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For Hasib Sabbagh
Builder of bridges
of steel
and of mutual understanding
and
Ismail R. al-Faruqi
scholar and pioneer
in Muslim-Christian dialogue



Central Asia and China

TRANSNATIONALIZATION, ISLAMIZATION, AND ETHNICIZATION

Dru C. Gladney

During his 1994 visit to each of the newly established Central Asian states (except Tajikistan), Li Peng, then premier of China, indicated that China intends to build a “new Silk Road” in the region, through investments estimated to surpass all other foreign investments by the end of the twentieth century. This prediction began to ring true when Premier Li traveled to Kazakhstan in 1996 to sign an exclusive agreement for Chinese rights to the Ozen oil field, the largest oil field in Kazakhstan, and perhaps in Central Asia. This indicates the growing importance of Central Asian trade to China’s international economy. In short, China hopes to downplay its political role in the region by emphasizing its historical and economic roles, attempting to “buy” stability on its new Central Asian borders.

The history of this policy extends back to the Han and Tang dynasties, when strong, centralizing Chinese empires sought to establish tributary states on its borders and to employ nomadic khanates as buffer zones between more established Eurasian kingdoms. China’s desire for influence in Central Asia today is reminiscent of the Great Game of the late nineteenth century, when China competed with Russia and Britain for dominance over the strategic region of Central Asia. A new Great Game is currently being played out in the region for critical access to its important mineral and energy resources. But today the players include not only China, Russia, and to a lesser extent Britain but also multinational corporations, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia,

(Left) There are nearly twenty million Muslims in China, more than in all of Saudi Arabia. Seagoing merchants brought Islam to coastal China, while overland traders brought it across the mountains of Central Asia to western China. Here, Muslims in a cemetery at Kashgar in the western province of Xinjiang recite prayers at a funeral.

and Turkey. Caught in the midst of this “game” are the local peoples and cultures, mostly Muslim and Turkic, with a large variety of different cultural and historical traditions.

This chapter examines current Sino-Central Asian relations in light of the long history of exchanges across the Eurasian continent through the rise of the southern and northern Silk Roads. Three aspects of the Sino-Central Asian historical and contemporary relations endure until this day: transnationalization (both because of the rise of the Silk Road and unification under the Mongols), Islamization (leading to social and economic transformations affecting both Chinese and Central Asian sides of the region), and the ethnicization of local identities (because of imperial, Soviet, and Chinese socialist policies). These issues pervade China’s historical and contemporary relationship with Central Asia and go beyond traditional analyses of the region, which have been primarily concerned with trade and state-to-state relations, generally taking for granted the identities of the people concerned and the ability of the economic development model to integrate them.

Each of these processes significantly transformed the vast region of Eurasia into what it is today. Transnationalization was thus a gradual process that linked disparate tribes and kingdoms through the interlinks of the ancient Silk Road, the unification of the Mongols, and the gradual transformation of ancient satrapies and kingdoms into modern nation-states. Islamization molded the plethora of multireligious and pluralistic cultural traditions (including Manichaeism, Buddhism, and widespread shamanism) into a fairly widespread acceptance of the basic tenets of one major world religion: Islam. Finally, ethnicization is an ongoing process in which formerly

Inner Asia is distinguished by a rugged terrain, with soaring peaks and harsh deserts. The Tien Shan mountains divide the region into two sections, an eastern part comprising the Chinese province of Xinjiang, and a western section now divided between the central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.



tribal and religious communal groups have gradually come to think of themselves as ethnic groups with rights and aspirations for nationhood. Perhaps the best example of this process is the Uighur people, once a tribal confederation, then a kingdom, and finally a Muslim nationality of the People's Republic of China, with many Uighurs seeking to establish their own separate nation, Uighuristan.

China has recently awakened to the fact that it is a nation with a significant Muslim and Central Asian population; the expansion of Islam through Central Asia into China is an important issue throughout this chapter. With nearly twenty million Muslims, China ranks as one of the world's most populous Muslim nations. Although its Muslim population is minuscule when compared with China's total population (about 2 percent of 1.1 billion), the Muslims of China play a crucial role disproportionate to their numbers in influencing China's domestic and international relations with Central Asia. This is particularly true in the border regions of Xinjiang, Gansu, and Ningxia where Muslims are in concentrated populations and where recent Muslim-led unrest and independence movements have influenced China's domestic and international relations.

The opening of the Pakistan-China Karakoram highway in 1986, the establishment of the direct air route from Urumqi to Istanbul in 1988, to Almaty (in southeastern Kazakhstan) in 1992, and to Islamabad in 1994, and the completion of the Sino-Soviet Trans-Eurasian Railway through Central Asia in 1991 have led to dramatic increases in the trade of goods and hard currencies. This heralded the first real reopening of the ancient Silk Route since its decline nearly a thousand years ago. For the first



As far back as the Han and Tang dynasties of pre-Islamic times, strong centralizing Chinese empires tried to establish tributary states on their borders and use nomadic khanates as buffer zones. The nomadic Kazakhs, who still herd sheep in the Heavenly Mountains, were one of these groups.



New communication links, such as the Karakoram Highway linking China with Pakistan, opened in 1986, and the Sino-Soviet Trans-Eurasian Railway, completed in 1991, have led to dramatic increases in trade in the region.



In addition to the special sections where Russian bulk goods such as cloth, cotton, and steel are sold, the bazaars in Urumqi and Kashgar also stock local produce.

time, the markets in the Chinese cities of Kashgar and Urumqi have special sections for “Russian Goods” that sell such bulk goods as cloth, cotton, steel, fencing, and so on, trucked in and sold to private entrepreneurs, who then sell the goods to small industries in the region or throughout China. At the same time, Chinese shops with manufactured goods from China line the market streets of Almaty, Bishkek (in Kyrgyzstan), and Tashkent (in Uzbekistan). However, discussions that regard the peoples of the region as “60 percent Muslim” often fail to take into account each state’s role in the “ethnicization” of these identities, their cross-border interactions, interethnic rivalries, religious factionalisms, and regional diversities within the groups themselves. Not only must the progress of Russian-Turkic and Muslim relations in the new Central Asian states be watched, but Han Chinese majority and (mainly Muslim) minority relations in the region, as well as improving Sino-Russian ties, must also be examined.

Rather than taking for granted national identities in the new Central Asian states as a resurfacing of pre-Soviet “tribal” identities, this chapter argues that Marxist policies have directly contributed to the ethnicization of local identities in the region. This chapter not only examines the economic, political, and transnational connections that link China to Central Asia, but it also discusses

how the legacy of Stalinist-Leninist nationality policies continues to affect the specific peoples involved in the region, particularly the Dungan (Hui Muslim Chinese), Han, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Uighur, and Uzbek populations. Although most recent analyses of China's relations with Central Asia have stressed economic ties, state-to-state exchanges, and government policies, this chapter suggests that larger forces, such as state-sponsored Islamization, transnationalism, and ethnicization, are the lines by which these interactions should be measured. These fault lines of interaction have become more salient in the post-Cold War era, when security issues have become more localized and territory has become increasingly associated with national identity. After examining the history and development of such issues as Islamization, transnationalism, and ethnicization, and their influence on the region's peoples, the chapter concludes with a discussion of how the reassertion of national identities in the region will become increasingly significant for interregional trade and economic development, involving a new Great Game in the post-Cold War era.

Transnational Connections on the Old Silk Road

Although scholars once believed that the early civilizations of the Eurasian continent were fairly isolated from each other, recent archaeological, textual, and historical evidence suggests that the civilizations of Europe and China were linked transnationally since the dawn of time. Not only have several Neolithic sites been linked to early African migrations and DNA evidence used to suggest descent from a common "Eve," but scholars such as William Watson have traced the origin of the bronze-socketed ax that arrived in Europe from China in the Late Bronze Age, and Victor Mair has recently reported that the "mummies of Xinjiang" found naturally preserved as desiccated corpses in the Taklimakan Desert, are possibly more than four thousand years old and originated in the Caucasus. The extensive trade in silks and other precious commodities that flourished between the Roman and Han empires from the second century B.C.E. to the second cen-



The ethnic groups of Central Asia and China were linked by trade, and nomadic civilizations were important in fostering cultural continuities between sedentary populations. The traditional means of transport has always been the Bactrian (two-humped) camel, which is able to carry large burdens across the harsh terrain.



Some Chinese blue-and-white porcelains were specifically made for export to Muslims, for Arabic inscriptions form part of their decoration. This large bowl, made in the early sixteenth century at the famous kilns in Jingdezhen in eastern China, is inscribed with good wishes in Persian.

Asia, between East and West, is also a product of orientalist scholarship, a tradition that Edward Said says is as misleading as it is informative about different cultural practices and is often politically motivated. China, as the late Joseph Fletcher said, was never as closed off from the outside world as Western scholarship portrayed. This is demonstrated by the importance of the central Asian and European trade to the various empires of China and its being subject to the same flows of ideas and commodities that influenced much of the history of the region, including its transformation by such world religious traditions as Buddhism and Islam. Indeed, even the Greek historian Herodotus did not speak in terms of the migrations of isolated “ethnic” groups (although the Greek term *ethnos* was certainly known to him) but rather of a “cultural continuum” that flowed across the Pontic steppes to the far east. This chapter suggests that current thinking about isolated “ethnic” and “national” groups is a product of the rise of the nation-state and the writing of nationalist histories. Indeed, the region now known as central Asia is perhaps the best example there is of intermingled and interconnected peoples, places, and political processes.

Herodotus himself wondered why the old world in his day was already divided into three places, Asia, Europe, and Africa: “Why three names . . . should ever have been give to a tract of land which is in reality one?” In his masterful introduction to the concept of central Asia in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*

ture C.E. followed well-worn tracks that only became labeled as the Silk Road in the late nineteenth-century heyday of European orientalism by the German scholar Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen. Indeed, the term could not be more misleading because the roads and caravan tracks that crisscrossed the region were legion, and they carried much more than just silk. They were also complemented by the southern maritime route that linked Africa and South Asia with China through southeast Asia, a route that rose in importance as the overland trade declined.

