Islam in China defines the Muslims of China, in particular the Hui (Chinese Muslims) and the Uyghurs. Concepts of nationality (minzu) and umma (Islamic community), and the penetration of Chinese culture or Sinicization, enable the reader to understand the particularities of Islam in China. Mosques, Sufism, feasts, and family shape the Muslim society and its ethos.

After the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, modernization plays an important role, and appears in the daily life of these Muslims through the impressive development of China which also influences indirectly Islam in this part of the world. China’s modernization constitutes a model for Southeast Asia and helps the Yunnanese Hui in Thailand and Burma to be proud of their country of origin. One chapter deals with these two countries and explains these unknown Overseas Chinese in particular in Chiang Mai and Mandalay.
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**Front Cover**: Khufiya Sufis at the Sacred Tomb of Ma Laichi (1680-1766), Linxia (January 2003)

**Back Cover**: Mahometan from Tali.

Islam in China
Hui and Uyghurs
Between Modernization and Sinicization

Jean A. Berlie

White Lotus Press
For my family, the living and the dead

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Introduction

"China is the safest and the best region on earth for the traveler."
Ibn Battuta

The world population includes approximately a billion and a half Muslims, among who are approximately 50 million citizens of the People’s Republic of China (officially 20 million). Islam plays a significant role in the country, even if it concerns only ten of China’s fifty-six official nationalities. There were nearly 400 million Chinese Buddhists at the beginning of the twentieth century, and there are currently 100 million. Catholics and Protestants would, respectively, be 4–5 million, and Taoists 2–5 million.

The Han Chinese control decision-making, but in order to communicate with the Middle East and other Islamic countries, the Hui (called “Ho” in Thailand and “Panthays” in Burma) are useful. Another major group researched here, the Uyghurs, occupy northwestern China, a part of Central Asia. These Muslims are not well known, and it is crucial to understand the role current Chinese modernization plays among them. This study attempts to explain the role of Sinicization or cultural change as a result of direct interethnic contact between the Han and Muslims in China.

According to an analysis furnished by the Islamic Summit of Doha, Qatar, on 12 November 2000, peace and development are the main problems of contemporary Islam. Modernization is necessary to achieve this goal. It seems useful to understand Islam and the Muslims from different viewpoints in order to find peaceful solutions between Islam and the world. The search for a durable peace, in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, concerns not only the government in Beijing but also Muslims in Central Asia.

Based on fieldwork in China between 1986 and 2004, the book details two Muslim groups among different Muslim minorities in China, Northern Thailand, and Burma (Myanmar) and seeks to promote a better understanding and knowledge of
Muslim communities in their host societies. Two in-depth studies of the Hui in Yunnan and the Uyghurs in Xinjiang Autonomous Region explain the history, society, and religion of these minorities. Chapter 5, based on research during 1990–2004, deals with the Hui of northern Thailand locally called “Ho,” Panthays from Yunnan in Mandalay, and Burmese Muslims in Ruili, Kunming, and Jinghong. Its main point is to evaluate the impact of modernization and Sinicization. The lack of influence of Sinicization on the Burmese Muslims in Yunnan is explained.

Modernity is conveyed via the acculturating filter of Sinicization. The Hui and other Muslims in China do not consider themselves as dhimmis (in Arabic, a minority) and generally accept their condition as a Chinese minority (minzu). Sinicization is a question of acculturation of the “others” by Chinese civilization. It creates an impression of public order for the majority and unites (tuanjie) all Chinese citizens.

Beijing’s cardinal principle is safeguarding unity. The law aims to enforce the national basic concept of Juguotuanjie, national unification or the unity of the whole nation. This principle is valid everywhere in the national territory, in particular in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. Similarly, China wants a unity or union (tuanjie) of all minorities, and this also concerns two “nationalities,” the Hui and the Uyghurs studied here. This principle of unification is not unique. In May 1754, Benjamin Franklin published in the Pennsylvania Gazette a cartoon entitled “Join or Die” preaching unity for the emergent American polity.

Modern China is unique in a globalizing world, and the Muslims of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are no exception. From the eighth century onward, Muslims were authorized to settle and to practice their religion in Chinese territory. Even if turbulent periods in the nineteenth century have shaken the Northwest and Yunnan, Chinese Muslims (Hui) always adjusted to Chinese society. In 1957, Yang, author of Islam in China, thought that the goal of the Chinese government was to “destroy all religions.” This was partly true in the past, but Islam in China as well as Taoism (Daoism), Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism are well defined by Document 19 of March 1982 and the new constitution.

Islam in China is not well known. Guangzhou (Canton), “the South Gateway of China,” is an ancient historical point of departure for the study of religions. The missionaries followed the seasonal winds in the Indian Ocean and China Seas. Arab pilots, and later Portuguese navigators, knew how to use the monsoon winds. Marco Polo (1254–1324) and Ibn Battuta (1304–77) described Canton’s religions and Islam, in particular. In 1345, Abu Abdullah Mohammed Ibn Battuta mentioned the practice of cremation for Chinese and Hindu funeral rites. During that period an important Muslim community resided in western Guangzhou. A distant relative of the Prophet is buried there. It also shows that the Hui–everywhere resident in China–live in cities with close contact in many regions (Canton is linked to central and northern China). Muslims reside on the main axis of communication. Guangzhou lies at the confluence of the Dong and Bei Rivers of the Pearl River system, China’s third largest. Canton was also one of the first cities marked by religious syncretism and by global business linked to Macao. In fact, the proliferation of religions existed in Guangzhou well before the establishment of a Portuguese settlement in Macao (c.1555), handed over as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China in December 1999.

One can ask if religion is a well-defined concept in China. The character for “religion” does not exist in Chinese; one should rather speak of “teaching” or “school.” Is the personality cult devoted to Mao Zedong also a religion? In Shaoshan, the Great Leader’s native city in the southern province of Hunan, I was able to discover the existence of effigies of him, jointly worshipped on domestic altars, with Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy (Avalokiteshvara). For Li Hongzhi, its founder, the Falungong (“The Wheel of the Law”) is a religion. Confucianism, not an institutional religion, is indirectly studied here. Confucianism influences Sinicization, which transforms the minorities via Chinese culture. Religion requires reexamination. Religion is a part of Chinese civilization, even if it does not occupy the first place as in India. No other civilization has, during so many centuries, served as a bond for so many people. The place occupied by religion in the society and its acceptance by the State has varied according to period. China does not give autonomy to religions, but freedom of religious belief has been inscribed in the constitution since 1954. Despite this, between 1958 and 1962, and during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76, there was intensive repression of all religion.

The People’s Republic of China recognizes only five religions. In theory, no other religion is officially accepted aside from Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. A spectacular return of religious belief is noticeable in the post-1980s modernization that drastically transformed China. Sinicization, the cultural contact with the Chinese, continues to produce an acculturation of all the minorities enforced for two millennia. Chinese Muslims, called Hui, did not escape this acculturating process during the last thousand years.

After thirteen years of total suppression, religious practices were re-authorized in December 1978. Churches, mosques, and temples began to reopen the following...
Chapter 1
The Setting

Islamization in China: A Brief Introduction

The 1300-year history of Islam in China saw the arrival of the first Muslims at the end of the eighth century. The Yuan (1279–1368) assured a golden period for Chinese Islam. The Ming (1368–1644) integrated the Muslims into the Chinese system, but Sinicization created serious conflicts under the Manchu (1644–1911). From the eighth century Muslim merchants followed the back-and-forth movement of caravans on the Silk Road (a term coined by Ferdinand von Richthofen) and the maritime route of the monsoons. Thanks to the perseverance of these first travelers, and to the resilience of the Bactrian camels, without which the crossing of the great deserts of Central Asia would have been impossible, the long history of Islam in China began.

