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# FROM OBSERVERS TO PARTICIPANTS: SINO-MUSLIM INTELLECTUAL'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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**Abstract**

*This paper aims to shed light on the evolving perception of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals on Pan-Islamism as they engaged with the Islamic world. Scholarly literature examining the relationship between Sino-Muslim intellectuals and the Islamic world often discusses the role of Chinese Azharites in the 1930s. However, the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world prior to the emergence of Chinese Azharites is rarely explored. This paper aims to address this gap by examining the process of Sino-Muslim intellectuals' engagement with the Islamic world in the early twentieth century, using magazines, books and travelogues published by Sino-Muslim intellectuals and official archives as primary sources. It argues that their level of engagement with the Islamic world depends on their acceptance of Pan-Islamism, an idea that emerged in the late nineteenth century advocating for the political unity of the Islamic world. Notably, the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world was not always as harmonious. Prior to the end of World War I, most Sino-Muslim intellectuals were sceptical of the idea of Pan-Islamism, which hindered the relationship between Sino-Muslim communities and governments. Nevertheless, after World War I, thanks to the efforts of certain Sino-Muslim intellectuals, they not only embraced this idea but also actively participated in various issues in the Islamic world.*

**Keywords:** Sino-Muslim intellectuals, Pan-Islamism, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Islamic world, Chinese Azharites

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## Introduction

In recent years, numerous scholarly works have explored the transnational history between the Sino-Muslim intellectuals and the Islamic world[2] in the early twentieth century. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite was among the first to highlight this forgotten history.[3] By providing a historical background, Benite argues that the connection of Sino-Muslim intellectuals to the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century was a form of recuperation following 'the devastation of China's Muslim communities in the nineteenth century.'[4] Since Benite's work, several articles and PhD dissertations have diligently reviewed the role of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals in the Islamic world from various perspectives.[5] In particular, significant emphasis has been placed on the Chinese

[2] The term "Islamic world" refers to the community of people, countries, and regions where Islam is a significant or dominant religion. Please refer to Reinhard Schulze (translated by Azizeh Azodi), *A Modern History of the Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 1

[3] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite,"Nine years in Egypt: Al Azhar University and the Arabization of Chinese Islam," *Hagar Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 8, no.1 (2008): 1-21. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "Taking Abduh to China: Chinese-Egyptian Intellectual Contact in the Early Twentieth Century," In: James Gelvin and Nile Green (eds.), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steel and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 248-267.

[4] Benite, "Taking Abduh to China," 252.

[5] Mao Yufeng, "A Muslim vision for the Chinese Nation Chinese Pilgrimage Missions to Mecca during World War II," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no.2 (2011): 373-395; John Chen, "Re-orientation the Chinese Azharites between Umma and Third world, 1938-55," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no.1 (2014): 24-51; John Chen, "Islam's Loneliest Cosmopolitan: Badr Al-Din Hai Weiliang, the Lucknow-Cairo Connection, and Circumscription of Islamic Transnationalism," *ReOrient* 3, no.2 (2018): 120-139; John Chen. *Islamic Modernism in China: Chinese Muslim Elites, Guomindang Nation-Building, and the Limits of the Global Umma, 1990-1960*, PhD Dissertation (2018), Columbia University; Zeyneb Hale Eroglu Sager, *Islam in Translation: Muslim Reform and Transnational Networks in Modern China, 1908-1957*. PhD Dissertation (2016), Harvard University; Janice H Jeong, "A Song of the Red Sea: Communities and Networks of Chinese Muslims in the Hijaz." *Dirasat*, no.12 King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (2016): 1-30; Janice H Jeong, *Between Shanghai and Mecca: Diaspora and Diplomacy of Chinese Muslims in the Twentieth Century*. PhD Dissertation (2019), Duke University.

