on his journeys in 1937, Ma Tianying had sojourned in Shanghai for several years. Rather than coming from a landowning family, he had found

\(^{18}\) Wang Zengshan, *Zhongguo Huijiao Jindong Fangwentuan Riji*, 507. The biography was outlined in an obituary on Wang Zengshan written by Sun Shengwu (孫繩武), dated 20 March 1961, which was included in the reprinted version of the *Diaries*.

opportunities through multiple kinds of positions and travels. In the middle of the political turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion, Ma Tianying’s grandfather Ma Yukui 馬玉奎 moved to and settled in Wanping 宛平 of Hebei Province (now corresponding to Fengtai district 豐台區 in Beijing) with his whole family. Ma Tianying’s father Ma Baolong 馬寶龍 ran a halal meat shop for a living. Ma Tianying was born in 1900, the same year as the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising, and attended a private old-style school. After having witnessed his family’s economic hardships, Ma Tianying decided to enter a school run by the French; with his father’s support, he finished studies in seven years, and in 1917 headed to France as a translator for the Chinese mineworkers headed to France. He divided his time between work and study, learned different French dialects, practiced public speech and writing, thus earning skills as a future diplomat. Upon return to China in 1922, he came back to Beijing where he got married, and relocated to Zhengzhou in Henan Province to work as a manager of materials for Longhai Railway for seven years. In 1929 he returned to Beijing and worked as a secretary of the Huabi Bank (華比銀行 Belgian Bank) for one year and moved to Shanghai in 1930, where he assumed the position as a secretary at the Turkish Consulate in Shanghai. He also worked as a
translator at a police office in the French Concession area, which he resigned after witnessing the ill-treatment of Chinese residents.  

In Shanghai, Ma Tianying became a part of the vibrant Muslim community in the city that we saw in Chapter 2. He acquainted himself with scholar-entrepreneurs such as Ha Decheng, Wu Tegong, and Da Pusheng, and wrote and taught for the Shanghai Islamic School that was established in 1928 inside the western mosque (Xiaotaoyuan mosque).

The Mission’s members thus emerged out of new groups of Chinese Muslim urban elites, which also included old gentry and scholars, who came to assume much more diverse and public positions in local societies and performed overlapping roles in commercial, religious and political realms. Like revolutionaries, intellectuals or independence fighters in all of Asia at the turn of the twentieth century whose successes and survivals depended on transnational, diaspora networks, this circle of Chinese Muslims collectively constituted and constructed capacious “cultural nexus” that was not confined to a city or province in China, but stretched to far-flung locations across the Islamic world. “Progressive” religious leaders emerged in Nationalist China, who could

20 Fukang Jia (賈福康), _Taiwan Huijiao Shi_ (History of Islam in Taiwan 台灣回教史) (Taipei: Yisilan Wenhua Fuwushe, 2005), 150.
22 Hagen Schulz-Forberg, _A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940_ (Routledge, 2015), 9. Prasenjit Duara has conceptualized “cultural nexus” as a “matrix within which legitimacy and authority were produced, represented and reproduced,” (40) wherein embedded symbols and values such as “religious
“enter into constructive negotiation with the government and, in exchange for political support and endorsement of the state’s anti-superstitious policies, were rewarded with some autonomy.”

Likewise, Chinese Muslims coming from different social and geographical backgrounds could build alliances on levels that transcended local village, city, province or countries, thereby accruing resources not necessarily available to popular religions that faced anti-superstition campaigns and confiscation of temple properties.

When Wang Zengshan and Ma Tianying set out on their journey in 1938, much had changed since the Khilafat movement that Wang Zengshan cited. Shortly after Indian Muslims mobilized moral and monetary support for the Turkish War of Independence, the Ankara government dissolved the Ottoman Empire and abolished the caliphate, shattering imaginations on pan-Islamic solidarity that the caliphate had symbolized.

beliefs, sentiments of reciprocity, kinship bonds, and the like…were transmitted and sustained by the institutions and networks of the nexus.” The boundaries of the cultural nexus are not defined by a “geographical zone or a particular hierarchical system,” but by the “persons and groups who pursue public goals within the nexus,” thus making it a “subject-centered universe of power.” On the other hand, supra-village religious organizations were not adversely impacted by transformative drive of “state involution” following the Boxer Uprising (156). Prasenjit Duara, Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988).


changed circumstances, however, mattered little for materialization of the Goodwill Mission and their articulations on the idea of the Muslim world.

3.2.1. War, Religious Associations and the “Islamic World”

Chinese Muslims affiliated with the Nationalist Party were latecomers in trying to develop amicable relations with political authorities in West Asia through religious ties. For imperial Japan, Mecca and the space of the pilgrimage associated with it represented a space that could be utilized for political purposes, long before the outbreak of World War II. Thinkers, politicians and military circles of imperial Japan had developed partnerships with Muslim notables from Russian and Soviet Central Asia since the turn of the twentieth century. As Japan’s ideologues refined pan-Asianist thoughts on the wake of its imperial expansion, observers in the Ottoman Empire, in turn, were shocked and amazed at post-Meiji Japan’s victory against the Ottoman archrival Russia in 1904-1905.26 The event instigated travels of streams of Russian Tatar intellectuals to travel to Japan, who developed ties with Japan’s political and military circles and performed critical roles in the founding of pan-Asianist Islamic study circles in Tokyo.27

26 Renée Worringer, Ottomans Imagining Japan: East, Middle East, and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Aydin, The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia.

Onto the early inter-war period, Japanese Muslims—who had converted through contacts with exiles and refugees from Russian Central Asia—utilized pilgrimage channels to create contacts with political and religious authorities in Arabia. A parallel aim was to survey new markets in West Asia for Japan to export cotton and light industrial products, a task that gained increased urgency following the Great Depression.\(^{28}\) Japan’s strategy of cultivating its own Muslim networks and befriending those of rival powers reached its height during the 1930s following its occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and exit from the League of Nations in 1933. In Manchuria, Japan nominally sponsored the “Muslim state” (Huihuiguohuihuigu 回回國) as a strategy of penetration into China. From 1937 onward, Japan immediately established branches of the Chinese Islamic Association in northern China to win the support of Muslims, informed by active learning on histories of Germany’s alliances with the Ottoman Empire and Italy’s engagements with Libya and Imam Yahya of Yemen.\(^{29}\) A similar approach and propaganda would be adopted in Southeast Asia during the brief number of years of

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Japanese occupation (1941-45), as Japan portrayed itself as a liberator of Muslims against British and Dutch colonial rule.³⁰

It was the full-scale war against Japan that, ironically, streamlined scattered Muslim networks in China into an intermediary political body. The War immediately tightened connections between Chinese Muslims of different strata and geographic backgrounds and put them in direct contact with Chiang Kaishek through a mediatory organization. Whereas Buddhist associations and delegations led by figures such as Taixu (太虛 1890-1947), Dai Jitao (戴季陶 1891-1947) and Tan Yunshan (譚雲山 1898-1983) provided flexible outlets for the Nationalist Party to forge linkages with non-Han Tibetan populations in the borderlands and also socio-political associations in India,³¹ wartime Chinese Islamic missions provided bridges to another geographic nexus of the expansively defined Islamic world.

Scholar-politicians and militarists who had ties to the Nationalist Party now became affiliates of a single religious organization, the Chinese Muslim National Salvation Association. Its president was Bai Chongxi (白崇禧 1893-1966), previously an unruly warlord from Guangxi who now served as the Minister of Defense of the

Nationalist Party. Figures such as Ma Buqing (馬步青 1901-1977), who was the younger brother of the Qinghai Provincial Governor Ma Bufang, and Shi Zizhou (時子周 1879-1969), a scholar and also a member of the Nationalist Party’s Central Committee, served on the Board of Trustee.\textsuperscript{32} The series of diplomatic missions, including the Goodwill Missions in 1937-38, were organized under the tutelage of the Chinese Muslim National Salvation Association.

Although multiple Islamic cultural and educational associations had existed throughout China in the Republican period, the Association quickly rose to prominence as the first all-national Islamic federation that carried the backing of the central government. By December of 1945, the Association had branches in 21 provinces such as Anhui, Qinghai, Hunan, Chongqing, Sichuan, Henan, Jiangxi, Hubei, Guizhou, Guangxi, Gansu, Guangdong, Ningxia, Xikang, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Suiyuan, Zhejiang, Yunnan, Fujian, Hebei. The branches totaled 381. It could not, however, establish branches in Xinjiang Province for reasons that are unclear, although potential plans were discussed.\textsuperscript{33} After the Association’s relocation to Taipei in 1949, General Bai Chongxi continued to

\textsuperscript{32} Rongrong Zhu (朱蓉蓉), “Kangzhan Shiqi Huijiao Shijiede Minjian Waijiao (Islamic world’s civil diplomacy during the War of Resistance 抗战时期回教世界的民间外交),” \textit{Xueshu Jiaoliu 学术交流} 213, no. 12 (December 2011): 197.

be its president until 1959. The same Chinese Muslim Association has maintained its functions in the Taipei Central Mosque until the present.

Japan’s direct penetration into Muslim communities in northeast China, which could potentially extend farther west to Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang, gave affiliates of the Nationalist Party the leverage to pronounce their apt positions as brokers between Republican China and what they portrayed as a unified Islamic world. Whereas the rhetoric of the “Republic of Five Nationalities” provided an ideological basis for them to cling onto in domestic context, outside China were yet another layers of Islamic networks and sets of languages that Chinese Muslim religious and political leaders could access and reformulate. When the Goodwill Mission departed in November 1937 from Nanjing and returned to Chongqing through Saigon and Hanoi in January 1939, their travels encompassed the whole area of ports and cities in the Indian Ocean. During the fourteen months from the time of their departure from Nanjing to return to Chongqing, the Goodwill Mission transited or sojourned in a dozen cities including Hong Kong, Singapore, Suez, Jeddah and Mecca, Cairo, Alexandria, Haifa, Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Isfahan, Bushehr, Bombay, Karachi, Istanbul, Ankara, Djibouti, Aden, Colombo, Pondicherry, Madras, Haiphong, Hanoi and Laoka. Throughout their visits, the delegation delivered lectures and propaganda on Japanese aggression in China; attended meetings and receptions; visited mosques, museums, and zoos; and conversed with more
than sixty religious and political dignitaries including King 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Saʿūd of Saudi Arabia and Muhammad Jinnah of the Muslim League.  

Occasionally joining the Goodwill Mission was Da Pusheng (達浦生 1874-1965) based in Shanghai, one of the entrepreneurial scholars who had founded the Islamic Teachers School within western mosque together with Ha Decheng. The tract he

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34 Wang Zengshan, Zhongguo Huijiao Jindong Fangwentuan Riji, viii.
distributed, titled “A Message from Muslims in China to Muslims around the world,” shows how nationalist Chinese Muslim scholar-politicians combined the rhetoric of anti-imperial Islamism and an image of united Muslims in China to undertake propaganda to audiences abroad. Da Pusheng described Japan as a “little sister” of China that in history had developed under China’s influence, who had taken advantage of China’s internal political turmoil after the fall of the Qing Empire to realize her longstanding colonial ambitions. Muslims in China, Da Pusheng emphasized, were “united with non-Muslims in defending the country.” This was because they understood that “the love for the homeland is part of faith (ḥub al-waṭan min al-imān حب الوطن من الإيمان), jihad is in the path of the right (al-jihād fi sabīl al-haq الجهاد في سبيل الحق), and humanity [undertakes] jihad in the path of the righteous religion (al-‘insānīyah huwa al-jihād fi sabīl al-dīn al-ṣahīh الإنسانية هو الجهاد في سبيل الدين الصحيح).” Some Muslims had therefore taken to arms under the leadership of well-known Muslims, and others were doing relief work for the afflicted. Some others propagandizing for China, for Muslims around the world to stand united on the side of Muslims in China at the face of aggressors who were violating humanity, righteousness, and correct religion.

35 Although the full book cannot be located, the preface was published in the periodical al-Risālah in Cairo, a copy of which is kept in the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Archive (Dārah) in Riyadh, which suggests that it was circulated in Saudi Arabia. Signed alongside Da Pusheng’s name for the statement was that of Muhammad Ibrahim Sha Guozhen, who had headed the group of Chinese Muslim students in Cairo’s al-Azhar University.

36 ‘Risālah Muslimī Al-Ṣīn ila Muslimī Al-‘Ālam – ‘an Haqā’iq Al-Harb Al-Sīnīyyah Al-Yabānīyyah Al-Qā‘imah (A Message from Muslims in China to Muslims in the world -- truths on the present war between
Citing Quranic verses, he urged the readers to judge with fairness and to punish the aggressors through words and in substance, for the restoration of world peace. As Allah said: “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression” (5:2), and “Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors” (2:190). The rest of the book narrated the horrors of war since its beginning, killings of young civilian women and men, and destruction of mosques and schools. The request from Muslims in China to Muslims around the world was to boycott Japanese goods; not sell them metal or foodstuff to forestall their plans of colonization; and to direct support through the Red Cross. Because “we could no longer tolerate aggression of a foreign country on our homeland (waṭan) and the detriment that the wicked aggressors have inflicted on our Muslim brothers in our country (bilādna),” he composed this statement to “Muslim brothers in the world and those who love peace and righteousness” that exposes the great calamity and disastrous wars faced by Muslims and non-Muslims in China.\(^37\)

While China clearly represented a homeland (waṭan) for Chinese Muslims, Mecca, epitomizing the symbolic and physical center of the abstract ideal of the Islamic world, could also be conceptualized and framed as a home place. In their meeting with the Minister of Finance ‘Abdullah Suleiman in Mecca in his private residence, the Goodwill Mission conveyed the conceptual value of Arabia for Muslims in China.

\(^{37}\) Al-Risālah 248 (April 4, 1938): 872.

\(\) Ibid., 873-4.
‘Abdullah Suleiman, whom the Diaries described as lively and humorous, was a former trader from ‘Unayzah in Central Arabia who had ventured into trade in Bombay and Bahrain. After an unsuccessful business attempt in Bahrain, he had risen to become a key advisor for King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and played a critical role in Saudi negotiations with American oilmen on concession agreements in the 1930s and in 1950.38 The Goodwill Mission’s meeting with ‘Abdullah Suleiman was arranged through their pilgrimage guide Hasan Subhāni.39

To ‘Abdullah Suleiman, Wang Zengshan proclaimed (translated by the Azharite student Wang Shiming): “Arabia is the origin place of Islam, and the center of Islam today. China’s whole body of Muslims has been attentive to and longed towards your country. At the time of the third caliphate, Islam had already entered China. It is just that because the distance was far, news did not get exchanged mutually. This delegation is, in fact, the organization that connects each Muslim group. We are visiting each Muslim country in the Near East, largely with the intention of making the pilgrimage to the Hejaz (Hanzhi 漢志) and coming to Arabia.”40

Wang Zengshan stressed that Muslims in China, with their strong notions on the religion and the nation, threw their lot for the war against Japan. A famous Muslim

40 Ibid., 97.
general, for instance, was ‘Omar Bai Chongxi, the Minister of Defense who was assisting Chiang Kaishek in military command. He emphasized the cruelty of Japanese forces in destroying mosques and schools and killing Muslim civilians. Arabia and China, he concluded, “were all countries that were facing oppression of imperialist countries; as for religion, China’s 50 million Muslims had kept the same faith as the nation (\textit{minzu} 民族) of Arabia.” Coming from a faraway place, he wished for sympathy from “your noble country.”

The reply from Minister ‘Abdullah Suleiman reflects both the notion of Mecca as a rallying site for Muslims worldwide, and the pessimism on the idea of the united world Muslim community that the Goodwill Mission continuously encountered throughout their journeys. The significance of the Hejaz (\textit{Hanzhi}), Suleiman reportedly emphasized, lay in being the point of congregation for Muslims (\textit{huijiao minzu} 回教民族) worldwide. Likening Mecca to League of Nations which fastened ties between countries, ‘Abdullah Suleiman stressed that any country in the world other than Arabia was not capable of assembling (\textit{jihe} 集合) Muslims (\textit{huijiao minzu} 回教民族) around the world into one place. In Mecca Muslims from every place gathered and could exchange opinions on establishing norms for activities of Muslims. He added, however, the concern that sympathy between Muslims was an empty one. China’s 50 million Muslims were facing Japan’s cruelties, as did Palestinians who were receiving ill-treatment from England and the Jews. Although different groups had recently “awaken” and tried to realize world
Islamic unity, they had succeeded only partially. He encouraged Chinese Muslims to continue organizational efforts and revive education; at Wang Zengshan’s request to boycott Japanese goods, he replied that it would be easy to cut imports from Japan.\textsuperscript{41}

In fact, it seems that the Financial Minister had been keeping all channels open. The same year that he received Chinese Muslim delegations, ‘Abdullah Suleiman also greeted Japanese pilgrim delegates headed by Suzuki Tsuyoshi. They discussed plans of initiating direct Saudi-Japanese trade ties, so as to lower the price of Japanese products by undercutting Yemeni intermediary merchants.\textsuperscript{42} The Goodwill Mission members also must have been aware of the limitations of notions of Islamic solidarity and the preponderance of Japanese goods in the Middle East. The abstractness of the idea of the united Muslim world and the recurring ritual of the pilgrimage, however, offered a repertoire for them to emphasize their importance vis-à-vis the Republican state back in China, and to arrange meetings with state dignitaries and carry on propagandas towards audiences at home and abroad.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{42} Koyagi, “The Hajj by Japanese Muslims in the Interwar Period,” 152.
3.3. *Diaspora Networks beneath Inter-State Diplomacy*

Chinese Muslims’ pilgrimage accounts reveal more than their diplomatic outreach and uses of the concept of the Muslim world. The delegates consistently encountered fellow pilgrims, exiles and sojourners who traced their homes to wide-ranging geographies across the Indian Ocean. The Hejaz through the notes of Chinese Muslim pilgrimage missions appears as a meeting point for settlers and travelers from distant regions, a haven for escapees, and grounds where contradictory political propagandas on Islam could penetrate. As the delegations reached Mecca and participated in the pilgrimage, they temporarily became parts of its society that had comprised of different sets of diaspora networks.

Among the persons whom they met were escapees and settlers from tenuous territories of China, who were concentrated in the Hejaz and dispersed around the Indian Ocean arena. Courting their sentiments, especially those from Xinjiang, constituted a major aim of Chinese Muslim pilgrimage delegations during and after the War of Resistance. The proximity of imperial Japan to diaspora populations from China’s volatile borderlands generated the language of urgency from pilgrim representatives sponsored by the Republican state. Securing internal borders was thus intimately related to befriending external diaspora networks that spanned across China’s western borderlands, and the wider geographies of Central and South Asia to Arabia.

The Hejaz in the immediate years after its inclusion into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constituted an autonomous social space composed of diverse diaspora...
communities, a point that the Chinese Muslim visitors noticed during their short stays. The Goodwill Mission, for instance, was struck by the numerous groups of Jawa people on the streets of Mecca. Some of them had come in pursuit of knowledge, and others were engaged in commerce; after a long time, they had settled (luohu 落户) in the city.\(^{43}\)

The pilgrimage guide Hasan Subhāni informed them that Mecca’s Jawa people constitute the majority of those who become dwellers in the city (zhuanju 轉居) after performing the pilgrimage. The Goodwill Mission’s colleague from Beijing who had made the pilgrimage in 1933 had in fact heard from a settler of Yunnan origin that a cheaper way to purchase return tickets was to get them from Indian/Jawi people. They had bought round-trip tickets due to various restrictions from the British or Dutch government but often stayed on in Mecca for a year or two. Then, after deciding to not return, they would then sell their return tickets at a lower price.\(^{44}\)

In touring around sacred relics of Mecca, the Mission followed along a different Tatar guide who had come from Russia, an episode that is also telling of the degree of laxity on regulation of religious practices in the Hejaz. The guide had been sojourning in Mecca for twenty years due to political overturns back home. The guide told the Mission that he had “drifted in an alien land, [and] there is no day he does not wish to go back.”\(^{45}\)


\(^{44}\)Zhao Zhenwu (趙振武), *Xixing Riji (Journey Westwards 西行日記)* (Beiping: Beiping Chengda Shifan Chubanbu, 1933), 273-4.

He took them around the birthplace of Aisha and the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the tomb of Khadija. The sites were desolate but remained accessible for visitors. As the Goodwill Mission’s Diaries described it, the King’s order to ban visits to tombs and other sacred sites by demolishing them was being implemented in a “clumsy” way, which puzzled the Mission members. Why would he not, with all the political authority he had held, simply send the police to “patrol and protect the area, forbid access at all times, [and] repeatedly check on the sites?” 46

More so than the religious sphere, control over one’s social and political membership to Arabia had remained laissez-faire. The Goodwill Mission briefly conversed with Musa Jarunllah from Russia, whom they characterized as a political offender who could not tolerate communism. The encounter led the Mission to compare religious membership (jiaoji 教籍) as equivalent to political membership (guoji 國籍).

As the Diaries stated, “regardless of [their] country or race, once the believers (jiaomin 教民) enter the boundaries of the country of Arabia they become its subjects (min 民); it can be said that there exists no [territorial] boundary (zhenyu 畝域).” Every Muslim political offender therefore “regarded the place as safe grounds.” 47

46 Ibid., 90.
47 Ibid., 84.
Performing the pilgrimage brought the Goodwill Mission into contact with pilgrims and settlers who preceded them, who had come from diverse geographies of China’s tenuous territories. After performing Sa’i (walking/running between Safa and Marwa Mountains seven times) and preparing to shave their heads, the Goodwill Mission passed by a housing for people from Gansu. The building turned out to be the lodging endowed by Ma Fuxiang (Chapter 1), the former governor of Suiyuan/Ningxia Province. The Mission’s Diaries described it as clean and beautiful.48 Throughout their stay in Mecca, the Goodwill Mission came across several sojourners and settlers from Gansu and Yunnan Provinces.49 Some of the “Gansu Muslims” (Gansu Humin 甘肅回民) approached them and expressed anger towards Japan’s “poisonous propaganda” (xuanchuan zhi du 宣傳之毒) in Arabia and its declaration of Islam as the second

48 Ibid., 77.
49 Later, at the Chinese tent on Mount Mina, where the Chinese (Republican) national flag hung, pilgrims from Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai Provinces were gathered. There was also a Yunnan person with a hearty spirit (jieshou). He was a respected, old Imam from Yanggon who looked scholarly and refined (ruya 儒雅) (79). The Mission also paid a visit to an elderly person from Yunnan named Ma Fucun, who received pilgrims from China with utmost kindness. He had kept with him a picture of Chinese Muslim dignitaries (Ma Songting, Hou Songquan, Tang Kesan, Ma Shaoyun [a different name for Ma Hongbin, the son of Ma Fuxiang], Sun Yanyi, and a calligraphic writing by Ma Junfu of Shanxi) (107). In 1933, Zhao Zhenwu had also visited Ma Fucun in Mecca and was treated with tea and delicacies. According to a report by 1939 Azharite delegation, Ma Fucun had followed his father to Mecca in order to escape from Yunnan’s Dali in the aftermath of the Panthay Rebellion, and had been running a store in Mecca after completing his studies. After completing the pilgrimage, the Mission also came across former subordinates of the infamous Chinese Muslim military general Ma Zhongying. Named Ma Dichen and Lei Fengxiang, they had escaped from Xinjiang and were “wandering in outer lands” (liu wang yu wai zhe). The Mission advised them to return and serve the country – since the pilgrimage was already over, they should not go around in alien lands (taxiang). The two persons, after giving much thought, were reported to have headed out to Bombay in order to return to China the next day (115).
national religion. The Mission, in turn, informed them of the course of the War of Resistance against Japan and hopeful prospects on the War.

Contrary to the Mission’s hopes, Japan’s outreach had successfully courted exiles from Soviet Central and Xinjiang Province. In Mecca, Musa Jarunllah from Russia raised his suspicions on Republican China’s alliances with the communist Soviet Union. Behind such ideas, the Mission claimed with impassion, was infiltration of Japanese imperial propaganda towards diaspora populations from Central Asia. At Musa Jarunllah’s reservations to engage with representatives of Republican China, the Goodwill Mission ardently replied that Sino-Soviet ties are temporary, based on short-term shared interests in military affairs; that China as a country of Sun Yatsen’s Three Principles of the People (democracy, nationalism and people’s livelihoods) cannot tolerate communism; that the Communist Party within China was collaborating with the Nationalist Party against a shared enemy; and that extermination of Donggan (東干) Chinese Muslims and Turkic Muslims (Hehui 紇回) in southern Xinjiang was fault of regional military commanders rather than the Soviets who were occupying the region. The Goodwill Mission handed him their pamphlet, “Messages to World’s Muslims” (gao shijie huijiao shu 告世界回教書), potentially the booklet that the abovementioned Da Pusheng had composed.

Most alarming to the Mission, Japan’s outreach to the Muslim world had influenced exiles from the Xinjiang province. They met several escapees from Xinjiang who had been residing in Mecca through the mediation of a person by the name of “Ma
De 马德,” a former magistrate in Xinjiang whom they came across near the Ka’ba. He introduced the delegation to several escapees from Xinjiang who had been residing in Mecca. One such person was “Muhammad Sulite” from Ili in westernmost Xinjiang that borders present-day Kazakhstan. Muhammad Sulite was described as an erudite person about 60 years of age who had been residing in Mecca for a long time after “suffering under the communist party back home,” who had earned the respect of local authorities in Arabia. To the alarm of the delegation, Muhammad kept with him pamphlets printed in Tokyo, written in “Xinjiang” language, which on the front page had three flags of Japan, Italy, and Germany. The delegates urged him that his beliefs about Japan being the protector of Islam against communism were not true. They persuaded him that Japan was an imperialist state, unlike Muslim believers who were all parts of “weak nations.” Japan, the delegates emphasized, had been oppressing Muslims in inland China (neidi 内地) to the same extent that communists were repressing Xinjiang’s Muslims; furthermore, the increasing number of Japanese Muslim converts, in fact, carried an explicit political agenda.50

Winning over the minds of these “sojourning siblings,” or emphasizing their role in such a task, was a significant aim of the Goodwill Mission and future pilgrimage delegations to come. The dispersed settlers from Xinjiang, who had formed amicable

relations with imperial Japan, also provided a pretext for them to propose to the central government on the need to forge formal diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as we will see in later parts of the chapter.

The Goodwill Mission thus devoted much of their time in Mecca on publicizing the purportedly improved relations between the central government and Xinjiang, and convincing settlers from Xinjiang to side with Republican China instead of Japan. The Mission repeated their argument to escapees from Xinjiang who had occupied high socio-political positions prior to their settlements in Mecca. Two of them were “Mahmud shizhang 師長 (teacher)”, and “Muhammad Niyaz” who had previously served as Chief Executive (xingzheng zhangguan 行政長官) in Hotan in southwestern Xinjiang. To the teacher Mahmud who had initially been wary of the Mission, they told him that the government regards “borderlands” (bianjiang 边疆) as important and treats all ethnicities (minzu 民族) equally, but not everything could be realized because of external circumstances.51

Although Mecca could be framed as a conceptual homeland for Chinese Muslim visitors and settlers in the Hejaz, it was also an unfamiliar place to newcomers. After all, their hometowns in China were places where the food, acquaintances, and language were familiar, and where political ambitions that had accrued from previous years could be

51 Ibid., 83.
realized. Such was the argument that Ibrahim Ma Tianying, the co-leader of the delegation, made to the teacher Mahmud to convince him to return to Xinjiang. By returning, Ma Tianying emphasized, he would be able to realize his previous aim of realizing regional autonomy through reliance on the self, rather than on external powers, instead of aging, wandering and dying in an “alien land” (taxiang 他鄉). Back in Xinjiang, he would also be able to support people’s learning, as the central government also values nurturing talents and education in the borderlands (bianjiang 邊疆).\textsuperscript{52}

The notes of the Goodwill Mission show that long before its arrival, the Hejaz had been home to diaspora communities who had been connected to networks of pilgrimage, scholarship, and trade that stretched back and forth between Xinjiang, Central Asia, Indian Ocean, Istanbul, and the Hejaz. During the inter-war period, onto World War II and beyond, these conduits turned into pathways of escape for exiles from the turbulent Xinjiang. In this shared space that ran across East and West Asia, conflicting groups of Chinese and Japanese Muslims attempted to bring these populations closer to the different states that they represented, through the abstract rhetoric of universalist Islam against empires, and at times, through direct material support. We see the unfolding of these competitions more clearly in the entrances of two Chinese Muslim pilgrimage delegations in Mecca one year after the Goodwill Mission.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 87.
3.4. Mecca, 1939: War of Words, Battle over Diaspora Networks

The Goodwill Mission left Mecca for their other destinations, but the significance of Mecca as the site of recurring pilgrimage and a gathering place for exiles remained unchanging. Only one year after the Goodwill Mission’s arrival in Mecca in 1938, during the next pilgrimage season, two Chinese Muslim delegations, each sponsored by the Republic of China and imperial Japan, clashed in Mecca. Under the auspices of Japanese-sponsored Chinese Muslim United Association (Zhongguo Huijiao Zonglianhehui), five Chinese Muslims made the pilgrimage in 1939. It was headed by Tang Yichen 唐易塵, the Head of General Affairs (Zongwu Buzhang) of the organization. He and four others departed from Beijing on December 19th, 1938 to Dalian, onward to Shanghai, then to Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon, Mumbai, Masawa, Suez, Jeddah, and finally, Mecca. They made a roundabout through East Africa as they could not obtain an official national passport and British-certified visa to go directly from India to Arabia.

The onset of Tang Yichen’s trip led to the expedient organization of a counter-delegation, consisting of two dozen Chinese Muslim students who had been studying in Cairo’s al-Azhar University. They received a telegram from Imam Da Pusheng and other former teachers through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informing them of the “fake pilgrimage delegation” that had been composed of Chinese Muslims who were sided with
the enemy, Japan. At this news, twenty-five students organized a pilgrimage delegation with state funding. This included ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, whom we saw in Chapter 2. Leading the delegation was Muhammad Ma Jian (馬堅 1906-1978) who, like ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, was a native of Shadian in Yunnan Province who graduated from Shanghai’s Islamic Teachers School in the western mosque. A co-leader was Pang Shiqian (龐士謙 1902-1958), a native of Zhengzhou of Henan Province who had graduated from Chengda Normal School, the Islamic educational institution in Beijing that incorporated secular subjects.

The episode was an ironic moment when Chinese Muslims who carried different political affiliations confronted one another in Mecca through the shared language of the Islamic world against empires. As they did, each encountered exiles from Xinjiang in the Hejaz. After the pilgrimage, an Azharite student published the course of events on a periodical back in China, which the delegation leader Pang Shiqian republished in his 1951 memoir. Although both the original article and Pang’s edited version emphasized

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54 The original version had been published in 1939 under the name of another Azharite student Zhang Huaide. In the text that he republished within the book, Pang Shiqian omitted certain parts, including details on open confrontations with the Japanese-supported Chinese Muslim delegation headed by Tang Yichen, parts related to the Nationalist Party and Chiang Kaishek, and details on conversations with Isa Yusuf Alptekin, the leading activist writer on Xinjiang. The diary that was published in the same year as the delegation’s trip can be found in: Zhang Huaide (張懷德), “Zhongguo Huijiao Chaojintuan Riji 中国回教朝觐團日記),” Huimin Yanlun Banyuekan: Chongqingban 回民言論半月刊 重慶版 1, no. 9 (1939): 27–40. Here, I use both writings.
the religious significance of the pilgrimage, the mission that the pilgrim delegates carried was a politicized one. On the train from Cairo to Suez, they held up two flags, one of Republican China and one of the delegation. On the latter were written the words “Chinese Muslim Pilgrimage Delegation” (Zhongguo huijiao chaojin tuan 中国回教朝觐团), both in Arabic and Chinese. Seeing this, the passengers, most of the other pilgrims, reportedly “expressed sympathy, a sense of delight, and endless hopefulness” (biaoshi tongqing, biaoshi yukuai, biaoshi wuqiongde xiwang 表示同情, 表示愉快, 表示無窮的希望). Pang also noted with disapproval that Japanese products filled the market in the Hejaz, as “the enemy (diren 敵人) expanded its market and strengthened overseas trade.”

Before departing from Cairo, the students met with the Crown Prince Faisal bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd, who at the time was staying in Cairo as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hejaz. This was because the delegation lacked the custom fees to be paid in Jeddah, which the Hejaz Consulate in Cairo was also not willing to accommodate. As the students sought help from the Minister, Pang Shiqian and Ma Jian stressed that Chinese Muslims showed love and care for the “Hejaz imperial family” (hanzhi huangshi 漢志皇室), and admired the Prince in particular because he was the central person in the Islamic

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55 Ibid., 111
56 Pang Shiqian, Aiji Jiunian, 126, 7.
world (huijiao shijie de zhongxin renwu 回教世界的中心人物). Prince Faisal willingly agreed to give them special treatment. As they exited, the delegation shouted “Hail (wansui 萬歲) Minister Faisal, Hail the King Ibn Saʻūd, Hail the Chinese Republic (Zhonghua minguo 中華民國), Hail Islam (huijiao 回教)!” Later in Mecca, the delegation had an audience with the King ‘Abd al-ʻAzīz Āl Saʻūd and spoke on unwavering support that Muslims in China had been providing to the central government in the fight against Japan. They also confronted the “fake delegation” headed by “Han traitor (Hanjian 漢奸),” and persuade them to not fall into Japan’s scheme to use them.

What did Tang Yichen, the person who headed the Japanese-sponsored Chinese Muslim pilgrimage delegation have to say? He also published his pilgrimage account in 1943. On his part, Tang repeatedly stressed in his published travelogue that his group of five pilgrims carried no political mission whatsoever; nor did any Japanese personnel accompany them. Rather, the objective of his pilgrimage was to explore the sea route to Mecca: on the way to the pilgrimage were England’s colonies, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon, Mumbai, and Aden. His was to “find out whether the

57 Ibid., 110
58 Zhang Huaide, “Zhongguo Huijiao Chaojintuan Riji,” 36. The King, however, remained quiet; the delegation believed that it was customary for the King to not speak publicly when receiving guests. Pang Shiqian excluded the portion on the encounter with the King in his republished travelogue.
59 Ibid., 38-9.
route was accessible from Northern China, and if not, devise a new one for Chinese pilgrims.”

Nevertheless, his account well reflects the rhetoric of imperial Japan against western empires, particularly the British Empire that ruled over the majority of the Islamic world in the Indian Ocean. Opposition to British imperialism explicitly characterized Tang’s description of every location he visited. In Hong Kong, Tang lamented that the city needed to abide by the conditions and regulations of Britain and that people and ships can enter the Chinese port without restrictions. In this sense, “Hong Kong was no different from being Britain’s territory.” Likewise, Tang noted the military importance of Colombo for the British and the latter’s administration in the city for such purpose. Stopping over at Bombay, he wrote that Indian fathers, rich merchants, and aristocrats get married to women from Britain. He stated, “their children are of mixed stock (yingyin hezhong – would they rebel against Britain later?” This was, Tang emphasized, Britain’s deliberate scheme to suppress opposition. Arriving in Jeddah, Tang wrote that he felt a sense of assuredness at the green Arabian flag that he noticed. He remarked that almost all his way from Shanghai, the ships had to hold up a British flag, except for the Chinese flag in Shanghai and the

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60 Tang Yichen (唐易塵), *Maijia Xunliji (Records of Pilgrimage to Mecca 麥加巡禮記)* (Beijing: Zhengzongbao chubanbu 震宗報出版部, 1943), 57.
61 Ibid., 80
Italian flag in Masawa. He wrote: “at least Arabia maintained a degree of independence, thanks to prohibition of non-Muslim entry into Arabia.”

Tang Yichen finally underscored that Muslims (huijiao minzu 回教民族) in various places faced threat; everywhere from Singapore, Malaya, Mumbai, to Colombo were all under British occupation. Thus, “it is difficult to find people who can overthrow the yoke of British control, as the British Empire uses the policy of non-interference in religion to grasp onto power.” At the same time, Ibn Sa’ud, to overthrow English interference, purposefully was “becoming close to Germany and Italy to the utmost to win them over to its [Saudi] side, and German and Italian planes circle the air [of Saudi Arabia] every day.” In this way, Tang consistently criticized the British that stood in opposition to the Islamic world and hinted the need to cooperate with the Axis.