Furthermore, the term *central Asia*, which presumes an “outer” Asia and a large gap between Europe and

(1990), Denis Sinor has suggested that a more appropriate term for the region would be *central Eurasia*. The region developed not on the so-called periphery but at the core intersections of civilizations that included Europe, the Middle East, India, Southeast and East Asia. Because all of the great civilizations of central Asia flourished before the middle of the first millennium, and no single civilization occupied all and only that particular region (the Mongols controlled nearly the entire continent, from Europe to east and south-east Asia), the term *central* or *inner Asia* was always relational and never stable. It was known as *inner Asia* to include Pannonia (a province including territory now mostly in Hungary), and the Greek territories in Asia Minor (Anatolia) by the Romans, then by the Huns (fifth century) and the Seljuk Turks (eleventh century). Northern China was considered to be *inner Asia* once it was occupied by the Khitan, the Jürchen, the Mongols, and the Manchus. Except for the periphery of the Eurasian continent, the surface features of the land prevented dense populations with agrarian empires. At the core of *inner Asia*, one finds “agricultural alternatives” that involved pastoralist and other highly adaptive technologies, none of which supported large populations. Cultural continuities developed between the sedentary civilizations, and transitory or nomadic civilizations often became the mediators and brokers for much more than just material commodities. To mention perhaps the greatest examples, Buddhism and Islam thus became dramatically transformed in their migration eastward from the south and west. One might suggest that globalization had its beginnings in the region now known as central Asia. Certainly, transnationalism and the flow of goods and ideas between innumerable peoples was never new to the area. The horse and perhaps the cart were the only material commodities that linked the entire region with its peripheral kingdoms.

China’s direct relations with central Asia date to one century before the common era, when the Han dynasty general Zhang Qian returned to the capital of Changan (modern Xian) from a mission in 138 B.C.E. to form an alliance against the Huns. This was one among many military missions to central Asian capitals



Other Chinese blue-and-white porcelains bear owners’ marks showing that they were exported through Central Asia to the Islamic lands. This large dish with a landscape scene, made in the early fifteenth century, was probably imported into Persia under the Timurids. Inscribed on the back with the owner’s name—Qarachaghay, chief page at the court of the Safavid shah Abbas—it was part of the imperial collection of Chinese porcelains endowed to the shrine of Ardabil in northwestern Iran by the Safavid shah in 1611.

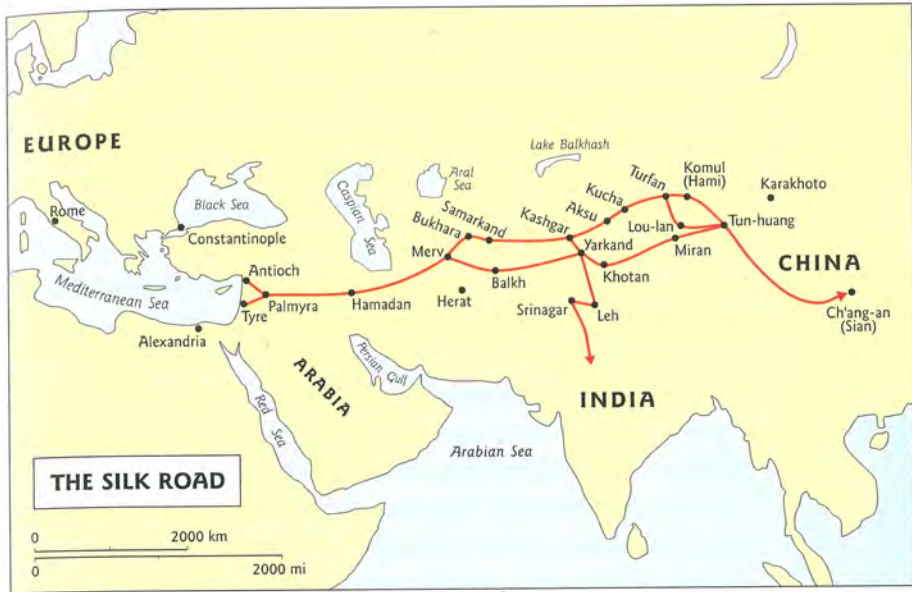


The Silk Route, a term coined in the nineteenth century by the German orientalist Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen, existed since pre-Islamic times as the major route for goods and ideas between China, India, and the West. Buddhism was carried along it from India to China, and monasteries were established along the way. Here, at Bezelik, on the fringe of the Taklimakan Desert, Buddhist monasteries were carved into the cliffs.

as far as Samarqand, Bukhara, Andkhui, Herat, Shiraz, and Isfahan. These missions solicited alliances and “tribute” (*gong*), which Joseph Fletcher said only indicated an exchange of gifts and never clearly established political submission. There were times when Chinese military control extended into central Asia, such as in the Han (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, but it was just as frequently controlled by inner Asian empires, such as the Jin, Liao, Yuan, and Qing dynasties. The region today known as Xinjiang (meaning “new dominion”) received that label in 1759, when the region was finally brought under the control of the Qing, a dynasty established by the inner Asian Manchus to rid the region of continued Mongolian (Zungharian) control. Even Manchu control was short-lived in the region, disrupted by Taiping and Uighur

rebellions, Russian influence, and finally its own collapse in 1911.

The so-called Silk Road was one of several routes that Zhang Qian traveled again in 126 B.C.E. in search, not of silk, but of the famous Ferghana horses that “sweated blood,” which the Han emperor had hoped to use against the nomadic Huns. In addition to silk and horses, there were innumerable commodities traded along the way, and rarely did one person or group travel the entire route. Chinese merchants were never sighted in Rome, and Romans were not found in Changan. Even later, Europeans rarely traveled overland to China, and scholarly doubt regarding the great Marco Polo expedition has been popularized. China-bound caravans carried gold and other precious metals, wool and linen, ivory, amber, coral, jade and other rare stones, asbestos, and glass, which was not produced in China until the fifth century. Outbound caravans carried a wide variety of bronze weapons and tools, iron, furs, pottery, ceramics, cinnamon, and rhubarb. From the China side the famous collection of tracks across the Eurasian steppe started from Changan, passing the famous Hexi corridor in Gansu in the northwest, to Dunhuang on the fringe of the Gobi Desert. From Dunhuang the route passed through the famous Jade Gate (*Yumen guan*, where the Chinese collected taxes on jade, among other things, entering China from Central Asia) and then divided into a northerly and southerly route, skirting the impassable Taklimakan Desert,



following glacial-fed oases at the base of the Tian Shan mountains in the north and the Himalayan escarpments and great Pamirs in the south. Once reconnecting in Kashgar, the main route continued westward through Kokhand, Samarqand, Bukhara, Merv, Persia, and Iraq to the Mediterranean, while southern and northern routes wound their way to India and Russia. Lesser spurs intersected these routes and formed a network of intermittent communications, although travel between the nodes was lengthy and was hampered by political and economic ruptures.

Along these routes Buddhism and then Islam found their ways into China. In central Asia and the oasis cities around the Taklimakan Buddhism was transformed into its current "Serindian" form, which in the ancient city of Gandhara gave the image of the Buddha his physical and Greco-Indian and even Chinese features. These features included a physical body with Hellenic features (a chiseled nose and forehead, wavy hair, and classical lips), adorned in a toga-like robe. Buddhist art as found in the cave library at Dunhuang and the Chinese capitals of Changan and Loyang took on decidedly east Asian features, as well as absorbing Chinese and even Taoist notions of the afterlife and the way of suffering, con-



With the advent of Islam, Muslims added their distinctive religious buildings to Buddhist sites. At Turfan, for example, a tall tower known as the Imin Minaret marks the presence of the nearby congregational mosque.

tributing to the rise of the new Pure Land and Chan (or Zen) schools of Buddhism. Nestorianism and Manichaeism also found their ways into China along these transnational tracks, transforming Christian and Persian teachings into new hybrid forms, as the Nestorian monument in the Xian provincial museum indicates. The religion is remembered in China by this stele, which depicts a Nestorian cross on a lotus flower base, dating to the mid-seventh century when a Nestorian church was officially established in Changan. Indeed, during the heyday of the Tang dynasty, its capital was a truly transnational city, with an official population of five thousand foreigners, including Hindus, Jews, Manichaeans, Nestorians, and Zoroastrians, and peoples described as Arabs, Armenians, Indians, Iranians, Japanese, Koreans, Malays, Mongolians, Sogdians, and Turks. Dwarfs from all over Europe were particularly sought out as entertainers, accompanied by exotic animals from throughout the world.

With the decline of the Tang dynasty, the Silk Road also declined. This process was heralded by the gradual retreat of the glaciers at the end of the Ice Age, and the drying up of the glacier-fed streams that made life on the fringe of the Taklimakan possible for several smaller oasis cities, including such prominent cultural centers as Lou Lan, Lop Nor, Niya, and Yotkan, now known only as sand-buried cities. More important, the arrival of Islam signaled the beginning of a new transnationalization of central Asia, with its roots not in Europe, China, or south Asia but in the Middle East. The rapid Islamization of central Asia, beginning as early as the mid-seventh century and reaching Balkh (in northern Afghanistan), across the Pamirs from Kashgar by 699, led to the cultural, political, and social transformation of the entire region, superseding its earlier transnationalization but certainly not displacing it. Interestingly enough, although Islam reached the Pamir borders of China by the end of the seventh century, not unlike Alexander the Great, it was almost prevented from going any further. Islamization did not take place in Kashgar until the eleventh century, and it took nearly four hundred years to travel across the Taklimakan to the eastern oases of Turpan and Hami, where people who called themselves Uighurs

continued to practice Buddhism until the sixteenth century. As Islam penetrated China by land across the Taklimakan and by sea along the southeastern coast, the people known as the Hui emerged, and the Uighurs disappeared, only to reappear again in the early twentieth century.

Islamization and China

Though Denis Sinor, in emphasizing the early multicultural and multireligious roots of central Asia, has suggested that “in Inner Asia no one faith has ever commanded the allegiance of more than a fraction of its population,” this certainly cannot be said to be true of Islam. Scholars estimate that today nearly 60 percent of the entire region bows toward Mecca in religious allegiance, although political allegiance may bend to various national capitals, including Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Istanbul, Almaty, and Tashkent. In China the largest Muslim group today call themselves the Hui people, and they are recognized by the state as the third largest minority nationality. They represent perhaps more than any other Muslim group in China today, a fascinating blend of Chinese, Middle Eastern, and central Asian cultural, religious, and historical traditions.