Azharites, who were the Sino-Muslim students studying at Al-Azhar University during the 1930s and 1940s. Although the number of Sino-Muslim students at Al-Azhar was small, scholarly works have underscored their historical significance. Benite asserts that Chinese Azharites established a connection to the Islamic world as the Sino-Muslim community in China was never considered part of an extension of the Islamic world.[6] Similarly, John Chen argues that the Chinese Azharites's mission to establish a connection to Egypt provided an opportunity to reorient China, Islam and Chinese Islam on a more auspicious path.'[7]

It can be said that Benite and Chen's perception of Chinese Azharites may have been influenced by the Chinese Azharites themselves. Hai Weiliang (1911–2006), a renowned Azharite who later became a diplomat, published a book in Arabic entitled *Relations between the Arabs and China* (*al-alaqat bayna al-arab wa al-sin*) in 1950. He evaluated the role of Chinese Azharites:

> "Muslims in China were a forgotten community in the past and the present. They have been isolated from the Islamic world and deprived of access to knowledge about Islam. As a result, they sought of elevating their presence in the Islamic world and devised a plan for communication. An opportunity arose in 1931, when the Islamic association in China decided to send some of their children to Egypt with the aim of acquiring Islamic, Arabic culture and religion. They arrived in different years and enrolled at Al-Azhar al-Sharif, marking the beginning of a new era of relations between Chinese Muslims and their brothers…"[8]

Hai's evaluation of the Chinese Azharites aligns with the aforementioned scholarly works, but he overemphasised the degree to which the Sino-Muslims were isolated from the Islamic world. In

[6] Benite,"Nine years in Egypt," 4-5.

[7] John, "Re-orientation the Chinese Azharites between Umma and Third world, 1938-55," 25.

[8] Hai Badar al-Din (Hai Weiliang), *Al-'Alāqāt Bayn Al-'Arab wa Al-Ṣīn* (*Relations between the Arabs and China*) (Al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1950).

reality, the connection between Sino-Muslim intellectuals and the Islamic world was never interrupted. For example, a small number of Sino-Muslims had travelled to Mecca and other Muslim cities and had written travelogues prior to the mission of the Chinese Azharites in Egypt in the 1930s. Thus, this paper aims to elucidate this dynamic by analysing the engagement of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world in the early twentieth century.

The paper suggests that the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world depended on their degree of acceptance of Pan-Islamism, an idea that emerged in the late nineteenth century and advocates for the political unity of the Islamic world. However, it is interesting to note that the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world is not always amicable. During the 1900s, the idea of Pan-Islamism was largely unfamiliar to most Sino-Muslim intellectuals. Merely observers of the Islamic world, they did not consider themselves part of it. However, after the World War I, an increasing number of Sino-Muslims accepted the idea of Pan-Islamism and actively discussed various related topics. What caused such a change? By examining magazines, books and travelogues published by the Sino-Muslim intellectuals and official archives as primary sources, this paper aims to shed light on the evolving perception of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals of Pan-Islamism as they engaged with the Islamic world.

The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. The first provides a brief history and features of Pan-Islamism, which contextualises the engagement of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world. The second analyses the factors behind the lack of enthusiasm among Sino-Muslim intellectuals towards the Pan-Islamism before the end of World War I. The third explores the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with Pan-Islamism before Chinese Azharites. The fourth reviewed the role of Chinese Azharites and challenges. Finally, the analysis is summarised and conclusions are drawn.

## The Historical Background of Pan-Islamism

The engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world in the early twenty century could be placed in the context of the rise

of Pan-Islamism. The origin of Pan-Islamism can be traced back to the deteriorating relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the late nineteenth century. Prior to that, the Ottoman Empire sought integration into the Concert of Europe rather than engaging with Muslim communities outside its territories.[9] However, the Bulgarian revolt in 1876 inevitably altered the course of Ottoman–European relations, leading to a worsening situation. During the revolt, militia groups loyal to the Ottoman Empire massacred thousands of Bulgarian Christians, which sparked widespread criticism across Europe.[10] Following the Bulgarian revolt, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in April 1877, with the stated aim of protecting the Slavic people of the Balkans. In less than a year, the Russian army approached Istanbul, eventually leading to the Ottoman Empire signing a ceasefire.[11]

After the ceasefire, other European countries became concerned about Russian ambitions in the Balkans. As a result, the Congress of Berlin was held in 1878, which granted independence to Balkan Christians. While this congress aimed to maintain the balance of power in Europe, it led to significant territorial losses for the Ottoman Empire's territories in the Balkans and triggered substantial demographic changes. Specifically, hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees from the Balkans sought refuge in Istanbul and Anatolia, increasing the Muslim population within the Ottoman Empire to 80%.[12] To prevent further disintegration of the empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842–1918) revitalised the Caliphate and positioned himself as the foremost leader of the Islamic world.[13]

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[9] Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 54; Sükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 82.

