

Hui Chinese Muslim in Yunnan: Arabian Genealogy and Diasporic Networks between China and Southeast Asia

Dr. Jianxiong MA



ABDULRAHMAN AL-SUDAIRY CULTURAL CENTRE

**Hui Chinese Muslim in Yunnan: Arabian Genealogy and
Diasporic Networks between China and Southeast Asia**

Hui Chinese Muslim in Yunnan: Arabian Genealogy and Diasporic Networks between China and Southeast Asia

Jianxiong MA

Division of Humanities, Hong Kong University of Science and
Technology

A Paper Presented at
The Rahmaniah Annual Seminar

January 2014
Al-Ghat



ABDULRAHMAN AL-SUDAIRY CULTURAL CENTRE

The Rahmaniah Occasional Paper Series is a select presentation of papers offered at the Rahmaniah Annual Seminar, a forum on current, socio-economic and international affairs as they pertain to Saudi Arabia. The Seminar is organized by the Rahmaniah Cultural Centre and its participants include more than forty scholars, lawyers and businessmen from Saudi Arabia, the Arab countries, the U. S. and Europe. The Rahmaniah Cultural Centre is sponsored by the Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Foundation. The Seminar is held annually in Al-Ghat.

Jianxiong MA

*Jianxiong Ma is an associate professor of Anthropology at the division of humanities at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His books include *The Lahu Minority in Southwest China: A Response to Ethnic Marginalization on the Frontier* (London: Routledge, 2012) and *From the 'Luo Bandits' to 'the Lahu Nationality': History and Ethnic Identity in the Construction of China's Southwestern Frontier* (In Chinese, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012). His present research focuses on the historical formation of Sino-Burma frontier and ecological conditions of cultural diversity and ethnicity in Southwest China, especially in Yunnan province.*

Hui Chinese Muslim in Yunnan: Arabian Genealogy and Diasporic Networks between China and Southeast Asia⁽¹⁾

Abstract

During the 13th to 15th centuries during Ming dynasty in China, more and more Huihui people were resettled from middle Asia and parts of central China to Yunnan. Some of them gradually lost their Muslim identities and original Islamic religious practice. After the 16th century, in the transformation from the Ming to the Qing dynasties, some Huihui scholars began to mobilize a movement to re-interpret Islamic ideas using the concepts of Confucian or Neo-Confucianism. Through this change, gradually, the Hui identity reformed. The Islamic education system was developed in communities based on the Common Items Charity, to extend local communities into a network. All of these developments were mainly based on the communal charity resources coming from mines in the mountain areas, and long distance trade, especially on the Yunnan-Burma frontier. For example, when the Qing state tried to produce more and more silver and copper, many mines were controlled by various powerful, Hui, mine hosts. Through the extension of the Hui network, the Hui elite

⁽¹⁾ This article was first published under the title “Re-creating Hui identity and the charity network in the imperial extension from Ming to Qing in the Southwest Chinese frontier,” in *Charities in the Non-Western World: the Development and Regulation of Indigenous and Islamic Charities*, Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown and Justin Pierce (eds.), New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 147-70. It is the result of a research project that was granted by University Grant Committee-Area of Excellent Scheme: The Historical Anthropology of Chinese Society. The author’s special thanks go to Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown for her long-term encouragement for his studies, especially this project on the Hui.

established, in a communal mosque, their Islamic education, which was based on the Common Items Charity in their home villages. It formed the basis of cultural construction for internal governance and a trans-regional network for business management and goods transportation. More Hui Muslims could, therefore, be freed from their everyday agricultural and official taxation and services tasks, because the Common Items played the role of a communal organization, and became a shield to deal with the state. In this way, the function of the Common Items Charity was to provide mosque education, deal with communal affairs, play host to long distant travelers and fulfill official tasks. Meanwhile, the network, based on cultural infrastructure like a common genealogy and a Confucian interpretation of Islam, made the sharing network possible. This systemic reform was pushed forward by some Confucian and Islamic scholars, but during the period from the 1710s to the 1810s, the Hui network based on the Common Items Charity was constructed. This system provided a fundamental institution for the Hui communities and integrated communal cohesion as well as the network extension. However, when the mine resources shrank some serious conflicts arose which brought about the Hui Muslim uprising, from the 1850s to the 1870s. In general, the process of the reform of Hui identity was linked with the charity network, but originally based on cultural projects like interpreting Islam using a Confucian concepts system and making a genealogy to link the Prophet with local historical figures, so that the communal network based on common property and a charity institution could developed. This social mechanism also provided some inter-

regional linkage for Chinese empires, from its margin to its center, as a part of empire construction on the frontier. On one hand, it was a way of religious continuity; on the other hand, it was a new movement of religious interpretation that waved in the process of identity mobilization in a period of political transformation from the Ming to mid-Qing China.

Introduction

Yunnan is the most ethnic diverse province in Southwest China, with 34% of its population of 45.9 million being of ethnic minorities, in 2011. Among them, about 0.7 million are the Hui minority, based on the 2011 census.⁽¹⁾ Even though the Hui occupies 1.52% of the whole provincial population, members of this significant ethnic group in Yunnan and in China are known as China's "familiar strangers", the Chinese Muslim.⁽²⁾ The Hui Muslim in Yunnan rebuilt many mosques in the Post-Mao reforms, and some studies show that the Hui has revived their religious network and their religious revival is a broader national trend brought about by a historical consciousness of both persecution at the hands of the state and non-Muslim groups. Many Hui people view the practice and promotion of their faith in the light of a legacy of Muslim rebellion, as a religious requirement to defend their faith and people. The Hui people locate their political and cultural efforts within a history of resistance against oppression in Yunnan, in the context of contemporary

(1) The public report on the 2010 census of Yunnan, Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, May 9, 2011. (<http://www.docin.com/p-200978626.html>. Accessed on December 3, 2011).

(2) Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997.

Islamic revival.⁽¹⁾ Based on these studies, cultural and religious revival after Cultural Revolution in China means a return to tradition, and an opportunity to modernize their culture and their communities. ⁽²⁾ But what are the real Hui traditions or cultural practices? Although previous studies highlight that “The Hui people have absorbed and adopted the language, dress, architectural styles, and even culinary tastes of those other groups among whom they reside”,⁽³⁾ they are Sunni Muslim. In Yunnan, most of them follow the Gedimu teaching following the Arabic qadim, or “old”, however, some Naqshbandi Sufism known as the Zheherenyeh (in Arabic, Jahriyya) and the Yihewani (from Ikhwan, Arabic for “brotherhood”) were also introduced in history. ⁽⁴⁾ It seems that, to give a particular idea of the Muslim Hui, they are a group of Muslims outside Chinese society in history, but they gradually experienced the process of sinicization with Chinese culture. However, they still keep up their religious tradition to maintain their status, to a certain degree, of “the stranger” in China.⁽⁵⁾

In this study, the author aims to point out that, the Hui identity and the Hui communal organizations based on communal mosques in Yunnan should be reviewed historically as a reform process. This reform of communities was integrated with Chinese imperial transformation, and

(1) David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

(2) Susan K. McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2009, p131

(3) Ibid. , p132.

(4) Ibid., p133.

(5) Ibid., p133; Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997; David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p35.

linked with different versions of state ideology, as well as the development of communal common property. Based on the reconstruction of a communal charity institution, the system of a communal network therefore became possible. The building up of communal charity provided resources for a Chinese style of mosque education which borrowed Confucian concepts, and this education system also provided a mechanism for networking, in terms of intermarriage, floating students, receiving guests and so on. This communal network could be regarded as the infrastructure of long distance trade between Yunnan and Burma, and the national system of religious education. Additionally, the building of a charity institution also played an important role in the weaving of a national network for educated elite, through which, an attempt was made to compile a genealogy as a cultural project to link Confucian ideas about lineage with Islamic ideas of a special lineage with the Prophet. Their movement established a religious authority for themselves in the building of a communal charity. This movement tells us that, the communal charity could not be regarded as the fundamental institution of Chinese Hui communities since their origin, but should be regarded as a historical change and a cultural strategy in the reconstruction of the Hui identity and network. However, common property as the base of communal charity performed a crucial role in this reconstruction.