Despite Tang’s explicit and repeated denial of any political task he carried, he not only publicized anti-British propaganda in Mecca but also unwittingly revealed himself to British authorities. The contestations between the Cairo delegation and Tang’s cohort caught the attention of the British Legation in Mecca, as the report noted:

…A certain Yahya, aged rather more than twenty, the son of a pilgrim guide of Chinese Turkestan origin named Abdullah Hassan Bukhari, is said to be the secret agent of the Japanese Government in Jedda. A journey which he made to

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62 Ibid., 112-3.
63 Ibid., 240.
64 Ibid., 241.
Japan in 1938, ostensibly to study electricity, was paid for by the Japanese government. Yahya knew about the arrival of Tang-Yi-Chen on pilgrimage early this year, but he says that Tang-Yi-Chen, who was under another name, did not enter into contact with him at Jeddah and, on being spoken to in Mecca, told Yahya to avoid him. According to Yahya Tang-Yi-Chen was successful in his anti-British propaganda among the hundred odd Chinese pilgrims who came to Mecca last season. On the other hand anti-Japanese propaganda was conducted, according to Yahya, by Chinese Moslem students from Al Azhar University in Cairo and by one Yusuf Isa from Hong Kong and a certain Abdullah from Paris, both of them originally from Chinese Turkestan…

According to this report, Tang Yichen carried out his anti-British propaganda under an alias. Furthermore, he and Japanese-affiliated agents in Jeddah who traced their homes to Xinjiang were both a part of Japanese Muslim networks that reached the Hejaz.

Even in his published pilgrimage account, Tang quite explicitly problematized the position of the Chinese government. Tang wrote that “a thousand pilgrims from Xinjiang were killed in eastern Afghanistan this year [1939], hence no single pilgrim from Xinjiang this year,” which he reportedly verified from local residents in Mecca. Soviet Russia, in control of Xinjiang at the time through the warlord Sheng Shicai, “had forbidden pilgrimage from Xinjiang for several years, yet there had been individual pilgrims; but this year, it allowed pilgrimage, announcing that it will provide assistance. More than a thousand people registered, and were killed at Afghan by the

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soldiers who had been hiding.” 67 The Chinese government, Tang critically stated, “quietly watches Sheng Shicai’s cruelties in Xinjiang.” 68

In contrast to the Azharite students’ report, Tang very gladly ran into Chinese Muslim Azharite students at the place of the hajj guide for Chinese people. They talked to one another while washing for prayer, and afterward, each went about his own tasks; 69 they even socialized together very joyously for two or three hours. 70 When Pang told Tang that the Azharite students were in Mecca to keep an eye on them, and asked if Tang had any political mission, Tang replied that he had planned to tell Pang’s group of the situation of Muslims in northern China so that their minds could be at peace, and also make the pilgrimage route known to Muslims in northern China in wartime. Upon hearing this, Pang expressed admiration towards his spirit. 71 When they met with the King, Ma Jian, the co-leader of the Azharite pilgrimage delegation read aloud two written pages in Arabic that Tang could not understand. He could slightly make out the meaning of the second paper, which discussed something about Northern China. Tang thus assumed that the delegation from Azhar was representing Tang’s group as well. 72

68 Ibid., 192.
69 Ibid., 120.
70 Ibid., 156-7
71 Ibid., 134.
72 Ibid., 168.
Tang further noted that the students from Cairo had, in fact, conflicting attitudes towards their trips to Mecca. Some were determined to make sure that Tang’s group did not undertake any political propaganda, under the conscientious burden that they had received travel funding from the Nationalist government. Others, however, complained that they had to make the journey out of their busy schedules. Some others, because they had not undertaken the pilgrimage yet, were happy that they could come using governmental money. One of the students, Nazijia, gave Tang his own Quran before departing to Cairo, and expressed his warm sympathy towards Tang’s objectives and regretted not having been able to express his feelings due to the open presence of his colleagues.\(^2^3\)

While the intentions of both oppositional parties are beyond our reach, what is clear is that the arrival of Japanese-sponsored Chinese Muslim delegation in Mecca brought into sharp relief the collaborative nexus between imperial Japan, Chinese Muslims within mainland China (Tang Yichen), and diaspora populations in the Hejaz. The protrusion of this triangular nexus gave momentum for the Cairo delegation to present the issue of Xinjiang refugees in the Hejaz to the Nationalist government with renewed earnestness, which reveals snippets of the lives of Xinjiang exiles. In their post-pilgrimage report, Ma Jian and Pang Shiqian first raised the issue of increasing traffic of pilgrims from China, as a way to propose the need to establish a consulate. Each year, no

\(^{2^3}\) Ibid., 176.
less than 400 “Muslim compatriots” (huijiao tongbao 回教同胞) were making the pilgrimage from inland China (neidi 内地). Pilgrims from Xinjiang numbered another 3-400. At the time of “national crisis” (guonan 国难), or the outbreak of war against Japan, inland Muslims (neidi huimin 内地回民) could not exit the borders due to transportation blockage; but this year, around 100 of them from the northwest region had found a way to cross the borders through Tibet, or through Sichuan and Yunnan.\textsuperscript{74}

Furthermore, already in the Hejaz Kingdom (Hanzhi Wangguo 漢志王國) were overseas Chinese (Huaqiao 華僑) population that numbered around 2,000. Most of them were Turkic Muslims (chanhui; turbaned Muslims 纏回) from Xinjiang who “could not bear the regional government’s oppression and were getting by with difficulty in the sacred lands.” There were also a small number of people from Yunnan, Gansu, Ningxia and Sichuan Provinces who had come to the region for commerce and pursuit of knowledge. According to the delegation’s conversations with some of them, such populations were not receiving treatment equal to that towards diaspora subjects (qiaomin 僑民) from other countries, due to the absence of a Chinese diplomatic body in the Hejaz. Problems such as passport issues were making them become citizens of the Hejaz (ru hanzhi guoji 入漢志國籍) without a choice.

\textsuperscript{74} “Huijiao Chaoshengtuan (Muslim Pilgrimage Delegation 回教朝聖團),” 1939-1948. MFA, 11-04-10-05-03-007, 0037-0045. Academia Sinica, Taipei.
The reasoning for the need to establish a Consulate went beyond that of obligatory “protection” (baohu 保護) of China’s populations abroad. The necessity lay in preventing them from growing close to the “enemy,” (diren 敵人) imperial Japan, and securing China’s own interests abroad. The report pointed out that although industries of the "the Hejaz Kingdom" were “backward,” (luohou 落後) one could find an abundant amount of imports from other countries. Every year, pilgrims who usually numbered around 100,000 needed to purchase gifts from the sacred lands to give to their relatives and friends. For example, a merchant from Xinjiang named “Habib Allah” had initially opened a store in Mecca and was selling “national products” (guohuo 國貨). Following the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, however, as there was no way to secure the goods and stocks had run out, Habib Allah had no choice but to turn to selling the Japanese products. Building a Consulate, the report claimed, was a necessary step for realizing plans of developing “our country’s trade abroad” (wei fazhan woguo haiwai maoyiji 為發展我國海外貿易).

Forestalling Japan’s outreach towards Xinjiang diasporas – for either political or economic ends – was the main reasoning behind the delegation's proposal to establish a Consulate in Jeddah and provide the communities material relief. The two leaders remarked that Tang Yichen’s delegation now clearly understood the pressing needs of the Hejaz’s overseas Chinese (Huaqiao 華僑). Were they to suggest the enemy to establish a consulate in Jeddah in the name of “the fake state” Manchuria 伪满, overseas Chinese
(Huaqiao 華僑) who generally lacked “conceptions of the nation” (guojia gainian 國家概念) would find it difficult to resist the temptation (youhuo 誘惑). For this reason, the report stressed, a Consulate needed to be established first.

By the same token, the delegation urged the central government to provide economic assistance to the exiles from Xinjiang in the Hejaz. Mecca and Medina, as they noted, were “the center of the Islamic world where no less than a hundred thousand men and women pilgrims gather.” Among them were Xinjiang compatriots (Xinjiang tongbao 新疆同胞) who could not bear the oppression from the regional government. Those who had occupied relatively high positions back in Xinjiang fell to the status of “petty peddlers and carriers” in order to subsist daily, or were making a living by teaching. If the government does not provide relief for those wandering (liuli 流離), it would be difficult to “prevent them from being utilized as propaganda tools for the enemy.” Although the government had already dispatched a pilgrimage delegation, they noted, it was to no effect. Pang Shiqian and Ma Jian suggested that instead, the personalities in leadership roles needed to be granted substantial governmental positions; religious scholars appointed to important teaching posts; the youth desiring to pursue scholarship should be given support to finish their studies; and widows, orphans and the childless should be able to easily access relief aid.

As if speaking to present-day China, Pang and Ma wrote that in this way, the government could “comfort” (anfu 安撫) the minds of Xinjiang compatriots without too
much expenditure, and get twice the result with half the effort (*shiban gongbei* 事半功倍), as the move would also effectively create liaisons with Muslims worldwide (*lianluo shijie zhi huimin* 联络世界之回民). A few months after Ma Jian and Pang Shiqian submitted their report, a seasonal Consulate of the Republic of China was established in Jeddah. The arrangement in Jeddah was such that Wang Shiming, who had been a part of the Goodwill Mission in 1938 and a graduate of al-Azhar University, would serve as a rotating Vice-Consul in Jeddah for two to three months only during the busy pilgrimage season.

The Nationalist government was never capable of successfully managing Xinjiang Province let alone the diasporas outside it. Persons who had hailed to the Hejaz from different places of present-day Xinjiang (or East Turkistan) would continue to be integrated as a part of the Central Asian community in the Hejaz as “Bukharis” or “Turkistanis,” and forge closer ties with the leaders of the independence movement of East Turkistan in exile.

The Chinese Muslim pilgrimage delegations’ interactions with and portrayals of them show the pull of Mecca as a gathering ground for escapees, and a mediator of extensive diaspora networks across Arabia, Indian Ocean world to Xinjiang. Mecca, in other words, signified both a symbolic center of the Muslim world that offered competing Chinese Muslim pilgrim-delegates an accessible language of Islamic unity and readily available itineraries across the Indian Ocean and a hub for older diaspora networks that
encompassed China’s volatile borderlands. For this reason, Chinese Muslim representatives affiliated with warring states mobilized the routes of their travels for the purpose of building diplomatic alliances on behalf of the state, announcing its image abroad, and attracting networks connected to precarious territories to which post-Qing Chinese states laid claim to.

3.5. *Mecca and Shanghai Remain: 1947 Pilgrimage Delegation from Shanghai*

Imperial Japan withdrew from occupied territories across East and Southeast Asia with the end of World War II. Yet, outlasting the War itself were the religious institutions within China and diplomatic practices in the space between Shanghai and Mecca that solidified during the early years of the War. The importance of courting Xinjiang’s diaspora populations also remained, informing the activities of Chinese Muslim pilgrim delegates. Within China’s territories, the Chinese Islamic Association for National Salvation, which now changed its name to the Chinese Muslim Association (*Zhongguo Huijiao Xiehui*), operated to streamline with greater intensity the traffic of pilgrims between China’s western regions and the port of Shanghai. The semi-governmental association that had been established as a response against imperial Japan in both internal and external spheres now became a major medium through which the mobility of travelers needed to be organized. As pilgrimages resumed in postwar years, Mecca and the cities on route offered the religious delegates a space of encounters with dignitaries of
newly established nation-states, and diaspora networks that had been spread out across China’s western regions and the Indian Ocean to the Hejaz.

With the end of World War II, Shanghai again hosted travelers from across China setting out for the sea route. For the pilgrims who hailed from China’s west, Shanghai was a city of perpetual waiting, where documents and ships were pending. Two years after the retreat of imperial Japan, in 1947, forty persons from Beijing, Gansu, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Jiangsu, Henan, and Hebei arrived in Shanghai and requested passports for their travels through the Chinese Islamic Association. Each of their name, age, province of residence, occupation, and gender were recorded by the Association and forwarded to different Ministries in Nanjing to request for assistance and passports.\(^7\)

Late next year in 1948, when the future of the Nationalist Party in China was dwindling, about 200 pilgrims from diverse parts of China again arrived in Shanghai. Nearly half of them were from Linxia. The stated purpose of pilgrimage travels, forwarded by the Chinese Islamic Association was “personally, to fulfill virtuous deeds

\(^7\) 9 from Kashgar (8 religious scholars 籁长 and one trader, all “Uighur zu” 维族); 4 from Urumqi (one agrarian Uighur and three “Huizu” 回族 traders); 1 from Hotan (Uighur trader); 2 from Ili (1 Uighur religious scholar and 1 Hui trader); 1 Suilai 绥来, present-day Manas county in Changji (Hui agrarian); 2 from Qinghai (Hui traders); 11 from Gansu (all Hui, 10 traders and 1 religious scholar); 1 from Henan (Hui trader); 2 from Jiangsu (Hui traders); 1 from Hebei (Hui trader); 2 from Beijing (Hui traders); 1 illegible. All of them were men except one. 4 leaders of the Chinese Islamic Association were grouped separately as a pilgrimage mission – two from Henan (Boai and Luoning), one from Beijing and one from Urumqi. “Zhongguo Huijiao Xiehui Wei Huibao Chuguo Qingling Huzhaode Wenshu (Neiyou Chuguo Renyuan Minge) 中國回教協會為回報出國請領護照的文書 (內有出國人員名冊) (Chinese Islamic Association’s Report on Request for Consular [Affairs] and Passports [Names of Departing Travelers Included]),” 12-6-18129, 1947. No. 2 Historical Archives, Nanjing.
(zai si ze wei geren gongde 在私則為個功德), and on the public, to create linkages of international friendship (zai gong wei guoji youyizhi lianluo 在公則為國際友誼之聯
As these pilgrims transited in Singapore, newspapers in Singapore pointed out the anti-communist missions that they carried.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{Figure 14 Singapore Newspaper reports on Anti-Communist Chinese Muslim Delegation, 1948.}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} “Communism A Threat to Muslim World,” \textit{The Straits Times}, September 1, 1948.
Many pilgrims transiting in Shanghai in 1947 were reported to be waiting anxiously in western mosque for their documents to be processed in order to board the ships in time for the pilgrimage. This, however, was not necessarily so for the four persons among them, led by Li Tingbi (李廷弼). Organized by the Chinese Muslim Association, they were to conduct “international propaganda (guoji xuanchuan 國際宣傳)” and visit high-level dignitaries in Muslim countries. Although they stayed together with the rest of the pilgrimage crowd in Shanghai, the four delegates traveled separately by using combined modes of transport – on air and the seas. They took the privilege of flying from Shanghai to Hong Kong, and from Hong Kong to Kunming, and onward to Calcutta. After staying in Calcutta for one week, the delegates again took an airplane to Karachi, which, as they described it, now belonged to the “newly rising country in the East (dongfang xinxingzhi guojia 東方新興之國家), Pakistan.” After five days in Karachi, they boarded a ship to Jeddah to perform the pilgrimage. On the way back, the four persons took a ship on the way back to Shanghai through Hong Kong, following a couple of days’ transit in Singapore/Malaya where they conducted meetings with overseas Chinese population and Malaysian independence fighters.

Similar to their predecessors, the four delegates traveled along a space of networked diasporas that emanated from China’s borderlands and continued propagandas towards them on behalf of the state. Such outreach could also be reported to the government as a major achievement. An accomplishment that they emphasized was "safely transferring pilgrims from Tibet and Xinjiang." In Karachi, they came across 33 "Muslim brothers and sisters" (huibao 回胞) from Tibet and southern Xinjiang who had journeyed not through the sea route via Shanghai, but overland through India. Of them, 18 persons from southern Xinjiang had not been able to purchase steamer tickets from Karachi to Jeddah. The pilgrim delegates reportedly had a discussion with Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to arrange a special treatment for the Xinjiang pilgrims, and in the end secured tickets for them to complete the pilgrimage. 79

Karachi was more than a transfer city to Jeddah, but a city where new diplomatic ties could be negotiated. As the Goodwill Mission had done a decade ago in Bombay, the delegates had a discussion with Muhammad Jinnah in Karachi. 80 Jinnah reportedly conveyed his wishes of forging diplomatic and commercial ties with China. Other

dignitaries whom they met in Karachi included Jinnah’s younger sister Aisha Jinnah, Minister of Education Fazlur Rahman, the mayor of Karachi, and president of the University of Sind. Based on the discussions, the delegation proposed establishing diplomatic relations with Pakistan. The next year, the two countries established diplomatic relations and initiated the process of exchanging ambassadors.81

With the return of the pilgrimage delegation from Republican China in Mecca through Calcutta and Karachi, propaganda towards exiles from Xinjiang resumed. The report in 1947 estimated escapees from Xinjiang who were residing in the "holy place" (shengdi 聖地) to number around 2,000. Under the rule of Xinjiang governors Jin Shuren and Sheng Shicai, they had abandoned property and housing and were "floating around" (liuwang 流亡) in a "faraway country" (yuanbang 遠邦). They possessed no understanding of "our government and the situation of Xinjiang." The delegates, whenever it could, thus informed them of the "favorable treatments" that Chiang Kaishek and every provincial governor were giving towards Xinjiang. The delegation managed to have eleven persons of the Xinjiang settlers return with them to China to survey the "real picture" of Xinjiang's situation, a trip that could potentially take place year after year.82

81 The relations lasted until Pakistan recognized the People’s Republic of China in 1951. The pilgrimage missions from Taipei in the following decades, however, would utilize the pilgrimage visits as a means of maintaining relations between Republic of China and Pakistan through unofficial means.
82 Ibid., 5.
Engagements with pilgrims and sojourners from Tibet and Xinjiang are telling of the extent to which travelers from these borderland geographies had already formed networks of their own outside the purview of territorial China. The report noted that many of “Tibetan siblings” (zangbao 藏胞) did not acknowledge membership to China (zhongguoji 中國籍), in order to keep conveniences of travel. This was because the British, who had control over Tibet and India, handed out passports to many of the Tibetans and granted them special treatment. Their documents had no indication of their belonging to China. Had the pilgrimage delegation not directed fellow Tibetan pilgrims to the Chinese Consular office, the report emphasized, the pilgrims from Tibet would have joined the Indian community. The account goes that the Vice Consular Wang Shiming in Jeddah treated them especially well, to which Tibetan pilgrims expressed gratitude.

The pilgrim representatives, therefore, stressed their role in “grouping pilgrims from China in unison” for logistics in lodging and camping in Mecca. Previously, “receptionists for our country’s pilgrims were multiple, and not in unison. For example, many of Xinjiang siblings (tongbao 同胞) were oriented towards Central Asian lodgings (zhongyaxiya zhi zhaodaisuo 中亞細亞之招待所), named ‘Bukhara 布哈拉.’” Pilgrims from Tibet, on the other hand, had been closer to reception lodgings of India. This, the delegation thought, was not right. After an assiduous consultation with the Vice Consular Wang Shiming, they “directed pilgrims from our country, whether from the borderlands
(bianjiang 邊疆) or the interiors (neidi 内地) to Chinese reception buildings (zhaodaisuo 招待所). Our national flag hung high, and the sounds of sojourning siblings (qiaobao 僑胞) vibrated in unison." These reports on pilgrims from Tibet and Xinjiang, however, tell more about their mingling with South Asian and Central Asian diaspora networks rather than the efficacy of the state representatives’ propaganda.

Republican China’s pilgrimage delegates seem to have been more successful in contacting and gathering information from other state representatives in Mecca. The delegation had a conversation with the Crown Prince Saud, who had been acting on behalf of the King ‘Abd al-'Azīz at this time, and conveyed respect of Muslims in China for the Kingdom. The pilgrim delegates also attended the King’s banquet, a military ceremony and sword dance performance, and visited the Ministers of Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Commerce.

Also present in Mecca during the pilgrimage season were representatives of other newly established states following the end of World War II. The delegates conversed with the Consuls of Syria and Lebanon who reportedly expressed desires in establishing diplomatic relations with China and other states. Their report recommended forging diplomatic relations with these two countries, and in addition, strengthening the Consulate in Jeddah. The Vice-Consul Wang Shiming in Jeddah, they reasoned,

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83 Ibid., 5.
possessed the necessary religious and linguistic backgrounds, and Arabia was the grounds where Muslims of every country assembled. Jeddah Consulate was now being operated lonelily, however, by Wang Shiming all by himself. More funds and personnel thus needed to be directed to the agency.

Mecca and the pilgrimage routes also brought the pilgrimage delegates into connection with dignitaries coming from farther eastern end of the Indian Ocean. While in Mecca they conversed with pilgrim representatives of Indonesia that was headed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs “Rashid,” who had also represented Indonesia in the Asian Relations Conference convened by Jawaharlal Nehru. They together discussed clashes between the Chinese diaspora (Huaqiao華僑) and the rest of the Muslim-majority population in Indonesia, which were exacerbated in the course of Japanese occupation and the revolution in Indonesia. The report proposed dispatching staff to Indonesia to maintain relations between the government and society. Preferably, the staff would be a Muslim, which would smoothen his entry into the arena of civil relations (minjian民間) and make it easier to mediate conflicts. On the way back to Shanghai, as they spent a few days in Singapore, they heard a similar request through meetings with Malaya’s politicians and with Chinese diaspora populations. Organizers of the independence movement for Federation of Malaya were reported as wanting to

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84 Ibid., 8.
collaborate closely with the 2.5 million Chinese populations in Malaya but did not have in-depth relations with them due to religious relations; they expressed hopes that China’s central government would send a Muslim Consular staff in order to progress such cooperative ties.

### 3.6. Pivoting of Networks

The next year, as if to respond to the report, Ibrahim Ma Tianying who had been a member of the Goodwill Mission in 1938 was sent to Ipoh as the Consular-General with the specific task of facilitating interactions between the Chinese diaspora and local Muslim communities. After the end of the Goodwill Mission in 1937-8, he had led several similar Chinese Islamic Delegations to the South Seas (Zhongguo Huijiao Nanyang Fangwentuan 中国回教南洋訪問團) under the auspices of the Chinese Islamic Association for National Salvation. He and the two other delegates had carried with them vehement anti-Japanese propaganda materials and a side agenda of introducing Islam to Chinese diasporas. Afterward, he had been in Cairo briefly as a Secretary at the Chinese Consul. He now returned to Malaya as a Consul-General with his wife, and to his dismay, would never be able to return to mainland China in his lifetime.

The biographies and itineraries of the members of the pilgrimage delegations show that their physical and conceptual travels did not stop with the end of World War II.

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The matrix of networks that Chinese Muslims built outlasted transformative events that the end of the World War II signified, metamorphosing into new relations of religion and kinship while continuing to be informed partially by Chinese states’ outreach to the Islamic world during the Cold War. Imam Da Pusheng, as well as the 1939 Cairo delegation’s leaders Pang Shiqian and Ma Jian, switched allegiances to the People’s Republic of China. Da Pusheng led the first pilgrimage delegation from the PRC in 1955, and together with Ma Jian, served as advisors or translators to Premier Zhou Enlai on matters relating to Islam. A member of the Goodwill Mission Xue Wenbo, the very narrator in the Diaries of the Goodwill Mission, also remained in mainland China and assumed various religious and political posts in Gansu Province.

For the rest of the members of the Goodwill Mission, however, when the political party for which they had thrown their lot failed to win, the way to survive was to escape and disperse. In some cases, these were in-between places, neither the PRC nor the ROC, that were still familiar to them. The former leader Wang Zengshan and his family undertook the life-threatening journey across the Pamir and Himalaya Mountains from Urumqi, where he had become the Minister of Civil Affairs in 1946, to flee from Communist victory. When he fled Urumqi in September, he brought one pistol and one revolver, with the permission of the Consul-General of Pakistan in Karachi that was registered in his and his brother’s passports. During his sojourn in Karachi between 1949 and 1956 Wang Zengshan worked as a teacher and translator for the Chinese language at Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations. While in Karachi
he kept communicating with the former Minister of Defense Bai Chongxi, still the president of the Chinese Muslim Association that now was based in Taipei, on matters of attending Islamic Conference in Cairo in 1953 and Muslim Youth Assembly in Karachi in 1955. He wrote reports on the affairs of Near East and South Asia, and the prospects of utilizing Islamic connections to combat communism.86

Wang Zengshan also continued his engagements with diaspora settlers from Xinjiang following his own exile from the province. When Wang Zengshan sojourned in Karachi, he engaged more deeply than in 1938 with the Turkic and Chinese Muslim diaspora populations in what now became Pakistan. His private correspondences in Karachi reveal that he had been communicating between the “All Pakistan Eastern Turkistan Association” and “Free China Association” in Taipei to coordinate distribution of relief aid to refugees, and transferred letters from Chinese Muslim Ahmadiyya community who were placed at risk of being evicted from Pakistan due to passport and visa problems following Pakistan’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1951.87 Wang Zengshan himself relocated to Istanbul in 1956 with his family. As a resident in Pakistan that officially recognized the PRC, who carried a Republican Chinese (Taiwanese) passport and explicit political connections to the Nationalist Party, he feared

86 Wang Zengshan Collection, National University of Singapore, Uncatalogued.
for the safety of his own and the family. In Istanbul University where he had once studied three decades ago, he assumed position as a professor of Chinese Studies.

Three other members of the Goodwill Mission followed a similar course and permanently left mainland China. Zhang Zhaoli settled in Taipei and started business by opening a Middle East trade company; he then became the first Secretary of the South Korean Embassy in Taipei, assisting overseas Chinese populations in South Korea and directing money from the Turkish government to the first community of Muslims in South Korea.\footnote{Jia Fukang, Taiwan Huijiaoshi, 190.} Wang Shiming, who had joined the Goodwill Mission in Cairo, became the Consul of the Republic of China’s Embassy in Saudi Arabia in 1957, and later stepped up to become the ambassador of the ROC to Kuwait. He later retired to Honolulu, Hawaii to live with his children and served as the first imam of the Manoa mosque for eighteen years. Ma Tianying, after being appointed as the Consular of Ipoh in 1948, faced the shut-down of the Consulate following Communist victory in the mainland. He and his family settled first in Singapore, then in Kuala Lumpur. Like Wang Zengshan, Ma Tianying maintained his contacts with the Muslim community and the Nationalist Party in Taipei, while disseminating ideas about Islamic solidarity and inter-religious and inter-ethnic peace in Kuala Lumpur through writings and lectures. After resettlements, Wang Zengshan and Ma Tianying initiated ties of kinship oceans apart,
leading to vows of marriage between Wang Zengshan’s daughter Rosey Wang (Ma) and Ma Tianying’s son Nassir Ma in Kuala Lumpur.

Conclusion

This chapter has portrayed the politicization of the space and networks between Mecca and Shanghai during and after World War II in the Asia-Pacific sphere. Journeying across the seas, and later, air, Chinese Muslim diplomatic delegations mobilized inter-connected regions across Asia as an arena for propaganda, inter-state ally-making, and outreach to dispersed diaspora populations. The mobility and imaginations of the delegations themselves, and the preexisting diaspora networks of pilgrimage and exile between western China and the Hejaz they encountered, show the critical importance that the vast space outside territorial China held for different groups of Muslims based in China – for mobilizing external political connections, and for articulation of discourses on the Islamic world that were intimately related to their collective representation and social positions within China.

The intertwined conduits of diplomacy, religion and kinship that Chinese Muslims assembled across long distances in the middle of unpredictable wars, chaos and uncertainties in China and across Asia become visible not by employing the prism of minority nationality or imperial infrastructure and networks, but only by uncovering the mobility and discourses of the actors who laid claims to the Indian Ocean space by summoning histories, conjuring imaginaries, arranging journeys and writing all of them
down. Through their narratives, we also caught glimpses of analogous networks of Turkic Muslim diasporas who occupied the shared space.

We saw in this chapter how the outbreak of World War II in the Asia-Pacific sphere, a historic event in all aspects, transformed the organizational structure of Muslims in China and the nature of their travels across the Indian Ocean. Internally, the War brought military commanders, scholars, and politicians closer to Chiang Kaishek, mediated through the semi-governmental Chinese Islamic Association for National Salvation. Externally, imperial Japan’s Islam policy towards West and Southeast Asia that had been in place since the turn of the twentieth century became both a source of criticism and an inspiration for devising similar strategies of pilgrimage diplomacy and propaganda.

The persons who performed roles as pilgrim representatives during the War were individuals who in previous decades had constructed networks of education, philanthropy, publishing, pilgrimage and region-based kinships across China and the Indian Ocean, or students and acquaintances of the persons whom we saw in Chapters 2. With access to states dispersed around the Indian Ocean that had been experimenting with Islamism, as well as to dispersed overseas Chinese diaspora communities, wartime pilgrimage delegations forged relations on behalf of the state on an intermediary level through unofficial channels without the bureaucratic credentials as formal diplomats, and with the language of trans-Islamic solidarity. Post World War II, such practices and discourse remained to facilitate Republican China’s relations with states and diasporas in
West, Southeast, and South Asia, now without a clearly defined imperial enemy. The preexisting diaspora networks that they encountered – Bukhari, Jawi, and Indian communities in Mecca who had connections to external places – show the position of Mecca as an inter-Asian hub for sojourners and settlers from across the Indian Ocean and Central Asia, and offer directions for future research.

As seen from the lives of some of the pilgrim delegates after World War II and the end of the Nationalist-Communist War, Chinese Muslim networks constantly adapted to changing domestic and international circumstances and shifted locational centers to new, sometimes unexpected places. A pivotal mediator for their mobility was Mecca, which guided their real and imagined travels across space and time. The next chapter shows how Mecca directed escapes of waves of Chinese Muslims who were fleeing for their lives in the aftermath of the victory of the Communist Party, many of whom were affiliates of the Nationalist Party. As newcomers to the Hejaz, they joined traders and scholars from Gansu and Qinghai who had preceded them, formed an enclave of Chinese Muslims in Mecca’s vicinities, and redirected external networks from their new homes.
Part II: Re-Routings
4. Routes and Re-Routes: Making New Homes in the Hejaz

Jamila’s salon in the Nakhab district of Tai’f city is known only to her customers through word of mouth. Behind the entrance door stands a partition that blocks the view of the inside. Past the partition, on the left side opens a wide white room, where a side of the entire wall is covered with mirrors. In front of the mirrors are three slightly worn-out black chairs where customers sit to get their hair-do done. On the other side of the room is a makeshift bed where they can lie down for make-up. Assisting Jamila are two young make-up artists whose parents have migrated from Afghanistan two decades ago. The imminent approach of Ramadan means clustered late-night weddings for which the ladies must get ready by late afternoon. Constant entry of unexpected customers demands endless chit-chattering on Jamila's part that caters to each customer's sentiments and uplifts their confidence, and no time for sitting. Yet this is the high season that Jamila cannot afford to miss, one that she is grateful for.

Born and raised in Ta'if, Jamila speaks Arabic that local taxi drivers recognize as foreign, Tibetan with her mother who migrated from Lhasa to Ta'if sixty years ago, and a bit of Mandarin Chinese that she learned in order to communicate with her husband. Her husband Sa’ud, whom she describes as a person from "China-China (al-Sīn al-Sīn)" and a graduate of Islamic University in Medina a decade ago, is originally from the capital city of Qinghai Province and a family acquaintance of her late father. Saud now conducts business in the port city of Yiwu in China's southern coast and comes back to Saudi once only three or four months. She traces her father's home to "Taozhou," a historical name.
for Lintan in Gansu Province's Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture about 200 kilometers south of Linxia. Her father Loqmān passed away not in Ta'if, but in a hospital in Lanzhou in 1997 at the age of 76, shortly after making a come-back to his hometown more than three decades after fleeing from Lintan.

Although Jamila herself has never left the borders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, she keeps the passport of a country where she has never stepped her foot – that of the Republic of China (ROC), or Taiwan. Until 1990 when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC), it was Taiwan that represented the legitimate “China” in Saudi Arabia. Chinese diasporas in Saudi Arabia who could not obtain Saudi citizenship – or chose not to at the time – received identification papers from the Embassy of the ROC, the government that went into exile in Taipei following Communist victory in the mainland in 1949. The ascendancy of the PRC in the international arena, which reached the first climax when it replaced the ROC in the United Nations (and thus the Security Council) in 1971, and second climax following the PRC’s open-up-and-reform in 1978, has left diasporas with Taiwanese

1 The One China principal, held by the governments of both Beijing and Taipei, stipulates that there exists only one legitimate China. Foreign governments cannot establish official diplomatic relations with both the PRC and the ROC, and need to choose one over the other. In 1991, ROC recognized its limited jurisdiction only over Taiwan and other islands (Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu) and that PRC controls the mainland. For an overview of contestations between the ROC and PRC in the United Nations and the consequences of ROC’s exit from the United Nations: Eric Ting-Lun Huang, “Taiwan’s Status in a Changing World: United Nations Representation and Membership for Taiwan,” *Annual Survey of International & Comparative Law*, 2003, 55–100.
...passports in a state of limbo. Will Jamila be able to switch her passport from that of the ROC to the PRC? Wouldn't this be a better option in the future? She wonders.

This chapter narrates the lives of the first generation of settlers from various regions who started to constitute a variegated, flexibly conceived “Chinese” community in the Hejaz in the early decades of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The previous three chapters revealed the significance of Mecca as an imagined homeland, source of religiopolitical authority and a site of diplomatic contestations from afar, which instigated formations of little Meccas and Muslim enclaves within logistical hubs. In this chapter, I bring to the fore the imagery and reality of Mecca as a haven for refugees that turned old and new roads of pilgrimage to pathways of escape. The Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) not only displaced countless persons within China but created a mass exodus of an estimated number of more than two million migrants to Taiwan and elsewhere, inducing intense nostalgia among the diasporas whose ties to home places were suddenly severed.² Besides Taiwan where the Republican government retreated to, many moved to old neighbors in Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Burma), and to the

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United States, the erstwhile ally of the ROC during the Civil War that would form a staunch anti-communist bloc in East Asia through Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

A portion of Chinese Muslims, led mainly by the former Qinghai warlord Hussein Ma Bufang whom we saw in Chapter 1, headed to Mecca and connected with a small community of existing pilgrim settlers who had hailed from different parts of China. They were joined by another wave of Chinese Muslims fleeing from the land reforms in the PRC in the 1950s. If we approached the Hejaz from the outside in Chapters 1 to 3 in Part I, as this chapter follows the trails of Chinese Muslim exiles, the Hejaz now becomes the internal ground from which we trace re-routings of external connections.

Pilgrim settlers from mainland China, many of whom arrived in Mecca as political refugees like Jamila’s father Loqmān, found themselves in a difficult position. Unlike diaspora communities from Southeast Asia, Central Asia or South Asia that had shaped the landscapes of the Hejaz, they lacked social or material capital in a completely changed setting. Nor were they versatile in local languages. Whether they had held high political positions, owned batches of land or conducted prosperous commerce back home, all was now past. Roads to citizenship narrowed year by year, and even when they became Saudi nationals, narratives centered on the Najd (Central Arabia) dominated official state historiography at the expense of pasts of diverse populations on both coasts.³

In situations of precariousness, connections with distant places through both direct travels and imaginations turn into a source of empowerment. Those who collectively formed the "Chinese" or "al-Sīnī" community appear as stall shop runners, ṭaqīyya (skullcap) makers and tailors, Sino-Arabic translators, religious missionaries and diplomats during the founding decades of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Locally, they relied on the production of handcraft and foodstuff as a critical source of living, while a portion of the community was incorporated into state institutions as educators and civil servants. Externally, shuttle trade through sites such as Hong Kong and Lebanon provided another outlet, as did engagements with diplomatic agencies including the ROC Embassy in Jeddah that received pilgrimage delegations from Taipei, and the World Muslim League in Mecca. Cut off from access to homes and acquaintances in mainland China especially during the Cultural Revolution, they framed Mecca as a historical homeland, leaving their children to position their families as “muhājirīn,” or migrants who moved in search of religious safety.

The chapter thus unfolds the many paths, occupations and historiographical imaginaries that they re-routed from the new base in Saudi Arabia, by looking at personal biographies and narratives, and institutions of collective gathering. The different routes and modes of transport that led to Mecca, explored in the chapter’s first section, are

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4 On the other hand, Turkic-speaking Muslims from present-day Xinjiang Province who preceded Chinese-speaking Muslims formed their own "Bukhari" or "Turkistani" communities together with settlers from Soviet Central Asia, and presented themselves as a unified group.
telling of the importance of prior roads of overland, maritime and air travels that now
turned unexpectedly into a one-way trip. Coming from faraway homelands where Arabic
or Persian had been spoken only limitedly within local mosques at best, the small number
of pilgrim-migrants from China carried neither a sense of familiarity nor prestige as did
some others from the neighboring regions. Upon permanent settlement, they constantly
engaged in the process of re-formulating external connections in covert and overt ways –
assimilating into the society but imagining histories connected to outside places – and
utilizing ties with elsewhere as a resource to preserve a sense of self and to increase
chances of social mobility. Their stories embody not only the homogenizing impulses of
the newly founded Saudi nation-state, but the cosmopolitan potentials inherent in its pasts
defined by overlapping diasporas in the Hejaz, and in its mid-level international
diplomacy through migrants, the pilgrimage, and educational and religious institutions.5

4.1 Reaching Mecca

The few living first-generation settlers in Saudi Arabia vaguely remember the
paths they took as children to reach Mecca from different places in China, a story that
gets rapidly simplified and truncated as it passes down from generation to generation.
The routes of travel between Mecca and China that existed in the middle of the twentieth

5 For Saudi Arabia’s diplomacy strategies by attempting to control flows of migrant populations, see
Helene Thiollet, “Migration as Diplomacy: Labor Migrants, Refugees, and Arab Regional Politics in the
pilgrimage and religious institutions as second-tier diplomacy will be discussed more in depth in Chapter 5.
century, which in themselves speak of histories that connected the two regions, are better remembered in mainland China. There, under the Communist Party’s ethnic policies in the 1950s that modified Stalinist classifications, Muslim populations were subdivided into ten different categories based on language groups; Chinese-speaking Muslims were set aside as a separate minority based on the logic of foreign descent. Incorporation of ethnology studies into academic institutions has produced generations of “ethnic minority” scholars who specialize in their own minority group, who have continuously recorded communal pasts and present in public arenas, as ethnographers and historians.\(^6\)

Historiographical production on Islam in China that takes place under the framework of minority studies wherein different groups of Muslims in China discover and re-inscribe their communal pasts, an act that has politics of its own,\(^7\) stands in sharp contrast against the practices of Chinese Muslim community in Saudi Arabia where origins from elsewhere is frequently hushed up despite the desire to remember foregone connections. Private and exclusive circulations of past newspaper articles, pictures, and short genealogical trees, though a reflection of such sentiments, are to remain within the family. Some of the Sino-Saudi residents who lived through the height of the Cold War from the 1950s to 70s, however, were willing to share their journeys and life stories with

\(^6\) Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*.