The First Wave: 8th–14th Century

The first official non-commercial contacts of the Chinese and Islamic world date to the eighth century. A Muslim embassy left Fergana in 713. In 872, Ibn Wahhāb of Basra landed in Canton (Guangzhou) and was received by the Chinese Emperor, Yizong (859–873), whom he charmed with his magnificent collection of images of the prophets. In 1345, Ibn Batuta visited Canton, which became a prosperous Arabic-Muslim port, with a Shaykh (Shaykh), Islamic representative, and a Qadi to hand down judgments and to rule the local administration with an indirect power on religion. Muslim merchants took root during the first Islamization of the seventh to the fourteenth centuries and under the Ming (1368–1664). Then, under the latter
The Second Wave: (Sufi): 17th–18th Century

The second wave of Islamization—principally Sufi—coincided with one of the most brilliant periods of Chinese history, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The nineteenth century would be more dramatic. The uprisings from 1820 to 1876 in northern and southwestern China terminated with the end of an Islamic State in Yunnan and the death of its founder, General Sulaiman Du Wenxiu (1827–73). Du, whom the French officer Francis Garnier (1839–73) met, was, according to him, born Chinese (so his Sinicization is evident) and educated by rich Muslims from Dali. Shaykh Sulaiman had been slightly influenced by Jahariya Sufism. One cannot say that Jahariya mysticism was the key to his doctrine, as it was in Gansu and neighboring Ningxia for the Master Ma Hualong (1820–71), one of the greatest spiritual descendants of the founder of the order, Ma Mingxin (c. 1719–81). Some Chinese Muslims continued to call these Sufi members of the “New Islam” (Xinjiao). Perfectly valid before the last phase of Islamization, this appellation is no longer correct, if nonetheless common, since the implantation of Wahhabism.

The Third Wave: Late 19th Century—The Present

The third wave of Islamization—ikhwan—often in reaction to Sufism, marked the end of the nineteenth century. The “New Religion” founded by Ma Wanfu (c. 1849–1934), was inspired by Wahhabi doctrine. Sometimes considered anti-orthodox, the Muslim Brotherhood was most likely utilized by the Manchu Dynasty to eliminate Islamic anti-Manchu resistance. But this new Muslim expansion did not transform Islam to become, without conquest, the next “principal religion of China,” as the Russian Sinologist Vasilev forecast in 1867. In 1910, Marshall Broomhall and his numerous correspondents in all of the Chinese provinces thought this new religion more liberal than the “Old Religion.” In the present Hui Autonomous Region of Ningxia, some Han cadres (Chinese) also expect an increase in numbers of these Muslim Brothers.

Since the Tang Dynasty Islam has successfully overcome several crises, especially those at the end of the nineteenth century and of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). These vicissitudes have strengthened Muslims. The Chinese believe that their society has successfully assimilated the remarkable developments leading to drastic modernization during the period 1980–2000. Islam naturally expands. The current spiritual void could, in the long run, favor religions; however, it will be very difficult to convert the Han.

Muslim National Minorities and the Hui

There are fifty-six official “nationalities” in the country (including the Han majority), and this number is not open to change. China is an ethnic mosaic officially divided into ten Muslim minorities (minzu) separated into three groups.

The most numerous Muslim grouping is composed of the Hui, Chinese Muslims stricto sensu, the Uyghurs (called Huihu since the sixth century, then Huihe), to be discussed later, are the second, and there are also the Kazakhs, a majority in neighboring Kazakhstan. Kazakhs and Kyrgyz were the last Turkish peoples converted to Islam. Kazakhs and Kyrgyz are classified in the kipchak Turkic linguistic group. Since the 1950s the Chinese have attempted to settle all Muslim nomadic minorities of Xinjiang and, in particular, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Horses have become rare in the Uyghur Autonomous Region, a clear indication of the “sedentariness” of many nationalities formerly nomadic and of their increasing acculturation.

The second group includes the Dongxiang, Mongol Muslims who call themselves Santa, and who form an autonomous district in Gansu, the Kyrgyz residing in Chinese Turkistan, in particular around Aksu facing Kyrgyzstan, at the southern base of the Tianshan Mountains. Kyrgyz probably means “Descendants of Forty Maidens” according to myths of origin. The Salars, a group of Turkish origin of the Altai linguistic branch, also belong in this group.

The third group is composed of the Baoan or Bonan, the Tajiks, the only Shites (Shia) of China; the Tatars, few in number, but who have cousins with powerful international relations, operating from Helsinki to Kazan and in Western countries; and the Uzbeks. The Baoan live, as do the Salars, near Jishi Mountain. The ethnonyms Tajik could come from “Taj” the Arabic qualifier for Persian speakers or from “taj,” which designates the conic skullcap worn by Sufis. The Uzbeks are principally urban, living in the capital of Xinjiang and in the frontier cities of Kazakhstan, Yining, and Tacheng.

A precise demography of Islam in China is difficult to establish. While one speaks reasonably of 4–5 million Muslims residing in France, it is necessary to mention 50 million in China, even if the Muslim population of China dropped to
only 10 million according to the 1953 census to reach officially less than 20 million in 1990. Xinjiang is the only region where there are representatives of almost all Muslim minorities. Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is officially inhabited by almost half of the Muslims in China.

Among these, the Hui are the most numerous. In 1872, 4 million Muslims were counted for a total population of 400 million. Before 1949 they were 50 million. In 1990–92, the official statistics for the ten Muslim minorities mentioned fewer than 20 million representatives. The official number only increased by 2 million over ten years. The 2 million Muslims of Ningxia are the most important regional and provincial Hui population.

Minority status is sometimes considered inconvenient. It may be the case for the Uyghurs, who do not benefit from the economic advantages of the Chinese. The Hui situation, however, requires reflection. Some young Han complain that the Hui have quota for entry in universities. The following example shows a favorable case for the minority people, Cai Jingqing, a Muslim woman from Beijing born in the Hui quarter, and her three brothers, successfully completed graduate studies in the United States. However, it is generally much more difficult for Hui than for Han to have access to higher education. It is now necessary to pay high registration fees to enter a good university, and the Chinese majority is wealthier. However, children of mixed marriages often opt for minority status instead of taking their mother’s Han nationality (this is most common case among children of mixed marriages).

Three possible types of relations exist among the ten Muslim minorities in China and the Han majority: (1) Avoidance of the Han practiced by some rural minorities; (2) Resistance and eventual conflicts with the majority; (3) Acceptance of the Chinese minority system and the desire to have good relations with the majority, as in the case of the Hui.

**The Hui Minority**

Muslims were a religious group more than an “ethnic group” of the Chinese Republic (1911–49) among the five nationalities, becoming “minorities” in the 1950s. Current PRC policy excludes the Uighurs and the other eight Muslim minorities from the Hui. The Hui studied hereafter are one of the current ten Islamized minorities.

Hui, unlike other Muslim minorities, are a highly complex and mixed ethnic group exactly like the Han. That does not mean that Arab and Central Asian ancestors did not play the central role to shape their ethnicity in the beginning. The ethnonyms “Hui” has probably existed since the Liao Dynasty (907–1125), and it is also recorded under the Song in the eleventh century. For some six hundred years the Hui were also called “Huizhi” (“Moro” in the Portuguese-Chinese dictionary of Ruggieri and Ricci, compiled in the sixteenth century). The expression “Hui people” (Huimin) is preferred to Huizhao, a term that qualifies their religion. In the northwest, Gansu and Xinjiang, where they are numerous, they were formerly called Dungan (their current name in Central Asia). Contrary to most minorities, the Hui speak and write Chinese as well as the Han do. These Chinese Muslims often prefer to designate themselves by the term Musulim, but for centuries have been called “Hui” (meaning “Return”, that is, return toward their religion). They are one of China’s minorities (shaoshu minzu), and contrary to the great majority of these minzu, are not an ethnic group but a cultural minority. Minzu is a concept coined by the Soviet Union, but it became a tool to implement an ancient acculturation process, Sinicization.

Three main concepts are considered to define the Muslims of China in this book: Minzu (nationality minority), Muslim community, and Sinicization.

**Minzu**

Stalin’s four nationality criteria apply to China’s minorities and, in particular, to the Hui and the Uyghurs: a language, cultural life, economic life, and common territory. The economy and the language of the Hui are not significant criteria. The Chinese Muslims do not meet the official ethnic norms, for they inhabit the whole of China and their religion distinguishes them from other minorities.

Arabic is a language of origin of the Hui but is no longer their mother tongue. Mandarin dominates from Beijing to Lanzhou, and from Gansu to Yunnan, for there is only one national written language. However, because of its complexity and of the small number of linguists competent in Arabic and Chinese, the Koran was not fully translated into Chinese until 1932 (in Myanmar this translation into Burmese was completed in 1980). Acknowledging the languages of minorities in some regions and districts does not diminish the national language’s dominance, even in the autonomous regions. In relation to the other Muslim minorities, the Hui are at an advantage because their principal language is Mandarin (Putonghua).