Social transformation from the Ming to the Qing in Yunnan's frontier (1640s – 1720s)

In the 1640s, when the Manchu rose to fight with the Ming state in the northeast, the rebellious peasants, led by Li Zhicheng, occupied Beijing. Then the Ming dynasty fell. Led by the former Ming general, Wu Shangui, who had surrounded the Qing, the Manchu army arrived at Beijing in 1644. The Qing government quickly destroyed the peasant rebellions, but a refugee Ming court was established in South China. In 1646, a descendent of the former Ming emperor was enthroned at Zhaoqin in Guangdong by some Ming supporters, to resist the Qing state. The South Ming emperor was known as the Yongli emperor. Later, in 1652, those Ming officials cooperated with the remaining peasant rebel generals, Li Dingguo and Bai Wexuan. They moved the southern Ming court to Yunnan and set up Kunming as a new capital for the Ming refugee court. In 1659, the forceful Qing army, led by General Wu Sangui and other two Manchu generals, marched toward Kunming. The Yongli emperor and Ming supporters thereafter escaped to Yongchang, in western Yunnan. Two months later, the Yongli court and the Southern Ming refugees escaped into Burma. Large numbers of previously native chieftains and officials followed this escaped court into Burma and in May of the same year, the refugee courts was reset by the Burmese king at the capital city, Ava⁽¹⁾.

The transformation from Ming to Qing in Yunnan

(1) Guo Yingqiu, *The Chronicle of Li Dingguo*, Beijing: People's University Press, 2006. Ma Yao edited, *The Concise History of Yunnan*, Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2009, p104;

was a period of continuing peasant uprisings and native chieftains' resistance against the coming Qing armies. The fighting between the remaining Ming and the Qing armies continued for more than twenty years. In 1662, under extreme pressure, the Burma king sent the Yongli Emperor back to Kunming where he was killed by General Wu Sangui.⁽¹⁾ However, after Kangxi became the new emperor of the newly built Qing dynasty, General Wu Sangui conspired to share Yunnan, as a separate kingdom, with the emperor. In the following eight years, until 1681, the Qing armies fought with General Wu's forces and finally, this rebel was destroyed by the young Kangxi Emperor. Social order was gradually restored in Yunnan.⁽²⁾ During the long term, social chaos, from the 1630s to the 1680s, the local population had seriously reduced. The local elite, who had served the Ming refugee court or Wu Sangui's government, were scared of being penalized by the Qing government. Additionally, as the educated elite who had been trained in the Ming style, Neo-Confucian ethic and ideology, how to deal with a non-Han Manchu ruler was a cultural and psychological challenge to them.

It was a time in Yunnan history when the political transformation from the Ming to the Qing, in about the period of fifty years, pushed people to experience a variety of ideological conflicts and religious mobilizations. One case was the development of the Big Vehicle Religion movement in Jizu Mountains in Dali area, west Yunnan. Some Confucian scholars trained many monks there. They

(1) Ibid, p104.

(2) Ibid., p107.

claimed their ultimate salvation was based on the theory of combined Buddhism and Taoism and developed this sect into a new secret society network situated between the holy Jizu Mountain in Dali area and some minefields in Yunnan, but also extending to some provinces like Sichuan, Jiangsu and Hunan provinces. This system was developed by Confucian scholars such as Zhang Baotai and Yang Pengyi, who were becoming involved with the Ming refugees and the Yongli Emperor's court. This religious mobilization method was used to mobilize some uprisings later, known as the White Lotus Rebellions.⁽¹⁾ The case of Big Vehicle Religion demonstrates that, during the imperial extension from the Ming to the Qing, Confucian scholars who grew up under the Ming had tried alternative ways to bring about religious mobilization in early Qing in order to practice their political ideal and some of them had acted as religious creators or leaders. In this historical context, some of these Neo-Confucian scholars also tried to search for religious resources based on their Islamic family background. Another case in this historical context was that of Ma Zhu, which will be discussed in the following sections. His efforts and influence in searching for the Islamic interpretation based on the Ming style Confucian training, and some social consequences of this movement will be explored.

(1) Ma Jianxiong, “Shaping of the Yunnan-Burma frontier by secret societies since the end of the 17th century”, in *Moussons*, vol. 17, pp.65-84.

Making genealogy of the Prophet Mohammed, by Confucian scholars

A. Ma Zhu and his life in the imperial transformation from the Ming to the Qing

In the 1380s, after the Ming army settled in major cities along the transportation routes in Yunnan, rebellions against the Ming government continued in different areas. Wars with Burma and official military attacks on native chieftains occurred frequently during the Ming dynasty. However, at the same time, Confucian education gradually became established and extended from the core regions like Kunming, Dali and Linnan to more frontier areas, like Yongchang and Shunning prefectures. In those areas, when Confucian education had developed in the middle Ming, native elite were encouraged to participate in the national civil examinations. After the 1500s, more and more Yunnan original scholars were entitled 'Jinshi' and were promoted to become high officials, and acquired fame. Among the Ming officials, Yang Yiqing (杨一清), Lei Yinglong (雷应龙), Yang Shiyun (杨士云), Zhang Zhichun (张志淳), Li Yuanyang (李元阳) and many others became members of an active scholarly group, wherein they not only shared their political ideals with each other, but also tried to establish a local Confucian education system. Based on their efforts, many communal based schools in cities and rich areas like Kunming, Linan, and Dali, were built. A woven network among Confucian scholars or retired officials was gradually extended. The Yunnan Neo-Confucian scholar connection was closely linked with Wang Yanming (王阳

明), Li Zhi (李贽) and Yang Shen (杨慎) in the long term on one hand, and to some original Yunnan officials in the court or other places, on the other hand. Hence, a regional network of Confucian education and scholarly exchange, as well as connections among the officials, became significant in the late Ming period⁽¹⁾.

The developed, local Confucian academic study and education not only trained many students from different native groups like the Bai and the descendants of the Han military households, for instance in Dali Prefecture in late Ming, but also became a shaping agency in the reconstruction of local identities and the change of local customs.⁽²⁾ Local identities of Yunnan Confucian scholars were also constructed based on their educational experiences and academic activities, as a part of the national Neo-Confucian movement in the late Ming. For example, one local scholar, Zhuji (朱玑), in Menghua, had sent his son to study with Wang Yangmin when Wang lived in Guizhou Province. The scholarly connection used to be a familiar system to those scholars, because, normally they were retired officials. When they worked as so-called floating officials (Liu Guan 流官) in different places, they developed their own personal connections with their teachers, students and colleagues. In this social context, Ma Zhu's life will be more easily understood.

(1) Ni Tui, *The Chronicle of Yunnan*, Yunnan University Press, 1992; Fang Shumei, *The Collection of Yunnan Inscriptions*, Kunming: Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, 2003.

(2) Ma Jianxiong, "Historical Process in the Bazi Basin Ecological System: A Case Study of the Zhaozhou Bazi Society in Western Yunnan Mountains Area, Southwest China", The First Conference of East Asian Environmental History, October 24-26, 2011.