\(^7\) The politics of minority nationalities’ historiographical production as an investment to evidence their historical contributions to China in the PRC period is eloquently explored in Uradyn Bulag, *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China’s Mongolian Frontier* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).
me. Others who have passed away left traces in travelogues written by pilgrims and students who had come from Taiwan, and sometimes also left their own writings. Memoirs collection and research conducted in PRC constitute another source. Bringing together public and private accounts that exist in dispersed places of Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and the PRC reveals the manifold routes between Mecca and China that turned into pathways of escape, and re-routings of circulatory channels between these regions from Chinese Muslims’ new home base in western coasts of Arabia.

One of the frequent visitors to Jamila’s salon in Ta’if is Selima. One afternoon shortly before Ramadan, Selima dropped by Jamila's salon to pick up the dress that she had wanted to be tailored. The bright yellow, long dress with pieces of jewelry attached on the chest part was to be worn during an upcoming Friday night wedding in Jeddah. "Madame Selima came to Saudi with the 'emperor' (imbrätür) in the year 48 (si-ba)," informed Jamila enthusiastically. As I hastened to take down her phone number, Selima asked if I wanted to follow her to her house. The next moment, we were together on a somewhat derelict car with a driver whom she usually calls on for errands when her sons are not in town. Selima’s house was a two-story building where there were two reception rooms for two genders and a kitchen on the first floor. She made green tea, gifted to her by her nephew who frequently travels to both mainland China and Taiwan. Selima herself, born and raised in Ta'if, never visited any of them. Her parents had come to Saudi with Ma Bufang, a story that her mother used to talk about, but that which she knows nothing about. “They always stayed inside home and only spoke Chinese,” reminisced
Selima. “Alhamdulillah they made taqīyya and shumāq although they didn't have many possessions.” Selima herself attended until middle school, then took lessons at Ta’if’s historic ‘Abdullah Ibn al-‘Abbās mosque.

‘Abd al-Majid, Selima’s brother-in-law, kept a much more detailed memory of his escape from Xining to Mecca in 1949 when I met him in 2014. As we recall from Chapter 1 on Linxia, ‘Abd al-Majid had composed a poem that reflects on his longing for the old hometown (guxiang) in Linxia when he made a return trip in 2006. At the age of four, he had moved from Linxia to Xining, following his father who came to the capital city to work at Qinghai’s Ministries of Construction and Finance. At the face of imminent victory of the Communist Party, ‘Abd al-Majid’s family followed Ma Bufang in an exasperated flee. They hurriedly flew to Chongqing, then to Guangzhou (Canton). In Guangzhou, the families were lodged at the Huaisheng mosque, traced to be the burial place of the Companion Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās. Carrying them from Hong Kong to Jeddah were planes of the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), just around the pilgrimage season in late August in 1949. ‘Abd al-Majid was sixteen years old. Barely did he know that his return to Linxia would be after half a century. On the day before performance of the pilgrimage, his mother passed away in Mecca. The fatigue from the journey in the middle of ongoing wars in mainland China had accrued, reminisced ‘Abd al-Majid. Just at the moment of her imminent pilgrimage, Mecca became her burial place.

The quick relocation of Ma Bufang’s extended family to Saudi Arabia was, in fact, a culmination of not only familiarity with Mecca and the royal family that the Ma
warlords had cultivated in the early twentieth century (Chapter 1), but the interpersonal ties that they had developed with American military and businessmen. Unknown to ‘Abd al-Mājid, Ma Bufang’s resources and the political and economic interests of American airline operators had made the escape possible.

For the escape, Ma Bufang loaned the airplanes through connections with “Chen Na De,” or Claire Chennault. Chennault had been a retired U.S. Army Air Corps officer who initiated the semi-commercial airliner Civil Air Transport (CAT). CAT’s initial pilots came from former fighter squadrons in “the First American Volunteer Group,” popularly known as the “Flying Tigers,” who had been trained in Burma to support Chinese armies against Japan during World War II. Following the end of World War II, CAT stood on the side of the Nationalist Party against the Communists and transported arms and supplies to its troops, and later evacuated thousands of people to Taiwan. CAT later became an arm of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to undertake covert operations throughout East and Southeast Asia.8

I discuss Ma Bufang’s escape routes at some length here because it shows the importance of underlying infrastructural networks that enabled the expedited relocation, and the contingencies of that arrangement which depended on prior relationships that had been built on mutual interests. Chennault had initially made contacts with Ma Bufang

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8 William M. (William Matthew) Leary, Perilous Missions: Civil Air Transport, and CIA Covert Operations in Asia (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1984).
because he had seen both commercial and political opportunities in northwest China. As
the prospects of Nationalist victory dwindled, so did the profits of CAT. In 1948 CAT
managers observed potentials to turn Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province on the
banks of the Yellow River, as "the hub for a network of feeder routes" to neighboring
regions. In their vision, light aircraft could carry lightweight cargo of high value such as
mails, personnel, and machinery parts; transport aircraft, on the other hand, could carry
drummed gasoline into Lanzhou, and on the way out, pick up passengers, wool and cargo
to coastal points. The first landing of an airplane in Xining was in May 1948. It was
flown by the pilot Felix Smith, who had been commissioned to carry a mail parcel from
Lanzhou to Xining, to pass on the package from the governor of Gansu to Qinghai
governor Ma Bufang. By early 1949, CAT and Ma Bufang had an agreement for CAT to
ship all of Xining's wool without interference. CAT and Ma Hongkui of Ningxia
Province had been discussing similar arrangements.

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9 Ibid., 73.
10 Ibid., 75.
Figure 15: Pilot Felix Smith of Civil Air Transport hands over the first parcel of airmail from Xining to Lanzhou, to Ma Bufang on May 9, 1949.\textsuperscript{11}

Simultaneously, CAT envisioned the armies kept by the “Muslim” governors, especially Ma Bufang, as the last throng of anti-communist forces that could overturn the tide of events. CAT’s memorandum judged Ma Bufang as “fair dealing and sincere,” with fifty-thousand armed soldiers and two hundred thousand unarmed yet trained troops in reserves. The memorandum noted: “It is likely that, if this man were armed with sufficient weapons of lighter type such as rifles, machine guns, tommy guns, mortars,

bazookas, and mountain (pack) artillery, he would prove to be impossible to drive out of his province, and he would very possibly become a strong rallying point for Chinese anti-Communists. It is entirely possible that he could become a spearhead for a real drive against the Communists owing to the fighting qualities of his troops and his aggressive policy.”

When Chennault toured around the northwest in April 1949, he was greeted by a military parade put on by Ma Hongkui in Ningxia. In Xining, his last destination, he met Ma Bufang, whom he thought of as "one of the most liberal and progressive officials in China," observed his reforestation projects, and promised him CAT's continued assistance. The "Chennault Plan" to arm the military governors in the northwest was proposed to the Congress and the Department of State, which did not materialize.

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13 Ibid., 75.
When Ma Bufang and his soldiers were forced to retreat to Xining after the last battle in Lanzhou where they fought against two hundred thousand People's Liberation Army until ammunitions ran out, CAT airlifted Ma Bufang and his close associates as well as the Ningxia Provincial Governor Ma Hongkui. On August 28, 1949, CAT evacuated Ma Bufang and his $1.5 million in gold bars. Through CAT’s assistance, he and the families stopped by Guangzhou and moved onward to Hong Kong and Jeddah to

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14 Ma Bufang Residence in Xining (马步芳公馆), also known as “Jade Palace,” had been repaired in the late 2000s/early 2010s as a tourist spot and museum that displayed Ma Bufang family’s living spaces, possessions and photos, which also included “minority nationality” exhibition hall. It had been a vibrant place with many tourists when I visited it in 2014, but it seems to have shut down since late 2016.
Mecca. Shortly after, Ma Hongkui was evacuated along with his treasury; he moved straight to California to raise horses. Ma Hongkui's cousin, on the other hand, surrendered to the Communists and became vice-governor of Ningxia Province under the Communist regime,\textsuperscript{15} until, as one of his relatives told me, he was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution.

\textbf{Figure 17} "U.S. Military Plane that Ma Bufang boarded as he left Xining." Photo kept in Ma Bufang Residence. Photo by Author, May 2014.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 80.
A route of escape, Mecca also served as a transit point to adjacent cities. Upon reaching Mecca, 'Abd al-Majid recalled, Ma Bufang was advised by Wang Shiming, a graduate of al-Azhar University and the Consular General of Chinese Consulates in Cairo and Jeddah at the time, to relocate to Cairo that offered more modern and vibrant lifestyle. The majority of the group left Mecca to Cairo. While living for nearly a decade in Cairo, they built a small cemetery for the Muslim "Chinese" families. As Egypt established official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1956, Ma Bufang, his family and former soldiers again used pilgrimage as a means of mobility, moved to Mecca and dispersed to mostly Ta'if and Jeddah. In 1956, as a prelude to his permanent settlement in Jeddah, Ma Bufang served as the “leader” of Taiwan’s second pilgrimage delegation to Mecca, a practice that would continue for more than three decades (Chapter 5). A year after, Ma Bufang assumed the position as the ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Jeddah.
Figure 18: "The graves of the Chinese family" (Arabic)/ "China’s Muslim Cemetery" (Chinese) in Cairo, dated 1951, endowed by Ma Bufang. Courtesy of 'Abd al-Majid family.

Figure 19: 'Abd al-Majid during his visit to Cairo, with his relative. Courtesy of 'Abd al-Majid family.
Whereas Ma Bufang’s group arrived in Mecca almost instantaneously on airplanes, many others who did not have such an option moved through older, more strenuous historical routes. Behind and beneath the arrivals of Chinese Muslims were a series of interconnected routes, some historic and some privileged more than others, that could be tweaked around towards performance of the annual pilgrimage. Below, I describe the overland and sea routes as remembered by those who, or whose parents had undertaken the journeys before and after the migration of Ma Bufang. Through paths old and new, continuous or segmented, on foot, or on backs of mules and horses, cars and trains, steamships and airplanes, Mecca for Chinese Muslim pilgrims and exiles turned from a temporary destination from which they could expect returns back home, into a point of departure for new lives where they were to plant their two feet.

Hussein Suleiman 'Omar, who was aged about ninety years old and lived in Mecca's outskirts near Mecca Industrial City when I visited him in 2017, recalled that his family had come to Mecca before Ma Bufang, from a small "village" (qarîyya) in China. Although he does not know the village's name, he knows that its inhabitants had originated from "Turkistan," talked themselves in Turkistani language, and only married each other. His people, he explained, were "Salars," who are now categorized in the PRC as a separate minority ethnicity among ten “Muslim minorities.” The region where his family had used to live, he explained, was administered by Qinghai’s political capital. When he was about nine years old, three families including his own left for Mecca after
They numbered about 22 in total. Prior to the migration of the whole family, Hussein's father Suleiman had already made the pilgrimage and had stayed in Mecca a couple of years back, and had been persuaded by a muṭāwif (pilgrimage guide) to settle permanently in Mecca.

The path that Hussein described was one across Tibet, Himalayas and the ports of Calcutta and Bombay. Hussein's family first reached Tibet by following a large group of caravan traders who made seasonal travels twice a year to “Buddhists’ Ka'ba in Tibet” – as Hussein put it – and thus knew the way. With the trading caravans and pilgrims, Hussein went on for two months in “open lands” where there was “nothing but sky and earth.” In Lhasa, they stayed for four months, in a “village” where Muslims were concentrated. The families sold goods that they had brought from China little by little and converted their money into Tibetan currency. They then walked on foothills of Himalayas for eleven days, again with the trading caravans, stopping by towns every time they disembarked. Upon reaching Kalimpong, they changed the Tibetan currency into rupees and rode cars for the first time. The cars took them to Calcutta. They might have stayed in the city longer before heading to Mecca, had they been able to find work to bide time. Since they could not, they left for Bombay. Hussein rode a train for the first time in his life that went through the longest tunnel he ever remembers. In Bombay, they stayed in

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16 According to Hussein Suleiman Omar, the families' fortunes were purchased by Ma Bufang, as Hussein's father had had close relations with Ma Bufang's father, which Ma Bufang distributed as endowments.
*musāfir khāna* endowed by wealthy merchants of Bombay and boarded steamship named Muhammediyya that arrived in Jeddah at the time when World War II was nearing its end.

Pilgrims and exiles such as Hussein traveled along a strand of established pathways between Sino-Tibetan borderlands. In Qing China, Chinese Muslims in Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Sichuan regions acted as middlemen between sedentary populations of Central Plains that produced agricultural and craft goods (tea, food grains, silk, pottery), and herders of the High Plateau who sold farming products (cattle, sheep, horses, butter, etc.).

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**Figure 20: Places on Sino-Tibetan trade paths, leading to Mumbai and Jeddah/Mecca**

In Qing China, Chinese Muslims in Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Sichuan regions acted as middlemen between sedentary populations of Central Plains that produced agricultural and craft goods (tea, food grains, silk, pottery), and herders of the High Plateau who sold farming products (cattle, sheep, horses, butter, etc.).
deer horns, medicinal plants). Most of the trade took place in the highlands of Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, which occupies twenty percent of China's territory. As destructive “Muslim revolts” of the 19th century winded down, Chinese Muslim commercial enterprises once again flourished especially in wool trade, although much of it was monopolized by warlords. The two major roads that led to Tibet in post-Qing China were 1) Linxia-Xunhua-Guide-Tongde-and Yushu and 2) Linxia-Minhe-Xining and Huangzhong. British intervention into Tibet on the eve of Qing’s fall brought Lhasa closer to Kalimpong and Calcutta, prompting a diverse group of traders from different religious and ethnic backgrounds to traverse in between the borderlands.

Second-generation settlers in the Hejaz who trace their families' migrations to China echo the route explained by Hussein, with their families' points of arrival ranging between the 1920s and 50s. The family of Sa’id Seiny that undertook the pilgrimage in the 1920s or 30s had come from "northwestern China" to Mecca through the Himalayas and India and later settled in Medina.

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18 Ibid., 117.
20 Author’s email communications with Sa’id Sīnī (Seini), February 10, 2017.
'Uthman al-Ṣīnī, a doctor of linguistics from Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca and the present editor of al-Waṭan newspaper, has described his family as having come from an "Islamic district" in China. They crossed the Himalayas to India, arriving to Jeddah and to Mecca during World War II, before relocating to Ta'if.\(^{21}\) The region that 'Uthman al-Ṣīnī's family had come from, in fact, was Bafang, the predominantly Islamic district south of Linxia City.\(^ {22}\) In Mecca, where his father had a small store near the Safa Gate, he picked up different languages from interactions with pilgrims – little bits of Urdu, Turkish, Swahili, Malay and so on, which aroused his obsession with different languages. In Ta’if, where his family had a store in the marketplace, he learned dialects thoroughly from working with all kinds of tribes who were selling produces to them. By attending the same middle and high schools with students from different tribes, he absorbed dialects to the extent that he could tell the tribal belonging of a person just by listening to him speak.\(^ {23}\)

Just as settlers who had arrived in the 1930s and 40s started to obtain Saudi citizenship, open shops and send their children to public schools, another wave of


\(^ {22}\) Author’s phone conversation with ‘Uthman al-Ṣīnī, June 20\(^ {th}\), 2014.

\(^ {23}\) “Ma sir ihtimam D. 'Uthman al-Ṣīnī bil-loghāt wa al-lihjāt? (What was the beginning of Dr. ‘Uthman Šinī’s interests in languages and dialects?)” Posted November 2, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar0N08PSIhI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar0N08PSIhI).
political refugees fleeing from land reforms in China arrived in Mecca in the mid and late 1950s, using the old routes through Tibet and India. Jamila’s father Loqmān al- Sīnī had been a trader who carried merchandise between Lintan (Taozhou) and Tibet. During the Communist “war,” as Jamila recalled, he arrived in Mecca by crossing the Himalayas with around twenty of his acquaintances. Jamila's mother Ashia, originally from Lhasa, had come to Mecca around the same period, after sojourning in Kalimpong. She was a part of the “Kache” community, or descendants of merchants from Kashmir who traded in Tibet and intermarried with Tibetans, and are presently classified as Tibetan minority within the PRC. Ashia’s family headed from Lhasa to Kalimpong through the Himalayas and onward to Mecca, selling clothing, bags, and corals on the way. She married Loqmān in Mecca, and after about five years moved to Ta'if, where the weather was more temperate.

\[24\] For a study on the diverse composition of Kache in Tibet, the impact of the Tibetan Uprising in 1958-9 and migration of some of those who claimed origins to Kashmir to India in its aftermath through a series of negotiations with the PRC government, David G. Atwill, *Islamic Shangri-La: Inter-Asian Relations and Lhasa’s Muslim Communities, 1600 to 1960* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).
Figure 21 Pilgrim Pass of Loqmān al-Sīnī issued in Calcutta (1959), Courtesy of the Loqmān family
The importance of Kalimpong and Calcutta as gathering points for Muslim traders and exiles coming from the southern Gansu-Qinghai region appears in more detail in an ethnographic interview conducted in Linxia Prefecture. In 2005, Ma Shiren, an anthropologist of "Bonan" ethnicity, encountered the extended family of Ma Zhong, a former merchant who settled in Saudi Arabia in the late 1950s. Ma Zhong's sons and nephew in Ganhetan village (within Jishisan's Dajiahe township in Linxia Prefecture) recounted that Ma Zhong had visited India three times during the 1930s and 40s, the high period of the region's trade through Calcutta. The products that were brought back, still kept by the family, included things such as small plates, lunch boxes, Tibetan woolen fabric, iron boxes, and glass mirrors, most of which had English commercial labels on them. The first time that Ma Zhong visited Calcutta was in July 1939, when he followed the trading caravan of a governmental official in Xining, Ma Mingji. After they arrived in Calcutta through the Himalayas, Ma Mingji left a representative on his behalf and returned to Calcutta after undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The last time that Ma Zhong went out of his township to Kalimpong was in 1959 when he himself made the pilgrimage to Mecca and settled in Ta'if shortly afterward. That year, he purchased a cart full of wool, employed a truck, and went from Shigatse in

25 "Bonan" ethnicity (保安族) is one of ten Muslim "ethnic minorities" in the People's Republic of China that traces its descent to Mongol mercenary settlers during the Yuan Empire; they are concentrated in "Jishisan Salar and Bonan Autonomous Township" located in western end of Linxia Prefecture, which is on the border between Gansu and Qinghai provinces connected by Yellow River valleys. The ethnographer, himself a "Bonan" person, interviewed the family of Ma Zhong in 2005.
Tibet across the Sino-Indian borders. After arriving in Kalimpong, he came across several Muslims who had come from Lhasa, who had arrived from Gansu's Hezhou (Linxia) and Taozhou (Lintan), and Qinghai's Xunhua and Hualong prefectures. The group, after a series of discussions, decided to move to Saudi Arabia to settle permanently. Upon learning that single men could not settle but were required to have families, he and others married the "Kachi" community in Kalimpong. He started communicating with his families in the mid-1970s by exchanging letters through his Pakistani neighbor who relayed the letters when he traveled back home.26

While not explicitly mentioned in the interview of Ma Zhong’s family, like Loqmān, he was most likely escaping from the collectivization campaigns of the 1950s that launched violent attacks against landowners in the early years of the PRC, or from the Tibetan Uprising in 1958-9. In this volatile period, the old routes of trade and pilgrimage turned into paths of escape, a way to seek chances of life elsewhere. Pilgrim migrants from diverse geographies of China and social backgrounds thus converged in Mecca over time, cross-cutting the divisions between ten Muslim minorities that were instituted in the PRC.

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4.2 Switching Roles

In 1961, the Embassy of the Republic of China recorded the names of the “overseas Chinese” populations in Saudi Arabia that it survey, their places of origin (籍貫), age and citizenship status. Of the 271 persons, 243 were from Gansu; 77 from Qinghai; 35 from Tibet; 12 from Ningxia; 9 from Yunnan; 5 from Sichuan; 2 from Xinjiang; and 1 from Hong Kong. The survey included 10 women from “Arabia (A-la-bo),” suggesting a handful of instances of intermarriages, although the exact meaning of “Arabia” here remains unclear. Among those counted, 109 had already acquired Saudi citizenship; 173 had permanent resident status; and 110 had neither citizenship nor residency, most of whom were from Tibet, Sichuan, and Gansu. Many of the listed names were a combination of Chinese surnames (such as Ma, Sha, Hai, Han, Min, Na, and Lin) and Arabic names (i.e. Ma Maria, Ma ‘Abdullah), whereas elderly persons who had spent some time back in China often had their full Chinese names written down.\(^{27}\)

In the years to come, career prospects would diverge significantly depending on whether one had Saudi citizenship. Implementation of “Saudization” policies from 1975 onward limited employment of non-citizens, first in public administration jobs, then in

\(^{27}\) Academia Historica Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, 11-WAA-00838, November 1961. While he was not recorded in the survey, personal interviews attest that Imam Sui Chengli from Shandong Province took an individual hajj passage in the late 1950s and settled in Jeddah.
private businesses.\textsuperscript{28} In the 1930s and 40s, nationality papers (tābi‘iyya) were given according to an expansive and loose notions of citizenship, such that in 1934, a Qādī in Medina considered everyone who had been present in the Hejaz since the first declaration of tābi‘iyya decree (1926) to be Saudis.\textsuperscript{29} The first systematic nationality regulation that applied to populations of both the Hejaz and Najid appeared only in 1954.\textsuperscript{30} Much has, therefore, depended on luck and timing for acquiring citizenship. Some first-generation settlers had declined or were unable to pay fees for the citizenship paperwork, while later arrivers such as Ma Zhong were not eligible to apply for citizenship in the first place. Their children who were born and raised in Saudi Arabia, until the early-mid 1970s, were eligible to apply for citizenship when they reached the age of eighteen. The tightening of that policy in the 1980s, concurrent with the “Saudization” project, has created families in which elder siblings became Saudi citizens, and the younger ones residents with passports of countries they had never visited.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30} The 1954 nationality regulations stipulated three kinds of persons who qualified for Saudi citizenship: a) former Ottoman subjects who were residents of Saudi Arabia as of 1926, b) former Ottoman subjects who had been born in Saudi soil between 1914-26, and c) persons who had been in residence in Saudi soil between 1914-26, but were without any other nationality. Gianluca P. Parolin, \textit{Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-State} (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 89.
\textsuperscript{31} These dynamics of citizenship for “Fatani” diaspora communities in Mecca are explored in Muhammad Arafat Bin Mohamad, “Be-longing: Fatanis in Makkah and Jawi” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2013).
At the time when the survey was undertaken in 1961, however, the socioeconomic split determined by citizenship status was not necessarily predictable. Standardization of identification papers for creating a unified citizenry had just begun, and state distribution of welfare, employment, public services and infrastructure using oil wealth was yet to come. All pilgrim settlers from different parts of China, in other words, struggled to hold their grounds.

The majority of people who formed a “Chinese” community, especially those who came as a large group with Ma Bufang, settled in Ta’if - an hour drive away from Mecca, where the altitude reached 18,000 meters and living expenses were comparatively low. Ta’if’s dusty mountains resembled the topography of Linxia where the average altitude of the mountains is 15,000 meters, and other adjacent cities such as Xining where they had lived. The difference was that although famous for its roses and pomegranates, the hills of Ta’if were black and bare, as were their own prospects. Several years into exile, the land reforms and Cultural Revolution in mainland China cut off all possibilities of outside contact or any hopes of Republican China taking back the lands that were supposedly usurped by the Communists.

The most accessible way for the first generation of Chinese Muslim settlers to make a living in such a situation was to sell handicrafts and food. Important items for sale were sanzi (饊子), oil-fried thin dough frequently characterized as an "ethnic minority" food of Chinese Muslims across China, and taqiyya. Sanzi is still frequently seen in weddings of second and third-generation Chinese families in Saudi Arabia and
sometimes sold in large supermarkets. The youngsters among the community, even if they do not know a word of either dialect or standard Chinese, refer to the snack as sanzi.

The early residents who had settled in the 1930s, when they arrived in Mecca, started selling homemade sanzi on makeshift stalls, which to local populations was known as dijāz burj, or chicken intestines. Sold alongside sanzi were paper-folded flowers, some of which were colored, and school bags made of thin iron that came in different sizes for children and adults. Abd al-Majid recalled that when his group arrived in 1949, Jianzishan Ahong (Imam) who had settled in Mecca in the late 1930s and gave religious lessons to Chinese community had also been selling sanzi and paper flowers on streets in the Shamīyya district that disappeared with the expansion of the Haram

32 Author’s email communications with Sa’id Sīnī (Seini), February 10, 2017, as well as interviews with elderly people including ʿAbd al-Majid and Hussein Suleiman Omar.
33 Author interview with ʿAbd al-Majid Ma Jingwu, March 26, 2017.
Besides making foodstuff, sewing *taqīyya* provided the most widespread and accessible source of income for the community. As someone started selling *taqīyya*, everyone in the Chinese community followed suit starting in the 1950s, both in Ta'if and Mecca. They would pack twenty pieces of *taqīyya* into one bundle. Every piece would be priced differently according to its quality and embroidery. One could make about twenty ordinary-quality *taqīyya* a day, whereas one would need to spend the whole day to make just five to six high-quality ones. Ramadan was particularly a major season to sell them, as people do not spare themselves from purchasing new clothes during 'Eid al-Fitr. Abd al-Majid's wife Ma Yuqing was particularly adept at sewing beautiful ones, he reminisced. He himself was also quite good, he added excitedly, although not to the
extent of his wife. At the time the *taqiyyas* were a bit thick because they put cotton in the middle. They made them in different sizes, for children as well, and produced all of them at home. The good ones were sold to cloth stores, and eventually, a portion of the Chinese community also started opening shops in Ta’if.\textsuperscript{34}

Yang Quesu (楊卻俗), a member of the Taiwanese pilgrimage delegation of 1959 that visited Hong Kong, Beirut and Jeddah on the way to Mecca and returned by the way of Karachi published his pilgrimage account and made observations about the "overseas Chinese compatriots" in Saudi Arabia from whom he received assistance during the pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{35} The leader of the delegation was Ma Chengxiang (馬呈祥 1914-1991), a nephew of Ma Bufang and a former commander of the Fifth Cavalry Corps in Xinjiang who was now based in Taipei. His parents, daughter, and wife, however, had been living in Ta’if.\textsuperscript{36} Visiting Ta’if with him, Yang noted that the most numerous among the “overseas compatriots” (*qiaobao* 僑胞) residing in Saudi Arabia were those from Xinjiang; they numbered around five thousand, but some suggested that they were close to ten thousand. Those from Xinjiang, whom pilgrimage delegations from Taipei often included in their category of “overseas Chinese,” mainly engaged in commerce and industry, and lived under quite stable circumstances.

\textsuperscript{34} Author interview with ‘Abd al-Majid Ma Jingwu, April 16, 2017
\textsuperscript{35} Yang Quesu (楊卻俗), *Maijia Chaojinji (Records of Pilgrimage to Mecca 麥加朝觐記)* (Taipei: Zhongyang wenwu gongyingshe, 1961).
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 17.
The second-largest in number were those from the northwestern provinces such as Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia, and the third to follow were from provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet. Numbering around three hundred, and all of them Muslim, they were dispersed in Jeddah (34), Mecca (38), Medina (about 20), and Ta’if (around 200). Because Saudi Arabia’s population had been relatively sparse in its initial years, Yang remarked, it had encouraged settlers from different countries to acquire citizenship and did not require any conditions. With a steady increase in population, however, and its wariness of “communist infiltration,” the state was tightening conditions for entry. Some of the Chinese residents were facing difficulty in purchasing property, because of the law forbidding non-citizens from engaging in such activities.  

With the eyes of an ethnographer who identifies with the populations that he observes, Yang Quesu moves on to describe the social make-up of the Chinese community. As for their industry, retail business accounted for 40 percent, handicraft thirty 30 percent, labor 16 percent, and foodstuff 10 percent. Yang also wrote that many of Ta’if's Chinese community relied on selling “hats used during prayers,” (libaimao 禮拜帽) a daily necessity for Saudi males. The caps produced by Chinese were newer than the models made by people from Jawa, Yang proudly wrote, and the colors produced by “Xinjiang's compatriots” were resplendent. Those relatively in upper strata liked to wear

37 Yang Quesu, Maijia Chaojinji, 14.
purely white caps, and particularly favored the ones made by “compatriots from Gansu and Qinghai.” These caps, Yang pointed out, were "made with Chinese silk, Egypt's cotton, glue from America and Switzerland, and lace from India" as raw material. All kinds of elegant patterns and designs could be embroidered with careful craftsmanship; the hats were "spotlessly white and elegant, tenacious and wash-resistant," and superior to all other products.\(^\text{38}\)

According to Yang, the community could make a substantial amount of living by engaging in this business. The hats dominated the market; each cost about two to three Saudi riyal to produce at the most basic level, and the seller could earn about five to seven riyal after the transaction. Everyone regardless of gender and age could manufacture them by using the embroidery machine, although the finished products would vary in their exquisiteness. But despite differences in quality, "one could earn about forty to fifty Saudi riyal more or less, about ten US dollars, by relying on the simplest handicraft industry at home."\(^\text{39}\) Many overseas Chinese dealing with this business had already purchased a house, Yang added. When they were not qualified to purchase property due to their citizenship status, they would delegate citizenship holders to act as substitutes in the sales.\(^\text{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 15.
Besides sewing caps, during the 1960s and early 70s, a small number of the community with the right means seems to have engaged in shuttle trade as another occupation. Sara Mohī al-Dīn al-Sīnī, the granddaughter of Ma Bufang who escaped from Xining in her teens in 1949, opened a shop for women in Ta'if together with her mother. When Ma Bufang retired from his post as the ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan), he brought goods from Hong Kong and Lebanon to Jeddah. Sara's mother transferred the products from Jeddah to Ta'if.

As Sara’s daughter Faiza recalled, the store was like a franchise shop, with one in Ta’if and another in Jeddah. Sara and her mother understood commerce and business, so they used to bring goods from Hong Kong and Lebanon. In the 70s, because the relations between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon had been smooth, many products came from Europe to Beirut. Her grandmother, Faiza recounted, herself went to Beirut in 1972 or 73, and brought a lot of goods such as leatherware. The shop was in the same house that they had been living in Ta’if, but on the first floor. It was only for ladies to come in and had everything that people needed, such as sewing materials, underwear, and bedsheets. A sign was displayed outside the shop, and because Ta’if had been the summer palace for King Faisal, sometimes princesses used to come and visit the shop. At the time the visiting neighbors included Yemenis, Syrians, Palestinians, Afghanis, and Saudis as well.
Some of the products came from Hong Kong but through indirect connections, first brought to Jeddah then to Ta’if.41

While portions of the community gradually left the sewing business with their entries to public and educational sectors, as we will see in the next section, others without access to these fields could not afford to do so. Earning money for living through the taqīyya business or commerce was a long and arduous one for the later settlers. The aforementioned Ma Zhong who had conducted Sino-Tibetan-Indian peddling trade in the 1930s and 40s, for instance, recorded the harsh conditions under which he sewed taqīyya in Ta’if for a decade after settlement in Saudi in 1959. He sent a cassette tape with his voice in 1981 to his family in Jishisan, Linxia Prefecture, in which he reflected on his journeys. He first performed the pilgrimage along with others who had come with him. Several days went by as they fulfilled the religious duty. Then they borrowed some money from earlier pilgrim settlers and purchased a sewing machine to make caps. Everyone, by their background, had not been craftsmen; they learned the skill while continuing to sew taqīyya. They could get by day by day by selling them. A year after arriving in Saudi, his son Ibrahim was born. The situation turned even more difficult with a new baby to feed. He and others tenaciously studied the craft of sewing taqīyya. A decade went by like this, and life finally stabilized a little.

41 Author Interview, June 12, 2014.
"These ten years were the most difficult (zhe shinian ku chi wan le)!" Fourteen years went by after settlement, and only then did he start to think about opening a small shop. “Thanks to God” he earned some money, and “the store business did quite well.” Around this time acquaintances said that communicating with old home (laojia) was now possible. His neighbor was a Pakistani person and had wanted to go back home. "I immediately wrote a letter and asked him to bring it to Pakistan, and mail it from there to my home. You people were very happy to receive my letter, because before the letter, you all had no idea where I was, even whether I was alive or not. After seeing the letter you people could finally have relief of mind. I also received your letter. And saw the pictures. They made me very happy. Had I not started a family here I would not have wanted to stay here for such a long time. I could get by on waqf...living on had no hope. When I became old there was no one to take care of me...Now it is good. Little Ibrahim, Yahya, and his wife attend to me. I pray that one day, you brothers and sisters in two locations one day will meet."

Although Ma Zhong passed away in 1989 in Ta'if, his son indeed came to visit his distant relatives in August 1997, along with a wristwatch and “a batch of beard that had belonged to his late father to hand over to his extended family, which made them choke with tears.” Although he had been thoroughly "Arabized," Ibrahim thereupon started his
business of importing goods from Zhejiang province and had his children, nieces, and nephews study in Beijing and Lanzhou.  

Shua'īb (Han Youliang), who escaped from his hometown in Xunhua of Qinghai Province in 1955, went through similar hardships. Shua'īb, accompanied by his son-in-law, met me at the lobby of the upscale Awaliv Hotel in Ta’if. In accented Mandarin, Shu'aib explained that he had run away from Qinghai’s Xunhua Prefecture by himself at the age of sixteen, as his family had been identified as a landowning class. He reached Lhasa after eleven days of travel in "high grasslands," and had to stay there for three months because he did not have enough money to travel. When he reached Mecca through sojourns in Calcutta and Bombay, Shua'īb bore nothing other than his own clothes. Ma Bufang who had been the ambassador of Taiwan to Saudi Arabia at the time provided emergency relief items and a small amount of settlement money.

For a few years Shua'īb attended middle school in Mecca, but before long had to stop as he had to devote himself fully to making a living. "I had no means of finishing middle school," he said. Like settlers from China, he sewed ṭaqīyya all day long. Ma Bufang, though he had money, also made ṭaqīyya, Shua'īb added. For Shua'īb, making ṭaqīyya from morning to night only left 5 Saudi riyal a day. Because everything in Ta'if was cheaper at the time, and the weather was cooler than Mecca and Jeddah, Shua'īb moved to Ta'if like others. Housing rent amounted to only about 300 to 400 Saudi riyal

per year. In the 1980s, he worked in Abha as a translator for a decade for a Taiwanese company that was engaged in road construction work.  

Suleiman, whose granduncle had similarly migrated through Tibet to Mecca and Ta’if in the late 1950s, repeated the similar stories of hardship experienced by his granduncle. Suleiman himself had grown up in Zhangjiacun township in Gansu Province and studied in Medina’s Islamic University for a decade in the 1990s. At the time of our meeting, Suleiman had been working at the da’wa (missionary) center for foreign populations in Ta’if, including recent Chinese migrants. Because his granduncle had come to Saudi Arabia alone and could not obtain citizenship, he married a Kache person from Tibet. Because they had no child, they could sew only a small number of ṭaqīyya, unlike others whose whole families were engaged in the craft. This made it very difficult for his granduncle to make everyday living. After the passing of his granduncle, it was to take care of his old grand-aunt that Suleiman decided to stay in Ta’if, with a residency permit from his workplace, after graduating from the Islamic University of Medina.  

4.3 Climbing Up Institutions, Altering Names

Suleiman had been a part of new waves of students from mainland China who began to arrive in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s with scholarships from the

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43 Author with Han Youliang, April 1, 2017.
44 Author interview, April 3, 2017.
Islamic University of Medina. There is no chance that their studies in the University will grant them citizenship, and nor do they expect it to. Settlers who had come to Mecca from Sino-Tibetan borderlands prior to 1949 and pursued their studies, however, became a part of the Saudi state apparatus as teachers and missionaries. Saudi Arabia in its early decades had carried remarkable capacity as well as necessity to integrate into its religious and social institutions diverse populations, a past that remains overlooked. Established scholars from places such as Mauritania, Algeria, and Yemen found positions within “official structures of Saudi Islam” in the 1960s, shaping the Arabian Peninsula through “transnational tradition and a real cosmopolitanism that remain underestimated even today.”