Stevan Harrell calls the Hui (Chinese Muslims) the “strangest” minority in China, because religion, not ethnicity, distinguishes them. Is the official Chinese notion of minzu sufficient to define, for instance, both the Hui and the Tibetans?
Islam in China

The Hui, as do the Tibetans, have an identity centered on religion. For the Hui, the roots are their foreign Muslim ancestors, whereas for the Tibetans, Tibet is a central geographical entity—a notable difference of interpretation of religion in relation to two different minorities. Islam is a main component of Chinese Muslim identity, not ethnicity. A Muslim who violates the criteria of Islamic ethic is considered a “bad Hui,” but he/she absolutely cannot become a Han. Religious affiliation as such has no official recognition.

On the other hand, a Han may become Hui, something rare but not impossible. It is the case in the important port of Zaitun (Quanzhou) in Fujian Province—an ancient point of Islamization—where numerous Han succeeded in reconstituting their genealogies in the 1980s and once more became Muslims after centuries of oblivion. It is a complex but remarkable example. The identity of the Chinese Muslims is not constant. Some “new” Hui (a tiny minority) are in reality Han: they eat pork, very rarely enter a mosque, and generally do not meet other Muslims. Their identity card indicates “Huizu” (Chinese Muslim). However, they never speak in public of their rare “Muslim” identity. This also shows the power of Sinicization. In China it is easy to be a Han and sometimes difficult to be member of a minority. If one parent (generally, the father) is Hui, it is easier to behave in Han fashion and posit only the Han identity, even if under state laws the person in question is classified “Hui.”

For a Uighur, it is different. Nationality is more central than minzu status or identity, history playing an important role as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Muslim Community

Their Arab ancestors mark the past (the Hui sometimes say “we are also Arabs”), and their Islamic identity is currently crucial. This identity, woven during the long history of Islam in China is constructed around written traditions such as the Koran but is also composed of simple things such as cooking and feasts that bind the community. Arabic has been forgotten, and only Ahong can read the Koran in the original. A tiny minority among the elite speaks Arabic. Currently the only widespread foreign language and having a reasonable number of readers among the Chinese is English. Many Muslims do not much care about administrative concepts classifying them as an ethnic minority. In general, their religion counts most for them.

Islam is concerned with religion but also integrates the social and religious lives of its believers. The community bases are the family and the mosque. Places of worship are the center of the Islamic religious life from birth to death, passing through feasts such as Sacrifice Day, Guebangjia, Korban, or Idul-kebir. Few authors, Western or Han, mention the central role of the mosque. The orientation of all the mosques in the world, except for one in Medina, is toward Mecca.

The believers are brothers without discrimination. The community is initially the group of those who profess Islam, read the Koran, and observe its laws. According to circumstances, it is the “loose” concept of the umma (in Arabic, community) or the national identity minzu (nationality) that officially defines the Hui. The socialization of a Hui, his position in the Muslim community, is a function of age and sex. The Islamization in China occurred thanks to the merchants, and it is thus in the cities where many Hui live.

As a result the term “ethno-religious” group for designating the Hui seems the most appropriate, for Islam is central to their identity. The majority are traditionally attached to what they term “The Old Religion” (Laojiao or Gedima). So in Yunnan, Hui call themselves “Old Heads.” Almost all Hui are Sunnis of the Hanafiite branch. Marxist Chinese scholars speak of three “sects”: the Old, the New (Tihewani or Wahhabi), and the “emerging” sects.

Hui have a national identity based on the concept of minority (minzu), but as Muslims, the community continues to play a central role. To be Hui is to be Muslim. The term umma appears around forty times in the Koran, signifying “people,” “nation,” and also “community.” Almost all human communities, and particularly the Islamic community, are centered on the family. It is around the mother that the family revolves. Take the case of a friend from Kunming who lost his wife in 2000. Her death was terribly painful to him. He had also a passion for books. So, he received the first shock in his life during the Cultural Revolution when, in 1966, Red Guards took away all his books. However, Islam and his family make up the hard core of his ethic. At present, his daughter perpetuates the central role of the mother; she comes to see him every day in his old age. Family and the mosque are truly two key elements of the Hui Muslim community.

Sinicization

Islam, taught to the Hui through Chinese characters, has a Confucian flavor. Interestingly, there has been a recent tendency of “modern” Muslim leaders such as former President of Indonesia, Wahid, and Dr Sami Angawi, an organizer of the pilgrimage in Mecca, to praise Confucian values. It is enough to note the influence of Chinese
characters among the Hui to have an idea of their strong cultural impregnation (Sinicization). In 1642, for example, Wang Daiyu (c.1584–1670) was the author of one of the first Islamic works in Chinese Zhengjiao zhenquann [Correct Religion and True Koranic Annotations]. He draws a parallel between the five pillars of the Koran and the five Confucian virtues. Islam in China is tempered by Sinicization. The point is not really a good knowledge of Chinese characters displayed by Muslim poets such as Ding Henian (1335–1424). What interests me is the acculturation, the penetration of Han culture into the Hui’s everyday life.

The most ancient sites of Chinese mosques (displaying a network) are found in Canton, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, and Xian, the largest being in Xian, Lanzhou, Xining in Qinghai (photograph 3), and Kashgar in Xinjiang (photograph 19). Muslims are mainly localized in the northwest (Xinjiang), north and Ningxia (“The Koran Belt”), and the southwest (Yunnan). The Hui mainly live in these regions but are spread throughout the whole country.

Chapter 2

Islam’s Ubiquity in China

Under the Tang Dynasty Dashi, “Arabs,” were known as early as 638, and their importance became significant in 756 when Calif Al Mansur lent some of his troops to Emperor Suzong (756–762). These Muslims later became Hui, but in Central Asia called themselves Dungan (Tungan). Uyghurs (Huihu until 1911) are the most numerous in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The Hui: An Omnipresent Community

Before dealing with modernization and Sinicization, to better define the Hui, this chapter has noted that they live everywhere in China. For Émile Littré, ubiquity is a whole, “the state of that is everywhere.” Muslims occupy the whole Chinese space (see map “Muslims in China”) and are as flexible as bamboo in adapting to Chinese civilization despite the Koran’s inflexibility. For more than a thousand years, Muslims have “tranquilly enjoyed their liberty” without attempting “over much” to propagate their religion (Thiersant). Among dominant Chinese, this is a sine qua non for Islam’s survival in China.

Their ubiquity is evident. Muslims are numerous in north, northeast, northwest, southwest China, and even in the central provinces such as Sichuan. Two thirds of China’s Muslims, Hui, Uyghurs, and Kazakhs, live in the autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Ningxia, in Gansu, and in Qinghai. Henan and Yunnan have each a Hui population of nearly a million.

Merchants in the beginning, they followed the main routes of communication. Hui live along the Yellow River in Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Shandong. The Great Canal, the Blue River, Changji-
Islam in China

Ang, the road between Beijing and Tianjin, are the main axes of transport and communication with a high density Hui population. Historic ports such as Canton, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, provinces oriented toward Southeast Asia, Yunnan and Guangxi, and railroads have favored Hui networks.

Hui Muslims live in harmony. They actively participate in what Fernand Braudel calls the "exchange." They like to establish themselves in cities, where they participate in inter-provincial exchanges that are facilitated by their high adaptability. Vissière (1911) found a monastery of 5,000 lamas in Gansu, between Qinghai and Sichuan, in Labrang. Xiahe; the Muslim community consisted of only a thousand Hui survivors, who sometimes married Tibetan women (at that time, the dominant society there was Tibetan). Vissière studied families with one son lama and the other Ahong. In 2003, in Labrang, the Hui prospered and their numbers increased, and they currently comprise half the population.

At the close of the nineteenth century, in Mongolia and Shaanxi, the Muslims numbered only 50,000. They are now officially 400,000, including a Hui population of 200,000 in Inner Mongolia. Hui and Mongols played a historical role, and contributed to the development of business, animal husbandry, and agriculture in this region. The Chinese are currently dominant in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. Many Hui were forced to migrate and left Guihua, at the end of the nineteenth century. This capital now called Huhehui, "The Blue City," is officially divided into three administrative zones: a suburb is Hui, and the two other Han districts are called Xinxu ("The New Quarter") and Yuquan ("Jade Circle"). Muslims represent approximately 18% of the total population of half a million inhabitants. William Jankowiak believes that Hui and Chinese of this region share an identical family organization. Sinicization has accelerated this process in Inner Mongolia.