Ma Zhu (马注, Yusuf, 1640-1710?) was an important social actor in the shaping of Hui community in Yunnan. His book *The Guide of Islam* (Qingzhen Zhinan, 《清真指南》), was written in 1683 in Beijing. It was one of the most fundamental interpretation texts of Islam in Chinese. Another book was *The Explanation to the Key Elements of Islamic Rituals* (Tianfang Dianli, 《天方典礼》), written by Liu Zhi (About 1660-1730?), after Ma Zhu. Both Ma Zhu and Liu Zhi have been regarded as the fathers of Chinese interpreters of Islam, based on their Confucian training background. However, Ma Zhu was also known as an Islamic educator and Confucian scholar in Yunnan. Additionally, Ma Zhu was the first to compile a genealogy of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din (赛典赤·瞻思丁). He tried to link Chinese Hui Muslim families with this famous historical figure in Yuan Dynasty, then extended it to the Prophet Mohammed. This version of *The Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din Genealogy* (《咸阳家乘》) became a founder text for Chinese Hui people as an imagined family, in case any of them wanted to claim their genealogies were linked with the Prophet in China⁽¹⁾.

Ma Zhu was born in Banqiao village in Yongchang Prefecture (today's Baoshan in west Yunnan). His father, Ma Shikong, (meaning following the teaching of Confucius, 师孔) was entitled a Juren (举人) in 1642, but Ma Shikong's

⁽¹⁾ Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din (1211-1279) was entitled as the King of Xianyang (Xianyang Wang) when he was in Shanxi before he was appointed as the Provincial governor Pingzhang Zhengshi of Yunnan by Kublai Khan in 1274. He carried out many important institutional changes in Yunnan, hence he was known as the King of Xianyang in Yunnan. His sons were appointed officials by the Yuan government in many provinces in China, therefore the Hui in different provinces could track their family line to the sons of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din. See Song Lian, *History of the Yuan*, volume 125, "Biographies".

great-grandfather was also an entitled scholar and had been an appointed county magistrate in Sichuan Province. Later, Ma Zhu's grandfather worked as a high official in the military department, in Nanjiang. However, Ma Zhu's father, Ma Shikong, passed away when he was only seven years of age and his mother, Ms. Wu, brought him and his brother up, until he was eighteen. One of his father's friends, Zhang Shiming (张世明), was also given the title of a Juren at the provincial level examination in the same year as Zhu's father, so the two families became close to one another. Zhang Shiming ran a private school in Yongchang and he allowed Ma Zhu to be one of his students. After 1652, when the Southern Ming court moved to Yunnan, Zhang Shiming joined it as a local receiver. He was appointed by the refugee, Yongli Emperor, as a secretarial official of the ritual department (礼部中书). In 1656, Ma Zhu participated in the civil examination held by the Southern Ming court, after which his teacher encouraged him to join the Southern Ming government, to fight with the newly established Qing government. As local hosts, both Zhang Shiming and Ma Zhu worked hard to support the escaped court in Kunming, but in 1659 the escaped emperor retreated to Yongchang, then to Tengyue. Finally, the court settled in Ava, in Burma. In the Southern Ming court, Ma Zhu was appointed initially as a secretary but was then promoted to a higher official (锦衣侍御), working with Yongli Emperor directly, until the Yongli Emperor was captured and killed by General Wu Shangui. Ma Zhu escaped from the Ming refugees, lived in seclusion in different villages, and worked as a village teacher to feed himself. He wrote:

“I experienced an official career when I was twenty, with my passion for traveling and literature. When I was twenty-five, I travelled in search of the ideals of Taoism and Buddhism, and wrote a book *Textual Interpretations* (Jing Quan, 经权), in order to leave behind an immortal text for history. In this period, I studied the (Confucian) ideal of Xiu, Qi, Zhi, Ping (修、齐、治、平, ideals about cultivating self, managing family, ruling the county and making the world peaceful) and I thought that I got the ultimate comprehension. But when I was thirty-five, I started to search for ideas of Islamic text and religion, wanted to know the meaning and the origin of fate. Having studied days and nights, I suddenly realized that I know nothing at all! And, it was blank incomprehension in the future. Since then, I travelled everywhere, to search for great masters, to see or to listen, in order to gain knowledge. I wrote it down as this book The Guide of Islam”.

It is clear that, Ma Zhu used to be a Confucian scholar and that he worked with the Southern Ming government for several years when he was young. After this political resistance against the coming of the Qing army failed, he concentrated on the study of Confucian theories for about ten years before he changed direction and started to study Islam. Not only had his personality been linked, in depth, with Ming politics but, also, his life had been seriously linked with Ming ideology and politics. He visited Wuding

area in 1665 with one of his close friends, He Guangwu, who was also a famous Confucian scholar from a native Bai family in Dali. The purpose of this trip was to search for some historical legacy of the second emperor of Ming dynasty, known was the Jianwen Emperor (建文帝), whose throne was seized by his uncle, Zhudi. Zhudi, or the Yongle Emperor, sent the eunuch Zheng He (郑和) by ship, to Arabia and Africa from 1405 to 1433, and Zheng He also came from a Hui family in Yunnan. Some Yunnan natives learned that, after his throne was seized, the Jianwen Emperor escaped to Yunnan and became a monk at a temple in Wuding. In this period of his life, Ma Zhu, still emotionally attached to the lost Ming, could not give up his identity of a surviving Ming. His study on the theory of Confucian was his way of self-exploration in this situation. Later, he was invited to be a Confucian teacher at Wuding, so he trained many Confucian students here. Later, in 1669, after the war between the Qing court and the opposing force of General Wu Sangui in Yunnan, Ma Zhu retired from his teaching, in order to escape again from the coming wars and chaos in Yunnan. He travelled from Yunnan to Guizhou and Hunan, then he arrived at Beijing and after that, he was hosted by the King of Yan (燕宗王) for a long time.⁽¹⁾

When Ma Zhu stayed in Beijing, he started his academic interaction with some Islam scholars at various mosques and in the meantime, began his study of Islam and the Arabic language. In 1683, when he was forty-four, Ma Zhu finished the work *The Guide of Islam*. The following year,

(1) Ma Zhu, *The Guide of Islam*, “Preface”, Yinchuan, Ningxia People’s Publishing House, p7; Liu Yuzhao, “Ma Zhu’s Family Background and Life”, *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies*, Vol., 66 (N0.2, 2007) .

he left Beijing to go to Shandong, Zhejiang, Anhui, Shanxi and Sichuan provinces, carrying his book manuscript for academic exchange with scholars, and so he built relationships with the Huihui community or the Islamic research connection in China. He was warmly received by Zheng He's family in Nanjing. Zheng He's name was Ma Sanbao, and he came from a Hui family in Kunyang, in Yunnan, and was awarded the surname Zheng by the Yongle Emperor when the Jiangwen Emperor seized the throne in 1402. Ma Sanbao contributed a lot to the emperor Yongle in coup. Zheng He's father was a Hajji, and his family still practiced Islam in Nanjiang when Ma Zhu visited them. Supported by Zheng He's family in Nanjing, Ma Zhu also shared his Islamic academic experiences with another important scholar, Liu Sanjie (刘三杰). In his three-years of travelling to different Huihui communities in China, his work *The Guide of Islam* was well reviewed by almost all the famous Hui scholars of his time. Ma Zhu revised his book several times during these exchanges. He returned to Yunnan in 1687 when the social situation became peaceful. In 1710, Ma Zhu finished the final version of his book which has since become one of most influential books about Islam in Chinese.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Bai Shouyi, "Biographies of Chinese Islamic Scholars" in *Collected Works of Bai Shouyi*, Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2008. p406.