Merchants in the Hejaz with longstanding experiences in external commerce, on the other hand, collaborated with the cabinet of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

Several of the migrants from different parts of China were incorporated into the expanding Saudi bureaucracy in religious and educational sectors, which offered their future generation better prospects in social advancement. Simultaneously, though different from one family to another, even such persons eventually faced pressures to cut ties from distant homelands at least outwardly.

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47 For expansion of Saudi bureaucratic institutions that co-opted traditional social forces and operated as layered fiefdoms, Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats*. 

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The career of the aforementioned Hussein Omar Suleiman al-Sīnī, who had arrived in Mecca with his family from a “Salar” town in Qinghai Province through Tibet and India, shows the gradual shift in Saudi educational sector from privately organized schools to governmental educational institutions between the 1940s and 70s. When he first came to Mecca, he started attending the Ṣawlatīyya School. The Ṣawlatīyya School had been founded in 1875 by Rahmat Allah Khalīl al-‘Uthmāni originally from Uttar Pradesh in northern India, who had been in exile in Mecca after the 1857 uprising in India against Britain. Funding the school was a wealthy woman from Calcutta Ṣawlat al-Nisa' Begum, who had met Rahmat Allah during the pilgrimage to Mecca. Madrasa Ṣawlatīyya exemplified both the cross-border flows of scholarly activities and patronages that constituted private schools in the Hejaz at the time, and also the importation of modern-style structured educational curriculum that now included secular subjects such as arithmetic and geography besides the strong emphasis on religious lessons.  

Back in China, Hussein explained, he had only studied some verses of the Quran. Here in Ṣawlatīyya, which he attended free of charge, he finished the curriculum in ten years, two of which were devoted to memorizing the Quran upon entering the school. After graduating at the age of 19, which would have been in the mid-1950s, he became a teacher at a governmental school in Mecca. As Steffen Hertog has noted, then-prince

Faisal had increased budgets for education and communication in 1958-9, positioning himself as a reformist partly in response to the growing popularity of socialist and nationalist republican ideologies that could potentially threaten the Saudi regime.49

Figure 23: Photo with Hussein Suleiman al-Ṣini, Mecca (outskirts), May 3, 2017

Hussein Suleiman moved between different educational institutions in the 1960s and early 70s. After teaching in the elementary section for 9 years, he moved to the high school part. Then he realized the different treatments he was receiving due to his degree from the Ṣawlatīyya school. Despite the same classes he was teaching, as he did not have a university certificate, he could not receive the same salary of 1,200 riyals as other

teachers with university certificates. Because universities in Saudi did not acknowledge a certificate from the Ṣawlatīyya school, he decided to go to Egypt, where the same degree from Ṣawlatīyya was accepted. He studied at al-Azhar University for one year and came back to attend family matters. His second year in college was in the College of Shari’a in Mecca, after which he “became a teacher with university certificate.” His salary finally became 1,200 riyals. Then, after ten years, Umm al-Qurā University opened a Master's program. Because there were no students wanting to enroll, the university put up a second ad in which it offered stipend that equaled the amount of salary. He enrolled in the Master's program, and after earning the degree, returned to school as a teacher.

Hussein rode on the rapid increase of income for governmental employees following the oil boom. He recounted: “It was now the time of King Khaled (1975-1982). Then the salary also changed, because of petrol; King Khaled raised the salary of employees. As of now, governmental teachers earn 8,000 riyals a month, and every year the salary rises. With 15 to 20 years of teaching experience, they would earn 15,000 riyal, which equals about 5,000 US dollars. Now in China, a teacher makes 4,000 Chinese riyal, which equals about 2,500 Saudi riyals,” he pointed out. Whereas governmental employees earn 5,000 Saudi riyal, teachers make 8,000 riyals. His daughter is an English teacher at a governmental school, he proudly added.

Similar to Hussein, "Ma Jinkly" ʿAbdullah Ibn Anas al-Ṣīnī from Linxia went through formalized educational institutions in Mecca. But afterward, he came to work as a religious missionary and a trader. ʿAbdullah arrived in Mecca with his three brothers,
his father, grandfather, and granduncle who had four daughters. As told by ‘Abdullah’s son, an engineer at ARAMCO, the families came to Mecca around 1946 through the way of Himalayas, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Kuwait, and proceeded to Riyadh and to Mecca. He described the journey as “hijra” – meaning emigration, with spiritual connotations of migrating in search of safe religious practice\(^50\) – which took about four years. At the age of twenty, ‘Abdullah started attending elementary school in Mecca and proceeded to the College of Sharia. ‘Abdullah’s teachers included the Egyptian sheikh Muhammad Al-Sha’rāwī, Abd al-Azīz bin Bāz, Muhammad ibn al-‘Uthaymīn, Sheikh ‘Abdullah Ala Sheikh, and ‘Abdullah ‘Omar Nasīf. After studying for twenty years in Mecca and graduating, he received Saudi citizenship and spent a year in Dhiba as a missionary dispatched to villages (داﻋﻲ), giving lessons on tawhīd (oneness of God; unicity). After a year, he was in search of a wife. As his son put it, "in Mecca there were Jawis, and in Ta’if there were Chinese." ‘Abdullah, however, went to neither of these places and headed instead to Medina. He married Karima in Medina, whose family had been from Andijan in present-day Uzbekistan, who had then been thirteen years old. He settled in Ta’if shortly afterward, where he worked for twenty years.

When he was about 65 years old (at the end of the 1980s), ‘Abdullah had to forsake his Chinese first name. “Because in Saudi, the Identification card was small."

After the ID started being made by the computer, we couldn't put more than four names. They said, remove Ma Jinkly. You know why they erase Ma Jinkly? Because it couldn't be entered in the computer. My father had two names. Ma Jinkly Abdullah. Now they removed it. They said, don't make two names in one person. They removed it and said, you are ‘Abdullah now.”

Ironically, a few years before his Chinese name was removed from his Saudi ID, Ma Jinkly ‘Abdullah became a frequent traveler to China as a religious instructor and a trader. For twenty-five years until shortly before his death, ‘Abdullah went back and forth between Ta'if and China, splitting his time in half and getting married again with a Chinese Muslim from Qinghai. As ‘Abdullah’s son recalled, he had affiliations with the World Muslim League, a semi-governmental religious institution established in Mecca in 1962, and the Islamic Bank. The pictures kept by his son show ‘Abdullah making speeches as a representative of the World Muslim League in China's mosques. He directed funds from the League for a mosque in Zhengzhou of Henan Province (Xiao Lou Si 小楼寺), and presented pictures of the mosque to the League with a letter to certify how the money was spent. A certificate from 1999 shows that ‘Abdullah had been invited to serve as a headmaster of external affairs of “Muguang (穆光 Muslim Light)” Arabic school in the mosque. Simultaneously, ‘Abdullah imported clothing pieces (thawb, ‘Iqāl

51 Author Interview with the family of ‘Abdullah Anas, July 1, 2017.
and Iḥrām clothes) through Guangzhou; he would ship six containers and sell them in Ta'if, Jeddah, and Mecca. Earlier before his trips to China, he had brought them through Syria. Travels to China as an affiliate of the World Muslim League, then, made it possible for ‘Abdullah to do business on the side by engaging with light industry producers in Guangzhou, although he had to drop his alternative name in official Saudi papers.

A portion of the earlier settlers who had already been performing religious leadership roles was incorporated into the state sector, while concurrently developing new relations with Taipei through pilgrim delegates coming from the island country. Jianzishan Ahong, whom ‘Abd al-Majid recalled as having been selling sanzi in Mecca, ascended to become a representative Chinese Wahhabi proponent. Before migrating to Mecca in the 1930s, Jianzishan Ahong had sojourned through different places of northwestern China. According to biographic accounts on him published in Taipei, although he had spent childhood in the southern outskirts of Hezhou (Linxia), he studied in Bafang within the city where he earned credentials as an imam. After moving to Ganzhou (Jiuqian), he decided to move to Mecca with eight members of his family. They prepared a donkey and an old horse, passed through the Qaidam Basin in Qinghai to enter Tibet, and reached Kalimpong. They then took a train to Bombay and boarded a ship to
Out of money in Jeddah, they received assistance from local authorities and joined camel caravans to finally arrive in Mecca and complete the pilgrimage the same year. Jianzishan Ahong and the family used clay to make small toys such as pheasant, little puppies and kitties, colored them, and sold them on the streets. They also made and sold small metal boxes, book bags for elementary school students, and sanzi. This somewhat solved the problems of making a living.

Eventually, Jianzishan Ahong encountered "Wahhabi" authorities and presented eight queries regarding religious matters to the grand mufti at the time. He was then invited to provide religious lessons to the Chinese population in Saudi Arabia on a platform in the Haram and was provided with Saudi nationality and governmental salary. In subsequent decades, he assisted settlers from China who did not have Saudi citizenship acquire documents to continue on staying. From 1961 onward, the Taiwanese Embassy in Jeddah received his counsel on performing the pilgrimage. His son Hassan, who came to

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52 According to the memoir of Long Ahong (Qi Mingde, 1894-1987) of the Qadriyya order, already in 1931, Jianzishan Ahong had been residing in Mecca as a “Wahhabi receptionist,” and assisted the new wave of Salafi pilgrim-scholars such as Ma Debao. Sheikh Kemal al-Din Qi Mingde, Yigao Jilu (遗稿辑录) (Electronic copy, n.d.).

53 Fukang Jia, Taiwan Huijiaoshi (Taipei: Yisilan Wenhua Fuwushe, 2005), 97. This is a short biography of Jian Zishan, composed by a member of pilgrimage delegation from Taiwan who had visited him in 1977. The biography is based on his own conversations and a 1979 obituary written by another Saudi-Chinese resident that was published in Taipei’s Islamic periodical.

54 Ibid., 97. The scholar whom he encountered was Mohammed al-Ma’sum Al-Khujandi, a Tajikistan-born scholar who switched from being a Maturidi Naqshbandi Sufi to a supporter of Wahhabi doctrine. He had made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1905-6 and studied there for three years. Upon return home, he fled from the Bolshevik Revolution into Ghulja (Yining) in Xinjiang, and eventually to Mecca in 1934-5, where he became a teacher in the Salafi educational institution Dar al-Hadith. Mohammed Turki A. Al-Sudairi, “Adhering to the Ways of Our Western Brothers: Tracing Saudi Influences on the Development of Hui Salafism in China,” Sociology of Islam 4 (2016): 27-58, 36-8.
work at the Ministry of Hajj, took over his father's role and drew up ground plans for Taiwanese tents in Mina and Mount Arafat, and provided it to the Taiwanese Embassy. He also helped the Embassy purchase small products such as wooden pegs for the tent, hammer, and water jars, and also employed temporary workers to put up tents for the Embassy's workers. Every year the pilgrimage delegations dropped by Jianzishan's place for some time; they would exchange greetings, take a rest, drink tea, use kitchenware, which made things much more convenient for them. After Jianzishan's passing in 1979, Hassan, who passed away in 1995, continued on his father's role of receiving pilgrims from Taiwan and counseling the Embassy.  

Educators such as Hussein, ‘Abdullah Ma Jinkly and Jianzishan Ahong who had arrived in Mecca before 1949 started out as handicraft sellers and traders, but became parts of the Saudi institutional apparatus as its citizens. While entering Saudi religious and educational institutions, they re-routed connections with outside places at different periods, sometimes undertaking travels themselves and at other times receiving those who flocked to Mecca.

While these figures became employees of the Saudi state apparatus, other settlers who had kept affiliation with the Nationalist Party back in China found positions in Taiwan’s diplomatic agencies. Shams al-Din Gao Wenyuan, a former scholar-bureaucrat

55 Fukang Jia, *Taiwan Huijiaoshi*, 98.
in China was one such person. Previously a member of Qinghai’s cabinet in Xining, Gao Wenyuan relocated from Hong Kong to Mecca and then to Ta’if in the early 1950s.

For Gao Wenyuan, the exile pilgrimage to Mecca could be conceived of as a return to the origins of Islam, or be framed as such. Gao Wenyuan’s grandson in Riyadh, a professor at King Abdulaziz University, pointed me to his uncle in Xining. The uncle showed me a short, typed manuscript of Gao Wenyuan’s memoir, an edited version of which was published a periodical in Xining in 2003, a few years before Gao Wenyuan’s death in Ta’if. In starting pages of the unpublished part of the memoir, he reflects on the decision to undertake the journey to Mecca instead of to Taipei. In Taipei, he had chances of serving at the Legislative Yuan. Yet, he had "drifted along in [his] hometown for twenty years, and had not mixed [himself] in any well-known outside places of learning."

Mecca, the Prophet's birthplace, was the point of origin from which Islam first emanated, and Medina was the place where the religion widely spread. As a Muslim, Gao Wenyuan writes, he had to settle in Mecca; he could deepen his religious understanding on the one hand, and on the other hand, Mecca would offer a temporary rest place difficult to come by in the middle of refugee life in exile. For these reasons, in 1952 he boarded the French steamship "Ma-Sai" from Hong Kong, and transited in Luzon and Saigon to arrive in Port

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Said through the Suez Canal. He was greeted by his colleagues such as Wang Shiming,57 to whom he passed on local produces such as soy sauce and sesame oil. He also encountered Ma Bufang, who at the time had been residing in Cairo with a portion of his family. After staying in Cairo for ten days, Gao Wenyuan boarded the Egyptian steamship "Sai-er-le" to cross the Red Sea for three days and arrived in Jeddah in July, where he was again greeted by old friends. He first visited Mecca and the Ka'ba and shed tears, "finally arriving where [he] had only looked towards for all his life." He relocated to Ta’if upon recommendations from his acquaintances that Ta’if has much more temperate weather.58

Gao Wenyuan took on multiple jobs while residing in Ta'if. In the unpublished memoir, Gao noted that in Saudi Arabia's initial years, because every infrastructure was in its starting stages, there were not enough medicinal facilities or doctors. When Chinese immigrants first came to Saudi Arabia, they were used to neither the land nor the language. Nor were they financially comfortable. When he had been preparing to leave for Mecca from Hong Kong, he had amassed a large quantity of books to bring with him. Due to his limited understanding of Arabic, which posed difficulties in his learning, he gathered Chinese language books on Islam. As Hong Kong too lacked such texts, he

57 A graduate of al-Azhar University, Wang Shiming had been serving as the Consul to both Cairo and Jeddah simultaneously, before the establishment of Taiwanese Embassy in Jeddah in 1957.
collected them from mainland China. His sources included Shanghai's two Islamic bookstores, Shanghai Zhejiang Road mosque (also known as the Foreign mosque), and the Chengda publisher in Beijing. He brought over a hundred books in total and later donated them to the library of Taipei's mosque. Another book he had brought from Hong Kong, published in mainland China, was a guide to examining and treating illnesses. For sixteen years in Saudi Arabia, he worked as a "Mongol doctor" or barefoot doctor; he saw all kinds of sicknesses, researched them in depth, and provided provisions free of charge. When the government organized official medical facilities, however, he no longer served this role. His eldest son in Ta’if, perhaps inheriting his father’s tendencies, came to run a pharmacy in Ta'if that has grown in size and was still in business as of 2017.

Perhaps due to his affiliation with the ROC’s Embassy in Jeddah as a local advisor, Gao Wenyuan once again headed outward, this time as a semi-diplomat to Indonesia. After a decade in Ta'if, Gao Wenyuan sojourned in Jakarta for another decade in the 1960s and 70s as an employee of Taiwan's Chamber of Commerce. During these few years, he was known by his Arabic name “Shams al-Din.” A newspaper article published in Jakarta in 1971, which he had scrapped and kept in Ta’if, introduced him as a “very friendly person” who speaks Arabic very well. The article begins with the story that Hajji Shams al-Din Kao was delighted to see a media reporter who happened to be a Muslim, the only second Muslim he met in Jakarta at the time. Describing him as “very polite and a person with a good personality,” the article points out that Hajji Shams al-Din comes from a Muslim family, and that he was born in Qinghai in 1911, getting
Islamic education since early childhood. The writer mistakenly reports that Shams al-Din went to Mecca for studies after graduation in 1938 (in fact, it was in the early 1950s) and that he lived in Mecca for seventeen years (rather than Ta’if), where he was appointed as an advisor to a Chinese ambassador. While in Jakarta, Shams al-Din is said to have wanted to meet Indonesian Muslim leaders. When asked about how Muslims do in Taiwan, he responded that Muslims as citizens are protected by the government as it protects citizens who followed different religions. Upon finishing the meeting, Shams al-Din said, holding his hand, “thank you brother…thank you very much (shukran ya akhī...shukran kathīran).” Other articles reported on his meetings with religious and political dignitaries in Jakarta, as well as the leader of the Chinese Muslim Association (PITI) in Cirebon.
Figure 24: Gao Wenyuan reported in Minggu Abadi, September 26, 1971
As Gao Wenyuan moved locations, so did the sites of writing and publishing. Back in mainland China, he had composed articles for Islamic periodicals in Nanjing that reported on the conditions of Qinghai’s Islamic Progressive Association that had been presided by Ma Bufang.\(^{59}\) Away from mainland China, he continued writing in Ta’if and Taipei. When he spent several years in Taipei after the sojourn in Jakarta, Gao Wenyuan gathered archival data to publish a well-received book on nineteenth-century Muslim Uprisings in Qing China in Taipei in 1988, republished under the directive his family in mainland China in the 1990s.\(^{60}\) He also wrote short books on guide to pilgrimage, and biographies of the Guoyuan Hajji (Yihewani founder) and Ma Qi (the first governor of Qinghai Province and the father of Ma Bufang). In the mid-1980s, under the auspices of the World Muslim League, he worked on editing Ma Jian’s Chinese translation of the Quran from the 1940s, which was published by the King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Press in 1987. Owing to his associations with the World Muslim League, he invited his second

\(^{59}\) Wenyuan (文远), “Qinghai Huijiao Cujinhuide Qianzhan Yu Hougu (The Past and Present of Qinghai’s Islamic Progressive Association 青海回教促进会的前瞻与后顾 ),” *Tujue* 1, no. 2 (1934): 22–36.

\(^{60}\) Gao Wenyuan, *Qing mo Xibei Huiminzhi fan Qing yundong* (Northwestern Muslims' anti-Qing Movement in late Qing 清末西北回民之反清运动) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chuban she, 1998).
son who had been left behind in Xining along with his mother, to perform the pilgrimage in 1984.  

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 25: Gao Wenyuan (Shams al-Din al-‘Ali) reunites with relatives who undertook the pilgrimage in 1983. Kaituo Magazine (2003).**

While ‘Abdullah Ma Jinkly dropped his Chinese first name and kept his surname al-Sīnī, Gao Wenyuan and his family transformed their last name from Chinese to Arabic so as for it to retain translated meaning. Gao Wenyuan adopted the last name al-‘Ali, meaning “high,” to correspond to the character “Gao.” This became the surname that his children and grandchildren in Saudi Arabia would follow, keeping only partial memories about the family’s other names.

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61 Author interview, Xining, May 2014.
The dropping or changing of surnames, a common practice within the Chinese community as well as other diaspora populations in Saudi Arabia, reflected both the pressures to suppress outside connections and the strategies of reformulating them in private arenas. Names, rather than singular or fixed, are relational attributes that carry multiple, changing social contexts behind them. James Scott interpreted the invention of hereditary, permanent patrimonial surnames as the culmination of the modern state’s project to make individuals legible by identifying and linking them with a larger kin group. Such campaigns were related to the state’s agendas of fiscal exertion through tax collection, conscription, composition of census and property deeds and so on.62

In the context of modern Saudi Arabia, as Nadav Samin notes, the project of standardizing identification papers through the 1960s involved requiring every individual to adopt three-part names (a first name, father’s name, and grandfather’s name) plus a tribal or a popular name, thus making lineage the centerpiece of engineering a uniform citizenry. More than the need to extract financial resources, this move had to do with the politics of co-opting and managing tribal belongings by enshrining them in the state’s administrative system. The four-part name structure thus “placed the individual’s tribe at the foreground of their public identity, and invented new inadequacy for those whose popular names (al-shuhra) could not be linked credibly to a prominent tribe.”63

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63 Samin, Of Sand or Soil, 186.
What options did such systematization of names leave for individuals who traced homes to different places in China, rather than an identifiable tribe? Many had initially adopted “al-Sīnī,” (Chinese) as their nisba, or adjective form of nouns that are incorporated into personal names. The attributes of nisba names can describe varying social contexts such as occupation, religious sects or geographical regions. Their uses, as Clifford Geertz has pointed out from his observations in Sefrou in Morocco, are relative to social circumstances; an individual may be known through one nisba in a certain context and by another in a different one. While adaptive to situations, nisbas “cannot carry with them more than the most sketchy, outline implications concerning what men so named as a rule are like. Calling a man a Sefroui is like calling him a San Franciscan: it classifies him, but does not type him; it places him without portraying him.”64

Within the overarching name “al-Sīnī” were multiple levels of identifications and relationships that characterized an individual. The significance of the nisba al-Sīnī, now an abstract locale, lay in creating conceptual linkages with home places elsewhere, while concealing the manifold layers of social, geographical and sentimental attributes within.

The four-part name requirement left the Sino-Saudi community with a few different choices. They could adopt the overarching “Chinese” nisba as their surnames, which many did; renounce it all together; or use names whose meanings were legible

exclusively in the family. Gao Wenyuan picked an Arabic word whose meaning corresponded to the phonetic character of his Chinese surname. ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, whom we saw in Chapter 2, had also settled in Jeddah in the 1950s after escaping from Communist victory, through the route of northern Burma/Thailand. He then served as a translator and secretary assistant at the Taiwanese Embassy, and like Gao Wenyuan, had an affiliation with the World Muslim League. Unlike Gao Wenyuan, Lin and the family retained Arabic transliteration of his Chinese surname (Lin) as the family name.

The family of Ma Bufang, on the other hand, split his name into two – Ma Bu and Fang – and made Arabic transliteration of “Fang” their tribal name, and “Mabu” into the third family surname. In contrast to his name that was teared up, some transliterated their full Chinese name into Arabic, and made it into a single surname. Even when people chose the generic surname al-Sīnī, they passed on the Chinese surname to their children orally (i.e. Ma, Na or Hai), or wrote them alternative Chinese names in the private realm. ‘Abd al-Majid, for instance, gave all of his children Chinese names beside their official Arabic ones and inserted the character “hua” (華 meaning China) to all of their Chinese names lest they forget.

From Hussein Suleiman Omar to Shams al-Din al-‘Ali (Gao), we have seen representatives of higher circles of religious and political worlds. Through unpredictable and circuitous trajectories, they became parts of Saudi educational and bureaucratic institutions. As such, they represented “China” in Saudi Arabia, and when they made it to Taiwan or mainland China, authoritative guests from Saudi Arabia.
4.4 Rebuilding Lodgings, Receiving New Guests

Thus far, we have seen re-routings of pilgrimage paths to Mecca as ways of escape, and contingent processes through which Chinese Muslim diaspora in the Hejaz reformulated real and imagined external ties from their new base. While widening the geographic and temporal scope of inquiry, investigating pasts of the Sino-Saudi community also revealed the diverse make-up of Saudi society that often remains overlooked in scholarship.

Confluence of diverse kinds of Chinese Muslim sojourners and settlers in and around Mecca led to the establishment of communal spaces of gathering, similar to (re-)buildings of mosques in Canton and Shanghai that we observed in Chapter 2. These small yet concrete structures would undergo destruction and reconstruction while performing as connective points between diaspora populations in the Hejaz and newly arriving pilgrims and students.

The aforementioned Gao Wenyuan in the memoir devotes a few sections on the Chinese hajj hostel and the context for its refurbishment. With the expansion of the Grand Mosque, the Chinese Hajj house, which Gao Wenyuan refers to as "wa-gai-fu," or "waqf," also needed to be demolished. The original hajj house had been built through the patronage of the Ma warlords of Gansu, Ma Fuxiang and Ma Hongkui in the 1920s. According to Gao, this initial hajj hostel was near to the Ka'ba and about fifty steps from the Grand Mosque. The building was three stories high, and at the time an “Indian person” had been entrusted to take care of the procedures for purchasing property. This
person, when registering at the Mecca Supreme Court, wrote: "Ma Hongkui gave me alms, which I used to build a pilgrimage lodge house for Chinese." With post-World War II increase of hajj traffic and expansion of the Saudi economy through the oil industry, King ‘Abd al-‘Azîz initiated the project of expanding Masjid al-Haram in Mecca by inviting an Italian architect. As the buildings around the Grand Mosque needed to be demolished, Gao Wenyuan tried to rely on legal procedures to retrieve the reparation money provided by the government. And thus began the long litigation. Gao Wenyuan also notes the hard work of Na Huidong, who made a strong, convincing argument at the court and directed the money to Ma Hongkui. Gao recounts that the amount totaled about 200,000 Saudi riyals, about 60,000 USD, which was “a big number at the time.”

Up to the early twentieth century, residents and settlers who took root in Mecca through journeys from diverse parts of Eurasia had left onto the city’s landscape, along with their descendants and historical memories, physical engravings built through donations and endowments. In particular, ribāt, or guest housing for students, teachers and the poor resting from their travels, served as the most important charity institution for communal growth in Mecca. Interpretations of the term “ribāt” have been multifaceted, from defense fort institution to jihâd against the enemy or jihâd of the self, to equivalents.

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of Sufi khanaqah houses. Its meaning and understanding have been expanded to indicate rest houses that have been built through endowment (waqf) that abided by the conditions set by the donor. According to recent researches by scholars on Mecca in Saudi Arabia, ribāt in Mecca numbered twenty-nine by 1882 (1300), and between 1883 and 1915 (1301-1334), the number increased to fifty-six.67

As relatively new arrivers, the only building that Chinese Muslims in the Hejaz could claim as their own was the small housing that had been built with the funds of Ma Fuxiang in the 1920s. If the initial Chinese hajj lodge house in Mecca of the inter-war period was installed through the funds of Ma Fuxiang on the hands of Sufi scholars with alleged contributions from Linxia's Muslims (as we saw in Chapter 1), when such ties were cut off, the small building switched hands to become a rallying point for the newly settled residents identifying with China.

Receiving compensation for the demolished waqf became a rallying point for the newly settled residents from China in Mecca’s vicinities. They also solicited a letter from Ma Hongkui exiled in California, which left trails in Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives.68 According to Gao Wenyuan, with Mecca Supreme Court's position that the hajj hostel was equivalent to charity and the money could not be taken back, the

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68 Academia Historica Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (Taipei), 11-WAA-00823, 1955.
whole sum needed to be used to build another lodge house for Chinese, and under the supervision of the Mecca Supreme Court. The situation lay at a standstill for a while until Ma Hongkui passed away; his wife Zhao Lanxiang later agreed fully with the Mecca Supreme Court, and the Chinese representatives finally won the lawsuit. Yet because times had changed, and the price of housing in Mecca had skyrocketed, 200,000 Saudi riyal was no longer enough to buy a house in Mecca, and "the Chinese hajj house in Mecca was about to disappear!" writes Gao Wenyuan. Under these circumstances, overseas Chinese needed another Hajj house.

Reconstruction of the lodge-house profited from flows of pilgrims and their donations from Chinese Muslim communities within and outside Saudi Arabia. As he took the initiative and solicited contributions in Thailand and Hong Kong, Gao explains, co-religionists in these two places were very passionate and contributed around 15,000 USD, with 1 USD equaling about 4.5 Saudi riyal. On Mecca's Gu-ba Mountain the community purchased a house, using roughly 43,000 USD. At the time of purchase, it had one basement and two floors; but they added another two floors, so the building came to have four stories in total, with twelve rooms. The reconstruction cost around 130,000 Saudi riyal (about 28,000 USD). The hajj house could accommodate about a hundred and

69 The nature of the dispute with the “Indian” claimant as described here is questionable. According to the memoirs of Long Ahong (Qi Mingde) whose father had carried the funds on behalf of Ma Fuxiang in the 1920s, an Indian scholar in Mecca who had great respect from the Qadriyya order in Linxia had inherited a third of the right to the property. Long Ahong recounts that in the early 50s, he received a letter from the descendant of the scholar that requested his testimony. Relations however were cut off afterwards.
thirty people, and people thought it to be very convenient; Gao Wenyuan writes that
every year hajjis from Hong Kong came to stay here, and a very small number from
Thailand as well. Gao Wenyuan’s private diary lists five cases of donations from Hong
Kong between 1971 and 1976, which totaled 7,755 USD, most of which were transferred
on the hands of “Sai Haji 賽哈智” and “Sha Yikun (沙義坤).” Gao Wenyuan in the
memoir writes that as the Grand Mosque underwent another round of reconstruction, the
hajj house again fell under its boundaries, and the government compensated about
1300,000 Saudi riyal, which he remarks as quite profitable.

A waqf founded by Ma Bufang in Mecca, on the other hand, at times became a
resting place for the few students from Taiwan. The building is described in the memoir
of Ibrahim Chao, a scholar and later a diplomat, and the current imam of the Taipei
Central Mosque. Ibrahim Chao’s parents had migrated from Shandong to Taipei during
wartime. After spending his youth in Taipei and studying Arabic at the Taipei Central
mosque, Ibrahim Chao was one of the first students from Taiwan to study abroad in
Sanusi University in Bayda in Libya during the 1960s (1963-76), and then in College of
Sharia in Mecca’s King Abdulaziz University (1977-85), which later changed to Umm al-
Qurā University. Ibrahim Chao recounts in his memoir that prior to officially beginning
his studies in Mecca, he made the ‘umrah in the summer of 1976 both to perform the
pilgrimage and to explore opportunities for continuing his studies. Helping him was the
then Minister of Ministry of Higher Education, Sheikh Hassan bin ‘Abdullah al-Shaikh,
who made the application process much easier and smoother. He began his Masters in
King Abdulaziz University School of Shariah in 1977, and also the aforementioned Hussein Suleiman, who had graduated from the Ṣawlatīyya School. Ibrahim describes Hussein as a “huaqiao” (overseas Chinese) teacher who had come to Saudi in the early years and was teaching language lessons to students from outside Saudi. The four students in his class for the regular curriculum included himself, a student from Sudan and two Saudi students.

Ibrahim Chao describes the two gathering places (huiguān 會館) that had been built in Mecca by Chinese Muslims as waqf when he arrived, which were used by pilgrims and by students sojourning in Mecca. The older one had been situated halfway up a hill between the mountain ridges of the area of Sha’b Hishām, where several senior-aged single “huaqiao” had been living, including an escapee from Tibet who had been pursuing his degree in the College of Sharia (who unfortunately passed away shortly after finishing his studies). Ibrahim himself stayed in the housing located in ‘Ajiyād district, a “very sturdy building” which had been built with private contributions from Ma Bufang. Ma Bufang’s eldest grandson wholeheartedly arranged a room for his stay, and for it to be taken care of well. There was a Chinese family (qiāobāo) who had been living on the lower floor and responsible for tending the building. At the time Ibrahim ended up staying alone in a very big room on the floor, and although the room was very spacious and roomy, because it still became very hot during the summer, he purchased a cooler that operates on cold water. And although the room’s furniture was very good, because there were no bookshelves to put the many books he kept for school, he had no choice but
to line them up on the bed, which made it more convenient for him to pick them up to read. Half of the big bed was thus occupied by the books, and the other half by himself.70

In recent years, the waqf has been revived to be used by pilgrims from China, with Hussein Suleiman Omar acting as the supervisor. During our initial meeting, I had given him my preliminary article on the Chinese Muslim community in the Hejaz that had been published by the King Faisal Center.71 He corrected that the amount of money that had been compensated for the demolished waqf (originally in the Sha'b 'Ali district) was in fact 1,317,000 riyal to be exact (rather than 1,300,000 riyal), and that the money had been kept intact in the bank by the government until a new waqf was purchased. This new waqf, of which Hussein is now serving as the "watcher" or the "agent," (nāẓir, or wakīl), is now in al-Hajūn region in Mecca. The new waqf had not been bought until three to four years ago when the other watcher of the ribāt passed away. This new building has six floors; six rooms on every floor, and a store on the ground floor. As Hussein put it:

Now in Mecca, there are two waqfs. The big waqf has six stories and thirty rooms. Two floors are for families, about three to four. They live throughout the year. They have iqama, and work, too. They were born here. There are two Tibetan families who are poor and live there for free. There are also Chinese women, old in their age, and they have lived with us for five to six years in the waqf. The rest of the rooms are for pilgrims, during Ramadan, who number

twenty, thirty, or forty. They make the pilgrimage, live for three to four months, and go back. This waqf is from the 1,317,000 riyals. This is the waqf that I am the watcher for, in the region of al-Ḥajūn. [Asked who among the pilgrims stay here] The official pilgrims come in groups, of 10,000 or 12,000 and rent places. [But] there are pilgrims who use other ways to come for the pilgrimage, out of their own pockets. They come, maybe five, ten or fifteen of them, in the name of traders, etc., and stay in waqf for free. These are unofficial ways. We take from them fees for electricity, like ten riyals for each person. For one month they would pay 300 Saudi riyal. This is for water and electricity. So there are two official waqfs in Mecca for Chinese. One in al-Ḥajūn. And in the Ajiyād region, there is the waqf built by Ma Bufang. In Ta'īf there is only one waqf. I am the watcher for this waqf. Waqf there is small, just one floor on the hills. There live only two families; this waqf is from thirty to forty years ago. In the past, it was for the poor, and to have weddings. Now, money increased, so they work in hotels and so on, so there are only two families living there. These are Tibetan families. I am the watcher for the waqf in Mecca and waqf in Ta'īf. Insha'allah I will write for you the whole story, and of our travels, of eighteen people.72

As Hussein explained, when Ma Bufang family came back from Egypt, they purchased houses in Jeddah, lived there, and bought two big buildings in the Ajiyād region in Mecca. They turned one of the two into a waqf. This was the official waqf, registered under the government. This waqf, still in use, had initially been managed by Ma Bufang's descendants, but because they lived in Jeddah and could not keep on managing it, it was turned over to the government. The government appointed a supervisor, a Turkistani person. As the supervisor is now a Turkistani, it is mainly used by Turkistanis.

72 Author Interview, May 2, 2017.
Conclusion

Hussein, after narrating the journeys to Saudi Arabia and histories of the lodgings, inquired: "So you are from Korea?" I replied confidently in the affirmative. "But where are you really from?" He demanded. "Well, I am from Korea but I do live in the United States," I answered, with some less confidence. "I know you are studying in the United States and that you are from Korea, but before that where were you and your family from?" "Before that... I think we were still from Korea..." I murmured. “Uncle” Hussein hurriedly explained: "What I mean is, for us, we say that we are Saudi, but we are originally from China. And in China, we say that we are in China, but we are originally from Turkistan. Do you not have any of this?" Now I started to have doubts about my origin. "So you are Korean by origin-origin ('asl-'asl kūrīa)?" his eyes widened. "Yes, Korean by origin-origin. Well, I think so..." at which point his young daughter intervened and concluded: "That's it, khalas, father, she is Korean by origin-origin ('asl-asl).” Uncle Hussein nodded slowly, not wholly convinced. While I tried to make sense of his recollections on the journey to Mecca that incorporated far-reaching places, he was attempting to comprehend how one could not trace his or her origins to places far apart.

For diaspora communities in Saudi Arabia of which Chinese Muslims are a part, remembrances of history entail genealogical tracings that encompass places near and far. The roads of travel that the different generations narrate, however abbreviated the stories may become as they pass from one to the other, have defined their self-understandings of
past. Historicizing the routes of their journeys revealed old trans-regional pathways that had sedimented over time, along which travelers without access to airplanes moved.

Mecca in this sense has represented the culmination of the most diverse routes through which people not only traversed but also composed distinct communities by becoming permanent settlers. Chinese Muslims were latecomers to the scene, and those who came after 1949 willfully retreated to Ta’if while maintaining ties to Mecca. In turning towns and cities of western Saudi Arabia into new homes, the first generation of Chinese Muslims adapted to new societies by becoming sewers, sellers, food producers, educators, and civil servants, while a portion of them redirected outside social and political ties through the way of Hong Kong and Taipei. They simultaneously interacted with pockets of coreligionist communities in Hong Kong and Taipei, who made occasional journeys to Mecca and sometimes transferred a modicum of donations.