The Autonomous Region of Ningxia has approximately two million Hui residents. In Gansu and Henan, they are respectively two million and one million. Before the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), Luoyang and Kaifeng, historic cities south of the Yellow River, included Hui merchants and craftsmen. Some became farmers despite their lack of inclination for agriculture. Muslims sometimes exiled themselves or were pushed into the countryside by urban Han migration coupled with their more efficient business networks.

At present, the Hui population in Yunnan does not reach yet a million, compared to an official total of 20 million in China. The decrease in population (more than four million Muslims before the Second World War) is partly due to emigration to Southeast Asia and Taiwan. Only in the northwest, on the road to Tibet, does one find few Hui. In Yunnan, they are numerous in the following cities and districts: Kunming (the capital), Songming, Xundian, Zhaotong (east and northeast); Yuxi, Tonghai, Huaping, Kaiyuan, Gejiu, Mengzi (center); Chuxiong, Xiguan, Dali, Weishan, Baoshan, Ruili (West); Puer, Simao, Jinghong, Menghai (southwest); and Yanshan and Wenshan (southeast).

Hui social mobility is explained by the following short biography. In Yuanyang, a Muslim restaurant owner, Ma Mang ("Ma the Illiterate") one day told us the story about Wenshan's imam. We were able to meet the imam later in his mosque. He was born 200 kilometers to the west, in Jianshui District. He arrived in Wenshan in 1945 with his wife and first daughters. In 1949, to avoid problems he took up residence in Mokou, where he taught Chinese in the public school and Arabic at home, in the evening. Like the old imam of Kaiyuan, he was an educator. During the Cultural Revolution, he and his family returned to their native village, near Jianshui.

The Ahong had spent most of his life in Wenshan, a quiet and small city. In the front line during the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979–80, Wenshan became very busy. A tactical road was quickly built toward Kunming. Imam Xu returned to Wenshan in 1978 and took charge of the new mosque in 1985. The only mosque in the district, located in a Muslim village, was destroyed at the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, the local Islamic Association, received 100,000 Renminbi (USD 12,500) from the government and managed to transform a large private residence into a mosque. It can accommodate forty Muslim travelers; some workers benefit from this rare privilege. As a rule, travelers cannot stay overnight in mosques, in particular foreign Muslims must stay in a hotel registered by the Department of Tourism. In 1994, Imam Xu was still active but just before his death a young Ahong, who recently passed his Koranic examination, replaced him. In 2002, Imam Xu Jianu, eighty years old, died quietly.

Xu's four daughters and three sons are all married, and he had eight grandsons and six granddaughters. His sons and daughters, following the example of the eldest daughter, working for the Family Planning of Wenshan, have only two children. This strict application of state policy under the family leadership of the eldest daughter shows that even a rather traditional Muslim family is deeply influenced by Sinicization.

In the Autonomous Region of Tibet, I visited the principal mosque of Lhasa where Muslims of China, India and Nepal meet.
Hui are in fact more numerous in the north, in Qinghai Province. The great mosque of Xining was rebuilt in the 1990s. Except in the cities of Changsha, Shaoyang, and Changde, an acculturation of Islam is apparent in Hunan. Islam regressed in this province. On a hillside of western Hunan, surrounded by Dong minorities, in Xinhuan, on the Wu Shui River, I arrived on the day of the Feast of the Sacrifice, hoping to find the whole Hui village busy. Around the small mosque, there was nobody: the villagers were all in the fields. Two or three years earlier, I had met the family of an Ahong deceased in the 1990s. Recently a son of the deceased imam mentioned that the Islamic Association of Hui no longer provided the Muslim calendar. The imam was not replaced at his death, and so the villagers did not realize the day on which this feast (Idul-kebir) fell. The sheep market, a former source of wealth for the village, had also disappeared. Despite unfavorable conditions, this village is still Hui.

Contrary to this case of de-Islamization, Uyghurs are present in Hunan and practice their religion. Following Xinjiang’s Sinicization at the end of the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of them were displaced to Changde, in the north of the province. The construction of the main mosque started in 1933. The presence of Uyghurs also explains the existence of two other mosques in Taoyuan. A hundred kilometers further north, a flood had destroyed Li Xian’s mosque (1751); it was reconstructed in the 1920s and restored in 1983. The following observations on mosques will help understand Muslim ubiquity in China.

Mosques

In China as in the Muslim world, mosques are the center of Islamic community life and of Koranic education. Muslim places of worship are often close to important roads, rivers, railways, or maritime communication. They do not benefit from advertising, so it is not easy to find them. We find historic mosques in the south, on the maritime Silk Road, and also along the Yellow River. The most ancient are in Guangzhou and Xian, the largest being those in Xian, Lanzhou, Xining, and Kashgar. At eight o’clock, the number of Uyghurs in the streets for the great Feast of the Sacrifice was already impressive, most of Kashgar’s Uyghur people go to Aidkah (Aidikaer) Mosque (there is another mosque sharing the same name in Prome, Burma).

Dabry de Thiersant describes the Chinese mosques (libaisi) as follows:

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In stone or in brick, they generally consist of a rather large building, covered with a Chinese roof, surrounded by a porch, and situated in the middle of a square courtyard, around which are situated places of lodging. The fountain for ablutions is in the courtyard, generally to the right. The temple consecrated for ceremonies has ordinarily of a square form. The walls are red, a privilege also reserved for Confucian temples (this color totally disappeared in the current new style of mosques common in the modern China of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao). Inside, one finds no paintings, no benches, no chairs, except in the classrooms for Koranic courses. At the entry-facing the east—is an altar on which lies a tablet with an inscription in Chinese wishing long life to the emperor (ten thousand years). [This no longer exists] [. . .]

Rugs or carpets cover the floor. The whitewashed walls are decorated with verses from the Koran, in Arabic calligraphy. On the western face, is a niche, painted in red and gold pointing towards Mecca.

There are more than 40,000 mosques in the whole country, and nearly thirty in the city of Linxia (Hezhou), called the “Small Mecca,” in Gansu Province. In neighboring Burma, Sittwe has a hundred mosques as in Kashgar, Xinjiang. A rather small percentage of Hui go to the mosque every Friday; this is not the case in Linxia, as in most Gansu, Xinjiang, and rural Yunnan, where Muslims are strict. Going to the mosque on Friday and during Muslim feasts is a universal Islamic rite binding the community together. For Jacques Berque, describing it, “the Friday assembly reunites the heads of family, synthesizes that combination of emptiness and fullness, of immobility and movement, of immateriality.” In Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, many Muslims in other times were employed in the center, beside the mosque. This is no longer the case. Because of these professional constraints, the place of worship is currently empty on Friday (only ten Hui come regularly to pray), contrary to the adjoining crowded Muslim restaurant serving an important Hui and Han clientèle. Imams regret this situation, and in 1993, one of them, a Yunnanese, left Nanning because Islam was not prospering there. He remained in charge of this mosque for four years and preferred to return to his province. An elderly imam from Tianjin took his place, and, at his death, was replaced by a young Ahong.

Muslim believers travel from mosque to mosque. Ibn Battuta, the great traveler of Tangiers, also used these Islamic structures throughout his long trip in China; a network of influential Muslim friends, qadis and sultans helped him. At present when Hui belong to a state enterprise or travel as tourists (as so many Chinese do
nowadays) they are generally taken in charge by a government travel agency and have no time to visit mosques. This is generally not included in official tours except, perhaps, in Xian and Kashgar (a huge department store recently opened nearby).

Clothing does not distinguish the Hui from other Chinese nationals, but the mosques are landmarks, not only for Muslims in China but also for the universal umma. Muslim residents identify themselves by their particular mosque, generally the one nearest to their residence. But sectarianism exists and members of the “New Religion” (Yihewani) frequent their own place of worship, sometimes located far from their home. In the same family, some can be Xinjiao and others could follow the old Sunni majority current, Gedimu. Hui do not often go to a mosque on Friday, though most attend the great Feast of the Sacrifice, the end of Ramadan, and the Prophet’s Birthday in the worshipping place of their community.