The Hui are the most numerous of ten Muslim nationalities recognized by the state in China. Numbering more than half of China’s nearly twenty million Muslims, the Hui are classified by the state as the one Muslim minority that does not have a specific language shared by all of its members. The other Muslim nationalities include eight Turkic-Altaic Muslim language groups in China (Uighur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tatar, Salar, Bonan, Dongxiang) and one Indo-European Tadjik group). Unlike these other groups, who are concentrated primarily in northwest China near the Sino-Soviet frontier, the Hui have communities in 97 percent of China’s counties, with concentrations in the northwest (Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai, and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region), the southwest (Yunnan, Guizhou), and the north China plain (Hebei, Henan, Shandong). They are the largest urban ethnic minority in most of China’s cities (200,000 in Beijing, 150,000 in Tianjin, and 50,000 in Shanghai), and they traditionally dominated certain trades throughout China (noodle, beef, and lamb restaurants, leather making, jewelry making, and wool trading).

Although the Hui have been labeled as the “Chinese-speaking Muslims” or “Chinese Muslims,” this is misleading because many Hui speak only the non-Chinese dialects of the place where they live, such as the Tibetan, Mongolian, Thai, and Hainan Muslims, who are also classified by the state as Hui. Yet most Hui are closer to



The Memorial Mosque to the Prophet, the Huai Sheng Si, also known as the Beacon Tower Mosque, at Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong province, is reportedly the oldest mosque in China. It is said to have been founded in the Tang period by the Arab missionary Abu Waqqas.



The largest Muslim group in China calls itself the Hui people. They represent a blend of Chinese, Middle Eastern, and central Asian cultural, religious, and historical traditions. Here Muslims in Gansu province gather together for prayer in the house of a recently deceased saint.

the Han Chinese than the other Muslim nationalities in terms of demographic proximity and cultural accommodation, adapting many of their Islamic practices to Han ways of life, which often became the source for many of the criticisms of the Muslim reformers. In the past this was not as great a problem for the Turkic and Indo-European Muslim groups, as they were traditionally more isolated from the Han and their identities not as threatened, although this has begun to change in the last forty years. Cultural proximity of the Hui and Han may account for some of the dynamics and urgency of Islamic reforms among Hui Muslim communities. Because they have no single language of their own and are so widely dispersed, the Hui did not originally conceive of themselves as one nationality. As a result of state-sponsored nationality identification campaigns over the course of the last thirty years, they have begun to think of themselves as a national ethnic group, something more than just “Muslims,” which is what the term *Hui* originally meant. Islam in China was known as the “religion of the Hui” (*Hui jiao*) until the nationalist campaigns of the 1940s and 1950s classified the Hui

as one among several nationalities who believed in Islam. The Hui became the residual Muslim group that contained anyone who did not fit the more stringent linguistic categories, many of which had been previously established in the Soviet Union (Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tatar, Uighur, and so on). The Hui are also unique among the fifty-five identified nationalities in China in that they are the only nationality for whom religion is the only unifying category of identity. Through a process of state-influenced ethnogenesis and transnational association, the Hui, like such other nationalities as the Uighurs, began to think of themselves as one nationality category officially recognized by the state and eventually as one ethnic group. Today it is possible to travel throughout China and meet people who identify themselves solely as Hui—only later do tremendous linguistic, cultural, and religious differences become apparent.

Resulting from a succession of Islamic reform movements that swept across China over the last six hundred years, there exists a wide spectrum of Islamic belief among the Hui today. The variety of religious orders within Hui Islam represents a history of reforms and Islamic movements that derived from both interaction with and isolation from the Islamic world. Joseph Fletcher was the first to suggest that the nature of China's present-day Islamic communities and orders can be traced to successive "tides" of influence and individuals who entered China during critical periods of exchange with the outside world. Like a swelling and ebbing tide, Fletcher argued, the influence of these movements grew or diminished with the interaction of China's Muslims and the Islamic world. This influence was not based on population movements so much as the gradual and profound exchanges of ideas between the two regions. Fletcher's argument had a profound influence on the history of Islam in China, but reflection on the Salafiyya (the early twentieth-century Islam reform movement that called for a return to the principles followed by the venerable ancestors) has led some scholars to reject his metaphor of "tides" of Islam, because it suggests not only unidirectional movement (from the Middle East to China) but also the notion that there was one moment, individual, or movement that touched all of China's Muslims and transformed them in one wave of religious reformation. In reality, among China's Muslims there is enor-



Chinese Muslims follow a wide spectrum of beliefs. Followers of traditional Islam are called Gedimu, from the Arabic *qadim*, meaning "old." They usually live in small communities clustered around a central mosque. Here in Beijing, Muslim men meet for communal prayer in the congregational mosque.

mous complexity, discontinuity, and continued coexistence of a wide variety of religious orders. Each new “tide” or religious movement did not replace the former movements; rather, they debated each other, sometimes violently, and generally established uneasy coexistences. They were also not only one way. Rather, China’s Muslims and Chinese culture exerted as much if not more influence on the movements that came into China from the Middle East and central Asia as the other way around. Moreover, each “tide” is not easily isolated to one narrow period of time, but hundreds of Islamic movements spread throughout China over the course of a millennium, and many of them are just as vibrant today as they were from the beginning.

These “tides” are better understood as “modes” of Islamic reform in conjunction with other Islamic movements that spread throughout the Islamic world, reaching China when it became more open politically, economically, or philosophically to the outside world. Newer movements did not replace earlier modes of belief in China; rather, they helped to define them. For example, the association known today as the Gedimu in China are not one “tide” (Fletcher’s first) of Islam in China; they represent a wide variety of Islamic practices and organizational orientations that are similar only in their rejection of later Sufi- and Wahhabi-inspired reform movements. Followers of traditional Islam in China only began to define themselves as Gedimu or “old teachings” when “new teachings” and reform movements rose in their midst and criticized the “old teachings.” Although these newer modes of Islamic practice and belief drew their converts from the earlier Muslim communities, they did not replace the older communities entirely. Instead, they provided a wide spectrum of religious alternatives from which Muslims in China could choose. For it is often ritual practice that distinguishes Islamic affiliation in China and elsewhere, but this practice is only an icon indicating the appeal of one movement over another for Muslim believers in the northwest enmeshed in the Chinese state and society.

Although this chapter does not begin to address Islam’s complex history in China, an introduction to the context of Islamic reforms is necessary for an understanding of the rise of Islamic reform movements in China. Each of these “modes” can be characterized by certain kinds of related and successive reform movements seeking to reform Islam in China by reference to discursive and moral standards encountered in the Middle East by Muslims from China on the *hajj* (pilgrimage), or preached by peripatetic Middle Eastern representatives of these movements in China, often arriving in China overland from central Asia. The somewhat quixotic quest of these Muslims at the distant edge of Islamic expansion for the fundamentals of their faith, and the dialectic interaction between periphery and center, society and state, engendered the rise of a series of reformist tides that washed across the Chinese Islamic hinterland.

The First Mode: Traditional Chinese Islam

The earliest Muslim communities in China were descended from the Arab, Persian, Central Asian, and Mongolian Muslim merchants, militia, and officials who settled along China's southeast coast and in the northwest in large and small numbers from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. Generally residing in independent small communities clustered around a central mosque, only later did they become known as the Gedimu (from the Arabic *qadim*, "old"), when later Islamic movements criticized them as old and antiquated. The mode for these communities was characterized by what Jonathan Lipman has termed a patchwork of relatively isolated, independent Islamic villages and urban enclaves that related with each other through trading networks and recognition of belonging to the wider Islamic *ummah* (community). For these communities Sunni Hanafi Islam became so standard that few modern-day Hui in the northwest had even heard of Shiism even during the Iran-Iraq war.

From the beginning, the earliest Islamic communities established a consistent pattern of zealously preserving and protecting their identity as enclaves ensconced in the dominant Han society. Each village was centered on a single mosque headed by an *ahong* (from the Persian *akhun*[d]) who was invited to teach on a more or less temporary basis. These *ahong* generally moved from one mosque to another on an average of every three years. A council of senior local elders and *ahong* were responsible for the affairs of each village and the inviting of the itinerant imam. Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century travelers noted the maintenance of these isolated communities: "I know of no strictly farming village where there is an equal mixture of the two groups [Han and Hui]," Robert Ekvall once observed in *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border* (1939), "in every case the village is predominantly one or the other. In some instances, the population is composed almost entirely of one group, with only a few hangers-on of the other." He goes on to suggest that because of different cultural, ritual, and dietary preferences that sometimes led to open conflict, the communities preferred physical separation.

This isolation was mitigated somewhat during the collectivization campaigns in the 1950s, when Han and Hui villages were often administered as clusters by a single commune. They have also been brought closer together through national telecommunications and transportation networks established by the state, including such umbrella organizations as the China Islamic Association, established in 1955, which seeks to coordinate religious affairs among all Muslim groups. With the dismantling of the commune system in the early 1980s in many areas, however, these homogeneous Hui communities are once again becoming more segregated. Although these disparate communities among the Gedimu were

generally linked only by trade and a sense of a common religious heritage—an attachment to the basic Islamic beliefs as handed down to them by their ancestors—it was the entry of the Sufi brotherhoods into China that eventually began to link many of these isolated communities together through extensive socioreligious networks.

Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, made a substantial impact in China from the late seventeenth century. Four major orders, locally called *menhuan*, became important. The Naqshbandiyya emphasized popular practices, which often revolved around the veneration of saints. Believers often sought inspiration and blessing by visiting and meditating at saints' tombs, as in Hezhou, in Gansu province.

The Second Mode: Sufi Communities and National Networks

Sufism did not begin to make a substantial impact in China until the late seventeenth century, during the second mode of Islam's entrance into China. Like Sufi centers that proliferated after the thirteenth century in other countries, many of these Sufi movements in China developed socioeconomic and religio-political institutions built around the schools established by descendants of early Sufi saintly leaders. The institutions became known in Chinese as the *menhuan*, the "leading" or "saintly" descent groups. The important contribution that Sufism made to religious organization in China was that the leaders of mosques throughout their order owed their allegiance to their shaykh, the founder of the order who appointed them. These designated followers were loyal to the leader of their order and remained in their prayer communities for long periods of time, unlike the Gedimu along, who were generally itinerant, not well-con-



nected to the community, and less imbued with appointed authority. Gedimu mosque elders were loyal to their congregation first and connected only by trade to other communities.

Many Sufi reforms spread throughout northwest China during the early decades of the Qing dynasty (mid-seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries). Increased travel and communication between Muslims, in both east and west, during what Joseph Fletcher called the "general orthodox revival" of the eighteenth century and A. H. Johns refers to as the "second expansion," had great influence on Muslims from west Africa to Indonesia, not least of all on China's Hui Muslims. Exposure to these new ideas led to a reformulation of traditional Islamic concepts that rendered them more salient, posing a challenge to both traditional clerical and state authorities.