Besides recording their life stories, then, this chapter has also shown how mustering oral and textual sources dispersed across Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and mainland China can reveal re-routings of circulations of refugees, pilgrims, and charities outside the very territory of mainland China. Such flows led to reformulations of communal gathering spaces in Mecca, which in turn hosted sojourners traveling outside of Saudi Arabia. The process of re-routing also included not only material but conceptual imaginaries, in which distant home places back in mainland China – rather than Mecca – came to represent points of potential return.
A strand of figures introduced in this chapter, as we saw, developed affiliations with the World Muslim League in Mecca and Taiwanese diplomatic agencies. The next chapter turns to pilgrimage diplomacies between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia during the Cold War, a dynamic that Chinese Muslim communities in both places shaped.
5. Cold War Re-Routings of Diplomatic Channels

In Part I (Wars and Travels), we observed how networks of pilgrimage, scholarship, and diasporas between China and Arabia periodically intersected with realms of domestic politics and foreign diplomacy, as religious dignitaries forged strategic alliances with state authorities in the interstices of empires, wars, and nationalism. The emergence of the Saudi state in the Hejaz further bolstered travels of pilgrim-cum-diplomats who sought to make contacts with the new Saudi regime and other societies that lay on the paths to Mecca. They simultaneously attempted to garner the support of external and internal Muslim populations through propaganda and the symbolic act of the pilgrimage. Representatives from China were not exceptional in this respect. Those from the Soviet Union, Japan, Malaya/Indonesia, and Pakistan engaged in similar endeavors at different points in time. Mecca thus assembled multi-layered mobilities of pilgrimage, patronage, diplomacy and, as we saw in Chapter 4, refuge for both political and non-political exiles.

It was not a coincidence that a strand of the first and second-generation Chinese Muslims in the Hejaz found roles as official or unofficial diplomats between Saudi Arabia and Taiwan following their settlements in the 1930s and 40s – as receptionists for annual pilgrimage delegations from Taipei, or as personnel of diplomatic and religious agencies such as the World Muslim League in Mecca and the Taiwanese Embassy in Jeddah. Interactions between states in East and West Asia were nested in constellations of
the Cold War in both regions and endeavors within the “third world” to diversify geo-economic relations.

The impact of the Cold War in regional dynamics of disparate third world buffer zones (i.e. the Middle East, East Asia) is relatively well researched, as well as the gathering of state actors in venues such as the Bandung Conference in the name of third world solidarity. Less known are re-adaptions of religious and diaspora networks to the new world order, and their reformulations as mid-scale, connective channels between states. This chapter shows the layers of diasporic and diplomatic networks between Mecca and China that realigned in the course of the Cold War, through a focus on mobility of strands of Chinese and Turkic (Turkistani) Muslim sojourners and residents in the Hejaz. I draw from a mixture of interviews and textual sources. Mecca was not only a space where exiles and pilgrims from diverse locations gathered and dispersed as we saw in Chapter 4, but a venue that coordinated encounters between outside religiopolitical representatives and dignitaries of Saudi Arabia, and between these pilgrim delegates and diaspora populations who had been residing in the Hejaz. As I show through networks and languages of Chinese and Turkic Muslims, Mecca in this period offers untapped potentials to explore the different kinds and circuits of inter-Asian interactions that were shaped by Cold War dynamics.

Islamic pilgrimage delegations from Taipei started to arrive in Mecca every year starting from 1954. This was a practice that had begun in the World War II years, as we saw in Chapter 3. After hiatus following the exile of the Nationalist Party to Taipei, the
annual-pilgrimage delegates once again received assistance from different governmental ministries in Taipei and acted as informal representatives of the Republican Chinese state. Dispatching of pilgrimage delegations constituted a part of the ROC’s strategy of cultural diplomacy, as it battled for its place in the international arena and strove to maintain external contacts.\(^7^3\)

Especially up to the early 1970s, when the tide turned decisively towards the People’s Republic of China (PRC) following its rapprochement with the U.S. and ousting of Taiwan from the United Nations in 1971, pilgrimage delegations from Taipei conducted anti-communist, pan-Islamist propaganda directed against the PRC while simultaneously arranging meetings with Sino-Muslim settlers in the Hejaz and Saudi kings and bureaucrats. Already in 1956, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria, and shortly thereafter, Iraq (1958) severed relations with Taiwan one after another in recognition of the People’s Republic of China. Another wave of countries in the region followed suit in 1971 (Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey).\(^7^4\) By contrast, in the very same year, King Faisal paid

\(^7^3\) External outreach through cultural diplomacy and propaganda work was akin to a survival strategy for Taiwan in international community following the relocation of Republican China to Taipei in 1949. Gary D. Rawnsley, \emph{Taiwan’s Informal Diplomacy and Propaganda} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000). Yanqiu Zheng, “Reorienting Orientalism: The Making of Chinese Cultural Diplomacy in the United States, 1926-1974” (Ph.D dissertation, Northwestern University, 2017).

\(^7^4\) Mohamed Bin Huwaidin, \emph{China’s Relations with Arabia and the Gulf, 1949-1999} (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 99, 104-6. Huwaidin points out that PRC’s establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran and Kuwait was motivated by the fear of growing Soviet influence in the region, especially after the signing of Soviet-Indian and Soviet-Iraqi treaties of friendship (1971, 1972), as well Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the announcement of Brezhnev doctrine and Sino-Soviet border conflicts in 1971.
a visit to Taipei and vetoed the resolution to expel Taiwan from the United Nations.\textsuperscript{75} Saudi Arabia recognized the PRC only in 1990, one of the last countries to do so followed by South Korea in 1992. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, pilgrimage missions to Saudi Arabia offered Taipei a regular means to interact with its staunch ally in the region.

As Taiwan’s pilgrimage delegations arrived in Mecca, present in the city were former activists from Xinjiang who were either residing in the Hejaz or were making pilgrimage visits. Like the years of World War II, pilgrim-diplomats representing the Republican government asserted explicit claims to Xinjiang (East Turkistan) as being a part of China, even as the government was now exiled outside of the mainland. Notwithstanding such overtures, Turkic Muslims formed autonomous transregional spaces of pilgrimage and diplomacy that Taipei’s formal and informal representatives could not access. Sharing the space of Mecca and the language of anti-communist Islamic solidarity, former Turkic Muslim intellectuals and politicians who had sojourned around different parts of East, South and West Asia dispersed to Istanbul and the Hejaz, mobilizing monetary and sentimental support of Central Asian diaspora communities. With the Hejaz as a critical mediating venue, Turkic Muslims formed a conceptual state

\textsuperscript{75} Muhamad S. Olimat, \textit{China and the Middle East since World War II: A Bilateral Approach} (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 34.
of East Turkistan without a territorial state of their own, mobilizing interpersonal ties and propaganda through print media.

It was by riding on intersections of Cold War politics in West Asia and that in East Asia that individuals among dispersed Chinese and Turkic Muslim communities reassembled pilgrimage and diaspora networks into channels of diplomacy and propaganda. Progression of Cold War politics instituted two axes of alliances in both East Asia and West Asia and injected renewed significance to Mecca and Islam as a foreign policy strategy in Saudi Arabia. West Asia in the 1950s and 60s witnessed simmering rivalries between conservative monarchies that had tight economic and military relations with the U.S., most notably Saudi Arabia that formed the main pillar of U.S. presence in the region together with Iran and Israel, and revolutionary socialist regimes that received tacit support of the Soviet Union. Among them, Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser of Egypt and his pan-Arabism attracted widespread popularity, posing a major sense of threat to Saudi leaders. In response, anti-communist, normative Islam served as an important strategic and ideological basis for Saudi Arabia to expand foreign influence and repress internal left-wing movements, especially under King Faisal (r.1964-74). In 1979, growing ties between the Soviet Union and its leftist allies in Afghanistan, the Iranian Revolution, and

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the insurrection in Mecca led by Juhayman ‘Uthaybi further galvanized Saudi attempts to deploy transnational Islamism in controlled ways to manage opponents both at home and abroad.77

In East Asia through the course of World War II (1937-1945), Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) followed by the Korean War (1950-1953), an even clearer split divided bridgeheads of the United States (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) – or what Lisa Yoneyama has termed its “military-security-academic, free market client states”78 – and their regional socialist-communist archrivals (North Korea, People’s Republic of China). Anti-communist rhetoric provided U.S.-allied regimes both a language to frame foreign policy and a violent means to eradicate domestic opponents by branding them as communists.

Both Chinese Muslims affiliated with the Nationalist Party and East Turkistani (Uyghur) activists easily tapped into pilgrimage routes and appeals to Islamic solidarity against communism. For Taiwan, and briefly for the People’s Republic of China in its early years, religious diplomats, pilgrims and translators who had been active in the 1930s and 40s provided accessible points of initial contacts in building relations with

Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{79} In building relations with the Gulf region and West Asia in general, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan adopted tactical and ad-hoc approaches, attempting to satisfy energy needs of the industrializing economies by forging complementary ties with markets in West Asia while piggybacking off infrastructural and security umbrella provided by the U.S.\textsuperscript{80} Religious networks provided channels of second-tier diplomacy that preceded and complemented official inter-state relations. On a related but conflicting front, sharing the space of pilgrimage diplomacy were political exiles from Xinjiang who had accumulated international experiences before the Cold War. Devoted to the cause of East Turkistan’s autonomy, they undertook lobbying, fundraising and circulated publications in places that lay beyond the reach of Beijing – especially in the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and later, Germany and Japan.\textsuperscript{81}

The framework of Islamic solidarity against communist repression, in turn, assisted Chinese and Turkic diaspora communities in Saudi Arabia in conceptually positioning themselves in Saudi society, and at times, prompted some of them who had

had no prior affiliation with Chinese politics to travel to Taipei through the mediation of Saudi religious and educational institutions.

5.1 Reframing Language, Shifting Locations

Muhammad met me in a hotel lobby in Ta’if in 2016, in late morning that followed a late-night wedding. I had gotten in contact with him by tracing a figure named Na Huidong, who made consistent appearances in pilgrimage travelogues that were composed in Taipei between the late 1950s and early 1970s. The pilgrimage accounts described how, in the summer heat, Ningxia person Na Huidong had been driving around between Mecca, Jeddah, and Ta’if to deal with the litigation regarding the lodge house in Mecca that had been built for China’s pilgrims during the 1920s, which we saw in Chapters 1 and 4. He once drove the pilgrim delegates to Ta’if for them to meet the Chinese community; a decade later, he joined another set of pilgrim representatives in Jeddah and in Mecca’s Mount Mina to greet pilgrimage delegations from Taiwan.82

Mentioning the name of Na Huidong, better known as “Na Hajji” among the Sino-Saudi community, led to my meeting with his son, Muhammad.

Muhammad recalled that his father had previously worked with Ma Hongkui, the militarist governor of Ningxia Province whom we saw in Chapter 1. Whereas Ma Hongkui escaped to California following Communist victory and raised horses, Na Hajji moved to Mecca and Ta’if in the 1950s. After escaping from the mainland, he sojourned for two years in Taipei and reached Hong Kong, where he got to know Shams al-Din Gao Wenyuan from Xining (Chapter 4). They decided to depart together to Cairo. Yusuf’s mother was a half-Pakistani person in Hong Kong whom Na Hajji had met during his transit. After undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca from Cairo in 1952, the same year that Yusuf was born, Na Hajji’s family eventually settled in Ta’if, making a living by sewing skull caps and selling clothes like others in the community. Na Hajji passed away in 2013, long after the PRC’s opening-up. However, he never traveled back to mainland China; instead, his uncles and brothers visited him during the pilgrimage season.  

The Chinese community in Ta’if during his father’s times, Muhammad reminisced, were much more tightly knit. Now, many are dispersed across different cities such as Jeddah and Riyadh. Back then, they would sew skullcaps during the day, and after the maghrib (sunset prayers), gather in ribat in Ta’if to participate in religious lessons (halaqāt). One of the two sheikhs who led the sessions was the grandfather of Muhammad’s wife. Muhammad eventually introduced me to his wife Fawzia Bukhari, a

83 Author Interview, Jan 10th 2016, Ta’if
retired middle school teacher in Ta’if. Fawzia and Muhammad drove me around alleyways where the Chinese community had lived in Ta’if, and the “Bukhari” mosque where Fawzia’s grandfather Yusuf ‘Abd al-Rahman used to pray and teach.

Much by luck, following a name in textual records led me to meet living families, which spurred possibilities to connect with more people and uncover flows of persons along the triangular nexus between northwestern China, Mecca, and Taipei. Her grandfather Yusuf, Fawzia told me, had been a scholar from Ningxia who had traveled overland to Mecca. Perhaps it was by mistake, she conjectured, that he obtained the surname “Bukhari,” a catchphrase used by Central Asian migrants in Saudi Arabia to refer to themselves. Her father Ibrahim Yusuf Khan, as far as Fawzia knew, taught as a professor in a university in Taiwan and worked for a while in Indonesia. Fawzia’s mother, on the other hand, was an Egyptian. Due to his early passing and continuous sojourns outside Saudi Arabia, however, Fawzia did not know much about the life of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan let alone his Chinese name. I took down the Chinese names of Ibrahim Yusuf and his father Yusuf by asking an elderly acquaintance in Jeddah and located traces of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan in Taipei during my next trip.

Before laying out the itineraries of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan and the forces that shaped his travels, let us first examine the pilgrimage delegations from Taipei of the 1950s to the 70s, accounts of which led to my encounter with Na Hajji and his son Muhammad. What were the tides of events that precipitated dispatching of pilgrimage representatives from
Taipei to Mecca, and what kinds of encounters unfolded between them and dignitaries and diasporas in the Hejaz?

5.1.1. Diplomatic overtures of Taipei’s Pilgrimage Delegations during the early Cold War Period

In the English language, writings by Ma Kainan, Makio Yamada and Wang Tingyi have illustrated the strong bilateral ties between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. This was aided by large-scale oil export from Saudi Arabia to Taiwan; Taiwan’s agricultural projects in Saudi Arabia; and cultural diplomacy dictated by anti-communist agendas and Islamic pilgrimage delegations, which competed against Beijing’s own outreach to the region. Wang Tingyi has thus described Taiwan’s foreign policy in the Middle East as “limited in scope, but with an emphasis” that placed a particularly strong stress on its ties with Riyadh due to the critical importance of energy necessities. In recent Taiwanese scholarship, besides overviews of the ROC-Arab world relations, several theses have recently focused particularly on the collaboration between

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Taiwan and Saudi Arabia in the agricultural sector during the 1960s and 70s, and on the transformation of the PRC-Saudi diplomatic relations between 1970 and 1990.\textsuperscript{85}

Beneath bilateral relations between the KSA and the ROC were networks of religious diasporas that preceded inter-state relations. The need for newly established states in post-World War II East and West Asia to build relations with one another strengthened, or reorganized, circulations of individuals who could act as diplomatic go-betweens prior to exchanges of official diplomatic agencies. Dispersed across the landscapes of Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and places in between were Chinese Muslim political exiles whose fates had been overturned by the victory of the Communist Party. When the Embassy of Taiwan was established in Jeddah in 1957, serving as the first ambassador was the former Qinghai warlord Hussein Ma Bufang, who had made a return from Cairo to Mecca as the leader of the 1956 pilgrimage delegation of Republican China. If Ma Bufang unexpectedly entered the world of diplomacy as a former militarist, there were writers, scholars, and students who had already served as religious diplomats before the 1950s and continued to play such roles in new locations in the rapidly changing setting of the Cold War. The language of the Islamic world against imperialism,

which had framed their diplomatic travels during World War II, was a conceptual framework that they could modify to target the abstract enemy, now defined as communists.

The first pilgrimage delegation from Taipei to Mecca in 1954 was precipitated by a report submitted by one such person to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jelāl al-Dīn Wang Zengshan. Wang Zengshan, as we recall from Chapter 3, had graduated from Istanbul University, joined the Nationalist Party as a member of the Legislative Assembly, and had headed the extensive Chinese Muslim Goodwill Missions to the Near East almost immediately after Japanese aggression in China in 1937. With the victory of the Communist Party, he escaped from Urumqi where he had briefly worked as a Minister of Civil Affairs of the Xinjiang Provincial Government. He was now based in Karachi with his family, where he worked at Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations as a teacher and translator for the Chinese language. Wang still kept affiliation with the Nationalist Party from afar, directing relief funds from Taipei to Xinjiang refugees in Karachi and submitting reports on ongoing affairs in Pakistan.86

Wang’s briefings were urgent messages that elaborated on the PRC’s recent propaganda activities in the Middle East. He explained the major strategies that Beijing had used since 1952 to approach the Middle East and the Islamic world, in order to gain

86 With increasing pressure from Pakistan that had recognized the People’s Republic of China in 1951, Wang Zengshan relocated to Istanbul as a professor of Chinese Studies in 1956. The previous year, he had attended the International Assembly of Muslim Youth in Karachi as a representative of the ROC.
international recognition and to increase its allies. These included: showcasing the well-being of Muslim populations in China by distributing English periodicals and designating “so-called Muslim autonomy districts” while “confining their movement within mainland China and trapping them in a state of deep distress.” Starting in August 1953, according to Wang Zengshan, Communist China’s Embassy in Pakistan started inviting “Arab professors,” one by the name of Mohammed al-Jamali, who assumed the position as a professor of Arabic in Beijing and took charge of composing Arabic-language propaganda materials.87

A grave concern, he added, was that Egypt, which had a strong presence in the Arab League, was on the verge of turning towards Communist China in search of new markets for its cotton. Through the Soviet Embassy in Cairo as a medium, Communist China was about to agree on a deal through which it would regularly purchase Egyptian cotton at a fixed rate, the first batch priced at 11 million pounds.88 Settlement of negotiations was imminent, Wang wrote, as the Egyptian trade delegation, after stopping by Taipei, had already visited India and Pakistan, and was now headed for mainland China. During that very month at the time of the report’s writing, he further pointed out,

the Arab League conference was expected to discuss the issue of whether to officially recognize Beijing’s Communist China.\(^8^9\) Already in 1952, the PRC had attempted dispatching a pilgrimage delegation headed by Da Pusheng, the scholar-entrepreneur who had been based in Shanghai, which had stopped midway in Pakistan due to failure to obtain entry visa to Saudi Arabia.

In the face of diplomatic battles in West Asia that were to unfold, an idea similar to that proposed during World War II emerges clearly in Wang’s suggestion. Strengthening ties with the Islamic world through “people’s diplomacy,” this time against communism rather than Japanese imperialism, was the essential step for Taipei. Wang’s follow-up list of suggestions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs included: substantiating already existing friendly relations between countries in the Islamic world (回教世界) by working in utmost capacity to establish embassies and consulates; gaining sympathies of the Islamic countries towards “Free China” through people-to-people diplomacy and thereby obliterating Communist bandits’ activities through the mediation of the Chinese Islamic Association; appointing a Muslim roving ambassador who would frequently circulate Muslim countries from his base, and who, using religious sentiments (用宗教感情) and diplomatic mechanisms, would make speeches and form connections that would propagandize progress in Free China. Persons

\(^{89}\) “Juyu Zhonggong chaosheng tuanti qianzheng; Zhu Sha dashiguang zhoubao,” 27-29.
participating in world Islamic conferences, on their part, would need to reach out to the “overseas Chinese” (huaqiao 华僑) and propagandize anti-communist and anti-Russian agendas, and publicize Free China’s developments in aspects of party politics, military, finance, democracy and land reforms.\textsuperscript{90}

Four months after the writing of Wang’s report, five persons headed the “Republic of China’s Islamic Pilgrimage Delegation.” They received full support from Taiwan’s Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Interior Affairs. Heading this 1954 missions in the heat of July was Yulbars Khan, a former Uyghur general who had allied with the Nationalist Party, who now served Chairman of the Office for the Chairman of the Xinjiang Provincial Government in Taipei.\textsuperscript{91} Delegations members were reported to be versatile in foreign languages of Arabic, English, French, and Turkish, and healthy enough to endure the hot weather during the pilgrimage. One of the six members, for instance, was Wang Shiming, a graduate of al-Azhar University who worked as the Vice Consul of the seasonal Consulate in Jeddah until it shut down in 1949.

The aims of the delegation to Mecca was in three-folds, all of which were related: 1) countering Chinese and Russian communist forces through propaganda work; 2) 

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 28-29.

“comforting” Xinjiang and “northwestern China” (xibei 西北) residents in West Asia (yaxi 亞西); 3) making anti-communist connections around the world. They first proceeded to Cairo, where they met dignitaries such as Amīn Hussēin the Mufti of Palestine, the Secretary of the Arab League (“Hassan”), the Minister of Ministry of Religion and Awaqāf, and the President Mohamed Naguib, to whom they passed on the letter from Chiang Kaishek. The members, however, had to cut short their propaganda activities in Egypt from 23 days to 11 days, due to what they described as marginalization of religious personalities in Egypt that reduced their enthusiasm about outside visitors. They headed to Mecca on 6 August, and the next day, started performing the pilgrimage.

Mecca offered a meeting ground for different groups of Chinese Muslim diasporas who had begun new livelihoods in places outside mainland China after escaping from Communist victory. Yulbars Khan’s delegation, for example, reported meeting nine pilgrims who were originally from Yunnan but were now residing in northern Burma and Thailand. Also joining them were “siblings sojourning abroad” (qiaobao 僑胞) in Saudi Arabia, who had originally been from the Gansu-Qinghai-Ningxia region, numbering about forty. This number, the report made sure to note, did not include “compatriots from Xinjiang” (Xinjiang qiaobao 新疆僑胞). As Yulbars Khan’s delegation stressed, “although the numbers [of overseas Chinese] were not many,

92 “Juyu Zhonggong chaosheng tuanti qianzheng; Zhu Sha dashiguan zhoubao,” 96.
the need to uphold our country united our minds.” The report noted the assistance of a
“Chinese emigrant in Mecca (yu Maijia qiaomin 於麥加僑民)” named Hajji Jin Zhiyuan
金志元, and the pilgrimage guide Hasan Subhani. Owing to their support, the
delegation was able to display the national flag (of the Republic of China) “at the highest
point of the Arafat Mountain, and show [it] to the 400,000 pilgrims gathered from around
the world.” By contrast, the “Hui traitors” from Tibet who were dispatched by the
“bandits” (feiwei suo paiqian zhi Xizang huijian 匪偽所派遣之西藏回奸) were “too
awed by fear at the face of our country’s flag to dare to publicly undertake any
activities,” as did the twenty-one pilgrims sent by “Red Russia.” In the heat of August, a
member of the delegation reportedly passed on propaganda materials to the tents where
Pakistan’s Prime Minister Muhammad Ali and Egypt’s Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser were
staying.93

A copy of the pamphlet that seems to have circulated in the Hejaz is now kept in
an archive in Riyadh. Its contents again illustrate the refashioning of the idea of the
Islamic world against imperialism, the rhetoric we observed in Chapter 3, into one
against communism that now came to signify a shared enemy. It starts with the grave
statement:

From the hajj delegation and Muslim brothers of the Republic of China to the
pilgrims of the House of God of Haram, and Islamic delegations that have left
their homes to emigrate near the God and his Prophet, in search of reward and in

93 Ibid., 142.
desire of recompense. And to all Muslims who are ardent about their religion, concerned about the creed and are working to raise the flag of Islam and uphold the word ‘Muslims.’ And to all who are overjoyed by the tones of jihad and who pave the way for good work and honest struggle, we convey the news about mujāhidīn, and promote knowledge of those struggling in the various parts of China.  

The next pages are replete with statements about the repression of Islam in communist China, incompatibility of Islam with communism, and the need for Muslims worldwide and umma to come together as “a unified body” to resist communism. Again, the abstract concept of the united Muslim world, at the center of which lied Mecca, could be appropriated according to changing contexts and manifest in different forms as a rhetorical device to frame the travels of Chinese Muslim pilgrimage missions. For the next two decades, pilgrimage delegations from Taipei continuously emphasized the trope of their successful anti-communist propaganda towards Muslims worldwide and of patriotism of the Chinese Muslim diaspora community in the Hejaz.

While reminiscent of the argument of anti-communist mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union two decades later in 1979, in the absence of actual armed conflict, the idea of united Muslim front against communist forces was used to facilitate diplomatic exchanges between the Republic of China and Saudi Arabia. While

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spreading the rhetoric of struggle of universal Islam against communism, Yulbars Khan’s
degregation simultaneously initiated contacts with the high echelons of the Saudi
leadership, and in fact, kept analytical views on the potential of Saudi Arabia as a stable
ally of Taiwan. During their meeting with King Sa’ud in his palace in Jeddah on the
morning of 14 August, the delegation passed on the letter from Chiang Kaishek to the
King, which was recited out loud, at which the King reportedly expressed his happiness
and conveyed his regards to the President.\footnote{“Juyu Zhonggong chaosheng tuanti qianzheng; Zhu Sha dashiguan zhoubao,” 143.}
Following the meeting with the King was
that with Prince Faisal, the Minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegate Ma
Fuliang (馬賦良) pitched his case towards the Prince.\footnote{In 1939, Ma Fuliang had once accompanied Isa Alptekin on 1939 pilgrimage missions during World War II.} He explained that since four years ago when China’s vice consulate in Jeddah had closed down, the Kingdom’s “protection” of China’s “sojourning subjects” (qiaomin 僑民) was mostly appreciated [on the part of Taiwan]. Constructing Taiwan, on the other hand, was advancing leaps and bounds (Taiwan jianshe mengjin 台灣建設猛進), and a counter-offensive [against Communist China] was soon to materialize (fangong zaiwang 反攻在望).

In his “personal capacity,” (benren jin yi siren zige 本人謹以私人資格), Ma
Fuliang carefully inquired on the Prince’s thoughts on the possibility of recovering
diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Taiwan on ambassadorial level. The
Prince agreed on such a possibility any time in the future and asked that if China (Taiwan) was willing, the delegation could make a suggestion to the government upon return and officially dispatch a person to initiate the talks. The figures whom the delegation met following their encounter with Prince Faisal included Minister of Finance ‘Abdullah Suleiman who had worked in the Ministry for thirty-five years; Prince ‘Abdullah Faisal (eldest son of Prince Faisal), the Minister of Ministry of Interiors; and Sheikh Mohammed Surūr al-Sabān (1898-1971) at his private residence. The report described him as a scholar of Sudan origin who receives respect throughout the Islamic world, a diplomat, and a figure deeply trusted by the King. In later years, al-Sabān would continue his relations with pilgrimage delegations from Taipei as the first Secretary-General of the World Muslim League (established in 1962), and as the second Minister of Finance. In their meetings, the pilgrim delegates consistently pounded on the “schemes of communist bandits, oppression of Muslims in China” and gratitude towards Saudi Arabia for its hospitable treatment of Chinese populations settled in the country.

Without the tangible presence of diplomatic institutions of China in Saudi Arabia or vice versa, interactions between the states unfolded through sojourning religious

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97 Ibid., 144. A prominent writer, poet, publisher, statesman and economist, Mohammed Sourour al-Saban had been born in Qunfodah and raised in Mecca. It has been claimed that he has Somali origins. Muhammad Hussēin Mu’alim ‘Alī (Mohammad Hussein Moulam Ali), "‘abāqira Lahum ‘usūl Fi Miṣṭaqah al-Qarn al-Ifrīqī (Geniuses Have Their Origins in the Region of Horn of Africa)" (Mogadishu Center for Research and Studies, September 4, 2014. Access to the article: http://bit.ly/32cwfR6)
representatives. Just before departure, they visited the King Saud again to bid farewell, at which the King granted full set of clothing to Yulbars Khan, and to every pilgrim delegate, a golden watch, a knife, and a set of clothing and a wristwatch. The 1954 report itself concluded that despite the pilgrimage delegation’s shortcomings, it took “console in the fact that under the name of private organization and without assistance from an embassy or a consulate, [we] were able to constantly and freely undertake [our] agendas according to plans.” The summary of their conversation with Prince Faisal on the potential establishment of the Embassy was cropped out and forwarded to different agencies.

Prior to the establishment of the Republic of China’s Embassy in Jeddah in 1957, these pilgrimage missions provided channels for the exiled government in Taipei to resume forging interstate relations with potential allies in West Asia and to gather information about future directions on the region. While framing the relations between Saudi Arabia and the Republic of China under the banner of anti-communist Islamic solidarity, the 1956 delegation led by the former Qinghai Governor Ma Bufang, for instance, was sharply strategic. Accompanying Ma Bufang was Xiong Zhenzong (熊振宗 1914-1962), a former imam of Canton’s Huaisheng mosque who had studied in al-Azhar University in Cairo, and now served as the imam of Taipei’s Central Mosque. Xiong wrote in his report that while Saudi had two-sided approach in its external relations, one characterized by military alliance with Egypt and another by economic alliance with the United States, in cases of instability such as its falling out with Egypt, Saudi would be
pressed to gravitate towards the United States due to its economic interests. He thus proposed that Taiwan build relations with Saudi Arabia based on commercial and cultural collaborations. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia as the protector of the holy cities was predicted to continue to have a leading spiritual role amongst Islamic countries worldwide, and as such, would be necessitated to not recognize “communist bandits.”

It should be noted that the PRC, after it is founding, also briefly utilized religious networks to organize contacts with dignitaries in Saudi Arabia, a tactic that it used again in the 1980s in the absence of official diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. Ironically, some of the most influential pilgrims and translators who assisted the Communist Party’s initial outreach to states in West Asia during the first few years of its establishment were Muslim political representatives who had had worked with the Nationalist Party.

Heading the first pilgrimage mission from Beijing in 1955, for instance, was the former entrepreneur and scholar Imam Da Pusheng (達浦生 1874-1965), who, as we saw in earlier chapters, had founded the Islamic Teachers School in Shanghai and headed anti-Japanese Islamic pilgrimage missions during World War II. Da Pusheng had now

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99 The first pilgrimage missions that received official endorsement by the Communist Party set out to Mecca in 1952, yet could not proceed from Karachi to Mecca as they were denied visa from the Saudi Embassy in Pakistan, which warned the delegation against conducting communist propaganda in Saudi Arabia. “Chinese Islamic Delegation’s Visit to Pakistan,” 1952, British Foreign Office Files, FO 371/999367.
become the Vice Chairman of the Chinese Islamic Association that was founded in Beijing in 1952. In 1955, pilgrimage delegation from Beijing led by Da Pusheng, successfully reached Mecca, possibly due to Zhou Enlai’s repeated requests to then-Crown Prince Faisal to grant visas to pilgrims from mainland China when the two figures met during the Bandung Conference.100

According to Da Pusheng’s account, the delegation received “great respect” in Saudi Arabia and forged contacts with other state representatives.101 In Mecca, they were invited to the King’s reception, attended by four hundred pilgrimage delegation leaders. Among them were Prime Minister Sukarno from Indonesia and high officials from different countries. Saudi Arabian government invited all “Chinese Pilgrimage Missions” members and arranged seats for all of them on Mount Mina despite the limited number of seats. They also met and presented gifts to the King and Ministers of Ministries of Interior and Finance, and each received a set of Arab clothing from the King. In Mecca, the delegation also participated in “a tea reception held by overseas Indonesians to


101 Da Pusheng recounted that the nineteen members of the delegation were composed of Hui, Uighur and Dongxiang Muslims from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xinjiang, Gansu, Yunnan, Shandong, Qinghai and Hebei, some of them imams, students, elderly figures (xianglao 鄉老) and professors. The delegation also visited Egypt, Pakistan and India after performing the pilgrimage. Da Pusheng, Nur Muhammad, “Pilgrimage to Mecca (Majia Chaosheng 麥加朝聖),” in Alabo Yinxiangji 阿拉伯印象記, ed. Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe 世界知識出版社 (Beijing: Beijing Xinhua Yinshuachang 新化印刷廠, 1958), 101-104, 101. The article had originally been published in the journal “Shijie Zhishi 世界知識,” vol. 2, 1956.
welcome Prime Minister Sukarno” and a tea reception held by Egyptian official
pilgrimage delegation. They passed on publications by the Chinese Islamic Association
and copies of the Quran and introduced in Arabic the situation of Muslims in China
through the Saudi media in the form of answering reporters’ questions. Finally, they
donated 10,000 riyals for the impoverished Muslims in Saudi Arabia, entrusted by the
Chinese Islamic Association.102 On the way back, the delegation visited Egypt, spent two
weeks in Pakistan, and stopped by in India.103 The next year in 1956, the pilgrimage
delegation headed by Burhan Shahidi reported encountering similarly welcoming
reception in Mecca. Trickles of pilgrimage delegations from Beijing would arrive in
Mecca until the early 1960s, be completely severed during the Cultural Revolution, and
resume in 1979.

We see from these pilgrimage delegations during the early years of the Cold War
how Chinese Muslim political figures, some of whom were former warlords and others
scholar-politicians, rearranged their religious and political nexus in a setting that was
radically transformed. The strengthening of ties between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia as
allies of the U.S. – and as parties seeking to diversify relations outside its orbit –
stimulated circulations of religious diplomatic figures. These were the persons who acted

102 Ibid., 104.
103 “Woguo Daibiaotuan Zai Guowai de Huodong (Our Country’s Delegation’s Activities Abroad 我國代表團在國外的活動),” People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao 人民日報), September 14, 1955. A number of similar newspaper articles were published in the same year.
as carriers of messages and information between state authorities prior to exchanges of embassies, and attempted to win the support of diaspora populations in Saudi Arabia whom they regarded as being affiliated with China. The channels of religious diplomacy between Mecca and Taipei drew in actors had been positioned outside the immediate network of dispersed Chinese Muslim political circles. One of them, as we will see below, was Ibrahim Yusuf Khan.

5.2 From Pilgrim Settlers to Diplomats

As mentioned in the previous section, my identification of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan in Taipei’s records had been prompted by a reading of pilgrimage travelogues from Taipei, and conversations with descendants of the individuals who appeared in the texts as overseas Chinese in Saudi Arabia. Ibrahim Yusuf Khan, also known as Ma Jixiang 馬吉祥, had left trails in Taipei. His obituary was published in Taipei’s Islamic periodical in 1988, written by Badr al-Dīn Hai Weiliang, a scholar-diplomat who had spent twenty years in Jeddah as a Secretary at the Taiwanese Embassy in Jeddah and retired to Taipei.

The obituary outlined the course of his birth, death, and itineraries of travel that had been modulated by state institutions. Born in Ningxia’s Helan County Qingshuibao (賀蘭縣清水鮑) in 1933 or 34 as the eldest of nine siblings, Ibrahim Yusuf Khan made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1946 with his whole family. With the victory of Communist China, rather than returning, they permanently settled in Mecca by engaging in commerce
for a living (*jingshang* 經商). As his father Yusuf had been particularly concerned about
the children’s education, his eldest son Ibrahim attended elementary to high school in
Mecca and entered the law department at Riyadh University (established in 1957 as King
Saud University). He also studied in Cairo’s al-Azhar University for two years, and upon
return, became an employee at the Ministry of Education.\(^{104}\)

When Ibrahim made the trip to China two decades later, it was not to his father’s
home province Ningxia, but to Taipei, through the mediation of the Ministry of
Education and recommendation from the World Muslim League,\(^{105}\) which, as we will see
later in the chapter, had been established in 1962 in Mecca as a religious diplomatic
institution. According to Badr al-Dīn Hai Weiliang, as relations between Saudi Arabia
and Taiwan tightened, in order to promote cultural exchanges, Ibrahim was appointed to
head out to Taiwan to teach Arabic at the Faculty of Oriental Language and Literature at
Taipei’s Chengchi University in 1969. The next year, the World Muslim League obtained
approval from the Department of Education and recommended Ibrahim as the Imam of
the Taipei mosque, a position he served for five years. In 1976, he was called back to
Saudi Arabia and was dispatched to Southeast Asia for religious propagation. While

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104 Hai Weiliang (海维凉), “Ma Jixiang Aheng Shilüe (A Brief Biography of Imam Ma Jixiang 馬吉祥阿

105 In an announcement in 1970, the periodical of Chinese Muslim Association in Taipei relayed the news
that “Hajji Ibrahim Yusuf Khan (Chi-hsiang Ma), in response to the recommendation of MWL, has been
appointed as Imam of Taipei Mosque.” “Ten Important Events for Chinese Muslem in 1969,” *Zhongguo
working, he also enrolled in a university in Jakarta and obtained a doctorate degree in law. After returning to Saudi, he was sent to North Africa; but in 1988, he ran into an unfortunate car accident in Morocco and met an untimely death at the age of 56. The news shocked the community of Muslims in Taipei, and a prayer gathering was held after the jum’a on 8 August.

The career of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan shows how internal formalization of education and religious diplomacy, and external changes in inter-state relations, drew in portions of diaspora community in Saudi Arabia to become diplomatic agents as parts of state institutions. His father Yusuf, or Ma Ziliang (馬子良) was a scholar who had not had prior political affiliations with the Nationalist Party. In a survey of Lhasa’s Muslim community, Yusuf Ma Ziliang is described as an Imam (Ahong) from Ningxia who taught in Lhasa’s Small Mosque for two to three years and later moved to Saudi Arabia. He raised a dozen disciples, one of whom encountered him during his own pilgrimage to Mecca in 1957. Whereas Yusuf most likely undertook the travels along the older routes of pilgrimage and scholarship through Tibet, the course of his son Ibrahim Yusuf’s posts and travels unfolded in the space arranged by the World Muslim League and the Ministry of Education that absorbed diaspora populations in the Hejaz in the

course of a generation shift. A turn of events changed the directions, shape, character, and mechanics of mobility.