[10] William Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: John Murray, 1876); Milena Methodieva, *Between Empire and Nation: Muslim Reform in the Balkans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 20.

[11] Methodieva, *Between Empire and Nation: Muslim Reform in the Balkans*, 23.

[12] Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 61.

[13] Kemal Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no.3 (1972): 243-281; Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 130.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II's action drew strong criticism from Western elites. Gabriel Charmes (1850–1886), a renowned French journalist, is credited with popularising the term of "Pan-Islamism" in 1883. He contended that Sultan Abdul Hamid II, influenced by religious fanaticism, utilised the title of 'caliph' to rally Muslims against Europe.[14] In addition, Western elites not only associated Sultan Abdul Hamid II with Pan-Islamism, but also viewed any Muslim political figures, intellectuals or social groups who opposed the West as being part of Pan-Islamism. The Earl of Cromer (1814-1917), the British Consul-General of Egypt, evaluated Pan-Islamism as 'recognition of slavery, laws regulating the relations of the sexes which clash with modern ideas.'[15] As Cromer indicated, the image of Pan-Islamism was highly negative and his opinion was not exceptional among the Western elites of the time. Most Western elites also believed that Pan-Islamism represented fanaticism, aggressiveness and irrationality among the majority of Muslims.[16]

In general, most Western elites held the negative view on Sultan Abdul Hamid II and Muslim intellectuals who were against the West. However, Muslim intellectuals worldwide rejected these accusations from the West. In fact, they criticised Western imperial ambitions and racism in the Islamic world.[17] Between the 1880s and 1900, approximately 70% of the Muslim population was either directly or indirectly colonised by European powers.[18] As such, Muslim intellectuals in various regions experienced European imperial racism and responded by advocating for the political unity of the Islamic world.

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[14] Gabriel Charmes, *L'avenir de la Turquie le Panislamisme* (Paris: Mon Autre Librairie, 1883).

[15] Samuel Zwemer, *Islam: A Challenge to Faith* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1907), 238.

[16] Wilfred S Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. Paternoster Square, 1882); Chirol Valetine, *Pan-Islamism* (London: Central Asian Society, 1906); Ernest Renan, Sally Ragep (trans.), "Islam and Science," McGill University, 2001, <https://www.mcgill.ca/islamicstudies/files/islamicstudies/renan_islamism_cversion.pdf> (accessed 5 April 2022).

[17] Mushir H Kidwai, *Pan-Islamism* (London: Lusac & Co, 1908); Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

[18] Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 66.

The outbreak of World War I seemingly provided an opportunity for Muslims worldwide. In late October 1914, the Ottoman Empire declared Jihad, supported by Germany, and called on Muslims under British, French, and Russian colonial rule to rebel against their dominations.[19]The Ottoman's Jihad strategy mainly had a psychological effect on Britain and France, failing to yield substantial results. Consequently, the majority of Muslim communities under British and French colonial rule did not engage in large-scale rebellions.[20]

After World War I, the Ottoman Empire awaited its fate of dismemberment. In April 1920, Britain and France confirmed their spheres of influence in the Arab East (*Mashriq*) through the "mandate system" of the League of Nations. Britain was in charge of Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq, while France controlled Syria and Lebanon.[21] While the Ottoman Empire lost its territories in the Arab East, it also faced invasions by Armenians and Greeks in Anatolia, the only remaining part of the Empire. Against this backdrop, Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938), an Ottoman officer, led Muslims in an effort to save the Ottoman Empire from the brink of extinction.

Kemal is known as the founder of modern Turkey, the mastermind who abolished the Caliphate, and the architect of Kemalism; however, little is known about the connection between Kemal and Pan-Islamism.[22] In fact, Kemal had very close ties with Muslims worldwide during the Turkish War of Independence from 1919 to 1922. He adopted Pan-Islamism as a strategy to seek support from Muslims worldwide in the face of the Allied Powers plans and Greece invasion.[23] Kemal's approach proved effective, gaining

[19] Ryan Gingeras, *Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016),113.

[20] Chiara Formichi, *Islam and Asia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Erik-Jan Zurcher, *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's Holy War made in Germany* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 13-27.

[21] Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (London: Routledge, 2015), 2-3.

[22] Sükrü Hanioğlu, *Anatürk: An Intellectual Biograp*hy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 103-108.