Although a mystical interpretation and social organization were perhaps Sufism's most lasting contributions to Islam in China, the public conflict between Sufis and non-Sufis was over the contested turf of Islamic practice. Sufis criticized traditional Hui Muslims for being too Chinese: materialistic, bound to their mosques, incense, and Chinese texts, and refusing to fully experience the presence of Allah in their worship. They condemned the non-Sufis for their use of Chinese in worship, adorning their mosques with Chinese Quranic quotations and hadith. They condemned the Muslims for wearing traditional Chinese white funeral dress and sullyng Islam with many other Chinese cultural practices, calling for a purified return to the ascetic ideals of the Prophet and his early followers. They also offered a more immediate experience of Islam through the rituals of remembrance and meditation, and the efficacy of the saints, instead of the daunting memorization and recitation of Quranic texts. Although theirs was a reformist movement, it was less textual than experiential, revealing the power of Allah and his saints to transform lives through miracles, healings, and other transformative acts.

Sufi orders were gradually institutionalized into sociopolitical organizations known as the *menhuan*. Only four orders maintain significant influence among the Hui today, what Claude Pickens as a Protestant missionary in northwest China first discovered as the four *menhuan* of China: the Qadariyyas, Khufiyyas, Jahriyyas, and Kubrawiyyas. Although these are the four main groups, they are subdivided into a myriad of smaller branch solidarities, divided along ideological, political, geographical, and historical lines. These divisions and alliances reveal the disparities encountered between the indigenous practice of Islam in China and new Islamic ideals as represented by returned *Hajji* or itinerant, often Central Asian, preachers who maintained, in their eyes, more "orthodox" interpretations of Islam.

It is unfortunate that Western scholarship has prolonged the confusion of early Chinese writers over the rise of Sufism and later Islamic orders in China. As each

Islamic reformer established a new following in China, often in conflict with other older Islamic orders, these “new” arrivals challenged or converted the “old” traditional Islamic communities. Chinese officials and even less knowledgeable Muslims from the beginning naturally referred to these communities with their new teachings as *xin jiao* (literally, “new religion” or “teaching,” not “new sect,” as it has been erroneously translated). As each new arrival replaced the older Islamic communities, they became known as the “new” or even “new new teachings” (*xin xin jiao*), as in the case of the arrival of the Ikhwan in China, which will be described below. Traditional Islam among the Hui generally was referred to as *lao jiao* (“the old teachings”), and even some orders that were new at one time when others arrived were gradually classed as *lao jiao*. This was the case with the Khufiyyas, an early Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, which itself is now classified as an “old teaching” even though when it first flowered in China as a Sufi reform movement it was known as a “new teaching.”

It was often the case that those who regarded themselves as maintaining the established traditional beliefs of Islam in China represented the reformers, who were their critics, as “new” and thus suspect, while they portrayed themselves as “old” or more true to their traditions. The reformers generally thought of themselves as the more orthodox, based on a more informed, sometimes esoteric interpretation of Islam due to more recent contact with movements in the Muslim heartlands. They thus resented the title of “new teachings” or the even more derisive “new new teachings,” calling themselves by the more exact names of their orders: Qadariyya, Naqshbandiyya, Wahhabi, Yihewani, and so forth. The stigmas “new teachings” or “new sects” stuck, as they were applied not only by their critics but often by the state as well. Even the name *Gedimu* for the “older” Islamic communities in China is a not-so-subtle jibe at the other Islamic orders as being newer and thus removed from the traditional fundamentals of Islam in China. Thus, in China there is a continued debate over orthodox discourse, with each Islamic movement seeking to portray itself as loyal to the original ideals, the spirit as well as the texts of Islam. As each movement sought to exert taxonomic control over the labeling of itself and its rivals, the state was often called in to adjudicate, leading to further debates over legitimacy according to the categories of the state. No longer Islamic, these criteria were often Confucian or legalistic in content, seeking to judge a movement’s compatibility with the Chinese order.

The designations of the movements thus became important politically as well as theologically. For example, during the mid-nineteenth-century rebellions in the northwest, some of which were led by Sufi leaders, the Chinese state proscribed all of those movements that became known as “new teachings” in order to root out what they saw as the more rebellious Hui communities. The state became convinced by opponents to the largely Sufi-led uprisings that they were

all similarly “new” and thus suspect. This is precisely the rationale whereby a wide variety of Buddhist sectarian movements were proscribed under the general rubric of the “White Lotus” rebellion in China, whereas recent scholarship has revealed that only a few Buddhist movements fell under the shadow of that term. Unfortunately, Chinese and Western scholars perpetuated the designations of “new” and “old” teachings, and until recently there were no accurate representations of the Hui’s own history of their Islamic orders in China. The opening of China to the West after 1979 has allowed the appearance of Chinese publications on these groups as well as Western fieldwork for the first time, giving a better, albeit still quite limited, glimpse into their origins and socioreligious complexity. These depictions by outsiders continue to plague Muslim reform movements and their quest for legitimacy.

Although there is some dispute among the Sufis themselves about which order was the earliest to enter China proper, because there had been regular contact on an individual basis with the Sufi orders of Central Asia that had already begun to proliferate in Xinjiang in the early part of the fifteenth century, it is generally agreed that one of the earliest to be established firmly on Chinese soil was the Qadari *tariqah* (Sufi order or brotherhood, literally “path”). The founder of the Qadariyya group in China was Qi Jingyi, Hilal al-Din (1656–1719). Known among the Hui as Qi Daozu (Grand Master Qi), he was buried in Linxia’s “great tomb” (*da gongbei*) shrine complex, which became the center of Qadariyya Sufism in China. One of the reasons that Grand Master Qi continues to be greatly revered among all Sufis in China is that the tradition suggests that he received his early training under two of the most famous Central Asian Sufi teachers, Khoja Afaq and Khoja Abd Alla. Qi Jingyi supposedly met with the revered Naqshbandi leader Khoja Afaq in Xining in 1672, where according to Qadariyya records, the master sent the sixteen-year-old acolyte home, saying “I am not your teacher, my ancient teaching is not to be passed on to you, your teacher has already crossed the Eastern Sea and arrived in the Eastern land. You must therefore return home quickly, and you will become a famous teacher in the land.” Qadariyya followers today feel that their saint received the blessing of the great Naqshbandi Khoja Afaq, while their order was formally founded by his second teacher, Khoja Abd Alla, a twenty-ninth-generation descendant of Muhammad. Chinese Sufi records state that Khoja Abd Alla entered China in 1674 and preached in Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and Linxia, and Gansu, before his eventual death in Guizhou in 1689. While Abd al-Kadir al-Jilani is the reputed founder of the Qadari order, it is not surprising to find that Khoja Abd Alla perhaps studied in Medina under the renowned Kurdish mystic Ibrahim ibn Hasan al-Kurani (1616–90), who was initiated into both the Naqshbandi and Qadari *tariqahs*, as well as several other Sufi orders.

The appeal of Qadariyya Sufism as a renewal movement among the Hui is related to its combining ascetic mysticism with a noninstitutionalized form of worship that centers around the tomb complex of deceased saints rather than the mosque. The early Qadariyyas advocated long-term isolated meditation, poverty, and vows of celibacy. The head of the order did not marry and eschewed family life, a radical departure from other Islamic traditions in China. Qadariyya Sufis continue to attend the Gedimu mosques in the local communities in which they live, gathering at the tombs for holidays and individual worship. The founder Qi Jingyi was known for his emphasis on poverty, self-cultivation, and ascetic withdrawal from society. Formalized Islamic ritual as represented by the Five Pillars of Islam (fasting, pilgrimage, prayer, almsgiving, and recitation of the *shahadah*, the obligatory Muslim profession of faith) was de-emphasized by Qi Jingyi in favor of private meditation. The Qadariyya maintain that “those who know themselves clearly will know Allah” and “the Saints help us to know ourselves first before knowing Allah.” Union with the divine, then, is accomplished through meditation and self-cultivation, rather than formalized public ritual. “The moment of thinking about Allah,” they maintain, “is superior to worshipping him for a thousand years.” Although the Qadariyya *menhuan* has always been less influential than other Sufi orders in China because of its rejection of “worldly” political involvement, it set the stage for many Sufi orders to follow. By stressing the intimate experience of Allah through the power of his appointed shaykh, Sufism in China became a force for renewal and transformation: a return to the pure ascetic ideals of Islam, as well as initiating a new sociopolitical Islamic order. At once fundamentalistic and transformative, it initiated a new tide of reform that swept across China.

The Naqshbandi order became most rooted in Chinese soil through the establishment of two groups: the Khufiyyas and Jahriyyas. Both groups exercised tremendous influence on the history of Islam in China, specifically in the northwest. As Joseph Fletcher argued, the reform movement emphasized a shar’ist orthodoxy, political activism, propagation of the religion, and a strong Sunni orientation that came to mark the Naqshbandiyyas in a way that proved definitive in the mystical path’s subsequent history. Two other general characteristics of popular mysticism—namely the veneration of saints (misleadingly called “saint worship” by non-Muslim writers) and the seeking of inspiration by visiting and meditating at the saints’ tombs (misleadingly referred to as “tomb worship”) were also prominent features of the Naqshbandiyyas in southern Xinjiang and later in northwest China.

Founded by Bahaad-Din Naqshband (1318–89), who lived in Mawarannahr (a Central Asian region west of the Pamirs), the Naqshbandiyya order gradually spread east across the trade routes and by the middle of the fifteenth century

gained ascendance over other Central Asian Sufi orders in the oasis cities of Altishahr, surrounding the Tarim river basin in what is now southern Xinjiang. The Naqshbandi order that gained the most prominence in the Tarim basin and played an important role in later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century politics in Xinjiang was the Makhdumzada, established by Makhdum-i Azam (also known as Ahmad Kasani, 1461-1542). It was his great grandson, Khoja Afaq (d. 1694), known in the Chinese sources as Hidayat Allah, who was the saint most responsible for establishing the Naqshbandiyyas among the Hui in northwest China. Khoja Afaq (Khwaja-yi Afaq, "the Master of the Horizons"), founded the Afaqiyyas in Xinjiang, and from 1671 to 1672 he visited Gansu, where his father, Muhammad Yusuf, had previously preached, reportedly converting a few Hui and a substantial number of the Salars to Naqshbandi Sufism. During this influential tour, Khoja Afaq visited the northwest cities of Xining, Lintao, and Hezhou (now Linxia, China's "little Mecca"), preaching to Hui, Salar, and northeastern Tibetan Muslims. Two of these early Hui Gansu Muslims became his disciples and went to Central Asia and the pilgrimage cities to become further trained in the order. When they returned to China, they established the two most important Naqshbandi brotherhoods among the Hui in the Northwest: the Khufiyyas and the Jahriyyas.