B. The search for a new identity for the remaining Ming; Ma Zhu uses genealogy as his source of authority in rebuilding Hui communities

After Ma Zhu returned to Yunnan, he immediately called a meeting of his relatives and many Ma surnamed Huihui families in Yunnan, to compile a genealogy. However, he had worked out a genealogy already and this meeting was actually called for a finally discussion. All participants approved the decision that, *The Ma Surname Genealogy* (《马氏家乘》) or *The Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din Genealogy* (《咸阳家乘》) was acceptable. In general, when Ma Zhu was writing his work *The Guide of Islam*, he was already working on a genealogy for his family, and trying to link Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din with the Hui communities in Yunnan and in China. We can conclude that when he returned to Yunnan after his travels in provinces and cities, from 1669 to 1687, especially his life in Beijing and Nanjing for many years, he had worked out a general root of the genealogy for the Huihui communities. Based on his meeting in 1687, he sent the printed genealogy to all attendants and mailed many copies to the Huihui communities who had not sent their representatives to the meeting. In this way, his version of the relationship between Mohammed, Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din and most of the Hui communities in China and in Yunnan, had become an academic fact, due to the many copies of this genealogy that were issued. During that year, he was forty-seven.

In this genealogy, the two most important parts were firstly, the genealogical link between Mohammed and

secondly, Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din. He wrote that, Mohammed had a followed generation Ali, then to Hasan. The thirty-first generation of Mohammed was Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din. Based on the record of *History of the Yuan* (*Yuan Shi*), Ma Zhu got detailed descriptions of all the sons of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din, but since the thirty-eighth generation, seven generations after Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din, the genealogy has described the branches of Sai Hazhi (赛哈智), and all of his sons had adopted Ma as their surname. Ma Zhu assigned different communities in Yunnan to be the descendants of the four sons of Sai Haizhi, who used be an official in early Ming dynasty. According to this family tree, almost all people, if they have a Ma surname, should be descended from two generations of Sai Hazhi's sons, and quickly and evenly dispersed to different places in China and the mountains or cities of Yunnan. However, the most skillful techniques used when compiling this genealogy linked Ma Zhu's great-great-grandfather to one of Sai Hazhi's sons. In his genealogy, he argued that, if people lived in certain villages or cities, like in Dali, Menghua, Yongchang, or Linan, all of them should be the descendants of Sai Hazhi's sons. But, if their surnames were not Ma, they should be the descendants of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din's sons. For instant, if the surnames were Na, Shu, La and Ding, they should be the branches of Nasiral-Din, one son of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din.⁽¹⁾ In summary, technically, based on this genealogical root, every surname in Yunnan or in China could trace their family genealogies to the family of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din. Therefore, years late, another Huihui scholar, Sai Yu, did the same.

⁽¹⁾ The Compiling Committee, *The Materials of Zheng He's Family Background*, Beijing: People's Transportation Publishing House, 1985. p115.

C. The case of Sai Yu, a follower of Ma Zhu

Based on the same logic, Sai Yu (赛屿) formed another genealogy for his family. According to Sai Yu's genealogy, Mohammed was known as The True White Emperor (白帝真君), as entailed by Zhu Yuanzhang or The Hongwu Emperor, the founder of Ming dynasty.⁽¹⁾ Then, all Sai surnamed families were the descendants of Sai Hazhi (赛哈智) also. Sai Yu grew up in eastern Yunnan, in Shiping County. Different from Ma Zhu, he had not experienced Ming dynasty as a young follower. He was a Confucian student and entailed as a Juren, in 1729. After that, he was appointed as a county magistrate in Sichuan Province. In Sichuan, he tried to build schools and Taoism temples. But the most important event in his life was when one of his students Bian Tingzhuo (边廷擢) was appointed as the Commissioner of Salt Revenue of Lianghuai (两淮盐运使) in 1779. Through this connection, Sai Yu became powerful among Yunnan officials.⁽²⁾ Afterwards, Sai Yu compiled his version of the genealogy, which showed that his family members were descendants of Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din.

Sayyid-al-Aljal-Din or the King of Xianyang (Xianyang Wang) was an important symbol of ethnic relations in Yunnan. He was appointed by Kublai Khan as the provincial governor and he was the founder of the diverse taxation policy for different ethnic groups. Based on his background of Semu category (色目), he was able to negotiate with the

(1) “The Sai Surname Genealogy”, The Compiling Committee, *The Materials of Zheng He's Family Background*, Beijing: People's Transportation Publishing House, 1985. p11.

(2) “Inscription of Sai Yu's Tomb”, In Bai Shouyi, *Collected Works of Bai Shouyi*, Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2008. P769.

kings of Vietnam and Burma, and the local chieftains, to accept the frontier framework under the Mongol's ruling. He also built the first Confucian temple in the capital, Kunming, as well as several mosques for his followers. Based on this symbolic representative of Yunnan, the Ming government built an official temple, known as the Temple of the King of Xianyan (咸阳王庙), to worship him. The Qing, having established its ruling order in Yunnan after the wars with General Wu Sangui, rebuilt the official Temple of the King of Xianyang in 1682. The management of this official temple was shared between two families; one had the surname Ma; the other the surname Sai. However, after Sai Yu constructed the Sai surname genealogy, he claimed that his family was the real descendent of the King of Xianyang and, helped by provincial officials the government drove the two families away and turned over the rights of this temple to Sai Yu's family⁽¹⁾.

Before the system of communal charity and mosque based education could be built to weave the Hui communities into a network, certain conditions were needed in Yunnan. In history, the most important cultural projects were the construction of genealogy and the construction of religious authority over communities. Through the cases of Ma Zhu and Sai Yu, we have learned that the Hui community was not, in fact, a self-evident system without any construction. The most difficult part of this construction, or reconstruction from the Huihui, was the transformation from a family based system to the communal charity based

⁽¹⁾ “The Sai Surname Genealogy”, The Compiling Committee, *The Materials of Zheng He's Family Background*, Beijing: People's Transportation Publishing House, 1985. P39.

system. The communal charity provided an institution of education, intermarriage and trade network. However, this change happened after the 1500s, when Confucian private education was already well developed, so more and more Huihui scholars tried to remobilize their communities to follow a Confucian education model. That is why Ma Zhu owned very high social prestige among the Hui people. One reason was for his efforts to interpret Islam based on his Confucian training, which made the concepts of Islam much easier to explain, and it should have been comprehensible even for students without enough Arabic or Persian language training. Based on this cultural infrastructure, the mosque based education could be developed in early Qing dynasty. Another aspect was the project of construction of a genealogy, so that highlighting religious and communal authority could be possible. What Ma Zhu did, was combine Confucian ideas with borrowed ideas from Sufism. This is a crucial point by which to understand the Chinese Hui community when the Hui mentions the idea about “Both the Islam and the Confucian must be put in (经书两全)”. It provides the ideological source of a so-called traditional mosque based religious education. This tradition was not very old because it was created in the imperial transformation from the Ming to the Qing and created by those skillful Confucian scholars. They were familiar with both sides, the Islamic religious life and the Confucian moral ideal about personality, family, and the state. Like Ma Zhu, it should also be understood that it was a time when they felt a certain pain of consciousness of belonging, to belong to a memorial Ming, or the Qing,

or to an alternative way, tracing back their family history as a Hui Muslim. Additionally, the construction of the genealogy of Hui surnames linked first to the famous Sayyid- Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din, then to the Prophet, evidenced an imagined social consequence. Through this, all Hui people were potential relatives and had potential relations with Islam, if they wanted to acknowledge this linkage. However, this construction was based on Ma Zhu and Sai Yu's Confucian ideology in the beginning, as well as their social capital as Confucian educated officials. In this way, we can also consider whether his work was a way to build a social infrastructure for the construction of a future web. In this sense, we should not regard the Hui, at least in Yunnan in Southeast China's frontier, as simply Muslim without checking the Confucian agency in the construction of Hui identity.