During the Cultural Revolution, almost all mosques were closed, except the main mosque of Lanzhou, Gansu. Many were reconstructed in the 1980s. It is the case of the wooden pagoda mosque near Changning, western Yunnan, which is two hundred years old. Red Guards sawed off its magnificent minaret in 1966. In the north (Ningxia), the great square mosque of Tongxin, more than five hundred years old, was reconstructed in 1990. Its green and red minbar, where the imam gives his sermons, is a marvel of Ningxia. The Cultural Revolution spared it from being looted. However, in a district having a population including 80% Hui, another marker of Sinicization is indicated by the number of Hui cadres members of the Communist Party (1,500, or 70%, compared with 30% Han).

In China, as in the Muslim world, mosques are the center of community life for the Hui, Uyghurs, and Kazakhs. It is also a Koranic teaching-center. China being a socialist country does not have cultural politics oriented toward the construction of madrasa, and young children cannot study the Koran in their parents’ mosque. Thiernant (1878) and Marshall Broomhall (1910) reproduced an inscription from 742, recalling the five Islamic pillars, located in the ancient mosque of Xian (Changan). It was called Qingjiaosi (Pure Religion), and in 1335 became a Qingzhensi. The name, “Pure and True Pagoda,” which designates the mosques, is often unknown to other Chinese. The Islamic community defines itself by purity and truth (qingzen). This term has been used since the Ming Dynasty and poses a question. Why Qingzhensi does not keep the root masjid (in Arabic) followed by the Malay speakers (mesjid) and the Turks (mescit)? Starting in 1998, the historical name Qingzhensi is often replaced by Chaocihenban (“True Temple”) in Yunnan Province, and this is even stranger.

Xu Xueqiang, who did intensive studies on China’s urban system, thinks that the success of the development policies on the period 1978–90 “should not be questioned simply because problems of unbalanced development were encountered.” However, as a consequence of intensive modernization and rapid urbanization, which is expected to accelerate in the future, the ancient Chinese style of mosques is disappearing. Reconstructed mosques are modern buildings in a Middle Eastern style, “politically correct.” Hui are still profoundly attached to their Arab ancestry, and the new religious identity expressed in this modern, but not especially artistic, style certainly reflects what may be an unconscious will. More probably, it is another mark of Sinicization, a new and modern Chinese name.

The main point seems to be a deliberate will toward modernization. One can ask if this new architecture is truly of Hui inspiration. This rather neutral style, trying without success to be universal, eradicates history. In adopting this new “look,” the young generation forget the past. Thus, the ancient and beautiful mosque of Kunming in Zhengyi Street in the town center, instead of being restored, has been razed to make room for a modern monument, but these cultural changes cause the disappearance of the historic “pagoda style.”

Maris Gillette, in her work on Islam in the ancient capital Xian (2000), shows that some older Hui prefer the ancient Chinese style. Others find that “mosques should have a style different from that of the Han.” These new places of worship, sometimes rapidly constructed, do not often have, from an architectural point of view, the beautiful appearance of ancient mosques. When Chinese Muslims return from Mecca they are evidently happy to find a style recalling the pilgrimage. But these new mosques are often, as at Kunming (Zhengyi and Shuncheng Streets) and Chengdu (Renminnanlu), constructed to replace magnificent 500-year old Islamic places of worship, capable of being restored or still in good condition. These ancient places of worship go far back into the history of Chinese Islam, which is thus forever effaced.

The Islamic Association, interested in good economic relations with rich countries, such as Saudi Arabia, often causes these new mosques replacing ancient mosques to be financed by generous international donors, and sometimes these international relations facilitate new commercial networks. Is it a question of a new artistic taste to shape a new Hui identity or an economic orientated program? The new modern style eradicates history and tends to create a new cultural taste.

A Hui from Yunnan, PhD student in Hong Kong, was surprised when I explained this process of acculturation, but after awhile he realized the question of eradication of historical Islamic culture in his province. Hong Kong investors have also
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contributed to the recent modern reconstruction of Kunming mosques and may, after gaining economic advantages in a province well-connected with Southeast Asia, have wisely advised sending the best students to Hong Kong. This destruction of historical and cultural Islamic heritage is not unique to China. Chauderlot (2004) reported the disappearance and demolition of Beijing’s ancient houses and lanes (huong). The character chai (“demolish”) inside a white circle means pulling down artistic ancient residences (or mosques) to implement modernization and attract investment to new suburbs in Beijing as well as in Kunming.

Mosques in North and Northwestern China

The village of Changying, on the road to Tianjin, twenty kilometers from Beijing, has five mosques, two of which are exclusively reserved for women. For the Islamic Association of China (Zhongguo Yislanjiao Xiehui), gender is an important issue.

Beijing possesses typical mosques such as the seventeenth century one in Oxen Street (Niujie), the point of departure for the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca promoted by the Islamic Association. More recent Dongxin Mosque is among the most popular for Muslim foreign diplomats.

Urumchi in Xinjiang Autonomous Region has more than twenty mosques. The largest, Shanxi, was built in 1736. Nanda, a famous mosque built in 1919, was restored in 1987. “The Large Alley” (Kuanxiang) dates to 1720. Five were constructed in the nineteenth century: Xida, Cuyuan, Ninggu, Balikun, and Salar Mosque (in principle dedicated to Muslims belonging to this minority).

In Kashgar, in addition to the large mosque Aidkah, built in 1524 and reconstructed in 1798, which symbolizes the greatness of the city, one finds Daxi (Great West).

In Yining, the Hui mosque was built in 1760. That of Turfan, dating to 1778, features an impressive central tower. Shanxi mosque in Hami was constructed in 1881 and restored in 1983 after the Cultural Revolution.

In Inner Mongolia, the magnificent Dasi Mosque at Hubehot was built in 1693. This major city possesses six mosques.

Mosques in Southern China

Until the ninth century, a large part of western Canton (Guangzhou) was Muslim. However, for a long time, Canton had showed a tendency of expanding eastwards, the Chinese part of the city. In 879, a hundred thousand Hui were massacred during a drastic period of Sinicization, but the Islamic community managed to survive. In 1192, Huasheng Mosque (Guangta) and its minaret were constructed. It was restored in 1351 and 1669. The old Muslim cemetery, not far from the central train station, is a remarkable historic Islamic site of the region. It was restored several times during the centuries—in 1350, 1467, 1695, and 1935. Its small mosque is located near one of the tombs of a great Arab pioneer, Saad Abi (Abu?) Waqqas.

Four thousand Hui currently live in Guangzhou. To develop its economy, the Islamic Association opened a large halal restaurant in the 1990s. Guangzhou’s other mosque, Xiaodongying (built in 1866), takes its name from ancient military barracks (ying).

Zhaoqing (Guangdong) was also an ancient Hui garrison city and has had a mosque from the mid-eighteenth century. It was restored for the Feast of the Sacrifice (Korban) in September 1984.

The Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has an important number of Muslims, currently some 30,000. The cities of Guilin, the former provincial capital, Liuzhou, and Nanning have a significant Muslim population. Once again, the Hui are found on the principal routes of transport and communications. Many live along the road linking Guilin and Nanning, the administrative city that holds the largest number of Hui families after Guilin. Between these two cities, the industrial city of Liuzhou possesses a small mosque built in 1673 (reconstructed in 1878 and 1923). I was able to meet the imam, a Yunnanese. He was probably replaced, the Islamic Association being in favor of lowering the age of leading Ahong, a policy also applied in Nanning. Some of the young imams often consult the community on important matters, others let the managers of the mosque (guanshi) play their financial and administrative role but tend to use their own politico-religious power to guide the local umma despite their youth.

Guilin now counts only a thousand Hui; the Han immigration has been very important since 1949. Going by road to Liuzhou, one comes to the District of Lingui, where the Muslim population consists of 10,000 inhabitants. The small city itself is the fifth Muslim agglomeration in the region after Guilin, Liuzhou, Nanning, and Lingchuan, north of Guilin. Nevertheless, Guilin remains the largest regional Islamic center, Nanning being depopulated of Hui workers who probably moved to Liuzhou or even Guangzhou thanks to their fluency in Cantonese. There are
five mosques in Guilin, one supposedly reserved for women. Gusi ("The Ancient Mosque") dates from 1664.