As AnneMarie Schimmel has eloquently documented, throughout its history the Naqshbandiyyas have stressed an active participation in worldly affairs. Their shaykhs worked wonders, chanted the powerful Mathanawi texts of the Turkish mystic Jalal ad-Din al-Rumi al-Balkhi, Mawlana Jalluddin (ca. 1207-73), and advocated scriptural reforms. They emphasized both self-cultivation and formal ritual, withdrawal from and involvement in society. Unlike the Qadariyyas, their leaders enjoyed families and the material wealth accrued from the donations of their followers. They also became committed to political involvement and social change based on the principles of Islam. Some of the Naqshbandiyya orders in China advocated more of a "transformationist" perspective, in which they sought to change the social order in accord with their own visions of propriety and morality. This inevitably led to conflicts with Chinese rule and local governments, causing some Naqshbandiyya orders, especially the Jahriyyas, to be singled out for suppression and persecution. "Due to the arduous way it has traversed," one Hui scholar Yang Huaizhong (himself raised in a Jahriyya home) wrote "the branch [Jahriyya] has always advocated the militant spirit of the Muslims, organizing uprisings to resist the oppression of the Qing and KMT [Nationalist, or Kuomintang] governments against the ethnic Hui minority and their religious belief." By contrast, the Khufiyyas tended to seek more conformist solutions to local conflicts, stressing personal internal reform over political change. The different stance that the Naqshbandiyya orders took in China with regard to the

state and Chinese culture reflects their dialectical interaction with local interpretations of identity and changing sociopolitical realities in the Northwest. A brief introduction of these two movements is necessary for understanding the later challenges to the movements by the Yihewanis and the Salafiyas.

During his 1672 visit to Hezhou, Khoja Afaq played an important role in the life of Ma Laichi (1673–1753), a Hezhou Hui of extraordinary talent who went on to found one of the earliest and most influential Naqshbandiyya orders in China: the Khufiyyas. According to Sufi tradition, Ma Laichi was born to a childless couple after they received Khoja Afaq's blessing. He was later raised and trained by one of Khoja Afaq's disciples, Ma Tai Baba ("Great Father"), who later gave Ma Laichi his daughter in marriage and passed on to him the leadership of the mystical path that Ma Tai Baba had received from Khoja Afaq. From 1728 to 1781 Ma Laichi went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, Yemen, and Bukhara, where he studied several Sufi orders and became particularly influenced by Mawlana Makhdum, a man of uncertain origin whom John Fletcher hypothesized may have been Indian. When he returned from his pilgrimage, Ma Laichi established the most powerful of the Khufiyya groups: the *Huasi* ("flowery mosque") branch. He propagated the order for thirty-two years among the Hui and Salar in Gansu and Qinghai before his death in 1766 at the age of 86. The group is still quite active and centered in Linxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu, at the tomb of Ma Laichi, which was restored in 1986.

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

The second Naqshbandi order, the *Jahriyyas*, was founded in China under the dynamic leadership of Ma Mingxin (1719–81). One of the most fascinating detective stories in historical discovery is the tracing of Ma Mingxin's spiritual lineage to Mizjaja, a village on the outskirts of Zabid in northern Yemen, by Joseph Fletcher. Although Chinese Sufis have known for generations that their saint Ma Mingxin studied in the Middle East, it was never clear whom he received his "new teaching" from or where he studied. Middle Eastern Sufi accounts recorded the presence of Chinese Muslims studying in certain Sufi areas, but only Joseph Fletcher was able to put the two together. This was an important discovery, as Ma Mingxin's Sufi practice was thought to be novel, even heterodox, and the subject

of many conflicts in Northwest China. This controversy is mainly over Ma Mingxin's use of the *jahr* in remembrance (vocal *dhikr*, from whence comes the name Jahriyya, "the vocal ones"), which he openly advocated in opposition to the Khufiyya's silent remembrance, the more standard Naqshbandi practice. After an extensive search through arcane Sufi documents in Arabic, Persian, Turk, and Chinese, and a final personal trip to Yemen, Fletcher discovered that the name of the Sufi saint under whom Chinese Muslim records indicated Ma Mingxin studied but whose identity was unknown was a Naqshbandi Sufi named az-Zayn ibn Muhammad Abd al-Baqi al-Mizjaji (1643 or 1644–1725), whose family home was in Mizjaja, the Zabid. Chinese Sufi records only indicate that Ma Mingxin studied in Yemen in a Sufi order known as the Shazilinye, whose shaykh was Muhammad Bulu Seni, but the records do not contain the full ancestry and origins of the order. Most Jahriyyas only say: "The root of our order is Arabia, the branches and leaves are in China."

It is known that az-Zayn had studied in Medina under the famous Kurdish mystic Ibrahim ibn Hasan al-Kurani (1616–90), who also advocated the use of vocal formulas in the remembrance of Allah (*al-jahr bi-dh-dhikr*). Al-Kurani's students were at the forefront of Islamic reform and fundamentalist movements throughout the Islamic world. Under al-Kurani's student's direction, it is not surprising that Ma Mingxin returned after sixteen years of study in Yemen and the Arabian peninsula in 1744 with more activist and radical reforms on his mind. While advocating the use of the vocal remembrance, he generally opposed the heavy emphasis on the veneration of Islamic saints that had become popular in China. These disputes led to bloody conflicts well into the early twentieth century. As the disputes grew worse and conflicts erupted, Qing troops, fresh from the conquest of Xinjiang in 1759, did not wish to have any more trouble among the Muslims in Gansu. They arrested Ma Mingxin in 1781 and executed him as his followers attempted to free him. Three years later they crushed another uprising led by a Jahriyya Sufi, Tian Wu. From this point on, the Qing sought to limit the spread of the movements, outlawing many of the so-called new teachings, primarily the Jahriyyas.

The great Northwest Hui rebellion (1862–76) was led by Ma Hualong, another Jahriyya Sufi leader fifth-generation descendant of Ma Mingxin. His rebellion was responsible for cutting the Qing state off from the Northwest, making way for the great 1864–1877 Uighur-led rebellion in Xinjiang under Yakub Beg. In 1871 Ma Hualong was captured and executed, supposedly with his entire family. His body is entombed in Dongta Township, Jinji, just east of the Yellow River in Ningxia, although his head is reported to have been buried in Xuanhuagang, a Jahriyya center, north of Zhangjiachuan in south Gansu. There is also evidence that suggests Du Wenxiu, the Panthay Hui Muslim rebellion in Yunnan (1855–73), was also



Sufis in China often wear distinctive dress. Most Chinese Muslims wear round white hats.

influenced by Jahriyya ideas. Following the failure of these uprisings, the Jahriyyas became much more secretive and dispersed, leading to the establishment of five main Jahriyya branch orders, all named after their ritual and historical centers: Banqiao, Beishan, Nanchuan, Shagou, and Xindianzi. The importance and extensiveness of these Sufi orders for uniting disparate Hui communities across China must not be underestimated. Unlike the isolated “patchwork” Gedimu communities that had been the norm until that time, Sufi orders provided the leadership and organization that could help the Hui survive politically and economically. During the fragmented Republican period (1911–49), extensive Sufi networks proved helpful to some Hui warlords in the Northwest and disruptive to others. Even today, membership in various Islamic orders and their concomitant Islamic practices often significantly influence social interaction, especially among the Sufi orders who often distinguish themselves by dress. Unlike the rounded white hat worn by most Hui men, Sufi followers often wear a six-cornered hat, sometimes black. Many Jahriyya Hui shave the sides of their beards to commemorate their founder, Ma Mingxin, whose beard is said to have been shorn by Qing soldiers before his execution in 1781. Although these markers are almost universally unnoticed by the Han majority—

for whom a Hui is a Hui—the Northwest Hui can easily identify in the marketplace members of the various orders that divide them internally. The exclusivity of Sufi orders in China illustrates the cruciality of identity and authority for Sufi Hui. The Hui can enter these orders through ritual vow or by birth but seldom maintain allegiance to two orders at once. This is unlike Sufi traditional orders, which tend to be less exclusive and allow simultaneous membership in several orders. In China membership in these orders is exclusive; changing to a new order is tantamount to an “internal” conversion experience for Muslims in China, perhaps the only one they will ever have, because most Muslims in China entered Islam by birth.

Despite the tremendous variety found among Sufis in China today, from the traditionalist and fairly apolitical Khufiyyas to the politically active Jahriyyas and the mystically esoteric Qadariyyas, Sufism may still be generally characterized as a modality that has influenced much of Islam in China. It is distinguished from other Islamic modalities in its hierarchical organization, its veneration of saints and tombs, and its emphasis on meditation and self-transformation. Given its

often tightly organized networks and capability to form secretive oppositional movements, it is not surprising that it is one modality that the state in China has most often sought to either eradicate or co-opt. To the extent that various Sufi orders and their shaykhs have been able to maintain their legitimacy through either secret resistance to the state or public compliance, they have maintained their appeal among Muslims not only in the Northwest, where Sufism is most popular, but in the eastern urban centers and northern plains as well.

The Third Mode: Scripturalist Concerns and Modernist Reforms

A third mode identifiable in Chinese Islam began at the end of the Qing dynasty, a period of increased interaction between China and the outside world, when many Muslims began traveling to and from the Middle East. In the early decades of the twentieth century, China was exposed to many new foreign ideas and in the face of Japanese and Western imperialist encroachment sought a Chinese approach to governance. Intellectual and organizational activity by Chinese Muslims during this period was intense. Increased contact with the Middle East led Chinese Muslims to reevaluate their traditional notions of Islam. The missionary Claude Pickens recorded that from 1923 to 1934 there were 834 known Hui Muslims who made the hajj to Mecca. In 1937, according to one observer, more than 170 Hui pilgrims boarded a steamer in Shanghai bound for Mecca. By 1939 at least thirty-three Hui Muslims had studied at Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar University. Although these numbers are not significant when compared with pilgrims on the hajj from other Asian Muslim areas, the influence and prestige attached to these returning Hui hajji was profound, particularly in isolated communities. "In this respect," Joseph Fletcher once observed, "the more secluded and remote a Muslim community was from the main centers of Islamic cultural life in the Middle East, the more susceptible it was to those centers' most recent trends."