Confucian scholars worked as agents for community reform

Ma Zhu's contributions in building the Hui community concentrated on three aspects: first, his efforts on interpreting Islam using Confucian concepts; second, his study of Huihui history and the compiling of the genealogy which linked the Hui community to the Prophet to develop an image of a "Hui family". Also, his personal authority in the reformation of community organization and education was established; the third aspect was his effort to build some fundamental principles for communal charity as a social institution, which is a crucial mechanism to transform the family based Huihui into the communal based Hui. Here, Huihui means the old

style Muslim who followed an inherited family tradition of religious belief and the study of the Koran, or who learnt Arabic and Persian before the mosque based education was developed. Ma Zhu's effort was an important shaping power to reform Hui Islamic belief and practice, based on communities. Before the communal charity was built, there was no collective resource to support the development of mosque education. Meanwhile, because some powerful families controlled religious resources and the Huihui were scattered in different places, it could not be easily unified without the necessary social and cultural mechanism. However, after these changes were created by Ma Zhu, the Hui network became possible, especially the network of mosque education. In a word, all of these reforms should be based on the comprehensive interpretation of Islam. We could conclude that, what Ma Zhu did, and also the many Chinese Hui scholars who followed or cooperated with him, was to explain Islam based on Confucian education. Their interpretations meant that ordinary people could understand the religious ideas without the requirement of Arabic or Persian language training in this Chinese context.

The dramatic change in Ma Zhu's life, from a follower of the Ming refugee court in Burma, to a life of seclusion in different villages as a rural teacher, this change pushed him to think about the meaning of fate. He thought that, "There was no complete house and no complete people if your county was no longer complete."⁽¹⁾ He could not practice his social ideal any more, based on what he learned from

(1) Ma Zhu, *The Guide of Islam*, "Preface", Yinchuan, Ningxia People's Publishing House, P24.

Confucian ideas, to serve the state. That was the reason why he tried to study Islam religion, to search for the interpretive sources of the ultimate meaning of Xin (nature, 性), Ming (fate, 命), and life and death. Then he divided the world into two parts: one is “before and after life”, another is “the life”. He defined the two ends, the beginning and the end, as the part of Shi and Zu (始卒), meanwhile he defined the part of life as the middle, Zhong (中). He explained that, “Confucians just study the middle, rather than the beginning and the end (儒者第言其中, 而不言始卒)”.⁽¹⁾ Like other Confucian scholars who studied Islam in China, such as Liu Zhi, Confucian scholars did not think that Islam and Confucian ideals were mutually exclusive. From their interpretation, Islamic ideas about religion could be matched with the parts that classical Confucian texts never touched, because Confucianism and Islam are dealing with issues linked with life and after life. So, Ma Zhu explained that, “The world could exist for itself. The world relies on the two poles; the two poles are based on the ultimate pole, Taiji (太极). But Taiji is also based on non-pole (无极), which means the true one (真一).” This explanation is similar to Taoism, but Ma Zhu put the Confucian discussions on the principle and the coherence into the framework of Tian (the Sky, 天), to divide religion and Confucian ideas about social morality into two parts of human life. The idea of the Sky was the key term used by Chinese Confucians to understand Islam. Because, Confucius said “Fate is given by the Sky” (天命) but “Keep a distance to the supernatural world”. The Chinese Confucian scholars therefore used the

⁽¹⁾ Ma Zhu, The Guide of Islam, “Preface”, Yinchuan, Ningxia People’s Publishing House, P6.

term the Sky to interpret Islam, a religion about the Sky. Therefore, Arabic countries were interpreted as the Sky Direction (Tian Fang 天方), and Kaaba was interpreted to be the House of Sky (Tian Fang 天房). ⁽¹⁾ In general, Ma Zhu pointed out that, “If the students studying Islam could not study Confucian, or the students studying Confucian could not study Islam, that should be a lifelong loss.”⁽²⁾

After he returned from Beijing, his first task was to issue *The Sayyid-al-Ajal-Din Genealogy* and then to revise and spread his book *The Guide of Islam*. He had close interaction with Yunnan officials in Kunming and in different prefectures and he was invited to teach in different Hui communities. Sometimes, he returned to Wuding and sometimes he taught in Sichuan. However, his authority was steadfast based on the genealogy project and his book about Islam. It was his purpose indeed, to change religious practices in Yunnan Hui communities.

In 1710, Ma Zhu became involved in the case of Qalandars in Wuding. He asked the Yunnan officials to strictly ban a heterodoxy religious teaching, which could have been linked with the local Taoism and the White Lotus rituals, as well as Qalandars practice. The believers of this sect were already scattered in different villages in almost all areas in Yunnan. The believers liked to use drugs to hypnotize themselves, dressed in Taoism ritual suits, wrote

(1) Discussions about Islamic understanding on the Sky, see also Wang Jianping, “The Concept of Sky in Ma Dexin’s Works and the Relationship between Islam and Confucian”, in *A String of Pearls: on Relations between Islam and China*, Yinchuan: Ningxia People’s Publishing House, 2007. Pp189-204. See also “Zhang Xin”, in Bai Shouyi edited, *The Biographies of Famous Hui in Ming Dynasty*, Yinchuan: Ningxia People’s Publishing House, 1988, p123.

(2) Ma Zhu, *The Guide of Islam*, Yinchuan, Ningxia People’s Publishing House, p369.

discourses and put these papers into old tombs as magic. Therefore, Ma Zhu defined this sect was a heterodoxy sect, rather than Islam, but these believers were active at the mosques. Wang Jianping points out that this religious case was based on a Qalandars tradition, originally from India, and Sufi orders.⁽¹⁾ But, according to Ma Zhu's description, this Taoism and Islamic combined sect developed from Dali, and the follows also practiced some rituals which followed the Buddhist tradition and the White Lotus rituals.⁽²⁾ If we review the historical context in this period from the late Ming to the early Qing, it was a time of rapid religious innovation. The Jizu Mountain in Dali area was then a center of the Big Vehicle religion and White Lotus sect. The case of Wuding, as reported by Ma Zhu, was also similar to other cases of local religious innovation in a historical transformation.⁽³⁾

However, the Yunnan provincial government quickly banned this heterodoxy sect according to Ma Zhu's request. After this case, Ma Zhu realized that, to build a communal based religious training system was the basic route to resolving these problems. Later, he worked out a practical list called "The Ten Commandments" as principles of communal Islamic practices. This new project made Ma Zhu into the father of Hui communal organization in history.

(1) Wang Jianping, *Concord and Conflict: The Hui Communities of Yunnan Society in a Historical Perspective*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1996, pp181-194.

(2) Ma Zhu, *The Guide of Islam*, Yinchuan, Ningxia People's Publishing House, p419.

(3) See also Ma Jianxiong, "Shaping of the Yunnan-Burma frontier by secret societies since the end of the 17th century", *Moussons* n° 17, 2011-1, 65-84.