Lingui possesses five mosques, and one of these is located in Laocun (the "Old Village"). The two ancient mosques of Yongfu, between Guilin and Liuzhou, bear the names of Suqiu ("Bridge of Suzhou") and Cheng ("Within the Walls"). Pingle Mosque was built in 1736 near the bank of Gui River, on the road to Guilin.

Baise, in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region controls the entry to Yunnan toward Funing and Kaiyuan. One evening in 1987, in its small one-floor mosque (built in 1906), I was questioned by local authorities who suddenly appeared. It was forbidden to interview Hui without special authorization. I was accompanied to my hotel and compelled to show my bus ticket. A spectacular socio-political change took place in the 1990s concerning research and liberty of travel for foreigners. The next day I entered Yunnan by Funing, a border-town linking Yunnan and Guangxi.

**Mosques in Yunnan Province**

This province will be studied in detail in Chapter 4. The Hui are settled throughout the whole of Yunnan but shows less dynamic modernization because of the remoteness of many districts. Coming from Funing, after Yanshan one finds Muslims and mosques everywhere along main roads and key cities.

Under the Yuan Dynasty, there were ten mosques in Kunming. Six still remained open in the nineteenth century and survive today. The French consul in Yunnan, Georges Cordier (1927), rightly noted the existence of six mosques in the capital. There are currently almost 5 million inhabitants in Kunming, including 100,000 Muslims residents. Four among the six mosques were reconstructed and "modernized" between 1997 and 2003. So, in 2003, only two mosques were ancient, the others being newly rebuilt Qingzhensi. Wu Jianwei, author of a fine monograph in Chinese, curiously mentions only one mosque, Shuncheng, the headquarters of the provincial Islamic Association. This ancient mosque (a Chinese Muslim pagoda) built in 1425 and restored in 1927 and 1988 was demolished and rebuilt in 2003 in a new style. The new designation of this mosque, Chaoshendian, symbolizes a Yunnanese deliberate will of modernization coupled with a lack of interest in heritage.

For the last international exhibition of the twentieth century (1999), the city was entirely transformed. Jinhbi Street became a large avenue; the ancient mosque of pagoda style was amputated of one side, and most of the century-old plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) disappeared. The oldest street in the city, opened in the thirteenth century, lost a third of its ancient houses. The street is nevertheless cleaner, but the Hui marketplace has lost its charm as have many suburbs. This type of urban modernization is not unique in China, but the designation Chaoshendian for mosques in Yunnan imposes a type of modernization leading to the almost invisible acculturation process of Sinicization. The cities are transformed and history is eradicated. This does not favor Muslims, and history is consequently rewritten. Elsewhere the modernization process occurs in populated Muslim suburbs, such as in Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, and even Guangzhou, cities completely transformed and modernized. In other provinces, for the Olympic Games of 2008, the Muslims of Beijing and Shanghai have to follow rules of the implacable-but clean and universal-process of modernization drastically transforming many Chinese cities (toward the twenty-first century?).

Yuxi is an important Koranic center where numerous Ahong from Yunnan and the neighboring provinces have trained. The retired imam of Jamia Mosque, the oldest in Hong Kong, studied the Koran there. Yuxi has three mosques, not counting those in the neighboring villages and Eshan. There are nearly 40,000 Hui in this booming district of 4 million inhabitants. Xiying Mosque, in Yuxi, was built in the seventeenth century, and Dongying ("Eastern Barracks") opened in 1875.

The principal mosque of Eshan, Wenming ("Culture") is said to date to the Ming Dynasty (sixteenth century). It was reconstructed in 1895 and after the Cultural Revolution. On the ancient caravan route to the south, this district is currently crossed by a superhighway toward the Red River. Mojiang is the most sacred Sufi mosque in the province. Sipsong Panna (Xishuang Banna) mosque is recent (1980). The Hui population in this district includes more than 20,000.

In Huaping, the ancient mosque Panxibeimen (1856) is located 40 kilometers east of Eshan, not far from Tonghai, and its community includes a thousand Hui. Muche Mosque known from its trees was constructed in 1938, during the Republican period.

Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, Tonghai in central Yunnan was a wealthy Hui district known for its indigo dyeing tradition, weaving factories, brick industries, and flourishing agriculture. At present, light "carpets" of dried turnips (luobosi) are sold as far as Japan for their high nutritive value.

The population counts more than 10,000 Muslims. I found numerous ancient Muslim tombs (gongbei) there. The favorite disciple, the adopted "son" of Ma Mingxin, is buried there (the second most sacred Jahariya shrine in Yunnan after Mojjang). A modern mosque in a Middle Eastern style was built in 1985. The construction of
this large mosque of Najiaying was financed by a loan of 20 million yuan (USD 2 million) from the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi Trustee Association. Two other mosques include a Yunnanese Jahariya Koranic School. Nearby, Dahuiqen ("Great Muslim Village") possesses a large Jahariya mosque (photo 10) and a Hui population of 3,000 villagers. The majority are disciples of Imam Ma Liesun, who was imprisoned for many years in Gansu. The other farmers follow the Yunnanese Order.

The ancient mosque of Kaiyuan near the train station, on the Chinese Railway linking Kunming to Hanoi via Hekou, built by the Société Lyonnaise, is an excellent Koranic center. The imam, a quite aged schoolmaster, is famous for his methodology for teaching Arabic. This district includes 20–30,000 Hui.

Gejiu District has a long Islamic history; the Muslim community is centered on tin mines and business. These Hui were particularly active during the construction of the railway in 1900. This city now counts more than 12,000 Hui, including Jahariya Sufis. The main mosque, Baifangzi ("White House"), was reconstructed in 1980.

During the Cultural Revolution, this region was the center of a Muslim uprising. More than a thousand Hui died, together with a hundred armed police inspectors. The city of Shadian was practically razed to the ground. The Lianhuatang ("Lotus Pond") Mosque was reconstructed in 1990 on a large area of a thousand square meters. It has three stories and a minaret. Its style is neither Middle Eastern nor pagoda-like.

Jianshi features a mosque built in 1313, one of the oldest in the province, and often reconstructed.

Mile, on an ancient caravan route, was revived with the construction of the strategic Wenshan-Kunming Road, built in 1980 to accelerate transportation between the capital and the front of the deadly Sino-Vietnamese War (1979–80). Mile has five mosques, the most ancient located in a village named Pengpu. The mosque at Bajiao was constructed in 1940. Two others were rebuilt in the 1980s. More to the east is Niujie ("The Oxen Market"), an ancient Muslim cattle market. Luxi has six mosques for a population that includes nearly 12,000 Hui. All the nearby mosques were built during the twentieth century, except for Taoyuan ("The Peach Garden") Mosque constructed in 1856.

Muslims were numerous in western Yunnan. Under the Mongols, Dali was a center of Islamization after it was conquered in 1253. Before 1873, there were five mosques in Dali. The oldest mosques were demolished after the fall of Du Wenxiu's State. His personal mosque was razed after his defeat, and two Muslim centers were later transformed into Chinese pagodas. At least two mosques remain open in the city, not counting numerous small mosques in the surrounding villages. Xiaguan, an important crossroads with a railway station opened in the year 2000, has two mosques. A population of 70–80,000 Hui lives in this prefecture.

Chuxiong has a small Muslim community, centered on a single mosque; the Han have replaced the Hui on the main crossroad on the highway between Kunming and Dali. Opened in 1999, the expressway has, however, reduced the importance of Chuxiong, which is no longer as it had been for centuries—an important stopover on the Burma Road. It is still a strategic crossroad toward Sichuan, Mogjian, and south Yunnan, and Muslims continue to reside there. The main center on Burma Road, Xiaguan, retains its importance as an industrial center and has a strategic position on the road to Baoshan, and Ruili at the door to Burma. Ruili displays its modernization and Sinicization by replacing a small Burmese place of worship by a large and modern Chinese mosque.

Weishan (Mengshe) was formerly linked to Dali by a small and muddy road. This explains why Islamization was delayed, four years after that at Dali (1257). The armies of Kublai Khan, including many Muslims, were slow in their southward progress. One of the reasons for the strategic delay of the Mongol armies was the resistance of Mengshe, a Tai principality, and another includes the difficulty of transport and communication in this isolated, hilly, area of Yunnan. The current Muslim population of Weishan Hui Autonomous District is 4,000. With its twenty-two mosques, this center of the former Nanzhao Kingdom (Nanchao) has been called "The Little Mecca of Yunnan."