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



Islamic reformist movements emerged in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pilgrims returning from Arabia, where the conservative Wahhabis were in power, introduced the Yihewani movement, Chinese for the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood). Stressing orthodox practice, they proscribed such cultural accretions as the decoration of mosques with Arabic and Chinese calligraphy, the most striking feature of traditional Chinese mosques.

hajji returned from their pilgrimages to the Middle East, they initiated several reforms, engaging themselves once again in the contested space between Islamic ideals and Chinese culture.

Influenced by Wahhabi ideals in the Arabian peninsula, returning Hui reformers introduced the Yihewanis (Chinese for the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) to China—a religio-political movement that supported, in some cases, China's nationalist concerns, and in others, its warlord politics. Although the *Ikhwan* Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere in the Islamic world has been depicted as antimodernist and recidivist, this is not true of the movement in China. In fact, the Yihewanis in China eventually diverged so far from their *Ikhwan* Muslim Brotherhood beginnings, that it is misleading to even refer to the Yihewanis in China as “*Ikhwan*” or as a single movement or order. It has now become merely another “mode” of Islamic practice, an alternative to *Gedimu* (traditional Islam) and Sufism in China.

The beginnings of the Yihewani movement in China can be traced to Ma Wanfu (1849–1934), who returned from the hajj in 1892 to teach in the Hezhou area. The initial reformers were primarily concerned with religious scripturalist orthodoxy—so much so that they are still known as the “venerate-the-scrip-

The Muslim periodical press flourished as never before. Although it was reported that circulation was low, there were more than one hundred known Muslim periodicals produced before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Thirty journals were published between 1911 and 1937 in Beijing alone, prompting one author to suggest that although Chinese Islam's traditional religious center was still Linxia (Hezhou), its cultural center had shifted to Beijing. This took place when many Hui intellectuals traveled to Japan, the Middle East, and the West. Caught up in the nationalist fervor of the first half of the twentieth century, they published magazines and founded organizations, questioning their identity as never before in a process that Hui historian Ma Shouqian has termed “the New Awakening of the Hui” at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. As many of these Hui

tures faction" (*zunjing pai*). Although the reformers were concerned with larger goals than merely "correcting" what they regarded as unorthodox practice, like previous reforms in China, it is at the practical and ritual level that they initiated their critique. Seeking perhaps to replace "Islamic theater" with scripture, they proscribed the veneration of saints, their tombs, and their shrines, and sought to stem the growing influence of well-known individual among and Sufi *menhuan* leaders. Stressing orthodox practice through advocating a purified "non-Chinese" Islam, they criticized such cultural accretions as the wearing of white mourning dress (*dai xiao*) and the decoration of mosques with Chinese or Arabic texts. At one point, Ma Wanfu even proposed the exclusive use of Arabic and Persian in all education instead of Chinese. Due to Ma Wanfu's contacts with the Wahhabi during his sojourn, the Yihewani follow strict Wahhabi practice. Their mosques are distinguished by their almost complete lack of adornment on the inside, with white walls and no inscriptions, as well as a preference for Arabian-style mosque architecture. This contrasts sharply with other more Chinese-style mosques in China, typical of the "old" Gedimu, whose architecture resembles Confucian temples in their sweeping roofs and symmetrical courtyards (with the Xi'an Huaajue Great Mosque as the best example). The Yihewanis also proscribed the adornment of their mosques with Arabic and especially Chinese Quranic texts and banners. This is the most striking iconographic marker of Sufi mosques and worship centers in the Northwest, whose walls and tombs are often layered with Arabic and Chinese texts on silk and

Traditional Chinese-style mosques often resembled Confucian temples, with sweeping roofs and symmetrical courtyards, as at the mosque in Yunnan shown here. The Yihewanis rejected this style, preferring plain white mosques.



cloth banners in the distinctive Hui-style art that fluidly combines Arabic and Chinese calligraphy.

The Yihewanis flourished in Northwest China under the patronage of several Muslim warlords during the Nationalist period, most notably Ma Bufang. In a modernist discourse, arguing that the Yihewanis supported education, a rationalized, less-mystical religious expression, and a strong Chinese nation, Ma Bufang supported the expansion of the Yihewanis throughout Northwest China. He must have also been aware that wherever the Yihewanis went, the hierarchical authority of the Sufi shaykhs and the solidarity of their *menhuan* were contested, thus protecting Ma Bufang from other organized religious organizations that might orchestrate an effective resistance to his expansion. This could not have been lost on the early Communists either, who traveled through Ma Bufang's territory and the Northwest on their Long March, which ended in Yanan, near Ningxia, a heavily populated Muslim area dominated at that time by Ma Hongkui, a cousin of Ma Bufang's, who also supported the Yihewanis. After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the state quickly suppressed all Sufi *menhuan* as feudalistic and gave tacit support to the Yihewanis. Although Ma Bufang and Ma Hongkui both fled with the Nationalists to Taiwan, their policy of opposing Sufi organizations was left behind with the Communists. The China Islamic Association, established in 1955, was heavily dominated by the Yihewanis and was supportive of the 1957–58 public criticisms and show trials of the Naqshbandi Shaykh Ma Zhenwu specifically and Sufism generally as feudalist and exploitative of the masses. After the purges of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), in which all Islamic orders eventually were affected, the Yihewanis were the first to receive renewed state patronage. Most of the large mosques that were rebuilt with state funds throughout China as compensation for damages and destruction caused by the Red Guards during the now repudiated Cultural Revolution happened to be Yihewani mosques, although all orders were equally criticized during the radical period.

Although no Chinese official will admit that the Yihewanis receive special treatment, this is cause for some resentment among Muslims in China. The great South Gate Mosque in Yinchuan, the capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, was one of the first mosques rebuilt in Ningxia with state funds—it just happened to be staffed by Yihewani imams, although the state said it was a nonsectarian mosque. After the state spent more than fifty thousand yuan to rebuild the mosque in 1982, the local Muslims, most of whom were Gedimu and Khufiyya, refused to attend. The building sat almost empty for the first few years and the state attempted to recoup its losses from the large Arab-style architectural structure by turning it into a tourist attraction and selling tickets at the entrance. This, of course, only confirmed its lack of religious

legitimacy among many local Hui Muslims, especially the Gedimu and Sufis. In 1985 a visiting Kuwaiti delegation to the mosque became aware of the situation and instead of donating money to the South Gate Mosque as originally planned, they gave \$10,000 (about thirty thousand yuan) for refurbishing the much smaller traditional Central Mosque, a Gedimu mosque popular among the locals.

The Yihewanis continue to be a powerful Islamic group throughout China. Like the Gedimu, the Yihewanis emphasize leadership through training and education rather than inheritance and succession. The Yihewanis differ from the



Much to the resentment of other Chinese Muslims, the reformist Yihewani movement receives special treatment from the Chinese government. The great South Gate Mosque in Yinchuan city was rebuilt with state funds in 1982. It is staffed by Yihewani imams.

Gedimu primarily in ritual matters and their stress on reform through Chinese education and modernism. Unlike the Gedimu, they do not collectively chant the scriptures, visit tombs, celebrate the death days of their ancestors, or gather for Islamic festivals in remembrance of saints. Because of their emphasis on nationalist concerns, education, modernization, and decentralized leadership, the movement has attracted more urban intellectual Muslims. This is why the Yihewanis in China cannot be regarded as a tightly founded “order” as the Muslim Brotherhood is often portrayed in the Middle East; it is instead a mode of Islamic reform and orientation in China. The Yihewanis’ nationalistic ideals, and their co-optation by the earlier Republic Nationalists and the Communist Party led many of the more religious Yihewanis to become disillusioned with the order. It was seen by many to be no longer a fundamentalistic agent of reform, but an institutionalized organ of the state for systematizing and monitoring Islamic practice. Though still influential politically, it has lost its dynamic appeal to many of the most conservative Muslims in China. For the vast majority of urban Hui Muslims, and even many rural Muslims in the small towns of the northern plains, however, it is merely the mosque that they belong to by virtue of birth or marriage, and few Hui Muslims can tell the difference between the Yihewanis and the Gedimu, let alone between the myriad orders of Sufis. A Hui worker in Hangzhou once said that the basic difference between the Gedimu (he used the term *lao jiao*, “old teachings”) and in this case the Yihewani (*xin jiao*, “new teachings”) was that the Yihewanis did not eat crab and the Gedimu did; the Yihewanis did not because “crabs walked sideways.”

Although the total population of the various Islamic associations in China has not been published, one Muslim Chinese scholar, Yang Huaizhong, estimates that of the 2,132 mosques in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, 560 belong to the Yihewanis, 560 to the Khufiyyas, 464 to the Jahriyyas, 415 to the traditional Gedimu, and 133 to Qadariyya religious worship sites (some of which include mosques). The most comprehensive estimate given so far for Hui membership in Islamic orders throughout China is by Ma Tong. Of an estimated total at that time of 6,781,500 Hui Muslims in the late 1980s, Ma Tong recorded that there were 58.2 percent Gedimu, 21 percent Yihewani, 10.9 percent Jahriyya, 7.2 percent Khufiyya, 1.4 percent Qadariyya, and 0.7 percent Kubrawiyya.

Ethnicization of the Silk Road Peoples: The Case of the Uighur

In 1997 bombs exploded in a city park in Beijing on May 13 (killing one) and on two buses on March 7 (killing two), as well as in the northwestern border city of Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, on February 25

(killing nine), with more than thirty other bombings in 1997 and six in Tibet alone. Most of these bombings are thought to have been related to demands by Muslim and Tibetan separatists. Eight members of the Uighur Muslim minority were executed on May 29 for alleged bombings in northwest China, with hundreds arrested for suspicion of taking part in ethnic riots and engaging in separatist activities. At a time when China celebrates its recovery of Hong Kong, which took place on July 1, 1997, many wonder if it can hold on to rebellious parts of its restive west.