He listed the Ten Commandments for communal life as follows:

1. Study Islam religious knowledge. Confucian students should study Islam and women should also follow men in their religious study as well;
2. Select a religious leader for a community. The criterion of choosing a religious leader should be based on the Confucian morals;
3. Strictly follow Islamic practices. Everyone should at least practice Salat al-Jum'ah;
4. Help each other in the rituals and festivals. In a community, everyone should join in communal affairs like weddings, funerals, and pay a religious tax to the mosque or collective fund. All collective property must be recorded;
5. Reorganize collective property under the name of Mosque. It is a way to build charity, through which people could donate farming land and wealth to the charity fund. The community could use this fund to do that the following: A. to invite and support the Islam teachers for the purpose of mosque (hall) based Islam education; B. to support students who are studying at the mosque (the hall); C. to receive long distant Hui travelers and to feed the poor in the community;
6. Treat long distant guests in a friendly fashion. Yunnan is a mountainous area in China, and Hui travelers have a very hard business. The task of the Islam leader of the

mosque (Zhangjiao, 掌教) is to arrange hosts to receive visiting guests based on a well accept cycle. It should be free, but at least three days of free treatment should be provided;

7. Treat the religious teachers in a favorable way. The religious leader should be invited by the on duty families committee (Xianglao, 乡老) to help them make their decision about the teacher's salary. All invited teachers to the community must follow the principles of local private Confucian school (Ruguan, 儒馆), to provide rice, oil, salt, everyday life needs and the annual salary. So that the young generation could be well trained.
8. Send children to the Confucian school and to the Mosque school. If the Confucian ideal is ignored, the children will not understand how to cultivate themselves, manage the family, and work for the state (Xiu, Qi, Zhi, Ping, 修、齐、治、平). If so, the family will lose everything, both in political power and in religion;
9. Keep meals legal. Islamic Halal food must be taken;
10. Take funerals seriously. The family morals, like the three-Gang and the five-Lun morals (三纲、五伦) and the relations between children and parents, husbands and wives should be seriously respected. ⁽¹⁾

At the end of these statements, Ma Zhu wrote: “Who am I, who dares to teach people about the commandments here?” in order to protect the religion through excluding heterodoxy behavior; it was the only possible action.

⁽¹⁾ Ma Zhu, *The Guide of Islam*, Yinchuan, Ningxia People's Publishing House, pp.428-437.

Otherwise, Islam could not be well developed. However, as Ma Zhu emphasizes at the beginning of his guide book on Islam, “I am the descendent of the Prophet!”

Ma Zhu’s archives about the principle of building communal charity is another fundamental law to reconstruct Hui community in Yunnan based on the long distance transportation system, and seriously separated communities in a rugged frontier in early Qing dynasty. If we review the current situation, most of these principles are practiced as local customs, such as the charity based on the mosque, the rituals of weddings and funerals, the treatment style arranged by the religious leaders, the style of invitation to a communal teacher, and support students who study in the mosque and so on. Those principles were the rules for constructing a Hui community, and maintaining its networks. But what is unfamiliar to most Hui people here is that, it is not a very long-term tradition at all. Based on those archives we learned that, the communal charity based on the mosque was a creation in the time of Ma Zhu, if we consider this system as a package of social organizational principles. If so, we should review the details of this charity system and its working mechanism in its process.

The network and community construction based on charity

The collective property fund had developed before Ma Zhu’s time, but, in the period of Ma Zhu’s time, it became the whole package as the basis of the network and mosque education. This mechanism significantly reshaped the social structure and identity of the Hui in Yunnan , as a

fundamental social institution. Therefore, a review about the development of charity is necessary.

According to *The Travel Notes of Xu Xiake*, when Xu Xiake (徐霞客) arrived at Dali in 1639, there was a mosque in the city that had been built by a Sha surnamed Muslim family (Jiaomen Sha 教门沙氏), and Xu also reported that the locals called it the Huihui Hall (Huihui Tang, 回回堂).

⁽¹⁾ The oldest Mosque in Yunnan should have been built by Sayyid-al-Aljal-Din before the Ming dynasty, in Kunming. Ma Zhu also mentioned that, in many communities the mosques were controlled by some powerful families, and they regarded the mosque as their private place. In this situation, the Huihui Hall in the context of Jiaomen Islamic families could not be regarded as the communal mosque based on common property principles. Xu visited Dali in 1639, but until Ma Zhu's time in the 1710s, 70 years later, the communal based mosques rather than the Islamic Halls were controlled by powerful religious families, and communal charity had not been well established according to these documents.

After Kangxi's reign, more and more mosques were built based on communal donations and more archives showed that communal common property was also established as the fund of the charity. In 1776, there was a case about that, when a Hui community rebuilt their communal mosque, the cost was funded by the villagers and they set a stone inscription into the building to record this event:

“The mosque in our village was already very old. Now it

⁽¹⁾ *The Travel Notes of Xu Xiake*, Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1985, p995.

shows limitations for communal usage. All members of our village have donated money or labor as their merit to rebuild it. Finally we have succeeded in this project. To rebuild this mosque has been a long term goal for our community. In 1642, the leader of the mosque, (掌教) Ma Mingtai and some elders planned to rebuild it but were not successful then. Since that time, the building has been repaired many times, but only now can we record the donated farming land as their merits as the following....”⁽¹⁾

This village was destroyed and disappeared during the Panthay rebellion from 1856-1873, which was another issue to mobilize Hui identity in Yunnan.⁽²⁾ From the above inscription we learn that, villagers had denoted farming lands to the mosque as the charity fund in the 1770s. But, before that, few archives could be found talking about the style of communal charity set under the name of a communal mosque. It was a historical change after the death of Ma Zhu, especially during the time from 1710 to 1810s. It was the time to rebuild mosque property as a charity, as well as the establishment of mosque education. Since then, more and more records show that the Hui communities and their network quickly developed in Yunnan.

In the above case, the cost per person of rebuilding the mosque was 300 *liang* silver (about 480 ounces). But one villager donated 100 *liang*, one third of the total cost. For the remainder, normally their individual donation

(1) “The Inscription of the Huzui Village in Dali”, in Dali Hui Study Association Edited., *This History of the Hui in Dali*, Kunming: Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, 2009. P265

(2) David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

normally was several *liang* silver. Additionally, there were more than 20 *mu* (about 3.3 acre) donated to the mosque as common property, also recorded as the Changzhu Tian (常住田). This is the same term used by local Buddhist temples for temple property. Therefore, we can call these donated farming lands merits for the villagers' regarding the mosque property. Even though we don't know the background of that biggest donor, if he was not an entitled official he would normally be a rich businessman. Another inscription at Mami Chang village in Weishan, not far from the above mentioned village, shows that, during this period, the communal network had already extended to far away silver minefields. Many villagers went to work at the newly developed silver minefields in the Yunnan-Burma frontier.

“The merit-doing for charity is based on donated money and farming lands. Normally the charity is used to invite over a mosque leader, to educate people and to support students. The villagers of Mami Chang village are all descendants of the Prophet and have follow Islam principles for many generations. The old mosque was built in 1679 and used until 1751, when it reached its limitation for services. All relatives wanted it to be rebuilt, so they started to contribute money and farming lands to the mosque. In 1786, we rebuilt the mosque. It costs 1100 *liang* silver for the whole project, including the rebuilding of the service hall and two minarets. The donations not only came from relatives of the villagers, but also from relatives in the Lazi Mountains and the Xiyi Minefields (悉宜厂). The former donated 26.6 *liang* silver, and the latter donated money and farming lands

to become mosque property.”⁽¹⁾

Through these archives we have found that, at least in the 1780s, the Hui communities had extended to the Burma frontier. The Xiyi Minefield was located in the area controlled by the Tai chieftaincy, at Gengma. Gengma area was the frontier because there had been wars from 1766 to 1769, and it was just ten years later that the Xiyi Mine was exploited. Immediately, in the same year, the Hui villagers who came from Mami Chang to work at the Xiyi minefield were able to send money back to rebuild their luxurious mosque, which cost 1100 *liang* silver.⁽²⁾

When more and more communities established their mosque property, the charity fund gradually developed. The main purpose of communal charity was to maintain a system of mosque education and communal affairs, as well as a collective unit through which to react to official taxes and official services.