Baoshan features an ancient one-story mosque reconstructed in 1845. Imam Ma Pinde, a passionate reader of Yunnan's history, probably returned to his birthplace, Dali. The Islamic Association replaced him by a young Ahong.

**Mosques in Shanghai Municipality and Other Provinces**

In the autonomous City of Shanghai the Hui are numerous. There are eight mosques, including a small one reserved for women. Shanghai's Peach Garden (Taoyuan) Mosque, constructed in 1917, is the Islamic Association's headquarters. The most ancient place of worship is named Songjiang (1341).

Another ancient mosque (1368) is located in the capital of Jiangsu, Nanjing (Nankin).

In Jiangxi, Nanchang's mosque is small, but that at Ku Shan, built in 1922 (reconstructed 1980) is larger. In Jiujiang, the mosque, built in the fifteenth century
south of the Blue River, controls the entrance to Anhui, a province open to the outside world. More than 300,000 Muslims currently live in Anhui.

Hubei confirms an important point of this study. Muslim communities are centered on crossroads and transportation lines. On Liberation Avenue (Jiefang Mahu) in Wuhan, numerous halal restaurants corroborate the will of the Islamic Association to catch up with Chinese economic growth. Wuhan, a large industrial capital, established its first mosque in 1723 (renovated 1986). It is situated south of the city, near the confluence of the great Blue River, Yangzi, and Han River (Han Shui). This Han waterway is an axis of penetration toward the Islamized provinces of Henan, Shaanxi, Ningxia, and Gansu. Upstream are the cities of Xiantao, Xiangfan, and at the limit of Shaanxi, Yunxi. Each town has a mosque, the oldest, built in 1881, is called Xichuan (“Western River”). Three hundred families can meet there to celebrate Muslim feasts. In Hubei’s second city, Shashi, the main mosque was built in 1459 near the Yangzi River, and currently occupies 600 square meters.

Shaoyang in Hunan is famous for its four mosques. The most ancient, Gusi Mosque (built in 1368) contains antique steles, unfortunately no longer very readable.

In Chengdu, Sichuan, China’s ancient capital, the wooden mosque of the Ming Dynasty, nearly five hundred years old, in People’s Street, no longer exists. The largest ancient mosque was also previously demolished and never rebuilt. Modern Renmin Nanlu Mosque, constructed near the famous standing statue of Mao, is impressive but lacking character. Reconstruction of mosques in new styles eradicates the history of Islam, which is elsewhere revived by the re-Islamization of tenacious Hui survivors who abandoned Islam during many centuries.

Re-Islamization in Fujian Province

A key instigator of Fujian re-Islamization was the Hui association of the “Five Families” (Wuxing Hui) including the following surnames: Bai, Ding, Guo, Jin, and Ma. The Ding clan is numerous in this province, particularly in Quanzhou, as well as the Ma, the most widespread surname among the Hui. Initiated by the Muslim National Society in 1940 and pursued during the post-1949 period at Chendai, not far from Quanzhou, discussions occurred between the Ding family and the Bureau of Religious Affairs in order to bring them back to the Islamic religion abandoned for centuries. Only in 1978, after the Cultural Revolution, did these negotiations begin to bear fruit, as Ghidney (1996) and Wu Jianwei (1995) have explained. In 1991, on an area of 500 square meters, a place of worship was finally reconstructed.

Quanzhou (Zaitun in Arabic) is one of the first points of Islamization and a famous port on the maritime Silk Road. The descendants of the Ding, and others clans, were recovered in the 1980s and became Hui again, (partly) abandoning their Chinese identity in order to recover their Arab-Persian roots (twentieth generation).

After this long administrative procedure, in the 1980s, nearly 50,000 of these former Muslims recovered their ancestral belief after centuries of oblivion. So, in Quanzhou, Hui became Han and are after many centuries again a Muslim minority. Accepting that, the Chinese government has corrected the mistakes made during the Cultural Revolution, and re-Islamization acts in a positive way. Imams from other provinces had to come to teach their religion to these religious survivors. The provincial Tourist Bureau took advantage of this process to attract Muslims investors from the Middle East to develop the region.

The ancestral Arabic cemetery, established in the eleventh century on the Lingshan hillside near Quanzhou, was also completely restored. The tombs, attributed to two imams, disciples of the Prophet, Sayyid, and Waqqas, are once again under a Chinese roof. Provincial authorities did not lose time and proclaimed this site a sacred place of universal Islam. These mausoleums, as well as the large Ashab mosque in Quanzhou, are, in fact, a historic Muslim heritage.

In the capital of Fujian, Fuzhou, the mosque in North Street was built in the thirteenth century. In 1541, a fire destroyed it, and it was reconstructed in 1549. As in Quanzhou, there was no brutal cessation of Islam for centuries.

In Xiamen (Amoy), an experienced imam from Gansu left Fujian Province after construction of the new mosque. Following the current trend, he was replaced by a young Ahong in the 1990s.

The mosque at Shaxu, halfway between Fuzhou and Nanchang, has three roofs. The main road and the navigable river between these two provincial capitals again demonstrate the ubiquity of the Hui along the principal axis of transport and communications. Using all modern means of transportation, some Chinese Muslims currently travel far away as in the past, although less than the Han. From the 1990s, each year there are more Muslims from China and Fujian going on the Hajj. Mecca and Medina are part of the compulsory Muslim rites of passage.

The Hui and Uyghurs in Mecca and Islamic Universality

In Mecca and Medina, past and present unite. One of the most famous Chinese Haji is Admiral Zheng He (1371–1435) of the Ming Dynasty, who made his first
pilgrimage in 1405. The Admiral was more fortunate than Ibn Battuta, who, suffering from a stomach illness, was forced to circumambulate the Kaaba seated on a chair, and later rode a horse given by the Emir to reach Safa and Marwa. But, when he arrived in Mina near Mount Arrarat, the great Tangerine traveler recovered well. He remained in the region and revisited the holy places between 1328 and 1330.

Nowadays, each year, thousands of Hui and Uyghurs figure among the 2 million pilgrims from the whole Islamic world. Beijing is generally the official departure point for Chinese pilgrims.

The Haji, completed once in a lifetime, is one of the five pillars of Islam, but should not cause financial, familial, or physical risks for the pilgrim. Several months in advance, the Islamic Association of China sends official applications for visas to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Beijing and the Saudi Consulate in Hong Kong. Other Chinese nationals may apply individually in Bangkok, Pakistan, or Central Asia. It is a heavy financial burden for the future Haji, whether Hui or Uyghur. It currently costs a minimum of 30,000 yuan (around USD 5,000), an important sum for a Chinese, compared to only USD 700 for an Iraqi pilgrim in 2004 (now free to undertake this religious duty after three decades of restriction).

The Chinese government currently imposes less rigid conditions than in the past to issue a passport. Travels through Thailand, Central Asia, or Pakistan are probably the best alternative routes to Mecca for the Hui of southwestern China and Xinjiang’s Uyghurs. Central Asia is cheaper. Our main Uyghur informant in Kashgar offered plane tickets to his both parents to Mecca from Kyrgyzstan for the second time. The capital, Bishkek (formerly Frounze), well connected with Saudi Arabia, is linked to Kashgar by modern buses. Since 1992, life has been much less expensive in Central Asia than in China [Kyrgyzstan and three other Central Asian countries have economic problems linked to the non-convertibility of their currencies. Kyrgyzstan has received hundreds of millions of dollars in credit from the World Bank and the United States. The economy is shaky and inflation higher than in China]. So, for Uyghurs in Kashgar, it is the cheapest and cheapest country. Security is also better, compared to traveling by bus to Gilgit and Lahore in Pakistan. For the Uyghurs, Beijing, and Hong Kong are far away.

Consequently, in 2003 and 2004, the number of Chinese Haji continued to increase. Linxia (Hezhou) District sends more than 1,500 pilgrims annually. Some, such as the illiterate brother of a Haji cadre from Gansu, went to Mecca via Hong Kong.

**Present Organization of the Hajj**

Hui and Uyghur pilgrims, aside from those traveling alone via Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, or Thailand, must follow a course of preparation in Beijing at Oxen Street Mosque. This course gives religious instruction as well as information about the climate, culture, and accommodations in Mecca and Medina, and even advice about changing money. To enter Mecca and Medina, two official guides (mutawif) per group are imposed, one for each sacred city.