Ibrahim Yusuf Khan himself had composed a short text his sojourn in Taipei, as a representative of Saudi Arabia. The visit of King Faisal to Taipei in 1971, a landmark event for the development of bilateral relations between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia, prompted Ibrahim Yusuf to publish a short booklet on the general history of Saudi Arabia and the various programs implemented under King Faisal. As he noted in the Arabic preface, he had been sent by the Kingdom, “to proceed on the path with children of Chinese brothers towards the desired end in the fields of da’wah and education.”\textsuperscript{107} He was thus working as a language teacher at Chengchi University and as an Imam of the Taipei mosque. More than serving the sectors of language and Islamic education, he wanted his position to extend to the “general domain of cultures.” Publications and books, he believed, was a way to “open windows of thought between the two peoples.”\textsuperscript{108} The book, written in Chinese, was a result of such reflection.

\textsuperscript{107} Ma Jixiang Ibrahim Yusuf Khan, Sawudi Alabo Wangguo Yu Feisaier Guowang Zhi Jieshao / المملكة العربية السعودية و سيرة جلالته الملك فيصل بن عبدالعزيز السعود.. في سطور (Taipei: Taibei Qingzhensi, Saudi Arabia Embassy, 1971), 5.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 5.
Figure 26 Cover page of Introducing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and His Majesty King Faisal (1971), Ibrahim Yusuf Khan/ Ma Jixiang

As an official representative of Saudi Arabia who had spent most of his life in the Hejaz, Ibrahim Yusuf seems to have made extra efforts to adjust to Taipei. He added in the Chinese version of the preface that when he had first come to Taiwan four years ago, because he had no foundation in the Chinese language, he had to carry out his responsibilities while being unsure whether meanings were conveyed. Because he
thought that linguistic tools were essential for successfully publicizing a culture (*dacheng xuanyang yizhong wenhua* 達成宣揚一種文化), he studied the Chinese language day and night. With the language thus learned, the purpose of writing the book in Chinese was to introduce to the people of the Republic of China the past and present of Saudi Arabia, and King Faisal, whose visit, though short, carried profound implications for collaborations between the two countries in various areas.\(^\text{109}\)

When I returned to Ta’if for the second time next year, I brought with me the obituary of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan written by Badr al-Din Hai Weiliang, which opened doors to Fawzia’s home. Surrounded by the family, I read out a shortened, translated version of the obituary. Fawzia and Muhammad then showed me the few documents of their keeping – a Sino-Arabic dictionary that Muhammad’s father Na Hajji had kept in Ta’if. The dictionary had first been published in 1934 and republished in 1952 by Beijing’s Qingzhen Publisher.\(^\text{110}\) Also in the couple’s possession was a plaque of gratitude to Ibrahim Yusuf Khan from students at the Department of Oriental Language and Cultures at National Chengchi University in Taipei, and a letter of appreciation by Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association based in Jakarta.

\(^\text{109}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^\text{110}\) The original version, Elias Modern Arabic-English dictionary, had been printed in Cairo through the Elias Modern Publishing House. Wang Jingzhai, a Beijing-based Imam from Tianjin, had utilized the dictionary to print an Arabic-Chinese version.
Figure 27 Cover page of Sino-Arabic dictionary, translated by Wang Jingzhai
Figure 28 Appreciation letter from “Indonesian Chinese Moslem Association” to Ibrahim Yusuf Khan, Jakarta
A series of textual and personal encounters back and forth Saudi Arabia and Taiwan, therefore, led me to piece together his mobility between Saudi Arabia and Taiwan as a cultural diplomat. Changed international relations during the Cold War impacted diasporas in the Hejaz on most personal level, not only severing ties to old homelands but instigating new connections between existing settlers and newcomers and directing their travels to Taipei. For this reason, going back and forth textual and personal encounters uncovered trails of Ibrahim Yusuf Khan as a cultural diplomat.

5.3 East Turkistan Networks and the World Muslim League

If Chinese Muslim settlers in Taiwan and Saudi Arabia became parts of the two states’ institutions as cultural or religious diplomats, for Turkic Muslims exiled from China, mobilizing diaspora networks through the symbol of Mecca and the geographies interconnected with the city meant claiming sovereignty of a state that no longer existed in territorial reality. Linkages between diaspora, diplomacy, and statehood were inseparable for leaders claiming for independence of East Turkistan outside its very geography.

Chinese Muslim pilgrimage missions kept a sustained interest in undertaking outreach to the community of settlers from Xinjiang in the Hejaz especially during the early years of the Cold War. Yet, many of them had already been pulled into a different circle of emigres who upheld the sovereignty of “East Turkistan” in domains outside territorial Xinjiang. Ma Huanwen (馬煥文), who had been a part of Ma Bufang’s
pilgrimage delegation in 1956 and once again led the 1966 a decade later, wrote his thoughts in travelogue. He noted that escapees in Xinjiang in not only Arabia but in other places were blaming the whole government and the country for the sufferings that people in Xinjiang had undergone under the rule of Yang Zengxin and Sheng Shicai, the regional governors who had presided over the province. The government of Arabia, on its part, regarded them as equals (tongren 同仁) based on the convention that “there exists religion, no categorical division” (‘youjiao wulei’ guanli 有教無類慣例). In his view, emigrants from Xinjiang in Arabia were “stably settled, and continued livelihoods under an environment that is suitable for religious faith and way of life (zai shihe tamende zongjiao xinyang ji shenghuo huanjingxia anju xialai 在適合他們的宗教信仰及生活環境下安居下來).” As “Chinese people are patient and diligent, and Xinjiang people are no exception (zhongguoren qinjiannailao de xixing, Xinjiang ren ye bu liwai 中国人勤儉耐勞的習性，新疆人也不例外),” over the years, they accumulated considerable economic foundation.

A part of them, he observed, had received education, and occupied various positions in Saudi governmental and administrative institutions – some even rising to the position of police officer, prison guard, transmitter-receiver (diantai 電臺), and tax collectors. The same held true, he noted, for settlers from Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai. Saudi government held a good impression towards Xinjiang sojourner-settlers who were
serving [the government] (*fuwu ji qiaoju de Xinjiang ren* 服務及僑居的新疆人).

However, he added, “these Xinjiang people in recent years have very little interaction with our Embassy,” and emphasized the need to attract them to “come return to the bosom of the home country, and together fight to achieve the great cause of recovering the country (*shi tamen chonghui zuguo de huaibao, gongtong zhili kangbao fuguode daye* 使他們重回祖國的懷抱, 共同致力抗暴復國的大業).”

Contrary to the Taipei government’s rhetorical claims to Xinjiang as a part of China, and its pilgrimage delegations’ designation of Xinjiang settlers as a part of the Chinese diaspora, the Hejaz and the World Muslim League functioned as a stronghold for diasporic activists who rallied support for East Turkistan’s independence. Most influential and respected of them was Isa Yusuf Alptekin, who throughout his lifetime pushed for economic and cultural autonomy of Xinjiang through political lobbying and active involvement in the print industry. Born in 1901 Yengisar County of Kashgar in western Xinjiang, Alptekin throughout the 1930s and 40s continuously juggled between the central government and regional provincial autonomy within it, while simultaneously building external connections. His position as the representative of East Turkistan thus

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111 Ma Huanwen (馬煥文), *Xixing Sanji (Jottings on Journey Westwards 西行散記)* (Taipei: Huijiao wenhuashe, Rongmin Yinshuachang, 1966), 11.
112 Linda Benson, “Uygur Politicians of the 1940s: Mehmet Emin Bugra, Isa Yusuf Alptekin and Mesut Sabri,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (January 1, 1991): 87–104. Alptekin had been born as a son of a local official, and received religious education in his youth. However, pressured by Chinese authorities to transfer to a Chinese school, he spent six years in Andijan under Soviet Central Asia for six years where he
extended back to the inter-war years when he had led the First East Turkestan Republic (1933-34) and attempted negotiating with the Nationalist Party on Xinjiang’s autonomy, onto World War II. As he carried strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist sentiments, Alptekin was briefly appointed by the Nationalist Party as the delegate to the National People’s Assembly in Nanjing (1946) and Secretary-General of the Xinjiang Province (1947) in the post-World War II years. With Communist victory, however, Alptekin escaped from Urumqi to Kashmir through Ladakh with several hundred others and settled in Istanbul. Alptekin henceforth turned Istanbul into a center for publishing books and periodicals such as Türkistan (Turkestan), Türkistan’in Sesi (Voice of Turkestan) and Doğu Türkistan’in Sesi (Voice of Eastern Turkestan).

With Istanbul as a pivotal center, proponents of East Turkistan found in the Hejaz patrons among the robust Central Asian community, many of whom had experienced brutal wars and repression back home, while connecting with religiopolitical dignitaries learned Russian. After returning, he worked as a tax collector and as a teacher of Turkish in a Chinese school.

Ibid., 92.

in the Hejaz. The same year that the Embassy of the Republic of China was established in Jeddah in 1957 with Hussein Ma Bufang as the ambassador, the state newspaper Umm al-Qurā published a letter of appreciation from Isa Yusuf Alptekin to King Saud. The article explained that Altepkin had come to Mecca during the pilgrimage season in 1957 as the representative of the East Turkistan liberation movement. He had “already broadcast the cruel conditions inside the Islamic country.” His letter, printed on the newspaper upon his request, further expressed his “gratitude to God at having joined the gathering of Muslims during the hajj, [where he could] publicize the situation of Turkistani brothers to those gathered.” Much of the letter was devoted to thanking the late King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl-Sa‘ūd and his successor King Sa’ud, who had stood at the “forefront of alleviating the pains of Turkistan’s muhājirīn.”

Saudi government, Alptekin continued, “was the pioneer among Islamic countries in providing accommodation for Turkestanis, welcoming them and assisting them with all the support they could provide, and making it easier for them to reside in the secure and blessed country.” Turkistani muhājirīn, thanks to the care of the Kings, and as residents (muwāṭīnīn) of the country, were living stable livelihoods with freedom to work, also enrolling in Saudi schools and becoming governmental employees. The royal goodwill clearly indicated, Altepkin wrote, that the Majesties were “not only protectors of the
Haramayn and the Arabs, but all of Muslims.”  

Alptekin was, then, “recording words of gratitude that fills every heart of Turkestan people.”

For the next three decades or so, Isa Alptekin was able to garner the support and sympathies of the settlers from Central Asia in Saudi Arabia and present the issue to the World Muslim League, forging a space that the government in Taipei or its Muslim representatives could not penetrate. Though drawing strong alarm from Taiwan, supporters of the cause were more or less free to do what they aimed in the Hejaz, as long as they did not pose a threat to the Saudi regime itself. Furthermore, the anti-communist language laid out by representatives of East Turkestan dovetailed well with Saudi turn against Egypt and the Soviet Union that followed the rise of Nasser and revolutionary republics in the region, and its robust friendship with the United States.

116 أن جلالته ليس حاميا للحرميين والعروبة فحسب انا حاميا للمسلمين جميعا
117 “Ra’is Markaz al-Kifāḥ Li-Taḥrīr al-Turkistān al-Sharqīyyah Yashkur Jīlālah al-Malik (Central Leader of the Struggle for Liberation of East Turkistan Expresses Gratitude to His Majesty the King)” Umm Al-Qurā, July 26, 1957.
118 An activist with ROC passport based in Saudi Arabia, for instance, raised thousands of Saudi riyals in 1972 to support the journey of a representative of independent East Turkistan sent by Isa Yusuf Altepkin to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He also congregated with other independence advocates during the pilgrimage season, to appeal to world’s Muslims to pray for Muslims in Xinjiang under Communist China. Despite protests from the Republic of China through its Embassy, the Saudi government did not actively intervene in the matter; ROC’s request to Saudi Arabia to oust the said activist from Saudi territories was also sidelined. Mitsumaya Hirayama (平山光将), “Bianzheng Huo Qiaowu? Zhonghua Minguo Zhengfu Qiantaihou Dui Zhongdong Diqu Xibei Musilin Nanminde Zhengce” (Border governance or overseas Chinese affairs? Republic of China government's policies towards Muslim refugees from northwest China in the Middle East following its relocation to Taiwan) Paper presented at Academia Sinica Institute of Modern History Academic Seminar, July 2014), 23.
Exiled Turkic Muslim independence fighters who had sojourned around dispersed places across Asia in the first half of the twentieth century piggybacked off the establishment of the World Muslim League to publicize the cause of East Turkistan. The World Muslim League, founded in Mecca in 1962, has been portrayed as an organ of pan-Islamism of Saudi Arabia against secularism, communism, and Nasser’s pan-Arabism. Together with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the League in the 1970s acted as a platform through which Saudi Arabia increased its presence in the Islamic world by using its position as guardians of the holy cities and the oil wealth that flowed in, giving the impression that “identifying with this Muslim world offered protection against secular and socialist threats from within the Arab world.” The role of the World Muslim League in facilitating the flows of mujāhidīn fighters from the Hejaz to Afghanistan in the 1980s has also been noted.

Yet, from the perspective of both Turkic and Chinese Muslims positioned outside mainland China during the Cold War, the World Muslim League represented one of the most reliable international platforms to propagandize the idea of sovereign, independent state of East Turkistan, or that of the Republic of China.

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Thomas Hegghammer has noted the role of print media in encouraging travels of mujahideen fighters. The League also funded the studies of ‘Abdullah Azzam, the critical theologian and scholar for mobilization of mujahideen, in International Islamic University of Islamabad. The League’s branch in Peshwar also facilitated the movements of fighters. Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 573–77 (kindle location).
As we saw in Chapter 3, networks of exile intellectuals from Central Asia and geopolitical interests of imperial Japan had converged to direct circulations of independence activists between Japan, the Hejaz, and Central Asia. In the post-World War II order, individuals who had been a part of these circles relocated to the Hejaz, and forged linkages between the preexisting Turkistani muhājirīn community in Saudi Arabia; dignitaries of the World Muslim League on the one side; and representatives of exile government of East Turkistan.

One such figure was Muhammad Amin Islami from Yarkand, a writer, activist, and affiliate of the World Muslim League who settled in Jeddah in 1956. Muhammad Amin Islami initially emerged from my coincidental conversations with a portion of the “Bukhari” community in Jeddah. By chance, two persons whose families traced their origins to the eastern part of Xinjiang introduced me to their friend Yusuf, an elderly Chinese Muslim man who had migrated to Mecca and Cairo with Hussein Ma Bufang in 1949. All of us met in a large conference room in the company Xenel in Jeddah. Yusuf quickly narrated the familiar story of escaping from mainland China through Hong Kong by airplane, of moving to Cairo in search of more vibrant lives, and of moving back to

121 Xenel is a company in Jeddah that engages in multiple fields of energy, construction, healthcare, real estate and global investing, the root of which goes back to the family enterprise House of Alireza (founded by Zainal Alireza in 1845) that had imported foodstuff and textiles from India.
Saudi Arabia with the rise of socialism in Egypt and its recognition of the PRC. He had been only two years old when the family left China.

Yusuf hurriedly took off, and the two persons who introduced me – Majed and Tariq – told me their own stories about the “Bukhari” or “Turkistani” community in Saudi Arabia. Tariq described himself as the great-grandson of Yaqub Beg, a general from Khoqand who had established the short-lived sultanate in Kashgar in the 1870s. He recounted that the cousin of Yaqoub Beg had come to Mecca about a century and a half ago to establish a waqf, now demolished, where his grandfather, father, and he himself were born. The money that had come through the waqf was used to establish four to five more awqāf in Mecca. His mother, on the other hand, was a Sindhi, whose family had arrived even earlier than his father’s side of the family. His extended family was now dispersed between Riyadh and Jeddah. The previous generation had formed a tightly knit community, to the extent that they could recite which house was next to which, and children guided visitors by the name of the person living in a house. The community was now scattered, and most had lost the Uyghur language.

Majed, on the other hand, was the son of Muhammad Amin Islami from Yarkand. I learned from Majed that his father, before coming to Saudi Arabia, had served as an Imam in Tokyo. Muhammad Amin Islami, like Hussein Ma Bufang and those who migrated with him, had not been satisfied with the life in Mecca and Jeddah. He had already been accustomed to city life in Tokyo, which had electricity and modern conveniences. He hence moved to Cairo, made investments in Egypt, and also made
donations to the Muslim Brotherhood; after the rise of Nasser, however, he also relocated to Jeddah after undertaking the pilgrimage.

My chance meeting with contemporary “Turkistani” or “Bukhari” persons in Jeddah thus pointed me to their predecessor’s pasts that were spread out across dispersed geographies, leading me also to discover their activities in Saudi public sphere. According to an article on Muhammad Islami composed by a Saudi-Turkistani writer, Islami had been a key linkage between the World Muslim League and the exile government of East Turkistan in Istanbul. Based in Jeddah, he utilized print and broadcast media inside Saudi Arabia to publicize the history, literature, and language of people of Turkistan and their plight under the Soviet Union and Communist China.

Islami’s endeavors in Saudi Arabia seem to have been a continuation of the activities that he had undertaken as a public figure during inter-war and wartime periods in dispersed places of sojourn and exile. After escaping from losses in rebellion in Xinjiang in 1937, he had sojourned briefly in Lahore and Saharanpur, and from 1939 to 1950, in Tokyo. In Tokyo, he joined the community of Tatar refugees and activists like ‘Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim, led the association for independence of East Turkistan, and served as the imam of the Tokyo mosque. After the pilgrimage in 1950, he moved the base closer to West Asia, forming connections with scholars and political leaders through the World Islamic Conference in Karachi in 1951 and through his stay in Cairo, where he continued publication work that sought to promote solidarity amongst Turkistani refugees outside mainland China and raise international awareness on the issue. The full rise of
Nasser forced him to once again undertake the pilgrimage in 1956 and settle in Jeddah, where he obtained residency and work as a translator in the Hajj Administration (Idārat al-Hajj). This was thanks to the recommendation from Amīn al-Hussēinī (the mufti of Palestine) and Muhammad ‘ Abd al-Laṭif Darāzi, “leader of the association for the struggle for liberation of Muslim peoples in Cairo.”122

As an association that institutionalized Muslim networks and state diplomacy into a structured organ, the World Muslim League presented the leaders of exile government of East Turkistan an accessible and fitting platform to mobilize the diaspora community in the Hejaz and undertake propaganda activities. When the World Muslim League was founded, Muhammad Amin Islami connected with the founding members of the League whom he had known before – including Sheikh Abul Alā Maudūdī (Amir of Islamic University of Pakistan), Amīn Hussēinī, Mustafā al-Sibā‘ī, Sa‘īd Ramadān, and Muhammad Mahmūd al-Šawāf – and made speeches in representation of Turkistanis in the Hejaz and the government of East Turkistan in exile.123

During the second meeting of WML in 1963, Isa Yusuf Alptekin himself successfully proposed a memorandum on the issue of Greater Turkistan to the annual meeting of the WML’s Constituent Council. The “seventh program on ‘East Turkistan

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122 محمد عبد الله الطيف دراز, رئيس جماعة الكفاح لتحرير الشعوب الإسلامية في القاهرة
question” that was passed requested protection of Turkistani refugees in different
countries of their settlement. It further articulated ambitions for independence of East
Turkistan, urging governments to stop calling the area by the colonial name “Xinjiang,”
but to replace it with “East Turkestan,” and prompted the WML Constituent Council’s
roving ambassador to the United Nations to relay statements by Turkistani
representatives. In 1980, when Alptekin became a member of the Constituent Council
and continued his propaganda work, Muhammad Amin Islami acted as his main aid.

The language of anti-communist Islam, and Mecca as a site of congregation, thus
offered Turkic Muslim political escapees a set of language and a worldly space. Now
based in places outside mainland China itself, they readjusted networks of pilgrimage and
print, and universalist notions on the Islamic world as a means of diplomacy. Even
without a sovereign territory, access to religious and diaspora channels enabled the
nominal state to be inscribed in the imaginations of settler populations.

5.4 Contestations in the World Muslim League

The World Muslim League was also an arena where Chinese Muslim pilgrimage
delegates who represented the Nationalist Party sought to build international alliances in

124 Wu Suoqi (吳鎖祺), “Zhonghua Minguo Yu Shawudi Alabo Wangguo Guanxi Zhi Yanjiu (Research on
relations between the Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 中華民國與沙烏地阿拉伯王國
關係之研究)” (National Chengchi University, 1992), Masters thesis, 63–64.
favor of the Republic of China. The claimed territorial extent of China’s sovereignty included Xinjiang, leading to clashes between Taiwan’s representatives in the World Muslim League and East Turkistani activists in the organization. Ironically, the issue of East Turkistan in the international venue of the World Muslim League exposed contentions within the Chinese Muslim religious and political leaders in Taiwan. The ways through which the issue of East Turkistan surfaced are telling of not only the factional feuds within Chinese Muslim community in Taiwan, but the reluctance or inability of Chinese Muslims who had been affiliated with the Nationalist Party, whether in Taiwan or in Saudi Arabia, to interfere with the propaganda for East Turkestan’s independence.

To Muslim religious and political leaders in Taiwan, the World Muslim League represented a steadfast outlet for forging external religious connections that could further strengthen inter-state exchanges between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia. From their perspective, participating in meetings of the World Muslim League was an extension of pilgrimage-based diplomacy in Mecca that had existed since the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was now formally institutionalized.

We see the explicit significance of the World Muslim League in the 1966 pilgrimage account of Ma Huanwen (馬煥文). Ma Huanwen was well aware of the geopolitical context under which the Muslim League was founded. As he noted, Saudi Arabia had more or less been encircled. The overthrow of King Farouk in Egypt and demolition of the court in Iraq, coupled with Nasser’s support for uprisings in the
region and successive recognition of Communist China by Egypt/Syria/Iraq, all acted as a stimulus for King Saud. He pointed out that the World Muslim League was organized in the same month as the world Islamic conference in Baghdad (May 1962), which Taiwan’s Muslims had been barred from attending due to interference from Soviet representatives.

In Ma Huanwen’s opinion, the World Muslim League was different from preceding attempts to establish Islamic organizations in several aspects. The first distinguishing point was that it had a permanent site for the gathering, money provided by the government, a Secretariat and a Secretary-General of the government’s choosing. Second, as the World Muslim League explicitly avoided political issues and aimed to solve problems in the non-political arena and to promote religious friendship, it would have an enduring function. Third, in contrast to other Islamic conferences that had socialist elements, the World Muslim League was openly opposed to communism. The holding of the conference in Mecca during the pilgrimage season was also a distinctive aspect of the WML that gave it religious significance.125

In the 1950s and 60s, one state after another in West and South Asia severed diplomatic ties with the ROC in recognition of the PRC, blocking Muslim representatives in Taiwan from participating in world Islamic conferences that sprouted throughout the

125 Ma Huanwen, Xixing Sanji (Jottings on Journey Westwards 西行散记), 86.
Cold War years. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, was an unwavering ally of Taiwan. Delegates from Taiwan had to withdraw their participation from the conference in Baghdad in 1962 due to interference from Soviet representatives.

Ma Huanwen, therefore, interpreted the WML as a steadfast ally of the Muslim community in Taiwan, and by extension, the state of Republic of China itself. “If the WML had not been established,” he questioned, “would Free China cut ties with the world’s Islamic organizations?” He continued, “it is fortunate that in the past ten years, we have established friendly relations with Saudi Arabia in diplomatic relations; Saudi Arabia thinks that Free China is the only legitimate government that can represent the Chinese Republic. It not only invites us to participate in the League and its conference but regards us as official representatives sent from an Islamic country. The League has also selected us as one of the Constituent Council. We need to grasp onto this opportunity, and try best to gain sympathy and friendship of Muslim countries that hold important positions (jinliang zhengqu zai shijie ju zhongyao diwei zhi huijiao guojia de tongqing yu youyi).”

Under stable conditions, the World Muslim League acted as a diplomatic organ that could facilitate or strengthen inter-state relations through networks of religion and diaspora. Prior to official recognition of the PRC by Saudi Arabia in 1990, the WML and

\footnote{Ibid., 90.}
Taiwan exchanged regular contacts through the pilgrimage missions from Taipei, and through visits of WML’s Secretary-General and Vice Secretary-General to Taiwan. Sun Shengwu (孫繩武 1896-1975), a key founder of the Chinese Muslim Association during World War II, had led the 1963 pilgrimage delegation from Taipei and conversed with the WML’s Secretary-General Mohammed Surūr al-Ṣabān on the necessity of having representation from the Republic of China in the League. From then on Sun Shengwu served as a member of the WML’s Constituent Council (composed of 21 members at the time) for fourteen years (1963-1975), before being replaced by Ding Zhongming (定仲明 1913-?), who represented China in the World Muslim League’s Constituent Council and World Supreme Council for Mosques between 1982 and 1997.\textsuperscript{127}

Within the Hejaz, a handful of Chinese Muslim settlers who had found positions as assistants, translators or consultants in the ROC Embassy in Jeddah frequently accompanied Taiwan’s pilgrimage delegations in their meetings with Saudi dignitaries. These were persons who during the inter-war period and World War II had traveled to Mecca and Cairo as students, pilgrims, and diplomatic delegations. They included ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi (林興智 1913-1991) whom we saw in Chapter 2. Another such

\textsuperscript{127} Ding Zhongming was a graduate of Shanghai’s Xiao Taoyuan mosque and al-Azhar University who throughout the 50s and 60s had circulated around diplomatic agencies in Lebanon, Mauritania and Libya. With Ma Bufang’s pilgrimage delegation in 1956 as a start, he was a part of four more pilgrimage delegations as a leader (1967, 1973, 1979, 1985).
scholar and writer was Badr al-Din Hai Weiliang (海維諒 1912-2006). Born in Shaoyang city (邵陽) in Hunan Province, Hai Weiliang had also studied in Shanghai’s western mosque, and in inter-war period and World War II, sojourned for more than a decade in Calcutta, Delhi, and Cairo as he picked up different languages and attended religious educational institutions. Before being stationed in Jeddah in 1959, where he would spend 18 years, he worked in the ROC Embassies in Iran and India, and as a private tutor of Ma Bufang in Cairo in the early 1950s. Hai composed several works including Relations between China and Arabia (العلاقات بين العرب والصين) published in 1950 in Cairo, and History of Muslims in China, Past and Present (تاريخ المسلمين في الصين في الماضي والحاضر) published in the 1970s, which was gifted by the World Muslim League to various countries.

Ironically, the contentions over the issue of East Turkistan in the World Muslim League revealed the divisions within Chinese Muslim dignitaries in Taipei who each had utilized outside connections to further their positions at home. When the memorandum on East Turkestan’s independence was passed, Xiao Yongtai (蕭永泰 1919-1990) submitted

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129 Jia Fukang, Taiwan Huijiaoshi, 284–87.
a report to Taipei’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs accusing his competitor Sun Shengwu, the representative of the Republic of China in the World Muslim League, of forfeiting sovereignty of China in an international Islamic platform. Xiao Yongtai, who had been a member of the aforementioned Yulbars Khan’s delegation in 1954, was a young imam from Rehe province of northeastern China who had escaped to Taiwan. As he faced conflicted relations with the personnel at the Chinese Muslim Association in Taipei Central Mosque, Xiao Yongtai established his own Culture Mosque (1951) and the Chinese Muslim Youth League (1956), which published fiercely anti-communist articles in its periodicals. Simultaneously, in place of the strong international contacts that the Chinese Muslim Association developed through its robust relations with the Republican state, Xiao Yongtai sought to forge his own transnational connections with the Ahmadiyya movement, and an anti-communist front with the Tatar and Turkistani descendants in Japan.130

A decade later after his initial pilgrimage missions in 1954, Xiao Yongtai managed to come back as the leader of the 1965 pilgrimage missions. He was, however, consistently blocked in transit points of Hong Kong and Beirut by affiliates of the ROC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and even caught at the Jeddah airport by custom officers. The charges against Xiao Yongtai, passed down from the World Muslim League, was

that he was an Ahmadiyya supporter. This was in consideration of the fact that he had attended an Ahmadiyya gathering in Pakistan several months ago. To his defense, Xiao Yongtai pointed out that the visit to Pakistan had been undertaken under the name of the Republic of China’s Islamic friendship delegation (zhonghua minguo huijiao youhao fangwentuan 中華民國回教友好訪問團). His participation had been approved by the central government, and the visit’s significance for politics and interests of the country superseded that of religion (qi zhengzhi yiyi ji guojia liyi chaoguo zongjiao 其政治意義及國家利益超過宗教). 131

What angered Xiao Yongtai even more was that the charges against him were made by Sun Shengwu, who had assumed the position as a Council at the World Muslim League a year before. As a member of the World Muslim League Council, Sun had accused Xiao Yongtai of being an adherent of the “heretic” (xiejiao 邪教) Ahmadiyya sect that was outlawed by Saudi religious authorities. The charge led both Sun Shengwu and Xiao Yongtai to the office of the World Muslim League’s Vice Secretary and the court, accompanied by the Embassy’s Secretary ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi who acted as a translator. The conversation proceeded thus:

Judge: Have you been a Muslim originally?

Xiao Yongtai: Our family has been Muslims for generations. As for myself, I have received religious education since I was young, and have studied the Quran assiduously. Now I am an Imam in China. We have propagated the religion for twenty generations.

Judge: Have you come for the pilgrimage before?
Xiao Yongtai: I have come for the pilgrimage once, eleven years ago.
Judge: At the time, were you a member or the leader?
Xiao Yongtai: I was a member.
Judge: Do you have an understanding of Pakistan’s Ahmadiyya?
Xiao Yongtai: I understand it very well; the Ahmadiyya sect has long departed from interpretations of the Prophet and Sunni sect. Islam calls Ahmadiyya sect *kafir* (unbelievers).

At Xiao’s response, the judge added that although Ahmadiyya also believes that Muhammad is God’s messenger, they also value “another person”. He urged Xiao Yongtai to avoid interactions if he runs into one of them, and to sign a piece of paper to that regard. Sun Shengwu who had been with them, according to Xiao Yongtai, “used all measures to stir trouble.” In front of “the foreigners” (*yangrenmianqian* 洋人面前), he asked Xiao Yongtai to acknowledge that he had been an Ahmadiyya follower in the past but now changed his mind, and to swear not to spread Ahmadiyya again. Xiao Yongtai, no longer able to hold back his indignation, said to Sun Shengwu, “even the judge is not making me swear an oath, and also has not even asked whether I am an Ahmadiyya or not. So why are you being so headstrong like this?” The judge, in any case, had both persons sign the document; the document was also signed by ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi and two Saudi dignitaries. Later, Xiao Yongtai described his warm encounter in Mecca.

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132 Ibid, 0013.
with the Secretary of the World Muslim League, Mohammad Surūr al-Sabān through the reluctant mediation of ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi. Prompted to say whether he had anything to say about accusations that Sun Shengwu had made against him, Xiao Yongtai, in consideration of the country’s honor (wei weihu guojia yun 為維護國家譽), reportedly replied that everything about the debacle had been a misunderstanding. 133

Upon return from Mecca, Xiao Yongtai submitted a report that accused Sun Shengwu of personally defaming him through his fabricated scheme, and moreover, of “humiliatingly forfeiting our country’s sovereignty” in an outer arena (zai wai sangquanruguo 在外喪權辱國). Throughout the report, Xiao Yongtai consistently criticized Sun Shengwu of disregarding reputation and “face of the country” (guojia timian 國家體面) by openly showing divisions within the group in front of foreign personalities at high positions, in contrast to himself who held himself back and smiled all along.

Moreover, Xiao Yongtai reported how Sun, as a Council of the World Muslim League, remained silent at the face of movements for East Turkistan’s independence that unfolded through the League. To Xiao Yongtai’s surprise, the flag of the Republic of China had not been hanging at the inauguration ceremony of the World Muslim League that was held after the pilgrimage. Although the Embassy sent another flag the next day,

133 Ibid., 0015.
the ceremony had already ended by then. According to Xiao Yongtai, the flag that had been initially sent to and checked by the Secretariat was reported to have been damaged by a “Xinjiang independence movement element” who was an employee in the Secretariat. But Sun Shengwu did not protest. Moreover, when a memorandum that supported the independence of Xinjiang was passed in a committee meeting before the closing of the conference, “our representative” Sun Shengwu “remained silent,” thereby expressing his tacit agreement by “not saying a word.” This indicated, Xiao Yongtai claimed, of his intention of “promoting his personal interests and keeping his position as a Council at the World Muslim League.”

In his defense, Sun Shengwu wrote on the designation of Ahmadiyya as a heretical sect in Saudi Arabia, a country critical for Taiwan’s interests. According to Sun, even before he himself raised the issue, the Secretary-General of the World Muslim League inquired him about an Ahmadiyya follower among Taiwan’s delegation. Sun also explicated his utmost attempts to prevent the spread of East Turkistan independence movement in the WML; he directed the issue to be presented at a “smaller meeting” rather than the general conference, on the grounds that this was a political rather than a religious issue, and that the World Muslim League was not to be involved in political matters. He also blocked the passed resolution from being implemented through personal protests.

\[\text{134 Ibid., 0015.}\]
Attempts by Sun Shengwu to Republican China’s claims to Xinjiang, however, seem to have further galvanized public figures among Turkistani diasporas to raise awareness about autonomous culture and history of East Turkistan towards internal and outside audiences through narrative productions. Sun Shengwu is remembered by the elderly among the Turkistani community as a representative of the ROC who arrived with a historian who falsely denied the presence of the autonomous history of East Turkistan. To counter his position that represented that of the Republican state, Turkistani leaders issued a booklet in 1964 entitled *A Letter to the Islamic World...Truths about Muslim Turkistan* (*risāla ila al-‘ālam al-islāmī...haqā’iq ‘an al-turkistān al-muslima*), with monetary support from the community in Saudi Arabia. Five thousand copies were circulated across different places around the world. It was also published in various newspapers, including *al-Da’wah* in Riyadh, *al-Nadwah* in Mecca, *al-Bilād* in Jeddah, and the magazine *al-Manhal*; an English translated version was also printed in the magazine *al-Hajj* published by the Administration for Hajj and Awqāf in Mecca.³¹³

As an assemblage foci for states and diasporas, Mecca thus offered not only a refuge for escapees from Xinjiang and elsewhere in Central Asia, but a space for Turkistani political activists to mobilize rhetorical and material support for a state that

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was composed of dispersed networks rather than a bounded territory and people. In this respect, the World Muslim League that endorsed them carried the capacity to engage with entities that were not necessarily recognized as full states in the international arena. The contentions over East Turkistan that were recorded in Taipei’s archives also revealed the divisiveness within Taipei’s Muslim dignitaries who nevertheless emphasized their unity outwardly. The idea of universalist Islam, and the convergence of Muslim networks in Mecca that the World Muslim League institutionalized, provided sets of tools for competing groups of Chinese and Turkic Muslim religiopolitical figures to portray themselves as a unified group, arrange journeys, and reorganize their religious, political and inter-personal networks from new bases outside mainland China.

5.5 Conclusion: Re-Orientations and Re-Routings

This chapter has shown multiple layers of diplomatic networks between Mecca and China that realigned in the Cold War, guided by interviews and textual traces in public and private archives. Along Cold War axes in East and West Asia, religious delegates of Taiwan, East Turkistan, and briefly, the PRC once again made their inroads to Mecca with the agenda of forging alliances with state representatives gathered during the pilgrimage season, and undertaking propagandas through the rhetoric of Islamic solidarity. The audience for such included not only the imagined body of the global Muslim community but trans-regional diaspora societies. The venue of Mecca thus represented a hub where writers and diplomatic notables with contesting claims could
reassemble and strengthen their religious and political networks through written and
spoken words, and simultaneously elevate their standing within dispersed diaspora
communities.

From the view of Chinese or Turkic Muslim religious and political dignitaries, the
World Muslim League, positioned in between the Saudi state and Muslim networks
worldwide, represented a forum that institutionalized the position of Mecca as a
congregation point for pilgrims, diasporas and state representatives. For states of both the
ROC and East Turkistan in exile, the League’s location within Saudi Arabia also matched
their geopolitical and ideological stances against the socialist-communist block. The
League, therefore, provided a flexible space where competing claims on China’s relations
with internal and external Muslim populations could be made towards religious
dignitaries and diaspora communities who were congregated around Mecca.

To the communities already settled in the Hejaz who may not necessarily have
been a part of the political circle, these public figures provided an axis around which to
gather and a sense of home elsewhere. Connections that different waves of settlers and
sojourners made with one another – whether through political affiliations, kinship or
education – drew in certain individuals with no previous political background into
channels of cultural diplomacy and shaped the course of their mobility.