Most analysts agree that China is not vulnerable to the same ethnic separatism that split the former Soviet Union. But few doubt that should China fall apart, it would divide, like the Soviet Union, along centuries-old ethnic, linguistic, regional, and cultural fault lines. These divisions showed themselves at the end of China's last empire, when it was divided for more than twenty years by regional warlords with local



Modern-day China has to confront many ethnic problems. For example, the Uighur people were first a tribal confederation, then a kingdom, and finally a Muslim nationality of the People's Republic. The main Uighur town is Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, and the main mosque there is known as the Grand Islam Mosque.

and ethnic bases in the north and the south, and by Muslim warlords in the west. Ethnicization has meant that the current cultural fault lines of China and Central Asia increasingly follow official designations of identity. For Central Asia the breakup of the Soviet Union thus did not lead to the creation of a greater "Turkestan" or a pan-Islamic collection of states, despite the predominantly Turkic and Muslim populations of the region. Rather, the breakup fell along ethnic and national lines. China clearly is not about to fall apart, not yet anyway. But it also has ethnic problems, and it must solve them for more pressing reasons. This section examines recent events in Xinjiang in light of a nearly century-long process of ethnicization that has taken place among the Uighurs and many other peoples of Central Asia and China as a result of Sino-Soviet policies and the rise of the nation-state in the region. Although it was noted

earlier that Islamization was an important force in forming the contemporary consciousness of the people known as the Hui, this section discusses the role of ethnicization in the region.

Chinese histories notwithstanding, every Uighur firmly believes that his or her ancestors were the indigenous people of the Tarim basin, which did not become known in Chinese as Xinjiang ("new dominion") until the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the identity of the present people known as Uighurs is a rather recent phenomenon related to Great Game rivalries, Sino-Soviet geopolitical maneuverings, and Chinese nation building. Although a collection of nomadic steppe peoples known as the Uighurs have existed since before the eighth century, this identity was lost from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. It was not until the fall of the Turkish khanate (552–744 C.E.) to a people reported by the Chinese historians as Hui-he or Hui-hu that the beginnings of the Uighur empire are found. At this time the Uighurs were but a collection of nine nomadic tribes, who initially, in confederation with other Basmil and Karlukh nomads, defeated the second Turkish khanate and then dominated the federation under the leadership of Koli Beile in 742.

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

The Islamization of the Uighurs from the tenth century to as late as the seventeenth century, while displacing their Buddhist religion, did little to bridge these oases-based loyalties. From that time on the people of "Uighuristan" centered in Turpan, who resisted Islamic conversion until the seventeenth century, were the last to be known as Uighurs. The others were known only by their oasis or by the generic term of Turki. With the arrival of Islam, the ethnonym Uighur

fades from the historical record. According to Morris Rossabi, it was not until 1760 that the Manchu Qing dynasty exerted full and formal control over the region, establishing it as their “new dominions.” (*Xinjiang*), an administration that lasted barely one hundred years, when it fell to the Yakub Beg rebellion (1864–77) and expanding Russian influence. The end of the Qing dynasty and the rise of Great Game rivalries between China, Russia, and Britain saw the region torn by competing loyalties and marked by two short-lived and drastically different attempts at an independence: the short-lived proclamations of an “East Turkestan Republic” in Kashgar in 1933 and another in Yining (Gulja) in 1944. As Andrew D. W. Forbes has noted in *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia* (1986), these rebellions and attempts at self-rule did little to bridge competing political, religious, and regional differences within the Turkic people, who became officially known as the Uighurs in 1934 under successive Chinese Kuomintang warlord administrations. This designation was achieved under Soviet sponsorship in a meeting of regional delegates in Tashkent in 1921, who voted to revive the ancient ethnonym Uighur and apply it to the sedentarized Turkic people of the Tarim basin. Today, despite continued regional differences along three and perhaps four macroregions—including the northwestern Zungaria plateau, the southern Tarim basin, the southwest Pamir region, and the eastern Kumul-Turpan-Hami corridor—there are nearly nine million people spread throughout this vast region who regard themselves as Uighurs. Many of them dream of, and some militate for, an independent “Uighuristan.” The recognition of the Uighurs as an official Chinese “nationality” (*minzu*) in the 1930s in Xinjiang under a Soviet-influenced policy of nationality recognition contributed to a widespread acceptance today of continuity with the ancient Uighur kingdom and their eventual ethnogenesis as a bona fide nationality. The so-called nationality policy under the Kuomintang identified five nationalities of China, with the Han in the majority. This policy was continued under the Communists, eventually recognizing fifty-six nationalities, with the Han occupying a 91 percent majority in 1990.

The “peaceful liberation” by the Chinese Communists of Xinjiang in 1949, and its subsequent establishment of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region on October 1, 1955, perpetuated the Nationalist policy of recognizing the Uighurs as a minority nationality under Chinese rule. This nationality designation not only masks tremendous regional and linguistic diversity, it also includes such groups as the Lopyk and Dolans that had very little to do with the oasis-based Turkic Muslims that became known as the Uighurs. At the same time, contemporary Uighur separatists look back to the brief periods of independent self-rule under Yakub Beg (1820–77) and the eastern Turkestan republics, in addition to the earlier glories of the Uighur kingdoms in Turpan and Karabalghasan, as evi-

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

Within the region, although many portray the Uighurs as united around separatist or Islamist causes, the Uighurs continue to be divided from within by religious conflicts, in this case competing Sufi and non-Sufi factions, territorial loyalties (whether they be oases or places of origin), linguistic discrepancies, commoner-elite alienation, and competing political loyalties. These divided loyalties were evidenced by the attack in May of 1996 on the imam of the Idgah Mosque in Kashgar by other Uighurs, as well as the assassination of at least six Uighur officials in September of 1997. It is also important to note that Islam was only one of several unifying markers for Uighur identity, depending on those with whom they were in cooperation at the time. For example, to the Hui Muslim Chinese discussed earlier, the Uighurs distinguish themselves as the legitimate indigenous minority, because both share a belief in Sunni Islam. In contrast to the nomadic Muslim peoples (Kazakh or Kyrgyz), Uighurs might stress their attachment to the land and oasis of origin. In opposition to the Han Chinese, the Uighurs will generally emphasize their long history in the region. This suggests that Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, will have only limited appeal among the Uighurs. This contested understanding of history continues to influence much of the current debate over separatist and Chinese claims to the region.

Another pressing issue for the Uighurs is economic. Since 1991 China has been a net oil importer. It also has twenty million Muslims. Mishandling of its Muslim problems will alienate trading partners in the Middle East, who are primarily Muslims. After an ethnic riot in February of 1997 in the northwestern Xinjiang city of Yining, which left at least nine Uighur Muslims dead and several hundred arrested, the Saudi Arabian official newspaper *al-Bilad* warned China about the "suffering of [its] Muslims whose human rights are violated." Turkey's defense minister, Turhan Tayan, officially condemned China's handling of the issue, and China responded by telling Turkey not to interfere in China's internal affairs. Muslim nations on China's borders, including the new Central Asian states, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, although officially unsupportive of Uighur sep-

artists, may be increasingly critical of harsh treatment extended to fellow Turkic or Muslim co-religionists in China.

Unrest in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region may lead to a decline in outside oil investment and revenues, which are already operating at a loss. Exxon recently reported that its two wells came up dry in China's supposedly oil-rich Tarim basin of southern Xinjiang, with the entire region yielding only 3.15 million metric tons of crude oil, much less than China's overall output of 156 million tons. The World Bank loans more than \$3 billion a year to China, investing more than \$780.5 million in fifteen projects in the Xinjiang region alone, with some of that money allegedly going to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), which human rights activist Harry Wu has claimed employs prison (*laogai*) labor. Senate hearings in the United States on World Bank investment in Xinjiang have led Assistant U.S. Treasury Secretary David A. Lipton to declare that the treasury department would no longer support World Bank projects associated with the XPCC. International companies and organizations, from the World Bank to Exxon, may not wish to subject its employees and investors to social and political upheavals. It is clear that ethnic separatism or Muslim complaints regarding Chinese policy will have important consequences for China's economic development of the region. Tourists and foreign businesspeople will certainly avoid areas with ethnic strife and terrorist activities. China will continue to use its economic leverage with its Central Asian neighbors and Russia to prevent such disruptions.

China's international relations with its bordering nations and internal regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet have become increasingly important not only for the economic reasons discussed earlier, but also for China's desire to participate in such international organizations as the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Council. Although Tibet is no longer of any real strategic or substantial economic value to China, it is politically important to China's current leadership to indicate that they will not submit to foreign pressure and withdraw its iron hand from Tibet. Uighurs have begun to work closely with Tibetans internationally to put political pressure on China in international forums. In an April 1997 interview in Istanbul that this author held with Ahmet Türköz, vice-director of the Eastern Turkestan Foundation, which works for an independent Uighur homeland, Türköz noted that since 1981 meetings had been taking place between the Dalai Lama and Uighur leaders, initiated by the late Uighur nationalist Isa Yusup Alptekin. The elected leader of the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization, based in The Hague, an organization originally built on Tibetan issues, is Erkin Alptekin, the son of Isa Alptekin. These international forums cannot force China to change its policy any more than can the annual debate in the United States over the renewal of

China's Most Favored Nation status. Nevertheless, they continue to influence China's ability to cooperate internationally. As a result, China has sought to respond rapidly and often militarily to domestic ethnic affairs that might have international implications.

In addition to the official minorities, China possesses tremendous ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity. The ethnicization of the Uighurs has important implications for other cultural groups across China. Intolerance toward difference in Xinjiang might be extended to limiting cultural pluralism in Guangdong, where at least fifteen dialects of Cantonese are spoken and folk religious practice is rampant. Memories are strong of the repressions of the Cultural Revolution, when all forms of diversity, political or cultural, were severely curtailed. If rising Chinese nationalism entails reducing ethnic and cultural difference, then anyone who is regarded as "other" in China will suffer, not just the Uighurs.

China and Central Asian Relations: Contemporary Connections and Contradictions

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, China has become an important competitor for influence in Central Asia and is expected to serve as a counterweight to Russia. Calling for a new interregional Silk Route, China is already constructing such a link with rails and pipelines. As noted earlier, the ethnicization of several Central Asian peoples and their rise to prominence as the leading members of the new Central Asian states means that economic development and cross-border ties will be strongly influenced by ancient ethnic relations and geopolitical ties.