Before arriving in Mecca, the pilgrims must shave the head and put on a new white cotton cloth (ihram) after bathing. For women, the white cloth covers the entire body, and the face is normally hidden. For the 2 million worshipers, despite the intense security, the pilgrimage is not without dangers. Casualties were reported in 2003 and 2004. One must follow all the rites and be prepared, as Abel Turki has noted, for an immersion into a “human sea constantly in motion” around the Kaaba. Since the 1980s this sacred symbol and the Mosque at Mecca have been exhibited in Hui and Uyghur households. These images can be bought in shops neighboring in China’s main mosques.

Before leaving Mecca, pilgrims drink water from the sacred well of Zamzam (Zamzam). The pilgrims must also run seven times (women walk) between Safa ("Large Rock") and Mount Marwah ("Hard Silex"). The drawing-point of the pilgrimage is the great “station.” The foot of Mount Arafat and its thousands of tents welcome the future Haji arriving on foot, by car, or by bus. Taxis are numerous, and each trip is subject to haggling. In 2003, there were 44,000 shelters of white canvas for the night preceding the Feast of the Sacrifice, each in a well-defined location. That night (10 February 2003 and 1 February 2004) marks the psyche of some pilgrims more than the seven circumambulations of the Kaaba. Then, in Mina, for the feast itself, a sheep must be purchased and sacrificed in memory of Ibrahim (Abraham). This rite is obligatory, as are the circumambulations in Mecca’s main mosque. If one is omitted, the pilgrimage is invalid.

There are also a thousand reasons to be lost during the movements from one sacred place to another. At some distance from Arafat, at Mina, there is another “station.” One must gather up forty-nine pebbles as large as chickpeas. These are thrown seven times (7 x 7 = 49) on the “Satanic” pillars. This is a dynamic rite of separation from the devil, another sine qua non rite of passage. At present, three steles symbolizing Satan simplify the ritual (continued until 13 February 2003). One day of farewell terminates the first cycle of rites.
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The pilgrimage is not finished at this stage, a visit to the holy places of Medina also being required. This oasis plateau, situated at 600 meters, renowned for its date trees, enjoys a more pleasant climate than Mecca situated some 400 kilometers to the south. A popular saying records that “he who patiently endures Medina’s cold and Mecca’s heat merits paradise.” The mosque of Mariya, the Prophet’s Copt wife, mother of Ibrahim, is one of the forty places of religious worship in Medina. It is useful to take three liters of water from Zemzem for the trip to Medina, to drink and for the ritual washing (wudu) before carrying out the salutations near the Prophet’s shrine in the Holy Cemetery (Al-Bakia). One must walk barefooted over the whole sacred site. A visit to the Saints’ Cemetery is also an emotional shock for many pilgrims.

Pilgrims from China and Selected Life-Stories

The existence of a community is fully confirmed during the pilgrimage. These different life stories explain the faith of the pilgrims. East of Dali, in a small village a half-hour by foot toward the Lake, Ma, a former butcher, dreams at the community (umma) to save his life. In 1998, after fifteen years of hard work, his restaurant and his cattle had sufficiently enriched him to be able to reach Mecca with his wife and father, the village imam. As a Haji, he became a notable, but suddenly his life collapsed. His daughter, mother of a young son, was obliged to divorce. Mrs. Ma accused her husband of incapacity and direct responsibility for the family misfortune. Haji Ma wants to return to Mecca to end his life there but has no more money. Moreover, Haji Ma speaks neither Arabic nor English.

The Jahariya Order would prosper in Yunnan after the year 2001. Among Yunnanese Jahariya Sufis the Master was able to make his third pilgrimage in 2001, and in 2003 again returned to Mecca via Bangkok with four disciples. The pilgrimage is the main door to the Islamic world. This symbolic form of universal Islamic faith also integrates the Sufi community and even the Sunni and Shia alike. It follows the line of Haji Ma Mingxin and Shaykh Ma Tengai who died on 20 July 1991.

In 2001, following the leader of the Jahariya community, two murids Jahariya left for Kunming and Mecca, one having been invited to join the official Chinese delegation. Two hundred other Chinese VIPs were also official guests of Saudi Arabia in Mecca’s most magnificent hotel during the Hajj.

Each year Ningxia is the point of departure for hundreds of Haji candidates. Tongxin District has a Muslims population of 400,000, of which 20% are Jahariya. In 2003, fifty became Haji. To celebrate her departure, a lady of this city invited Imam Ismail Li and fifty persons. Later, she left for Beijing on 12 January and for Jeddah on the 15th. A local cadre named Ma was also present. The most extraordinary fruits, confectioneries, almonds, raisins, and other sweetmeats were displayed. Many attendants said: “Help yourself! Help yourself!” but no one dared to taste these sweets. They were all waiting for a signal of the imam to start to eat. Finally, the imam, who had not been to Mecca, spoke, and in his speech explained to the future Hajj that the pilgrimage stands for an Islamic pillar but God is more important. The experienced imam had preached for nearly fifteen years in the ancient mosque at Xian and was a respected member of the Muslim community. Suddenly, Imam Li decided not to embarrass further the devout Hui lady. He got up without eating anything, thanking everyone, and went out followed by all the attendees except the Party cadre and myself. I asked this cadre if the Jahariya mosque was far away, and the lady immediately persuaded him to accompany me. He could not decline. Once in the courtyard of the mosque, Mr. Ma refused to be photographed, made his tires squeal, and finally drove away in his car decorated with two crossed red flags behind the windshield.

The present events in Saudi Arabia (twenty-two killed in Khobar on 29 May 2004) have an indirect impact on the future security of the pilgrimage, on Islam in general, and its relationships with the West, on the world economy, and on China. Saudi Arabia was previously linked to the “jihadic” and Talibam movement against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and now fights Al Qaeda. Wahhabi official discourse, which has been adopted by the Saudi ruling family, influences universal Islamic discourse. But what is the correct Islamic discourse in the mind of the Saudi people and the Hui majority? Al Qaeda? The Wahhabi? Or another discourse? These questions are not discussed here, but they concern China’s silent Muslim community.

Community and Ubiquity

Muslims are found everywhere in China. Hui are numerous in the Autonomous Region of Ningxia, and in other provinces, in particular, Gansu, Henan, Xinjiang, and Yunnan.

Chinese Muslims are above all businessmen. In Yunnan, for centuries (they date their arrival to 1253), and following historical highs and lows, the Hui controlled caravan traffic until 1950. Thanks to Deng’s reforms of the 1980s, some Hui began
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to be re-engaged in road transportation. In southern China, Muslim ancestral knowledge of the transportation networks is useful. They currently own trucks, and thus ancient commercial links are revived. The Hui are omnipresent in Yunnan, except in the province’s northwest corner. Haji Ma from Changning, not far from the Burmese border, in the 1980s established a prosperous family enterprise owning its trucks, buses, and taxis. Other Muslim companies followed this development pattern in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. However, Xinjiang and the Autonomous Region of Tibet recently became regions of intensive Han migration. Before the 1990s, the Han were a minority in these regions; they are now a demographic majority controlling the whole economy.

The Hui, as well as other Muslim minorities, are not really isolated and receive news from the Islamic world, mainly during the Hajj. Chinese Muslims serve as “middlemen” with the Arabic countries, in Mecca or Beijing, and cooperate with international Islamic commercial networks, controlled in China by the Han majority. But who, in fact, are the Hui?

19. Aidkah Mosque in Kashgar, one of the four largest in China (Winter 2003)

20. On the road to Aksu, Sanchakou (“Crossroads”) renamed by the Chinese
21. Marriage banquet at Ban Ho, Yunnanese Chiang Mai Mosque (27 March 2004)

22. Ma Zhizhong, the bridegroom, the bride, and a relative. Chiang Mai (March 2004)

23. Marriage banquet in Chiang Mai. Donation Box in Thai, Chinese, and English

24. Imam Ma, the Yunnanese Abong of Ban Ho (Wangbe), Chiang Mai Mosque (2004)

25. Chinese mosque at Chiang Mai surrounded by the flag of Thailand

26. Stele, Shuncheng Mosque, Kunming, replacing the ancient slab destroyed (1966)