When the People’s Republic of China reemerged to the world stage with the end
of the Cultural Revolution, it was the World Muslim League that started to facilitate
religious and cultural exchanges between the PRC and KSA in the absence of official
diplomatic relations between the two. This does not come as a surprise in view of its role in previous decades as an organ of diplomacy and propaganda for representatives from the Republic of China and the exile government of East Turkistan. With the unraveling of the Cold War order and the opening-up of the PRC on multiple religious, economic and political fronts, the World Muslim League and diaspora communities positioned in Mecca readjusted their orientations to branch out their networks towards the PRC. It is to this juncture that we turn in the next, final chapter.
6. The Many Homecomings

From the making of little Meccas in China and conceptualizations of Mecca from afar, and travels to the city as pathways for escape and diplomatic propaganda under the umbrella of the pilgrimage, we have uncovered the multiple layers of meaning that Mecca held for Chinese Muslims. We have moved together with them through the years of hot and cold wars in the twentieth century, observing expansions, shrinkages, ruptures, and re-routings of the protagonists’ networks of pilgrimage, patronage, kinship and diplomacy. Mecca, lying within yet above the nation-state of Saudi Arabia, constantly inspired a universalist sense of belonging, while simultaneously exposing the discrepancy between its imagery as the sacred homeland of Muslims worldwide and the political and administrative structure of the Saudi state of which the Hejaz became a part.

If the Cold War order represented one of the most radical forms of severance that contained physical and communicational mobility between the divided blocs, the unraveling of that order initiated a gush of reconnections across borders. In the same year that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, 1979, an event that foreshadowed its fall, the People’s Republic of China under Deng Xiaoping officially initiated its “open-up-and-reform” policy. This signified double openings in political and economic spheres. On the one hand, political liberalization loosened the state’s suppression of religious spheres and necessitated building new international ties. Economic opening through designation of special economic zones in coastal China, on the other hand, offered a range of opportunities for diaspora networks whose ties with home places in mainland China had been unexpectedly cut off for as long as three decades. For Chinese Muslims both within
the mainland and outside, loosening of control over mobility instigated multi-directional returns as pilgrims, home-comers or informal diplomats. It would initiate mending of emotions through reunions, and in some cases, forging of new relations for the next generation.

As a closure, this chapter shows the multifaceted returns of Chinese Muslims mediated by Mecca, on the eve of the Cold War’s end and the decades that followed it. With the retreat of the Cold War diplomatic battles and the re-emergence of the PRC on the central world stage, how did dispersed Chinese Muslim communities reknit networks of kinship, pilgrimage and commerce? With unleashing of restrictions on travel and contact, has it been possible to claim conceptual and social belonging to dual homes, here and elsewhere, if they chose to do so? What kinds of individual quests, alternative social spaces and tensions do we see?

6.1. Two-way Re-turns

The concept of home for diasporas cannot be fixed as a single geographical point. Whether in China, Saudi Arabia or elsewhere, diverse populations of Chinese Muslims have kept a historic sense of belonging to other, distant places while being embedded in their local societies. Their returns home, then, have taken place in circular directions rather than one-way.

I reached Kunming in 2015, following traces of ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi. Lin, as we recall from Chapter 2, had traveled from Shadian of Yunnan Province to Shanghai,
onward to Cairo through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. His diaries that recorded that
day, published in Shanghai in 1937, led me to Kunming. I had eagerly photocopied a
copy of that book in the central library in Taipei and started to read it, when I realized
that the entire transcription of the book in simplified Chinese was available online as a
blog post. The author of the post also mentioned other private writings by Lin. I
immediately sent an email to the linked address. After a series of email exchanges, a year
later in late 2015, I was in Kunming to finally meet Mr. Ma. As I got off the cab, Mr. Ma
profusely apologized for making me come to his neighborhood alone and guided me to
his apartment.

Mr. Ma had met his maternal uncle, ‘Uthman Lin Xingzhi, for the first time in
1986. Lin had been absent for most of Mr. Ma’s life. By the time that Mr. Ma was born,
Lin had not only returned home from Cairo but had already set out to Xinjiang Province
to assume a post as the magistrate of Aksu Prefecture. Soon afterward in 1949, Lin would
make an unexpected escape from Aksu in the face of the imminent victory of the
Communist Party. He would sojourn briefly in northern Burma then proceed to Mecca
and Jeddah, where he ended up spending the latter half of his life. When Lin returned to
Kunming for the first time in nearly four decades, Mr. Ma accompanied his newfound
uncle as Lin toured around repositories of memories -- the Yufeng elementary school in
Shadian, and Kunming’s Yunnan Military Academy -- observing the changes that had
unfolded in four decades. As he visited these sites, Lin let out ceaseless tears, reflecting
on the decades that had gone by. Before departing for Jeddah by way of Chiangmai, he
composed a poem, which Mr. Ma later published in a collection of materials on the “Lin” family:

Sea waves surge along the way,
And brothers carry cases filled with books for their studies.
Through endlessly long courses to remotest and farthest corners,
[We have] sought shelter in Mecca (Tianfang) to escape from China.
Sixty years since the opening of Saudi Arabia,
And forty sudden years since living abroad in Saudi Arabia.
Life has been full of hardships but let us not speak bitter;
I have happily guarded Mecca and been lighthearted,
Like a transcendent immortal being...
By imperial decree, I have performed the pilgrimage forty consecutive times,
And received thousands of visitors to Mecca.
Bodily birth in Shadian can be said to be a fortune;
The long residence in Saudi Arabia is grace from God.
Years in Saudi Arabia (“Shate 沙特”) are many,
and those in Shadian (“Shadian 沙甸”) few;
I wonder for which “sha” (沙) I keep longing for home.
Now three generations have been transmitted [here];
The second generation has become the people of Mecca...
With Sanbao Eunuch (Admiral Zhenghe) in the western oceans,
People of Yunnan began their era in Mecca.
Who would have known that five hundred years later, once again in Mecca, [we] would narrate a poem about people of Yunnan?

Lin, like others who had fled from or could never return to mainland China due to the Nationalist-Communist war, had lived with a wrenching sense of loss and nostalgia for the homes and families that he left behind. Accompanying such painful memory of separation, at the same time, was an awareness of Mecca, or the “Heavenly Square,” as another home place for Muslims worldwide. As we see from Lin’s poem, returns to homes could unfold in both directions -- from mainland China to Saudi Arabia, or the
other way around. The long years of residence in Saudi Arabia could be framed as a search for refuge near the sacred center of Islam, whereas different sites in China continued to represent distant home places of origin.

Mecca, more than a site of the pilgrimage or a conceptual homeland, facilitated reunions of previously separated diaspora communities by receiving Chinese Muslim pilgrims from mainland China. In fact, it was in Jeddah rather than Shadian that Lin first reunited with his siblings two years before his trip to Shadian. While Mr. Ma first met Lin in Shadian, Mr. Ma’s mother, or Lin’s younger sister, had already performed the pilgrimage in 1984 to reunite with her brothers.

The informal exchanges of religion and kinship were mediated by semi-official religious institutions of both Saudi Arabia and the PRC, preceding the forging of official inter-state diplomatic ties between the two countries. It was only in 1990 that Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recognized the PRC as the official China, the last country to do so in West Asia. For a decade before that event, the two states steadily exchanged unofficial visits through the World Muslim League in Mecca and the Chinese Islamic Association in Beijing. This included a commercial pilgrimage delegation from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in 1985, which was hosted by the World Muslim League. The tipping point for bilateral relations came in 1988 when Beijing covertly sold CSS-2 ballistic missiles to Riyadh. This provided the kingdom, which had been struck by security concerns following the Iranian Revolution (1979) and
Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), an arms transfer channel alternative to that offered by the U.S.\(^1\)

Both before and after these events, streams of state-sponsored and private pilgrims from the PRC flowed into Mecca through transits in Karachi throughout the 80s, while representatives of the World Muslim League frequented Muslim enclaves in mainland China.\(^2\)

Mecca thereby provided the very first site of reunions among families that had been separated, outside the territory of mainland China itself. Without undertaking physical travels themselves, Chinese Muslims residing in Saudi Arabia could extend their arms to kin members and home places in mainland China. Lin had also invited his two


\(^2\) From Gansu Province alone, a total of 891 persons are known to have made the pilgrimage in the 1980s. A small number of them were parts of official pilgrimage delegations, invitees of the World Muslim League and self-sponsored pilgrims, whereas more than half of them performed the pilgrimage through relatives visits visa in 1988 (244 persons), 1989 (312 persons) and 1990 (129 persons). The information is taken from Ma Fu (马夫), “Gansu Muslimin Renshi Chaojin Jishi (Records of Muslim Personalities’ Hajj Pilgrimage from Gansu 甘肃穆斯林人士朝觐纪实 1991),” in Gansu Wenshi Ziliao Xuanji Di 47 Ji (甘肃文史资料选辑 第 47 辑), by Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshanghuiyi Gansusheng weiyuanhui (中国人民政治协商会议 甘肃省委员会) (Lanzhou: Gansu ren min chu ban she, 1997), 143–50, 149-50. For visits of World Muslim League members to China in the 1980s, Ding Jun (丁俊), “Zhongguo Muslimin Guoji Jiaowangde Lishi Chuantong Yu Xianshi Yiyi (Historic Tradition of China’s Muslims’ International Exchanges and Their Practical Significance 中国穆斯林轨迹交往的历史传统与现实意义),” Xibei Minzu Yanjiu (N.W. Journal of Ethnology) 1, no. 88 (2016): 51–60, 55-6. The World Muslim League’s then-vice secretary general, Muhammad bin Nasser al-Aboudi (1926~), has published several accounts of his trips to mainland China in the 1980s and early 90s, as a part of more than a hundred travelogues he has written. Most of them, including three on China and one on Taiwan, are accessible online: http://waqfeya.com/book.php?bid=8346
younger sisters to come for the pilgrimage through the World Muslim League in 1984. His affiliation with the World Muslim League would have enabled him to organize invitation requests for his family back in Shadian.

Lin Huiruo, the aunt of Mr. Ma and the youngest sister of Lin Xingzhi, arrived in Jeddah in 1984. When she did, she had barely spent time with her two elder brothers in the city. She had been only two years old when Lin left Shadian for his studies. Although she saw him briefly when he came back from Cairo, he soon departed for his post in Xinjiang. Then, with the victory of the Communist Party, he was gone to northern Burma and Jeddah. Their eldest brother, Xiangdong, also joined him. She never saw them again, and no news of them reached the rest of the family in Yunnan. In their absence, the three younger siblings continued their lives in mainland China. The third brother Xinghua, who had studied in Cairo with Xingzhi in the 1930s and 40, returned to Shadian, and after 1979, revived his skills in Arabic to work as a professor of Arabic in Beijing’s Foreign Languages University. Huiruo herself remained in Shadian with her elder sister Huiran. Huiruo had also studied and taught at Shadian’s Islamic schools until the 1950s, and after moving to Kunming in the 1980s, offered lessons for women at a local religious center.

The visit of Huiran and her sister to Jeddah and Mecca had been arranged by religious institutions in Beijing and Mecca. The Bureau of Religion in Beijing received a list from the World Muslim League with names of persons to be invited for the pilgrimage and subsequently sent an official letter to its branch in Kunming. Huiruo, accompanied by her husband, her elder sister, and nephew, headed to Beijing to take a
flight to Pakistan and to proceed to Jeddah. For the first time post World War II, the Lin siblings were reunited in Jeddah, except for the third brother who stayed behind in Beijing. The two months in Jeddah in 1984 were one of Huiruo’s happiest moments, she recalled during our meeting in 2015. Her second pilgrimage was in 1996, through a family invitation visa. It was a strategy that avoided the long line of wait for the official pilgrimage visa.


The two-way homecomings between Mecca and different places in mainland China reignited networks of kinship and pilgrimage, which accompanied exchanges of
gifts and grafting of new interpersonal ties. It was not uncommon for the first generation of Chinese Muslim settlers around Mecca to reconnect with their relatives from China through the pilgrimage and to assist pilgrims even when they were not related to them. In some cases, they would entrust donations to be used in their hometowns back in China. In this sense, the networks that emerged were not different from those of Chinese diasporas between Southeast Asia and southern China post-1979. Diaspora communities’ relationships with home places in China during the Cold War had been marked by almost complete disconnect in communication and travel, which reverberated the magnitude of their absence. The return of diasporas that followed the re-opening of the PRC changed the nature of their presence in home places. Now, with reconnections through multiple pathways, they accumulated prestige and altered the landscapes of their home places while continuing to be physically absent.

6.2. Old Places, New Connections

Interweaving and maintaining ties of kinship over long distances, rather than instantaneous, require conscious efforts, especially over generations. Some forget or erase their imagined or real connections with distant home places, whereas others seek to actively revive them -- whether as a personal quest to discover the self, or to capitalize on far-fetched social networks. Such ties with families and alternative home places elsewhere, in fact, have offered breathing spaces for diaspora populations trapped in the
logic of the nation-state, potentials of forging new networks of kinship, and at times, opportunities to elevate their social standings on both ends.

For Hassan, born and raised in Ta’if, building relations with cousins and half-siblings in Gansu Province, whom he had never met until he reached his 20s, was both a personal journey and an opportunity that led him to venture into shuttle trade immediately after normalization of the PRC-Saudi relations. Hassan’s father was one of those who had escaped mainland China in the mid-1950s through the pilgrimage in the middle of land collectivization campaigns. He was buried not in Ta’if, Jeddah or Mecca, but in his ancestral home place of Lintan in Gansu Province, about three hundred kilometers south of Lanzhou. Hassan’s father had returned to Gansu Province for the first time in 1989. In a few years, he passed away in a hospital in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province; his body was moved to Lintan and buried with the rest of his foregone family.

Similar to the family of ‘Uthman Lin and others, the initial reunions for Hassan’s extended family had unfolded in Mecca in the early 1980s. Back in 1983, Hassan’s half-brother Ibrahim had come for the pilgrimage through a relative invitation visa. Ibrahim had been barely four years old when his father permanently left China. Upon reaching Jeddah and Mecca at the age of thirty together with his mother and elder brother, Ibrahim reunited with his father for the first time. After a tearful encounter, he stayed in Ta’if for four months and met Hassan who had been thirteen years old. From then on, he
performed the pilgrimage six times until 2011, sometimes staying in Saudi for as long as one year at a time.

As Hassan’s father bridged the distance between the two families in Ta’if and Gansu, Hassan enthusiastically traveled to mainland China and connected with his previously unseen relatives -- in Gansu on his father’s side, and in Lhasa of Tibet on his mother’s side. Attending one welcome gathering after another, Hassan was fascinated to find homes that he had not imagined back in Ta’if. Despite having been born and raised in Saudi soil, he had not been able to obtain citizenship unlike some of his older siblings, which placed an inordinate amount of limitations on education, employment and sales of property.

It was through revitalization of latent kinship ties between China and Saudi Arabia, that Aisha, who had belonged to a distant branch of Hassan’s extended family, made her way to Ta’if. She first set foot in Ta’if in 1990 -- as a newly-wed bride to Hassan. Summer that year, she had headed from her home in the highlands of Aba County in Sichuan Province to Beijing following her marriage to Hassan. She bid farewell to her mother, brothers, and sisters who saw her off, without the slightest idea of when they would meet again. She boarded a train for two full days in order to reach Beijing where flights to Karachi took off. At the youthful age of seventeen, just graduated from middle school, Aisha let life take its course. Yet she would not have pictured herself living in Ta’if in Saudi Arabia for the following thirty years, gradually adjusting to customs that seemed starkly alien at first -- without a single return trip back to mainland
China. She would reunite with her mother in Saudi Arabia rather than in China when her mother performed the pilgrimage to Mecca twice.

With increasing frequency, Aisha saw Hassan off as he set out for different places in China to expand his commercial activities. When I first encountered the family of Aisha and Hassan in Ta’if in 2017, Hassan kept an office in Guangzhou for his tea stores in Ta’if and Jeddah and was regularly visiting Guangzhou, Yunnan, and Gansu at least once or twice a year. Re-forging ties of kinship and pilgrimage had allowed Hassan to not only discover connections with distant places that had been severed, but also an alternative means of living. As he started frequenting China, Hassan began to collaborate with his siblings and cousins back in China to import small items such as jewelry and porcelain from the re-emergent industrial center of Guangzhou to Jeddah. Coinciding with Saudi recognition of the People’s Republic of China in 1990, Hassan quickly ventured into long-distance commerce. His main partner was Ibrahim, his half-sibling twenty years older than him. They would sell things like vases, decorative items and carpets as they toured around market exhibitions in different Saudi cities, and be able to earn twice the amount of the products’ original price. Eventually, sales of small commodities branched out to specialized import and selling of tea, a field in which Hassan kept personal interest and came to hold dear.

Business in Saudi, for Hassan’s half-sibling Ibrahim in China, was an extension of what he had already been doing in China. Already since 1981, he had been frequenting different cities within China such as Guangzhou and Beijing for private peddle trade.
With a decade of travels and experiences in China, he told me, he was not easily deterred or surprised by the new setting in Saudi. Although he could not speak Arabic fluently, he learned enough of the language to be able to understand it. He eventually retired to Linxia, which, he explained, has better soil and presented more convenient living conditions compared to the family home place of Lintan. In 2000, he also helped Hassan purchase a house in Linxia. When I visited him in Linxia in 2017, Ibrahim had been resting at home after retirement and had begun to attend a local school to attend daily lessons for reading the Quran.

If Hassan’s connections with external home places and acquaintances offered him a way out of the social restraints placed on him within Saudi Arabia, the presence of Aisha in Ta’if offered her family members in China pathways out of mainland China to seek other career prospects. In the summer of 2017, Aisha returned to China for the first time after 27 years, together with Hassan and three of her children. I followed them from Jeddah to Guangzhou, onward to Lanzhou and Linxia. As she landed at the Guangzhou airport, she reluctantly took off her niqāb (face veil) at her daughters’ repeated teasing that people would mistake her for a terrorist. For the following weeks, she would undergo tearful reunions with her elderly mother, siblings, and extended family in China.

In contrast to her own travel trajectories, Aisha’s residency in Ta’if had facilitated the sojourns of her two younger brothers in Saudi Arabia. By the time of her trip to China in 2017, both of her younger brothers had spent a decade or two in Saudi Arabia and already gone back to China. The husbands of her two sisters had also sojourned in Saudi
Arabia for several years before returning to Sichuan. For Aisha’s youngest brother Yusuf, whom I talked to in Linxia, being under his sister’s care in Ta’if made him feel less like a person floating in a foreign country. Growing up in Aba (Sichuan) and Linxia, Yusuf had learned atheist principles at governmental schools, while praying and abstaining from pork at home. To resolve what he perceived as contradictions between the two lives, he experimented attending a religious school in Linxia at the age of seventeen. After an unsuccessful attempt to study in Malaysia, he decided to go to Saudi Arabia where his sister resided – not to pursue education, but to assist Hassan’s business. For nearly a decade, Yusuf accompanied Hassan around different cities in Saudi Arabia to sell tea in market fairs that were held for a week to ten days at a time. This was a way for the team to continue sales when they could not open an official store as non-Saudi residents. As he sat in front of the stall with his glasses on, people conceived of him as a doctor from China and praised him with admiration as he recited the Quran. He was now back in Linxia to take care of his mother, teaching Arabic at one of dozens of religious schools in the city while simultaneously working as a translator for a local company.

Aisha supported her immediate and extended family with remarkable strength, raising eight children and caring for her numerous in-laws in Ta’if. As she did so, she took unwavering solace in the fact that she was residing in proximity to the sacred cities. After three decades in Ta’if, she considered herself to be an outsider in the country. A proud citizen of the People’s Republic of China, Aisha was not motivated to hide the difficulties that non-Saudi foreign residents in the country were going through, especially
with the steep increases in annual fees that they had to pay. As for herself, she told me, she was “living in Saudi Arabia because of Mecca and Medina, and nothing else. As for other matters, nothing holds importance.” She had no way of telling whether she would be returning to China in twenty or thirty years. Yet, when she grows old, she wanted to live in Mecca and be close to the Haram.

The linkages that Aisha and Hassan cultivated with their faraway home places in China offered their children, born and raised in Saudi Arabia but without citizenship, familiarity with places where they could potentially seek life paths away from the logistical constraints placed by the lack of citizenship. As inheritors of Taiwanese passports in Saudi Arabia, but without a single connection to the island country itself, Aisha’s children were what she termed “international vagrants.” The emotional attachment to Mecca and Medina that the family shared, though a source of encouragement, could not solve the day-to-day problems they faced as non-full citizens of a single nation-state. Due to their status as foreigners, Aisha’s daughters Aliya and Jamila had been placed on an indefinite waitlist for their Master’s program of choice in Jeddah, despite their acceptance with superb records. Although Aisha herself had not found time to make it back to her hometown and family, she was the one who encouraged them to head to China -- to accumulate different kinds of experiences and explore unseen parts of the world outside, rather than, as she put it, remain a frog in a well. Aisha was sure that in Lanzhou and Linxia, her daughters would be under the constant care of their relatives. They would also be able to learn proper Mandarin Chinese, one step further
from what they grew up listening to at home, and perhaps enroll in advanced degree programs there, instead of wasting the precious and brightest years of their twenties.

Notwithstanding their hearts that lie in Mecca, and the decades of residence in Saudi Arabia, the fact that Aisha and her family members possess neither full citizenship of a single state nor a complete sense of belonging to one reflects the inability of one nation-state to contain the physical and conceptual mobility of various groups of Chinese Muslims. Their ideas of homes have been dispersed between many places rather than one, blurring the distinction between living and dying in a “homeland,” or “foreign lands.” In Guangzhou and Lanzhou, Aisha’s daughters change their clothes from the black ‘abaya and niqab that they had worn in conservative Ta’if to long shirts, jeans and colorful headscarves like Hui youths in China. When I followed them to the vibrant markets of Guangzhou’s Xiaobeilu that sold fake goods, curious sellers would ask them where they were from. Their answers that had been repeated too many times were almost formulaic: that they were huaqiao living in Saudi Arabia, born there (chusheng zai nabian), whose old home (laojiao) was in Gansu. They would occasionally add that they were, in fact, Taiwanese nationals. In the words of their five-year-old brother who had not yet learned Chinese, they were “muwalladīn there (ahna muwalladīn hunāk).” Answering questions on origins or homes has required them to muster referents to diaspora that often lie at the blind spot of nation-based historiographies.

Though by no means easy, activating tangible connections with other homes through constant tussles and maneuvering could turn into social capital that Chinese
Muslim diasporas dispersed between Saudi Arabia and China could utilize to lift statuses on both ends. For portions of the Chinese Muslim community in Saudi Arabia who do not have the benefits of citizenship, ties with home places in inland China have provided a direct springboard to jumpstart new networks of kinship and trade, with Mecca continuing to figure as a conceptual home.

From the other direction, arrivals of long-term sojourners from China to Saudi Arabia have reformulated interpersonal networks of family, business and religious education – connections that are meshed with one another. While the PRC state policies tightened control over the religious sphere since the 2000s in the aftermath of the post-9/11 global war on terror and the growing unrest in Xinjiang, certain forms of mobility and religious activities that were deemed economically lucrative – and thus legitimate – were condoned and even openly endorsed. These measures included promotion of the halal industry and restaurants within and outside China, the secularization of religious schools into vocational Arabic language institutions, and support for officially designated prayer spots in international trade hubs, most notably Guangzhou and Yiwu. In the interstices of the state’s control and selective backing, streams of Muslim entrepreneurs, translators, students and restaurateurs in China have traveled across the country’s different provinces and to places outside China, starting educational curriculum or setting up private businesses, and sometimes becoming employees of state-owned enterprises.
along the way. In this sense, destinations in the Gulf such as Dubai, Mecca, and Medina could fulfill purposes of both religious education and commerce, while also guarantying the safe practice of Islam.

‘Abdullah, a professor at the IT department at Ta’if University whose father had migrated from Qinghai several decades ago, led me to one such family that had migrated to Saudi Arabia more than a decade ago. Ibrahim himself had grown up in Ta’if and had come back after attending college in Jeddah and completing his Ph.D. program in Australia. With apologies that he does not have much understanding about even his own family, he introduced me to Zahra and her husband Abu Faisal who had come to Ta’if from Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province in the early 2000s. Abu Hassan greeted me in Saudi attire and started conversing with the rest of the guests in lightly accented Arabic. During these years, he and his wife had been running a Chinese restaurant in Ta’if. Their youngest son, who had been a chef at a five-star hotel in Guangzhou, treated me and other guests with a savory afternoon meal – steamed lamb cooked in

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northwestern Chinese style, steamed fish seasoned with soy sauce, broccoli and mushroom, slightly fried peppered shrimps, buns, and in the end, spicy beef noodles.

After more than ten years in Ta’if, Zahra’s family came to stand in the middle ground between China and Saudi Arabia. While Xining continued to be their ultimate home, the livelihoods of Zahra and the rest of the family were now based in Ta’if and its vicinities. Zahra’s eldest son, who was preparing to open a Chinese restaurant in Jeddah, was married to a third-generation Saudi-Chinese partner through a series of acquaintance connections. His mother-in-law, though born and raised in Ta’if and possessing Saudi citizenship, had been searching for a partner from China for her daughter, in hopes of continuing the family’s heritage that could be easily forgotten otherwise. Now permanently grounded in Ta’if, Zahra reunited with her extended family in China through the latter’s pilgrimages to Mecca. A few days before my visit, Zahra’s elderly relatives from Xining had come for the ‘umrah to Mecca and Medina and received her care, leaving her joyful yet feeling hollow as she reflected on when reunions could take place again.

Yaqoub, who had spent more than five decades in Saudi Arabia after escaping from Xunhua of Qinghai Province in the late 1950s, had also considered marrying his youngest daughter to a partner from China. He decided against it, however, preferring to keep her closer to his side rather than increasing chances of her permanently settling in China. Instead, she was to be married to a “Bukhari” or Central Asian Saudi national, whose family her sister had gotten to know at her workplace, and accompany him to
Australia as he pursued a Ph.D. program. She herself would attempt to enroll in a Master’s program, provided that her visa issues in Australia – as a Taiwanese national residing in Saudi Arabia – could be resolved.

While he did not forge kinship relations with incoming sojourners from China, Yaqoub could make a return trip to Qinghai in 2015 owing to his acquaintance with traders from Xunhua who started conducting private commerce in the Gulf since the early 2000s. The new wave of Chinese Muslim sojourners in the Hejaz, whether for purposes of business or studies, had instigated interweaving of overlapping networks between persons who found common grounds. I met two of the traders at the engagement party for Yaqoub’s youngest daughter, held overnight in a hotel in Ta’if. While the party itself had been held in two completely gender-segregated spaces, at the breakfast buffet on the following morning, they welcomed me to sit with them. Of the two, the talkative and down-to-earth Aliyas had graduated from Medina’s Islamic University in the mid-1990s.

The ties of the same home region, together with business necessities, bound Yaqoub with Aliyas. Like many other Chinese Muslim graduates of Medina University, Aliyas’ religious studies branched off to the direction of long-distance trade. In Jeddah, his company was involved in the wholesale trade in white robes worn by Saudi males, which were produced in Xunhua and shipped in containers via Shenzhen. They had spent nine years in Dubai; with Dubai as a base, they ran around between different cities of Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina for business. Yaqoub’s eldest daughter, who did have Saudi citizenship, served as the company’s local sponsor in Saudi Arabia. This was in
accordance with the requirements of the *kafala* system in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf, which since the 1960s has made it mandatory for every foreign worker to find and pay a Saudi citizen or a company as a sponsor that would mediate his or her relations with the government administration. While the system has been portrayed as a formidable exclusionary force, *kafala* also worked to build new relations. As Aliyas explained, designating Yaqoub’s daughter as the sponsor was not only necessary for the company’s operations, but also provided steady monthly wages for her family.

Travels and sojourns have the effect of changing previously held fantasies about destinations, and can unexpectedly alter the future of the travelers. Besides prompting him to forge commercial networks and tap into existing diaspora communities in Saudi Arabia, Aliyas’s studies at Medina’s Islamic University made him turn critical of the very ideological basis of Saudi society that had led to the founding of the University. Aliyas could not comprehend the fact that Yaqoub, despite his residency in Saudi Arabia for almost sixty years, was not considered a Saudi citizen. Aliyas was familiar with Yaqoub’s story of escape from a small town in Xunhua of Qinghai Province, the nostalgia he held for home during long years of residence in Saudi Arabia, and the difficulties he faced without citizenship. In the eyes of Aliyas, Saudi Arabia as a country

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valued universal religion at the outset, but in truth, these were superficial words. Yaqoub, furthermore, was not the only person with whom he conversed. During his long-term stay in Medina, he also frequently heard of stories of his colleagues whose families were suffering from financial difficulties, even more so than, in his opinion, people in China. This stood in stark contrast to the popular image of the country’s wealth, which he interpreted as being confined to the royal family. He was also preparing to permanently exit Saudi Arabia, following its economic slowdown since the steep fall in oil prices in 2014.

The factors that inform individual choices are many. As Aliyas was on the verge of closing his company’s operations in Saudi Arabia, Suleiman, another graduate of the Islamic University who had come from Gansu Province, was continuing his work of religious propagation towards foreign populations in Ta’if. After graduating from the Islamic University in Medina in 2002, Suleiman chose to wear Saudi white robe and work for a da’wah missionary organization in Ta’if. I was introduced to him by Yaqoub’s nephew, a courteous religious policeman (mutawa’) who described Suleiman as a sheikh who was knowledgeable in both China and Islam. Suleiman gifted me Chinese-language pamphlets on Islam, along with a Korean translation of the Quran. His target population was arrivals from China and the larger East Asian region.

Before coming to Medina for studies, Suleiman had only heard about the existence of a granduncle in Ta’if. Suleiman, upon arriving in Medina, would reconnect with the granduncle, spending a decade with him until his passing in 2006. Over meals,
the granduncle would tell him of the hardships that he had suffered, the days that he
strived to make a living by sewing skull caps. In the middle of social upheaval in the
1950s, he had been classified as a bourgeois class enemy. In desperate search of life, he
escaped from Gansu through the way of Sichuan, Tibet, Himalayas to Nepal and India,
and arrived in Mecca utterly empty-handed. The soaring rent prices in Mecca prompted
him to move to Ta’if. He would sell the handmade skull caps in Ta’if, and in Medina
during pilgrimage seasons. Like many other refugees from China who had come to
Mecca during that period, Suleiman’s granduncle did not enjoy the benefits of
citizenship. His only family was his much younger wife, whom he had met in Nepal and
come together to Mecca. They had no child who could help with the family business.
Although they managed to open a small store in Ta’if, their life prospects never
recovered. After the passing of his granduncle, Suleiman stayed on in Ta’if to work at the
missionary institution that provided him residency permit. The job was not too arduous,
requiring him to work in the morning and afternoon; the salary was reasonable, and the
location was close to home. He could also take care of the grandaunt who had been left
behind without family, in a place where life was extra hard for women without male
guardians. Moreover, Suleiman reminded me, a prayer in Medina equaled 1,000 prayers
at home, and that in Mecca 100,000 times.

As we see from multi-faceted sojourns of individuals between Saudi Arabia and
China since 1979, Chinese Muslims across geographies rekindled ties of kinship,
commerce and religion, with or without the assistance of bureaucratic religious
institutions. The fading of Cold War geopolitics normalized traversable routes between divided blocs, and infrastructural developments lowered barriers in transportation and communication. For Chinese Muslims whose mobility had been severed, conceptual connections with distant places elsewhere materialized into real ones in multifold ways. At times, reknitting ties with distant homes from their base, whether in China or in Saudi Arabia, offered diasporas positioned in between these places social capital to break out of the boundaries conferred on them as foreigners or ethnic minorities. Interweaving long-distance ties was also a process of rediscovering the self, of acknowledging the perpetual state of travel between multiple home places as a defining pillar of one’s life and identity.

6.3. Everywhere and Nowhere to Call Home

At the same time, homecomings of multi-generational diaspora communities are ambivalent. Unfolding over long passages of time, their journeys to home are different from pre-arranged, predictable travel in which one is in control of its itinerary and is fully aware of where he would return to by the end of the journey. Whereas some actively reconnect with previously unknown relatives in their grandparents’ hometowns, for some others, what they grew up hearing as home places may no longer exist, or they may simply not be motivated to make the strenuous visit to unfamiliar places. In other instances, connections with distant home places are best left forgotten rather than enthusiastically celebrated. Homecoming in this sense can mean returns to multiple,
alternative centers rather than a single location, or it may remain an act that is unrealized till the end.

In contrast to the family of Hassan, for Yahya, a nephew of ʿUthman Lin Xingzhi in Jeddah, the home place in China does not necessarily correspond to the ancestral family home. To him, Shadian has stayed as an unvisited home. The new industrial centers of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, on the other hand, have offered an outlet to initiate his import-sales business. When pilgrims from Yunnan started arriving in Jeddah in the 1980s and stayed over in his house, they had admonished him for not being able to speak the Yunnanese local dialects. His far-sighted father and uncle, in fact, had taught the children Mandarin Chinese, consciously avoiding conversing in Yunnan dialects with them. This has allowed Yahya to easily join waves of small-scale merchants who have traversed between coastal cities in China and their home countries. He purchases small items such as cell phone accessories and electronics in Dongguan (industrial center between Guangzhou and Shenzhen) in large quantities to sell them back in Saudi Arabia. The online message platform of Wechat widely used throughout China, where conversations take place through audio messages rather than written ones, has made it even more convenient for people like Yahya to communicate with his agents in China using spoken Mandarin. To Yahya, inland provinces of Yunnan and Gansu, where most of Chinese Muslim communities in Saudi Arabia trace their ancestral homes to, are too far from ports to yield profit for his business. This has kept him from flying to Kunming at all, even as he visited China regularly once or twice a year. For him and others among
second and third-generation Chinese Muslims born in Saudi Arabia, returns to China mean visiting wealthy cosmopolitan cities on the eastern coasts.

The youth among the Sino-Saudi community whom I encountered, whose grandparents had migrated to the Hejaz decades ago, held mixed dispositions towards their families’ connections with faraway homes. Sara, a jubilant college student who lives in a girls’ dormitory in Jeddah, knows that her family on the father’s side had come from Bafang, the primarily Muslim district in Linxia of Gansu Province that we saw in Chapter 1. As a holder of Saudi citizenship, she receives a modicum of monthly stipend from the university. Her grandmother in Ta’if speaks broken Arabic and a bit of Chinese language that she does not understand, she tells me. Her mother, on the other hand, is a Pakistani person born in Ta’if, an English teacher whose father had come to Ta’if as a doctor some sixty years ago. Yet, Sara’s immediate interests on the eastward side of the world lie in Korean popular culture and language, rather than in places from which her grandparents had come. To her, I represent an intriguing epitome of that culture. She enthusiastically takes my number at a wedding and meets me again at a mall in Jeddah. Though the mall is close to the dormitory, this was an adventurous trip for her. By the end of the rendezvous, she confides in me with anxious excitement that this was her first time being out alone without the company of her brother or sister, and without getting permission from her father in Ta’if. I am her first foreign friend, she adds. She hopes to travel to Korea one day, and around different places in the world. Her biggest envy is her sister who is soon to go on a honeymoon to Hong Kong and Canton. She exchanges phone calls.
with one of the drivers at the dormitory, most of whom are long-term employees from different parts of India, and waves me goodbye.

Sara’s father, born and raised in Ta’if, understands with precision the reasons why he places restrictions on her daughter’s travels. The sociopolitical status of women in Saudi Arabia and its regulation, as Madawi al-Rashid has elucidated, has been shaped by the political project of “religious” nationalism that, by projecting religious revivalist movement of the Wahhabiyya as the basis for consolidating a political community, “constructed women into icons for the authenticity of the nation and its compliance with God’s law.”5 While bringing tribes under check, the state also retained “tribal ethos, which, among other things, keeps women in a patriarchal relationship under the authority of male relatives.”6

Rather than representative of simple repression, the position of Sara’s father has an aspect of performativity – to act as full parts of a society that is now the family’s sole home. Over our encounter in Ta’if, he asks me if I study anthropology or history. He himself, he informs me, studied sociology. What are the differences that I observe between the Chinese community in Saudi Arabia and others around the world? He asks. He moves on to stress cultural intermixing that occurs in different places – that when cultures mix, they create something new. When people move and settle, they inevitably

6 Ibid., 5.
adapt to the environment and adopt a new culture. That is the reason, he continues, there are many differences between Chinese communities in different places, even when they are Muslims. He points out that Chinese Muslims in America are very different from those in Saudi Arabia, for example. As settlers in Saudi Arabia, he implies, his family needs to abide by its social norms.

Others among Sara’s parents’ generation live with an acute sense of loss of past, and anxiety over further forgetting. Over the decades of post-World War II nation-building in Saudi Arabia, diaspora populations in the country have faced the pressure to erase the non-Arab roots and routes of their forefathers that encompass places external to the Arabian Peninsula. Holders of Saudi citizenship, although unimpacted by Saudization policies legally, have not always been inclined to embrace their families’ origins from elsewhere.  