A. Mosque property as the charity fund for communal affairs

Historical archives show that, the communal charity based on mosque property had been well established before the 1790s among the Hui communities. The communal charity fund functioned in diverse ways, but the rule for this mosque based system mainly followed Ma

(1) “Inscription of Mosque Property at Mami Chang”, in Chen Leji Edited, *The Selective Archives of Hui Mosques in South China*, Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 2004. P327.

(2) “The Xiyi Mine”, in Dang Meng Edited, *The (Guangxu) Gazetteer of Shunning Prefecture*, Hong Kong: Tianma Publishing Company, 2001. P251.

Zhu's list of principles. On a communal level, it worked as a crucial base for social organization and identity construction, bound up with Islam practice as well as Confucian morals, which were also carried out as Ma Zhu hoped. However, we should be aware that, from the 1710s to the 1810s, was an economic golden age, increasingly based on the development of the mine industry in Yunnan. Meanwhile, it was also a time when the Chinese population rapidly increased due to changes to the official taxation policy.

In case of village Najia Ying, an inscription records how the charity fund functioned, and the way it was built. In 1799, when the inscription was set, the villagers here also claimed that they were descendants of the Prophet and Sayyid-al-Aljal-Din, like other Hui communities. We can understand that, as it was following the genealogy made by Ma Zhu. The different cases about this ancestral trace were followed what Zhe He claimed. On Ma Hezhi's tomb inscription, Zheng He's father, it says that they were the descendants of a Yuan official Baiyan (拜顏), but never mentioned Sayyid-al-Aljal-Din or anybody else in 1405.⁽¹⁾ However, claiming the relationship with the Prophet became popular in the period after Ma Zhu's genealogy compiling project. Even in the inscription of villages like Mami Chang village and Najia Ying village in western and central Yunnan, people claimed their holy linkage with the Prophet. On the text

⁽¹⁾ "The Tomb Inscription of Ma Gong", in The Compiling Committee, *The Materials of Zheng He's Family Background*, Beijing: People's Transportation Publishing House, 1985, p1.

about the building of mosque property in this inscription, it emphasizes the basic item of mosque property was farming lands. People contributed their farming lands to the village mosque, but normally, for each piece of farming land, the fixed taxation also followed. For example, there was a piece of mosque land, with its fixed tax of three *sheng* (about 1.5 kg.) of grain. In 1725, the mosque bought a piece of land from the Na Chengjian brothers, its income of 5 *sheng* tax grain from the farm rent should cover the cost of a communal festival on the anniversary of Master Cai's death; in 1735, Na Cun donated a piece of land to the mosque, its income should pay for the cost of lamp oil; in 1750, Na Dazhang's family donated a piece of land with its fixed tax of eight *sheng* grain, the income should be used for the celebration of the Prophet's birthday as a communal festival; or, a woman donated a piece of land to the mosque, but she required the mosque to use the income for the communal festival of the anniversary of Fatimah's death. Gradually, the mosque property was increasing over a period of time, and step by step, more and more of the income from these properties was used to hold more and more communal festivals, for common costs, even to dig a new irrigation channel for the villager's farming lands, and so on.⁽¹⁾ In 1861, the mosque property had been developed into an organized system. The lands were categorized as “The lands for education (jingguan, 经馆), the lands for the Prophets' birthday; the lands for lamp oil; the lands for taxation; the lands for *mufa* official services (夫马)” and so

(1) “The Inscription on the Huojia at Bingju Mosque”, in Chen Leji Edited, *The Selective Archives of Hui Mosques in South China*, Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 2004, p304.

on. Now, a new name for mosque property was given: the common items (gongxian 公项).⁽¹⁾ By the time Common Items, Gongxian, was used as a specific term for mosque property, a system of charity for communal and network affairs had been well constructed. The common resources were not only used for communal education and communal affairs, but also for official tasks. So, the Comment Items provided the community with a political shell, as a collective organization, to deal with the relationship with the state. If tasks like agricultural tax and official services could be taken away by the mosque, villagers would be free to do their business. The consequence was that, more and more people liked to donate their farming lands to the mosque, and leaving the Common Items to deal with relationships with officials for them therefore became possible. Hence, they escaped from these affairs to concentrate on their own business, like travelling, studying Islam, or making money at the minefields. The development of charity therefore provided a new social institution for Hui communal organization, for certain freedom from their farming lands when they needed to face the state. Meanwhile, the relationship between families and community and its external network became stronger than in the time of Ma Zhu. Ma Zhu's fundamental principles had another social consequence, which went beyond his expectations: based on the Common Items, more and more Hui people could be free from farming, to become long distant traders or to work at the newly exploited minefields in the frontier mountains,

⁽¹⁾ “The Inscription on the Huojia at Bingju Mosque”, in Chen Leji Edited, *The Selective Archives of Hui Mosques in South China*, Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 2004, pp306-307.

but their relationship with the community became closer, and the interdependence between communities was also stronger than before.

The style of Najia Ying village was not the sole case. In Bingchuan County in Dali Prefecture, another case also shows that the establishment of mosque property could be shaped by a need or common desire to deal with officials. In year three of Jiaqing reign (1798), the officials carried out a new policy of household registration, the Huojia (火甲) system, which was similar to the Baojia system carried out in many counties in the late Ming dynasty. A Xiang head or a Bao head controlled two Jia heads at Bingju town. There were five hundred households in this town then. Families were registered as fire households (Huohu, 火户) under the Jia. However, among these five hundred households, only one tenth of them were the Hui (回民). There was no opportunity for the Hui to be selected as the Xiang head or the Bao head, but they could have their own Jia head, and the Hui here became a Jia organization. An old man therefore donated his property to the mosque, to call for more donations. Once the mosque accumulated enough common property, all official fees and taxations (火甲之费) could be paid by the income of this common property. The Hui villagers therefore accumulated their common items under the name of mosque. In this way, the mosque worked as the official of the Jia for the Hui. Until 1835, the principle of Common Items was well accepted, and followed by members of this mosque.⁽¹⁾

(1) “The Inscription on the Huojia at Bingju Mosque”, in Chen Leji Edited, *The Selective Archives of Hui Mosques in South China*, Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 2004, pp306-307.

Besides common affairs, the Common Items as a way of charity based on mosque property also worked as a collective political organization, to help its members to deal with official tasks, taxations, services. So it became a grass-root political organization for the Hui. In other words, if we define the Hui as an ethnic identity in Yunnan, the system of Common Items was its institutional base. The Common Items was the charity system built on mosque property. It had a management committee and worked as the middleman, between individual families and the state, or between one Hui village and another Hui village in the same network. When more and more people donated their wealth and farming lands to the mosque, on one hand they were free from the state to certain degree, on the other hand, they also found other opportunities to be businessmen or students, which relied on the mosque network. Moreover, if we consider the Common Items to be a charity, the communal mosque became a free school for public students who came from different places. The students found that, like businessmen, their study experiences included the experience of living in another community, dating their future spouse there, and weaving a friendship network among their classmates. They were free, because the charity paid for them. In general, the charity for education was for all Hui people woven into this web, and the mosque education was the agency used in the weaving of this web.

B. The development of the mosque education system based on charity

Once the Common Items became a social institution and was practiced by communal mosques, the core of this institution was the mosque education (Jingtang Jiaoyu 经堂教育). The mosque education included the system to invite in Islam teachers based on contracts, and the system to support students. Both the teachers and students could be floating among communities. Famous teachers should teach in one place for several years, normally one contract was for three-years, meanwhile the students had no tuition fees, and their living expenses should paid by the charity. In this way, the young boys could travel through different communities in search of their favorite teachers, or their favorite places.