A 1997 study by James P. Dorian, Brett H. Wigdortz, and Dru C. Gladney discussed the growing interdependence of the region. Trade between Xinjiang and the Central Asian republics has grown rapidly, reaching \$775 million in 1996, and the number of Chinese-Kazakh joint ventures continues to rise, now approaching two hundred. Xinjiang exports a variety of products to Kazakhstan as well as to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Ukraine. Increased economic cooperation with China provides Central Asia with additional options for markets, trade routes, and technical assistance.

As noted in the discussion of the Uighurs, whose modern identity depended on a conference in Tashkent in 1921 that revived their long-extinct ethnonym, cross-border ethnic ties and interethnic relations within Xinjiang continue to have tremendous consequences for development in the region. Muslims comprise nearly 60 percent of Xinjiang's population, and most of them are Uighurs. Being Turkic, the Uighurs share a common Islamic, linguistic, and pastoralist heritage with the peoples of the Central Asian states. Turkic nationalists proclaimed an "East

Turkestan Republic" in Kashgar in 1933, and another one in Yining in 1944. As Linda Benson has documented, both republics were short-lived.

The Uighurs and other Turkic groups in the region are also closer culturally and linguistically to their Central Asian neighbors than they are to the Han Chinese. The Han (the official majority nationality of China) are also relatively recent immigrants to Xinjiang. The beginning of the twentieth century marked an enormous movement of Russian and Han Chinese settlers to outlying Central Asian regions. From 1949 to 1979 China sent Han professionals to Xinjiang to help "open the Northwest." In 1990 estimates put the Han Chinese at 38 percent of Xinjiang's population, up from 5 percent in 1949. Although Russian populations have begun to decline in parts of the former Soviet Union since independence, the Han migration to Xinjiang continues to escalate.

Opportunities in Xinjiang's energy sector attract many migrants. China's rapidly growing economy has the country anxiously developing domestic energy sources and looking abroad for new sources. In 1993, with domestic oil consumption rising faster than production, China abandoned its energy self-sufficiency goal and became a net importer of oil for the first time. During 1996 China's crude oil production reached a record high of 156.5 million tons, while imports of crude were up 37.5 percent over 1995, to 22 million tons. China is expected to import as much as 30 percent of its oil by the year 2000. As China develops into a modern economy, it should see a rise in demand comparable to that experienced in Japan, where demand for natural gas and other energy needs has quadrupled in the past thirty years. This is particularly why China has begun to look elsewhere for meeting its energy needs; in September 1997 Li Peng signed a contract for exclusive rights to Kazakhstan's second largest oil field. It also indicates declining expectations for China's own energy resources in the Tarim basin. Once estimated to contain 482 billion barrels, even the president of China National Petroleum Corporation admits that today there are known reserves of only 1.5 billion barrels.

China hopes to make up for its dependence on Kazakhstan oil by increasing trade. China's two-way trade with central Asia has increased dramatically since the Chinese government opened Xinjiang to the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. By the end of 1992 formal trade had jumped by 130 percent; total border trade, including barter, is estimated to have tripled. Ethnic ties have facilitated this trading surge: those with family relations benefit from relaxed visa and travel restrictions. Large numbers of "tourists" from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan make frequent shopping trips into Xinjiang and return home to sell their goods at small village markets. Xinjiang has already become dependent on central Asian business, with the five republics accounting for more than half of its international trade in 1993.

Most China-Central Asia trade is between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan (Xinjiang's largest trading partner by far). From 1990 to 1992 Kazakhstan's imports from China rose from just less than 4 percent to 44 percent of its total. About half of China-Kazakh trade is on a barter basis. Through 1995 China was Kazakhstan's fifth largest trade partner, behind Russia, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. China's trade with Kyrgyzstan has increased rapidly. Through 1995 Kyrgyzstan was Xinjiang's third largest trading partner, after Kazakhstan and Hong Kong. As early as 1992, China ranked as Uzbekistan's leading non-former Soviet republic trading partner. Since then, bilateral trade has increased by as much as 127 percent a year, making Uzbekistan China's second largest central Asian trading partner. This may be one of the most promising economic relationships developing in central Asia. The large and relatively affluent Uzbek population will eagerly purchase Chinese goods when the remaining border restrictions are relaxed and better transportation is built. Bilateral trade with Tajikistan increased nearly ninefold from 1992 to 1995. With much of Tajikistan recently in turmoil and the country suffering from a deteriorating standard of living, however, trade dropped by half in 1996. Trade between China and Turkmenistan has also risen rapidly. China is expected to eventually import Turkmen gas to satisfy the growing energy requirements in the northwest corner of the country. The sale of natural gas accounts for 60.3 percent of the total volume of Turkmen exports.

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

Multinational corporations are beginning to play a larger role in the region's development. In Kazakhstan, for instance, foreign firms are estimated to control more than 60 percent of electric power output. A proposed Turkmenistan-China-Japan natural gas pipeline, part of the envisaged "energy Silk Route," which would connect Central Asia's rich gas fields with northeast Asian users, demonstrates the potential for cooperation among countries. But it also highlights the growing importance of international companies—in this case Mitsubishi and Exxon—in financing and influencing the course of oil and gas development in

the region. With a potential price tag of \$22.6 billion, this pipeline—as well as many smaller and less costly ones—would not be possible without foreign participation. The new Great Game between China and central Asia thus involves many more players than the largely three-way Great Game of the nineteenth century. Yet these new international corporate forces do not supersede local ethnic ties and connections that extend back for centuries.

Landlocked Central Asia and Xinjiang lack the road, rail, and pipeline infrastructure needed to increase economic cooperation and foreign investment in the region. Oil and gas pipelines still pass through Russia, and road and rail links to other points are inadequate. A new highway is planned between Kashgar in Xinjiang, China, to Osh, Kyrgyzstan, to facilitate trade in the area. China is also planning a new rail link between Urumqi and Kashgar. New links from central Asia could follow several routes west through Iran and Turkey, or Georgia and Azerbaijan, to the Black Sea or the Mediterranean; south through Iran to the Persian Gulf or through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea; or east through China to the Pacific. All the routes pass through vast, remote, and perhaps politically unstable regions, and those involving Iran face difficulties in gaining Western financing.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Chinese government feared that the new independence of the neighboring Central Asian republics might inspire separatist goals in Xinjiang. It also worried that promoting regional economic development could fuel ethnic separatism by resurrecting old alliances. China, however, was reassured by an April 1996 agreement with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to avoid military conflict on common borders. It is also resting easier after assertions from Muslim states that they would not become involved in China's internal affairs. China's policy of encouraging economic development while keeping a tight lid on political activism thus seems to have the support of neighboring governments, despite not satisfying many demands of local and cross-border ethnic groups. Despite increasing investment and the creation of many new jobs in Xinjiang, the Uighurs and other ethnic groups complain that they are not benefiting as much as are recent Han immigrants to the region. This is a major contributing factor to recent Uighur Muslim activism. The Uighurs insist that the growing number of Han Chinese not only take the jobs (and eventually the profits) back home with them, but that they also dilute the natives' traditional way of the life, and leave them with little voice in their own affairs.

More than one hundred ethnic groups live in central Asia: Muslim peoples (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Karakalpaks, and Dungans), Russians (and other European settlers), and peoples who were brought to the area by Soviet authorities during the Stalinist period (Germans, Crimeans, Tatars,

Koreans, Armenians, Chechens, and Meskhetian Turks). Deteriorating living standards are increasing tensions among many of them. The densely populated Fergana valley, home to many of the region's ethnic groups, has been the site of clashes over jobs, land, and natural resources, especially water. In June 1989 Meskhetian Turks, who had been exiled to the area by Stalin, were attacked by Uzbeks and Tajiks. Another skirmish followed a year later between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh. There is particular concern about the Tajik-Uzbek conflict, given serious tensions between the two groups and their proximity. One million Tajiks live in Uzbekistan, while both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have sizable Uzbek populations in their parts of the Fergana valley. In Kazakhstan, Russian-Kazakh tensions remain high; 60 percent of Kazakhstani Slavs and Germans still consider their homeland to be the former Soviet Union, not Kazakhstan. Throughout the region, Russians, mostly technicians and other professionals who came after the 1917 revolution, make up roughly one-fifth of the population. Their fears that growing nationalism in countries of the region may become increasingly anti-Russian has prompted many of them to return to their homelands. Efforts to build a Kazakhstani identity have failed to bridge Slavic-Turkic and Orthodox-Muslim differences.

The New Great Game and the Old Silk Route

China and central Asia will continue to be shaped by historical forces, policies, and economic development that have brought them closer together in the last few years than in the past thirty, when the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations in the early 1960s virtually cut off almost all direct contact except between Moscow and Beijing. Historically, however, central Asia has always been an important crossroads and meeting place in the heart of Eurasia; it is now reassuming this role in the international marketplace. The post-Deng Xiaoping leadership of China must seek new solutions to the old ethnic problems in the region. Deng's many crackdowns on separatist movements in the borderlands (he led the 1959 invading army to Tibet) no longer make sense in a country trying to open itself to world markets and global expectations. China must go beyond its former two-pronged policy in the border areas: political repression coupled with economic reinvestment. Not only has erecting a "steel Great Wall," to use Regional Party Secretary Wang Lequan's terms, failed to keep out separatists in Xinjiang, but it can no longer hide China's problems from the world.

China's Muslims are the last Muslims who live under communism. With the independence of the largely Muslim nations of former Soviet central Asia, the end of the war in Bosnia, the Israeli-PLO rapprochement, and the recent peace accords with Muslim separatists in Chechnya and the Philippines, world Muslims

have begun to focus their attention on the Uighur situation in China. China cannot ignore the fact that support for the Bosnian Muslims was the only issue on which Iranian, Saudi, and Turkish governments could agree. Turhan Tayan, Turkish minister of defense, recently told China "that many living [in Xinjiang] are our relatives and that we will always be interested in those people's welfare. Our government is and will continue to be sensitive over the plight of our Turkic and Moslem brothers throughout the world." Through a modern process of transnationalization and ethnicization, Turks see themselves as directly linked to their "brothers" in China and central Asia. Muslims, through the global community of Muslims (*ummah*) and Islamization, also see themselves linked to the region. These international connections and ethnoreligious ties will continue to shape and influence China and central Asian relations.

Interethnic cooperation and political stability are critical if plans to develop the region are to succeed. Faced with newly independent Muslim nations on its border and interethnic conflicts within Xinjiang, China is stressing economic development and national unity. These are crucial issues in this time of post-Deng transition and reunification with Hong Kong. These issues also signal a new beginning for the ancient Silk Road linking China and central Asia.