Hanifa, whom I met at an ‘Eid celebration gathering in Jeddah, shared with me the feeling that her generation “knows nothing.” Her grandfather had taught near Haram after coming from China, and her father who had come with him had been capable of speaking classical and colloquial Chinese languages in addition to Arabic. She, on the other hand, knows that she has relatives in China, but is clueless about who they are or their whereabouts. Her father passed away several years ago. “We are in between Saudi

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7 Such dynamics for Fatani/Jawi communities in Mecca are illuminated in Muhammad Arafat Bin Mohamad, “Be-longing: Fatanis in Makkah and Jawi” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2013).
and China, and are neither Saudi nor Chinese,” she goes on to tell me. “When we go to China, they would say we are not Chinese, that we don’t look like Chinese. In Saudi, people would say we are not Saudi, even if we have Saudi documents and citizenship. So, we wonder if we are Saudi, or Chinese, Saudi Chinese, or I don’t know what (ma adri ish),” she laughs out loud. The real loss, she feels, is that of the language, which she cannot speak. Attending Saudi public schools further compounded the difficulty of retaining languages spoken at home. She later hopes to find a Chinese school in Jeddah to send her children. One of her daughters, though, has married a “Saudi man” and now lives in Oregon. There is no way to tell where her daughter’s own paths will take her.

As the elderly among the community pass away one by one, the remaining generations who do not keep tangible connections to China witness their pasts fading away. The first settlers in the Hejaz from different parts of China, as we saw in Chapter 4, experienced parts of both worlds, not fully fitting into the category of a single place or a nation. Their life trajectories were dispersed across multiple sites—in the liminal, intermediary spaces of travel and exile mediated by Mecca. Their children such as Hanifa and Sara’s father, although entrenched in Saudi society, are at least partially familiar with the journeys and struggles of their parents and grandparents. Should such pasts be remembered at all? If so, how? These are points of contention that do not always lead to a clear conclusion even within one family. They pose fundamental questions on the future direction of individual and corporate identity of Chinese Muslims in Saudi Arabia and their latent connections with home places elsewhere. Caught between the urge to inscribe
and transmit histories of their predecessors, and the explicit disconnect with such pasts (or the preference to leave them to be eventually forgotten), diaspora communities cannot easily decide how to claim belonging to multiple homes, let alone a single one. With everywhere and nowhere to call home, their returns remain underlying potentials to be uncovered.
7. Conclusion

Although the individuals in this dissertation represent only a portion of the diverse groups of Chinese Muslim populations, they present an indicative view of Chinese Muslims as a collective — as a people for whom real and imagined connections with external places have been central to their self-understandings and social mobility in multiple locales. The expansive geographies and histories that they explored and mobilized remain hidden from view within the physical and conceptual boundaries that are defined by the frameworks of ethnic minority, societies within a single nation-state, and Cold War legacy of regional studies. What we saw in this dissertation, instead, was the position of Chinese Muslims in the geographic and cultural middle ground between China and the rest of Eurasia that surrounds it. For this reason, they periodically performed connecting roles between states in this geography, while forging autonomous networks of commerce, pilgrimage, scholarship and kinship within its different segments.

This dissertation has shown how eruptions of unpredictable wars and political turnovers across Asia in the twentieth century sparked a sector of Chinese Muslims to create and reformulate extensive networks of kinship, scholarship, patronage, pilgrimage and diplomacy between China, the Indian Ocean world and the Arabian Peninsula. The wars and political vacuums, while deadly and destructive, also granted new opportunities for portions of Chinese Muslims to rise to military ranks and seize power as war-lords; undertake long-distance travels for commerce and devote a part of their savings for religious projects; to seek individual and collective political positions in new states that were in the making; and travel back and forth as informal diplomats. The series of wars
and political upheavals - from the Opium War, Taiping and Muslim Uprisings, toppling
of the Qing and Ottoman empires, the two World Wars, the Nationalist-Communist War
and up to the Cold War - ignited Chinese Muslims to once again connect segmented
networks within and outside China’s tenuous territories in the face of volatile
transformations.

More than forging and reformulating tangible networks, the protagonists in this
dissertation were keenly aware of the far-ranging geographies that were contained in the
pasts that they inherited. In the long history of Islam in China, the twentieth century
represented its most recent past. The very presence and livelihoods of Muslims in China
had evolved together with exchanges of goods, persons and ideas across maritime and
continental Eurasia for fourteen centuries, the intensity of which ebbed and flowed. At
different moments in the twentieth century, the imagined linkages across space motivated
travels, sojourns, exiles, settlements, and returns of Chinese Muslims back and forth
among dispersed places in, and importantly, between, multiple locales in China and
Arabia. Genealogical understandings of the past constantly shaped their refashioning of
collective representations. As they moved to and across different locales, the emphases of
their historiographical narratives shifted between China, Mecca, other places of sojourn
and residence, and the idea of the Islamic world.

In the conclusion, I recap the three main themes that have emerged throughout the
chapters: interdependent relations between internal and external spheres as shown
through Chinese Muslims’ real and conceptual engagements with Mecca and the Hejaz at
large; intertwining of various modes of Chinese Muslim networks with diplomatic relations at critical moments of initiating inter-state ties; and adaptability of ties of kinship, pilgrimage, commerce and acquaintances across pivotal historical events.

Extracted from textual sources and ethnographic observations, these points present a view of Chinese Muslims’ networks and imaginings that have been anchored on far-ranging sites, of a space that has evolved through time in interaction with changing circumstances. In the second part of the conclusion, observations by Fei Xiaotong on the potentials of Chinese Muslims’ expansive pasts and geographies, which had been inspired during his visit to Linxia in the wake of the PRC’s open-up-and-reform, aid us in reconceptualizing external connections as intrinsic aspects of Muslims in China.

7.1 Internal-External Reversions through the Hejaz

The biographies, itineraries and spatial conceptualizations of Chinese Muslims in this dissertation blur and reverse distinctions between the internal and external, challenging a common internalist understanding of society in the social sciences. The societies that Chinese Muslims formed have been dispersed and partial ones, which as a whole cannot be contained within a single territorial state that conventionally defines the boundaries of a society. Divisions between external and internal spheres have been arbitrary, as the two formed interdependent relations, characterized by back-and-forth exchanges that concurrently impacted both sides.
The lens of Mecca as a site and a symbol in this dissertation emerged from the languages that Chinese Muslims articulated, and the substantive engagements with the city that they accumulated over time. As Mecca oriented the mobility of Chinese Muslims, it guided us in grasping their far-ranging space-times. If Mecca and the Hejaz more broadly signified an external arena at certain moments, in other periods, it embodied the very internal ground where China, or specific towns or regions of it, came to represent a distant place of origin and potential return. Definitions of spheres of internal and external, in other words, constantly shifted depending on one’s base place and sentiments at a given time.

For the heterogeneous groups of Chinese Muslims introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 who ultimately sought to make their careers within a China that was in the making, Mecca, although an ambiguous space that represented both an imagined homeland and “foreign land,” provided a source of authority from the outside. Journeys to and from Mecca, sometimes a spin-off of travels to other destinations and at other times an objective in itself, introduced ideas and texts that provided language for Chinese Muslim writers to argue for religious and political unity of all Muslims in China.

Perhaps even more important than the circulated ideas were the shared spaces created by overlapping pathways of travel. On ships, in transit cities or in different kinds of lodgings, the radically diverse and dispersed groups of Muslims who traced their homes to within the tenuous borders of China came into encounter with one another. Those with the power of the pen forged new relations with their likes in this space and
circulated their writings through the print medium, empowering the rhetoric of inclusive unity amongst Muslims in China that on the surface erased differences between them all.

For those based in China, access to the webs of religion, politics and interpersonal ties that spanned multiple locales within and beyond China granted additional sources of social capital to Chinese Muslims who were a part of it. Historically, such connections had unfolded more tightly along contiguous geographies between western China, the Indian Ocean, and Arabia. New means of transport, however, combined with older modes and paths of travel, continuously remolded and expanded the routes of circulations. Extended chains of social networks strengthened the cultural nexus of Chinese Muslims, increasing their prestige in communities near and far, and also in the eyes of state entities in China and in the Indian Ocean arena.

Across chronological divides, Mecca and the pathways connected to it directed escapes, dispersals, and reconnections of Chinese Muslims. As this dissertation progressed by tracing individuals and their networks, the position of Mecca changed from a place of occasional pilgrimage and sojourn into a site of exile and permanent settlement that came to harbor a settled community of Chinese Muslims for three to four generations.

In schematic terms, Mecca switched from representing an external sphere to an internal homeland. With the formation of a tightly-knit Chinese Muslim community spread across Jeddah, Ta’if, and Mecca, coupled with the geopolitical circumstances of the Cold War and its eventual disintegration, the Hejaz turned into a stronger focus that
hosted encounters between different groups of Chinese Muslims coming from mainland China and regions outside it. The pilgrimage season common to all, and the logistics involved in it such as lodging, camping, and documents, created spaces for Chinese Muslims moving between Mecca and other dispersed places to gather, form new relations, and thereby further thicken circulations of persons, donations, and relationships across regions.

Chinese Muslim settlers in the Hejaz in the mid-twentieth century were latecomers into the social sceneries of Mecca. Mecca and the Hejaz at large has represented a collection of partial societies, a space where communities who are grounded within its internal society carry real and imagined external connections elsewhere. It has embodied a meeting ground of overlapping diasporas, where the shape of each diaspora society incorporates multiple locales and the routes that go through them. As we saw from first-hand accounts in the 1930s and 40s in Chapter 3, Chinese Muslim pilgrim diplomats in Mecca encountered, interacted with and undertook outreach towards diaspora populations in the Hejaz. These included not only persons who traced their hometowns to different areas of Xinjiang and Tibet — regions that pilgrim delegates representing either the Nationalist Party or the Communist Party regarded as a part of the Chinese nation-state — but also other communities from Jawa, India, Arabia and North Africa, and Soviet Central Asia who had constituted the Hejazi landscape from generations ago.
Chinese Muslim writers’ descriptions of diaspora populations whom they came across, in addition to scholarly research, are telling of the attributes of Mecca as a hub where exiles, scholars, refugees and other pilgrim settlers from across the Indian Ocean world and continental Eurasia converged. Not surprisingly, a stream of Chinese Muslims also utilized Mecca and the pilgrimage as a path of escape and refuge in the middle of turmoil in the mid-twentieth century, joining a handful of settlers from Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan Provinces who had preceded them.

7.2 Sino-Islamic Networks and Inter-State Diplomacy

Diplomatic journeys, then, were a subset of more longstanding routes of travel and versatile, open-ended networks that Mecca helped assemble, of which different strands of Chinese Muslims constituted parts. Since the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mecca as the site of the pilgrimage and a perceived center of the Islamic world after the Ottoman fall repeatedly attracted different parties who had a strong say on conditions of Muslims in China, or who were in search of allies for their newly formed governments. Informing the pilgrim delegates was the enduring concept of Mecca as the symbolic spiritual grounds for Muslim populations worldwide, and therefore, a universal arena for propaganda. They also had a calculated understanding that they could arrange meetings with diplomatic representatives from a number of countries gathered in Mecca during the pilgrimage season, including those of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
Before the popularization of air travel in the latter half of the twentieth century and initiation of direct flights between Jeddah and their home cities, pilgrimage to Mecca also incorporated transit points at major capitals and ports where activities of similar sorts could be conducted. It was, therefore, the whole space inter-connected with Mecca that the pilgrim representatives tapped into in order to navigate the potentials of jump-starting initial diplomatic relations between their states, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim-majority countries.

The pattern of Chinese Muslims who kept different political affiliations traveling as cultural diplomats, bearing explicitly the task of representing their nation-states, can be traced back to the years of World War II. In the years between the two World Wars, the emergence of the institution of a new international order regulated by horizontal relations between nominally sovereign nation-states meant that when functioning states were in place, diaspora populations with external ties such as Chinese Muslims often acted as diplomatic messengers between newly forming states. Such figures’ sensibilities, geographic familiarity, linguistic skills, and interpersonal connections carried over into the Cold War years.

For both the PRC and the ROC during the Cold War, the pilgrimage missions to Mecca were a part of their overarching efforts to win over allies in the international arena against one another through cultural propaganda and mobilization of diaspora populations. Similarly, the World Muslim League exemplified the Saudi royal family’s strategy of leveraging pilgrimage networks for its external engagements. Several first and
second-generation Chinese Muslims in Saudi Arabia became affiliates of the World Muslim League in Mecca, some of whom sojourned in Taipei as religious leaders. At a time when the presence of the PRC was minimal in U.S.-allied Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia was emerging as the most important energy exporter to newly industrializing countries in East Asia, Chinese Muslims between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia once again provided initial channels to mediate tightening relations between the two states, armed with propaganda on Islamic solidarity against communism. Conversely, upon the PRC’s reintegration into the international sphere after the end of the Cultural Revolution, pilgrimages to Mecca and the World Muslim League once again offered leeway for unofficial representatives of the PRC and Saudi Arabia to organize exchanges through religious emissaries, prior to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.

A history that is now memorialized only by select Hui academics within the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the PRC that emerged as the new governing party-state regularly benefited from linkages that Chinese Muslims had put in place across the country and abroad in previous decades. During moments of its initial diplomatic outreach to the Middle East, leaders of the PRC selectively incorporated and utilized Chinese Muslim figures who had switched their allegiances to the Communist Party, dispatching them as pilgrim diplomats, special envoys or propaganda messengers. This was so in the first years of its founding, and once again in the period of its opening-up after the end of the Cultural Revolution.
7.3 Events and Changing Shapes of Networks

The networks that were formed through specific events and circumstances carried potentials to change shape and pivot into different variations. This became most apparent with the victory of the Communist Party over the Nationalist Party in 1949, which signified a world-historic event that led to the exodus of more than two million people and firmly instituted the Cold War order in East Asia. While a number of Muslim figures who had been active politically pledged loyalty to the Communist Party and became its external diplomatic wing, Chinese Muslims who were a part of the two million escapees restructured networks of kinship, pilgrimage, religious patronage and texts outside mainland China itself. Now refugees of war, former Chinese Muslim governors, political associates, entrepreneurs, and public intellectuals were forced to cut ties with hometowns in mainland China and find new havens. They built or expanded enclaves of social and religious congregations in dispersed places of settlements — including western Saudi Arabia, Taipei, northern Burma/Thailand, Hong Kong, and Malaysia/Singapore — and joined preceding groups of Muslims from China who had arrived through more historical and organic routes of travel.

Rapid re-knitting of Chinese Muslim networks in the post-Cultural Revolution years once again has shown that the diaspora and religious networks that undergo periods of inactivity carry potentials to expediently forge new connections and revive old linkages at opportune moments. Chinese Muslim networks that had been radically severed within mainland China during the Cultural Revolution, and segmented outside it,
reconnected in full circle upon the opening-up of the PRC. The reentry of mainland China into the international political and economic sphere, and the simultaneous imminent end of the Cold War and the beginning of globalization in transport and communications, initiated returns, homecomings, and reunions of Chinese Muslims in multiple directions. Traveling back to hometowns they had left three decades ago, or which they had only heard about from parents and grandparents, different generations of Chinese Muslims who had lost access to mainland China during the Cold War connected with relatives, and rediscovered their personal and family histories.

From the other direction, the liberalization of religious and economic spheres in the PRC prompted the returns of pilgrims to Mecca through different official and unofficial channels. The official delegations were intended to smoothen relations between Saudi Arabia and the PRC that had had no official diplomatic relations. As the Cold War order unraveled, Chinese Muslims across regions assembled relations of kinship, entrepreneurship, and donations, some of which were continuous reformulations of past social ties, and others entirely new.

The dispersed and adaptable networks that Chinese Muslims interwove throughout different epochs of the twentieth century, and historiographical reconfigurations that crossed space and time, urge expansion of our geographical and our conceptual purview beyond the territorial nation-state of China. The “ethnic minority” or “minority nationality” scheme within the PRC, combined with historical and anthropological research centered on a single locality, has placed methodological and
conceptual limitations on uncovering the back-and-forth exchanges and imaginations that religious and diaspora communities assembled across multiple sites inside and outside mainland China. The populations who are now classified as “Hui” ethnicity (*huizu*), and other Muslim minorities (i.e. Salars, Baoan, Kazakhs), have in fact constructed interconnected communities across political borders of the province or the imperial/nation-state, along routes in maritime and continental Asia that changed according to different events and circumstances.

When partnered with states, Chinese Muslims’ far-reaching social ties have also regularly offered a medium for China’s central states to arrange initial engagements with entities in the Muslim West. Post-imperial state authorities in China attempted to draw in politically conscious Chinese Muslims as agents for securing entry points to both the westernmost Muslim regions within China’s tenuous boundaries, and states in the perceived Islamic world with which its borders were connected. These were spheres unfamiliar to governing parties in Beijing, Nanjing, Chongqing or Taipei. For leaders of emerging states that relied on Islamism as a political ideology, Chinese Muslims within their own domains, or those arriving as diplomatic emissaries, offered readily accessible conduits to coordinate relations with the ever-changing states of China.
7.4 Potentials of Chinese Muslim Geographies and Pasts: through Fei Xiaotong in Linxia

Even within the PRC, scholars and political figures in the 1980s articulated and capitalized on the potentials of China’s Muslims to perform connective roles between China and Muslim societies in Eurasia, beyond the diplomatic sphere.¹ For Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005), the founding figure of anthropology and sociology in China, the geographies and histories of Muslim communities residing in Linxia inspired an overarching vision of the revived silk roads through which China's economy would expand westwards. In this framework, Muslim "minority nationalities" would circulate goods between pastoral and agricultural economies in China's west and eventually expand markets into the "Islamic world."

Fei Xiaotong made more than a dozen trips to Gansu Province during the 1980s and 90s as a renowned public intellectual with political ties. After suffering from more than twenty years of banishment during the anti-rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution, Fei Xiaotong had essentially been tasked with rebuilding sociology in China. He assumed positions as the director of the Sociology Research Institute at the Academy of Social Sciences and president of the Chinese Sociological Association, and in the

¹ In Xinjiang in the late 1980s, provincial officials pushed for “double opening” of the province: towards domestic markets in coastal China in the east, and to the “Great Islamic Circle” of Soviet Central Asia and the Middle East through cross-border ethnic and religious ties. Gaye Christoffersen, “Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: The Impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning,” The China Quarterly, no. 133 (1993): 130–51.
1990s, professor of Peking University and director of its Institute of Sociology and Anthropology. He also served in important political positions, including as vice-chairman of the standing committee of the National People’s Congress and president of the Democratic League.² In such capacities, he traveled all around China and wrote about the trips that reflected his keen interest in invigorating rural economies, small-town industries, and development of western regions – subjects in which he had been deeply invested throughout his life since the 1930s.

The extent to which Fei Xiaotong’s proposals on Linxia and surrounding regions were realized is an entirely different topic. However, the overarching view that he had on Muslim “minority nationalities” helps us shift the discourse on Muslims in China from a potential security threat needing to be pacified either through military or economic means, to mediators positioned in China’s very underbelly whose assistance is critical for China’s rebuilding of historical silk roads through the eyes of China’s arguably most influential anthropologist.

It was in Linxia Prefecture that Fei Xiaotong witnessed the critical role of Muslims as commercial mediators between two different topographies and economies in the Gansu-Qinghai-Tibetan region. Upon visiting Linxia, Fei Xiaotong was pleasantly surprised at the briskness of Linxia -- the prefecture was surrounded by low hills on four

sides, the scenery was green different from other parts of Gansu, and Linxia seemed to be faring comparatively well economically. He realized that it had been barely three years or so since the prefecture emerged out of poverty. Linxia did not have enough land to feed the overall population and its industrial base was weak. How was it so, Fei Xiaotong wondered, that people in Linxia were rising from poverty?  

Local people's answer to Fei's question was that half of Linxia's populations are minority nationalities who believe in Islam, numbering about 510,000 out of 1.4 million, who are versatile in commerce. They had suffered when life had revolved around agricultural production and were most enthusiastic when the system was reformed. As the labor force was freed from villages to move around, some went out of Linxia to places in Qinghai, Tibet, Ningxia, Xinjiang as workers at construction sites. Others went to outside cities as artisans, visiting household by household, and not a small number of people were engaged in the transport business, which in turn stimulated the growth of the household-level handicraft industry. Linxia was ahead of all other places in Gansu in terms of the number of people working outside the hometowns, most of whom were Muslims. Han people followed their lead. In Fei Xiaotong's opinion, such outside

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Fei Xiaotong, “Linxia Xing (临夏行 Journey to Linxia) (October 1987),” in Fei Xiaotong Yu Gansu (Fei Xiaotong and Gansu 费孝通与甘肃), ed. Zhongguo minzhu tongmeng Gansusheng weiyuanhui (Beijing: Qun Yan Chubanshe, 2015), 158–70, 159.
connections and Muslims' propensity towards trade were propelling the growth of the prefecture.  

To explain the reasons behind the orientation of "Hui" ethnicity towards commerce, Fei Xiaotong did not look farther than the very histories of Muslims in China that explained their wide distribution, and the geographical position of Linxia at the intersection between the pastoral highlands and agricultural regions. As he went on to elaborate, predecessors of Hui ethnicity (Huizu) were people from different places in Central Asia who believed in Islam, who entered China’s interiors through the silk roads from early days on through oceanic routes. Upon reaching the coastal region’s various ports, they settled and initiated livelihoods. Called “foreign guests” (*fanke* 番客) at the time, they left graves in places like Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou and Xi’an that were still in place. The name “Huihui,” although appearing in a document from the Northern Song Dynasty, started to be in circulation since the Mongol Yuan period. The Mongol armies that swept across Central Asia in the early thirteenth century incorporated artisans, merchants and literary people in every place that they conquered into rear services of the military and had them work for military expeditions to remote regions. When the city of Samarkand fell, it is said that about 30,000 artisans were taken. These

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4 Fei Xiaotong noted that of the whole prefecture's some 500,000 village labor force, about 160,000 people go out for work, which accounts for about 33 percent. Of them, about 60,000 people are engaged in construction industry, 60,000 in gold panning, mining work and cutting trees, and 50,000 in commerce (major commodities being tea and fur). Ibid., 161.
Muslim troops entered different parts of Yuan China and started to live in concentrated groups in strategically important places, with the earlier and later settlers mixing with another and absorbing Han people to form concentrated groups of “Huizu” that differed in size. To Fei Xiaotong, “this piece of history explain[ed] that Hui ethnicity’s versatility in trade was a long-lasting tradition.”

Linxia’s connective positions between different topographic and economic zones, where multiple ethnicities converged, was also significant for Fei Xiaotong in conceptualizing the importance of the whole area. Fei pointed out that “Hezhou,” which historically referred to Linxia and its adjacent region Haidong in Qinghai Province, was situated in the transitional zone between the Qinghai Plateau and Loess Plateau, in between Tibetan and Han peoples, and also between agricultural and pastoral economic regions. Throughout history, Hezhou had been a strategic point of Europe and Asia, and a commercial stop for the silk roads. It was “not difficult, therefore, to see the region’s importance for flows of goods.” For this reason, Hezhou had been selected as an overland commercial port, a tea-horse trade station during the Ming dynasty. By then Hezhou already had a concentrated community of Muslims who had settled since the early Yuan period. One could easily imagine, Fei Xiaotong conjectured, that Hezhou’s

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5 Ibid., 162.
6 Ibid., 162.
designation as a tea-horse trade station strengthened already existing circulations of goods which had been undertaken on the hands of Muslims.

Observing Linxia left a lasting impression on Fei Xiaotong. “Such historical reflection gave me a deep sense of realization. Combined with the present circumstances, it seems as if before our very eyes, tea-horse trade station is being reinvigorated, and ‘silk roads’ are opening up again,” he stated. Fei Xiaotong encountered several private entrepreneurs in Linxia Prefecture who, upon the open-up-and-reform, quickly initiated family-scale handicraft industry and peddling trade between Linxia and Tibetan regions all the way to Lhasa, and accumulated wealth large enough for them to build new housing units. The persons he had met in 1985 included a young Hui man in Linxia Prefecture’s Guanghe county who, upon hearing in 1979 that there was a demand for fur robes in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, immediately purchased sheepskin on the streets, sewed a few robes, asked for directions on the way, changed vehicles a few times, reached Ganzi (in Sichuan Province’s Garze Tibetan Autonomous Region), and quickly made profits. From then on, women in his family stitched robes whenever they found free time. He traveled on his own for sales, and after four years, had been to every place of Ganzi; now his remodeled new house was in place.

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7 Ibid., 163.
8 Ibid., 160.
Another Muslim (huimin 回民) family whom Fei Xiaotong met in Guanghe county had similarly amassed a fortune by conducting cross-regional trade between Gansu and Tibet. This family of Ma Dawu, aged 35, consisted of eighteen persons. They started to produce leather clothing in 1978 and sold them to places in Tibetan areas in Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces. In 1981, they saved enough money to buy a truck and started transporting little commodities to Tibet. On the way back from Lhasa, they brought back wool, leather, and Nepalese woolen cloth materials. In Lhasa, Ma Dawu linked up with a Tibetan motor transport corps and together started a sales store. Later he opened one of his own and had another worker reside in Lhasa for an extended period of time. The family then purchased one more truck. Every week the truck would make one round-trip, and from that journey would earn 10,000 RMB. They had recently opened a sales department in Linxia city within Linxia county and also built a two-story resident at home. From 1982 the family started a partnership business with someone from the same village. What started from one household business gradually expanded, and now had seventy people participating in circulating goods between Gansu and Tibet. The whole village had only forty-two families, which meant that family after family in the village were doing sales in Tibet.\(^9\)

Ma Dawu’s family whom Fei Xiaotong met was one of many others who had similarly taken up trade through Tibet. A local person told him that now in Lhasa there

\(^9\) Ibid., 164 The village was Doujiahang Wangjiacun.
were about 600 families from Linxia, about 2,000 people, whose stores now occupied one street. Some had a station in Yadong (in Tibet’s Shigatse prefecture) and were doing sales through Tibetan and Nepalese intermediaries. Linxia’s private trucks were estimated to number around 1,000, and in 1985, it was said that the sales made through trucks transport amounted to about 240 million yuan. When a four-ton truck made a round-trip between Linxia and Lhasa, it could earn 3,000-4,000 yuan.\(^{10}\)

In Muslim peddle traders circulating goods between Linxia and the regions surrounding it, Fei Xiaotong saw not only the revival of past silk roads but a grand vision for the future in which channels of circulation would connect tightly within China and expand westward beyond domestic boundaries, through the medium of Muslim populations. With appropriate provision of capital, transport and storage facilities, different kinds of insurance, and transfers of technology from the east, small commercial enterprises in Linxia that now depended on sales and circulations of handicraft products, and transport business, would develop into modern industries as in the case of Wenzhou. For starting capital, instead of looking “up” to the state, entrepreneurs could look “down” to pool in collective capital, as had already happened in constructing Linxia’s tallest five-story “ethnic market” building in the center of the city.\(^{11}\) Western and eastern regions of China would construct co-dependent relations through horizontal liaisons (hengxiang

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 165.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 169. Each share was worth 2,500 yuan, and 150 families had bought a share. Shareholder had the priority right to rent and establish a store inside the building.
lianxi 横向联系) rather than top-down state-driven initiative, wherein technological skillset of China’s coastal regions would be brought into the west to nurture processing industries oriented towards the local regions, and the west would provide raw materials for the east. More broadly, the multi-ethnic corridor of which Linxia was a part would further serve as the bridge into the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau pastoral economy, a phenomenon that had already been unfolding, and in the longer-term, would eventually extend farther west into the Islamic world.

Fei Xiaotong concluded the account of his journey to Linxia by laying out the larger Muslim geographies to the west for which Linxia could serve as a connective link. He stated: “We should not forget silk roads in history. The international trade road on this land route started from Xi’an to include present-day Linxia and Haidong and stretched farther westwards. More deserving of our attention is that this road of trade passes by many regions where Muslim believers (yisilan jiaotu 伊斯兰教徒) are concentrated. Perhaps because of this reason, Linxia that lies on this trade road is called ‘Mecca of the East’ within the Islamic world.” He noted that private interactions between Linxia and Kuwait, for example, were already taking place. “These numerous Islamic regions and countries are precisely the markets that await opening,” he emphasized. One field that Fei

12 Fei Xiaotong cited an example of a family enterprise of an Ahong who accumulated wealth by purchasing 55 cows from the highlands Gannan Tibetan Autonomous region, transported them on trucks, fattened them during winter by raising them next to his house, and sold the meat in Lhasa after slaughter. Ibid., 166.
identified was Linxia’s food industry that could potentially develop alongside the pastoral economy of the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau, which would place Linxia in a special position in the “Islamic world market (yisilan shijie shichang 伊斯兰世界市场).” This broader picture was something that “we must recognize early on and use as a motivational force to accelerate the building of the Linxia region; it is a critical measure to re-open (chongkai 重开) silk roads.” 13 Such was an opportunity that China could not afford to miss by sitting idly.

More than personal observations and lectures, Fei Xiaotong made proposals on Linxia to central political agencies with a recognition that the social spaces of “minority nationalities,” evidenced by their histories and geographies, could provide a gateway for China to assert its place in Eurasia. Less than a year after his second visit to Linxia in 1987, Fei Xiaotong devised a proposal on constructing Multi-Ethnic Economic Development Zone in Upper Yellow River (Huanghe Shangyou Duominzu Jingji Kaifaqu 黄河上游多民族经济开发区). The basic idea was that Linxia and Haidong of eastern Qinghai Province would link up to form an ethnic cooperative economic zone and serve as a strategic base for developing pastoral regions of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Linxia and Haidong, although belonging to two different provinces, shared similar economic geography and ethnic makeup, and as they faced common problems, needed to strengthen

13 Ibid., 170.
channels of informational exchanges. Utilizing “the Hui minority’s skillfulness in commerce,” the zone would stimulate collaborations between Tibetans and Muslims, and between trade and pastoral economy, which would also promote agriculture. It could thereby provide grounding to promote the development of industries. Its more farsighted significance was that the district would be a stepping stone towards reviving “silk roads” and opening international markets in the west. China would enter Central Asia, West Asia and different regions of the Middle East, and provide all kinds of daily necessities to Islamic countries by bringing into play Hui people’s “ethnic advantage.”

The district was also conceived to be a rectifying measure against the low level of autonomy for minority regions in the west. Although Fei Xiaotong had been a part of the commission to classify minority nationalities in 1956, throughout the 1980s and beyond, he conceived of the “minzu question” to be an unresolved one in modern China. Even though “minority ethnicities were liberated in the political sphere,” he pointed out, ethnicities’ self-governance (zizhi 自治) performed practically no function, which

impacted the economic development of ethnicity districts.\textsuperscript{16} The Linxia-Haidong region would gradually push for rights of self-governance, including the right to conduct external trade, attract foreign investments, and to revitalize the financial sector. Linxia, considering its special position, could be the area to experiment with implementing the first level of self-governance laws. The proposal soon evolved to incorporate the four provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, and Inner Mongolia with the support of provincial authorities and was submitted to the CCP Central Committee and the State Council through the Democratic League.\textsuperscript{17}

The visions of the western Muslim corridor that Fei Xiaotong articulated through Linxia, along with his other farsighted and comprehensive ideas on developing the Yangtze Delta region and the southern silk roads, have striking resonance with the overarching directions of PRC’s leaders from the 1990s to the present. Recently scholars have even characterized Fei Xiaotong’s thoughts and plans as a roadmap, or at least a stimulus for the PRC’s latest strategy of the Belt and the Road Initiative.\textsuperscript{18} Shortly after visits to Gansu Province, as with trade routes to the northwest, he drafted a similar

\textsuperscript{17} Fei Xiaotong Yu Gansu, 62-63. The steps included building 12 hydroelectric dams and developing mineral resources.
proposals to reconstruct historical “southern silk roads” between the three provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Burma, India and Bangladesh, with an economic district at southernmost Sichuan Province (Panxi) at the center. The plan was inspired by his 1991 visit to the mountainous Liangshan (涼山) area, where “Yi” minority nationality are concentrated. Concurrently, Fei Xiaotong articulated a vision for the Yangtze River Delta in eastern China, in which Shanghai would come to substitute the role of Hong Kong as a global economic hub. The animated vision was that Shanghai would be akin to a dragon’s head, the two provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu its two wings, and the Yangtze River the dragon’s back. The proposal on Shanghai was submitted to the CPC Central Committee in 1990 again through the Democratic League and is said to have been officially approved and implemented.

This does not mean that Fei Xiaotong’s proposals on Muslim regions were immediately executed on either local or central levels. Especially for the northwestern provinces, despite Fei Xiaotong’s concerns on the necessity of developing eastern and

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19 His main concept was “one point, one line and one side.” A development district would be designated at the resources-rich Pan-Xi (攀西; Panzhihua 攀枝花 industrial district and Xichang 西昌), a region that is the meeting point between Sichuan Basin, Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau and branches of the Yangtze River. With Panxi as the “economic heart,” the southern silk roads would be the cross-border “transport arteries” between Sichuan’s Chengdu, Panxi, and Yunnan’s Baoshan 保山 and Dehong 德宏 and Burma, India and Bangladesh. With Panzhihua industrial district and Liangshan region as the radiating point, the whole southwestern region would be industrialized. This entire area that included provinces, plateaus and basin of Sichuan, Chengdu and Yunnan, where minority nationalities are concentrated, would constitute “one side.” Fei Xiaotong, “Dui Minzu Diqu Fazhande Sikao,” 110.

western China simultaneously, which was an opinion voiced also by other scholars in the PRC, the official implementation of “Great Western Development Plan (Xibu Da Kaifa)” was announced only in 1999. The plan produced mixed results and did not reduce the stark inequality between the two regions. Already in the early 1990s, Fei Xiaotong expressed worries about the ongoing projects of industrial construction and operations of large state-owned enterprises having little benefit to the local populations, and especially “minority ethnicities” inhabiting these regions.21 Although infrastructural projects have been implemented in western China since then, scholars seem to agree that the plan did little to reduce disparity between eastern and western regions.22 In the end, for reasons unclear at this point, Fei Xiaotong’s idea of Multi-Ethnic Economic Zone in Upper Yellow River or legal autonomy in Linxia did not get fully implemented.

Nevertheless, Fei Xiaotong as a lifelong anthropologist who viewed China itself as a society of sets of networked relations,23 expressed in clear and intuitive terms the vast pasts and geographies that Muslims in China possessed, and the bridges that they could lay down between China and Muslim societies west and south of it. In his view,

Muslims in Linxia and regions around it had at their fingertips all the areas that lay west to them. These included not only the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau but also Xinjiang and a series of Muslim countries in Central Asia and the Middle East. The potentials and advantages of their geographies were greater than those of the eastern region. As he recounted in a speech to Linxia’s executives, he even encountered a store that an “overseas Chinese person” from Saudi Arabia opened “while being overseas in Linxia.” He went on to point out that people in Linxia could go through Central Asia, primarily the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan and Pakistan all the way to the Middle East. “You people go about everywhere, you have friends and relatives in Arab countries too!”

What Fei Xiaotong observed in Linxia and the greater northwestern region in the post-1979 years represented the beginning of the latest tide of Chinese Muslims’ mobilization of external ties that would continue to intensify. Since then, and with greater intensity after the turn of the twenty-first century, Chinese Muslims of different social and geographical backgrounds have migrated back and forth between eastern and western


China, and between mainland China and different parts of West Asia, independent of state-owned enterprises. Their roles as language translators, cultural and commercial intermediaries, and the formations of new Sino-Muslim communities in liminal cosmopolitan spaces ranging from Yiwu to Dubai are beginning to attract scholarly attention.26

This dissertation has shown that what appears to be a novel phenomenon of late-twentieth-century globalization has a history, that it has protruded as a part of larger patterns in which Chinese Muslims throughout different periods and under changing regimes have consciously constructed and reconfigured networks across geographies in Eurasia, with Mecca as a major mediating ground. Recent efforts by the PRC to control and severe transnational connections of Muslims within its political boundaries are telling of not only the persistent impulse of states in China to regulate its religious sphere and their anxieties over borderland territories, but also amnesia over pasts in which one of China’s most vibrant commercial and diplomatic interactions with foreign entities had taken place on the backs of its Muslim populations who are now classified as minority nationalities.

To delineate the social spaces of Chinese Muslims and to grasp their imaginations across internal and external spheres, we only needed to turn to places elsewhere, to follow geographies that they drew across predefined territorial borders. The significance and potency of the Muslim minorities framework quickly fade away outside the context and territorial borders of the PRC. Following the mobility of individuals across time using textual and oral sources has made it possible to reverse the focus of analysis from ideological and political mechanisms of minoritization, to the actual networks and spatial perceptions that often escape our view. Doing so also brought into view other communities in the shared geographies, either different groups of China’s Muslims or diaspora communities in Mecca, whose past and present transnational linkages have not been adequately addressed on their own terms. In future research, they, appearing on paper and in person, will be our guides in giving shape to societies whose spheres of activity and senses of belonging have spanned seemingly disparate regions in Asia.
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Biography

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