The mosque education was also developed during the century from about 1710 to the 1810. The founder of mosque education was Hu Dengzhou (胡登洲, 1522-1597), who originally borrowed the idea of Confucian private schools to teach students. But in his time, Islam education was still based in private schools. Hu developed a teaching package, including Arabic language study and selective text books in Arabic. However, after Hu became famous in Shanxi Province, more and more students came in search of his teaching. He could support these students using his family resources.⁽¹⁾ According to some historical archives, even if Hu Dengzhou was the founder of mosque education

⁽¹⁾ “Inscription of Master Hu’s tomb”, in Bai Shouyi, “Biographies of Chinese Islamic Scholars” in *Collected Works of Bai Shouyi*, Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2008, p405.

for Islam, it could not be regarded as typical of the mosque education adopted later. In terms of teaching style, Hu's teaching was still a family based Islam education. However, Hu trained some students and in the generation of the students trained by Hu's students, his teaching package began to spread to Yunnan. It's hard to say if there was a father of mosque education in Yunnan. After reviewing this history, at least we could say that, Ma Zhu had performed an important role by fitting Islam education, developed from Hu Dengzhou, into a communal based system. Only after the Common Items was established after Ma Zhu, and the Islam education added the Confucian interpretation, did a localized religious training become possible.

Besides Ma Zhu, there were some other famous Islam teachers. They had won very high prestige among the Hui communities, and one of them was Cai Rui. Cai Rui grew up in Zhaozhou, in Dali prefecture, and used be a student of Master Huang. After Huang passed away, he went to Hunan to follow a Ma surname teacher. Following that, he studied in Canton and Wuchang in Hubei province for several years. Then, he returned to Yunnan and taught in Najia Ying village, the community we mention above. He taught there until his death in 1693.⁽¹⁾ There is a popular story talking about what Cai Rui did, through which we could learn that, Islam practices should be a reconfirmed process with the development of communal reconstruction. The main plot of this story is that, during the Kangxi period (1662-1722), Master Cai and his teacher Master Ma once passed Najiang

⁽¹⁾ "Inscription of Master Cai'a Tomb", in Dali Hui Study Association Edited., *This History of the Hui in Dali*, Kunming: Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House, 2009, p264.

Ying village on their way to Mecca. They found that two villages here had betrayed their religion due to their desire to drink chicken blood. Because of this, Master Cai gave up his planned pilgrimage. He decided to stop at Najia Ying to educate the people there. The villagers did not allow him to talk about Islam in the beginning, but Master Cai used his money and playacted as a businessman, selling candy to children. He used a trick; if a child would follow him to learn a short piece of the Koran, Cai would award the child a piece of candy. A long time later, all the children liked to stay around Master Cai and they learned much of the Koran. Day after day, Master Cai helped people to kill chickens, and replaced their desire for chicken blood with other kinds of delicious things. Finally, the people were moved by his persuasion, accepted his advice, and returned to the mosque. Many years later, villagers here were proud of their Islam belief. When Master Cai was dying, he said, I trained Islam students here, as many as one *dou* (about 5 Kg) of sesame seeds.⁽¹⁾

Cai Rui was influential in the reshaping of Islam education at the mosques. He practiced the building of a style of mosque education in Najia Ying community. Another archive shows that, this reshaping was also partly because of the influence of the Arabic world. An Arabic inscription found in this village reported that, when Cai Rui built his school at the village mosque, an Islam missionary sent by the King of Yemen also joined Cai Rui. He was recorded by the villagers as the Yemen Master. Both Yemen Master

(1) “Master Cai”, in Bai Shouyi, “Stores about Yunnan” in *Collected Works of Bai Shouyi*, Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2008, pp774-775.

and Master Cai tried to persuade the villagers to give up those illegal customs learned from their older generations. They asked the villagers to practice a Hanafi Islam. Based on their teaching, people changed their ways and returned to Islam. This stone inscription was written by words combining abnormal Arabic, Persian and Chinese spellings of Arabic letters (小儿经).⁽¹⁾ Based on the history of Najia Ying village and Cai Rui, we found that, the network for Hui Islam education based on the mosque was not limited to Yunnan. It was a national network covering all of China, and it was also linked with the Arab world as well.

However, the Hui gradually became a network based community. Social features and religious practices quickly changed the fate of the Hui communities. The Common Items provided resources for social organization and made people free to travel. Villagers were protected by their communal resources to a certain degree. In a changing time, it was dangerous somehow. According to some officials, the following describes the impression the Hui make, according to nearby communities, due to the extremely strong social cohesion.

“The poor Hui will be miners and the rich will be caravan businessmen. They transport goods to Burma, which will have tripled profits. They like to join the army, two or three tenths of soldiers are the Hui. They live together, travel as a group, and help their gangs in conflicts. They build glorious mosques, study their religion there, and like to receive Hui visitors. If there is a specific calling, their information could

⁽¹⁾ “The Inscription in Arabic at Najia Ying Mosque”, in Chen Leji Edited, *The Selective Archives of Hui Mosques in South China*, Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Publishing House, 2004, pp309-313.

be communicated through a piece of paper, which is faster than the official mail. In this way, even though they are a minority, they still have very much, so they are strong.”⁽¹⁾

The above information aimed to explain the conflict before the Panthay rebellion which occurred after the minefields collapsed, between the 1820s and the 1830s. There are many academic studies on the Hui and the Panthay rebellion in Yunnan,⁽²⁾ however, my study wants to argue that the re-construction of Hui community from a family based religious system, to be a communal based religious system was a historical transformation based on some social conditions in Southwest China. It was a part of Chinese society, but the construction of charity as the principle of a social institution based on the mosque, provided the possibility of social mobility and collective cohesion in the weaving of a communal based network. However, both Islam and Confucian resources provided social and cultural capital in this transformation, which was seriously pushed by Confucian scholars in terms of construction of cultural infrastructure. It was a way of “imagined community” due to the making of genealogy, and the Islam interpretation by Confucian concepts.

(1) Ma Enfu, “The Political Situation of Yunnan”, In Bai Shouyi, “Stories about Yunnan” in *Collected Works of Bai Shouyi*, Kaifeng: Henan University Press, 2008, p771.

(2) David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Conclusion

The social transformation from the Ming to the Qing created a series of problems for the Ming intellectuals in their identity crisis; one direction they tried was to find resources from Islamic religion. So, they changed their careers to join the building of a communal education system and to establish their religious authority based on genealogy compiling. Meanwhile, the Huihui communities also changed through a process of reconstruction. A communal charity system based on mosque property was built in order to deal with state taxation tasks and to support public education on a communal network. The Common Items charity provided a mechanism for network building through students exchange, intermarriage, rituals and festivals and charity donation. This system therefore became the infrastructure of long distance trade between China, Burma, Thailand, or between cities and newly developed minefields, from the 1720s to the 1830s. Therefore, the system of charity had enforced migration and organization and provided methods for social organization in the conflicts in the Panthay rebellion when the minefields shrank after the 1830s.

Once the social mechanism of networking became based on genealogy, religious interpretation, communal affair principles and guests hospitality funds were established among the Hui, and the communal charity system gradually developed at the same time, especially between the 1710s and the 1810s. People donated their property to the mosque in the beginning. When more and more property came to the mosque, the mosque could perform the role to maintain

an education system, to organize communal festivals, and to perform the role of communal representative to deal with the state. In this way, more people liked to cooperate with each other as members of this network, under the shadow of their Common Items. The Common Items could be the protector of individuals, to help them to become free from their official tasks. In this way, people regarded Common Items as a political organization, because this organization could gain more freedom for the villagers in their business. In this network, people could share benefits everywhere. In this way, we should consider the charity here as the system of sharing in a network, but it performed a crucial role in the mobilization of the Hui community.

Map of Yunnan Frontier