[23] Hanioğlu, *Anatürk: An Intellectual Biograp*hy, 103.

widespread support from Muslim communities around the world, including India, Libya, Syria, Central Asia, and even China.[24]

On July 24 1923, after defeating the Greek forces, Kemal's representatives signed the Treaty of Lausanne, which largely preserved most of the remaining Ottoman Empire's territories.[25] The military victory made Kemal a renowned hero in the Islamic world. Indian Muslims bestowed upon him the title of "The Sword of Islam" as if Kemal was the protector of the Islamic world.[26] Some Western scholars began to take notice of this change. Lothrop Stoddard (1882–1950), an American scholar, mentioned the connection between Muslims worldwide and Kemal, citing several examples, such as Arab notables, Turkic–speaking Muslims in the South Caucasus, and Muslims in India, who actively cooperated with Kemal and even assisted him in countering Western power.[27] Stoddard believed that the Muslim world was entering a revival period after World War I, and that colonised Muslim communities cooperated to achieve true independence and autonomy.[28]

However, the connection between Kemal and Muslims worldwide was short–lived especially after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in October 1923. The Grand National Assembly led by Kemal initiated a series of reforms, including the abolition of the Caliphate in March 1924, marking the beginning of the detachment between Kemal and the Islamic world. The Caliphate holds significant religious, political, and historical importance in Islamic history. Despite the fluctuation of political authority throughout different periods, the Caliphate symbolises the political centre of the Islamic world.[29] Thus, its abolition caused an uproar

[24] Awad Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence 1919-22," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no.3 (2012): 19-37.

[25] Ahmad Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.

[26] Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 137; Hanioğlu, *Anatürk: An Intellectual Biograp*hy, 141.

[27] Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 226-232.

[28] Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, 77-81.

[29] Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate: The History of an Idea* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

among Muslim communities. Many Muslim scholars were quite disappointed with the decision, arguing that it had harmed the political unity of the Muslim community.[30]

The above brief analysis of the background of Pan-Islamism shows that it revolved around the Ottoman Empire, with the aims of unifying Muslims worldwide and countering the domination of European powers in Muslim lands. Nevertheless, with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, followed by the abolition of the Caliphate, the Islamic world lost its centre. In addition, European powers, through direct or indirect rule, continued to disturb the Muslims pursuit of self-determination after World War I.[31] The engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with Pan-Islamism occurred within this broad historical context.

## Sino-Muslim Intellectuals' Views on Pan-Islamism Before the End of World War I

Despite its emergence as a transnational political idea in the late nineteenth century, Pan-Islamism was rather unfamiliar to the Sino-Muslim intellectuals before the end of World War I. While several notable Sino-Muslim Imams had undertaken pilgrimages to Mecca or spent brief periods in Istanbul and Cairo, there are few travelogues or explicit mentions of their involvement with Pan-Islamism.[32] Furthermore, some Sino-Muslim intellectuals were sensitive to the idea of Pan-Islamism.

Wang Kuan (1848–1919), a prominent Imam in Beijing during the late Qing dynasty, was likely one of the first Sino-Muslims to meet Sultan Abdul Hamid II. In 1906, he embarked on a pilgrimage

[30] Rashid Rida, "Al-Khilāfah wa al-Sulṭān al-Qawmī wa Jiḥat Naẓar al-Turk ilā Hādhihi al-Mas'alah al-Kubrā (Caliphate and nationalist Sultan: Turk's views on the major issue)," *Al-Manār* 24 (1923), 692-693.

[31] Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 175-246.

[32] Ma Dexin (1794-1874) is often considered the precursor for the Sino-Muslim intellectuals. His work, *Chaojin Tuji* (*Record of the Pilgrimage Journey*), described his travelling experiences in the Islamic world between 1841 and 1848. However, he failed to provide detailed descriptions of his engagement with local Muslims during his trip. See Kristian Petersen, "Shifts in Sino-Islamic Discourse: Modelling Religious Authority through Language and Travel," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no.2 (2014): 354.

to Mecca, after which he travelled to Istanbul and submitted a petition to Sultan Abdul Hamid II in a letter written in Arabic. Sun Shengwu (1896–1975), a junior disciple of Wang Kuan, summarised the engagement between Wang Kuan and Sultan Abdul Hamid II as follows:

> After the Sultan read the petition letter written by the Imam (Wang Kuang), he was amazed by the elegant Arabic writing in the petition. He was curious and asked the Imam about the overall situation of Muslim communities in China, including their political status, economic situation, and educational conditions. The Imam replied that Muslims in China did not have high-ranking politicians, entrepreneurs, or educators. Recognising the challenging situation of Muslims in China, the Sultan decided to dispatch two scholars to China along with a significant number of Islamic books. Additionally, the Sultan bestowed upon the Imam the title of Mufti of China...[33]

The description above regarding the engagement between Wang Kuan and Sultan Abdul Hamid II has been verified using materials from an Ottoman archive.[34] Wang Kuan initially praised Sultan Abdul Hamid II as a noble and forgiving Caliph. He then requested the Sultan's assistance in revitalising Muslim communities in China.[35] While Wang appears as one of the early Sino-Muslim intellectuals recognised Sultan Abdul Hamid II as the Caliph, his intention was not to advocate for the political unity of the Islamic world, which was the focus of Pan-Islamism. Rather, he intended to improve the well-being of the Sino-Muslim communities. Education was identified as a crucial factor in achieving this goal. Upon returning to Beijing in 1907, Wang Kuan, with the help of Sino-Muslim intellectuals and businessmen, established Islamic primary schools. These schools not only taught fundamental Islamic

[33] Sun Shengwu, *Huijiao Luncong* (*Studies on Islam*) (Taipei: Zhongguo Wehhua Yanjiuso, 1963), 276.
[34] Chen, *Islamic Modernism in China*, 55-56.
[35] Chen, *Islamic Modernism in China*, 55-56.

knowledge but also offered modern courses, such as Mandarin reading and writing, mathematics, history, geography and physical education.[36]

After Wang Kuan's visit to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, two Ottoman scholars, Sheikh Ali Rida and Sheikh Hasan Hafiz were dispatched to China in 1907.[37] During their stay in Beijing (1907–1908), they taught Islamic curriculums, including Quranic recitations, theology, Hadith, and Arabic to Sino-Muslims.[38]

*Review of the Muslim World* (*Revue du mondel musulman*), a French magazine, published a photo of the opening ceremony of a primary school in Beijing in 1908. The photo shows two Ottoman scholars standing in the centre, surrounded by hundreds of Sino-Muslim students. Notably, the primary school had a bilingual name written in Chinese and Arabic. The Chinese name of the school is 'Niujie West Mosque Public Primary school,' (*Niujie Qingzhen Xisi Gongli Xiaoxue Tang*), while in honour of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Arabic name of the school was 'Hamidiya Science House' (Dar Al-Ulum Al-Hamidiyah). Additionally, two Ottoman flags are displayed behind the Ottoman scholars, symbolising that Sino-Muslims were under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire.[39]

[36] Sun, *Huijiao Luncong*, 276-277; Ma Jing, "Wang haoran ahong yu jindai musilin de kaizhi huodon," (Wang Haoran Ahong and the Enlightenment Activities of Modern Muslims) *Zhongguo muslim* (Chinese Muslims), no.4 (2019): 60.

[37] Sun, *Huijiao Luncong*, 276; Wang Zhibin and Ha Baoyu, "Wan qing tuerqi muslim de lai hua ji she hui huo dong yan jiu," (A Study on the Arrival of Turkish Muslims to China in the Late Qing Dynasty and Their Social Activities) *Shi Jie zong jiao wen hua* (The World Religious Cultures), no.1 (2023): 24-31.

[38] Yin Boqing, "Wang haoran ah heng zhuan," (Wang Haoran Imam's biography) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 7, no.24 (1935): 15; Sun Shengwu, "San Shi Nian Lai De Zhong A Wen Hua Guan Xi," (The Cultural Relationship between China and Arabia over the Past Thirty Years) *Huimi Yanlun Ban Yue Kan* (Muslim Opinion Bi-Monthly) 1, no.3 (1939): 16

[39] *Revue du mondel musulman* (1908), 698.


Ceremony of the Niujie West Mosque Public Primary school in Beijing, 1908[40]

Not all Sino-Muslim intellectuals welcomed the arrival of the two Ottoman scholars. Ding Baochen (1875–1914) was sceptical of the intentions of the Ottoman scholars. As a disciple of Wang Kuan, he had received Islamic education during his youth but had never travelled to the Islamic world.[41] Despite not being a religious scholar, he also emphasised the importance of education for the Sino-Muslim communities. From 1906 to 1913, he served as the chief editor of *The True Patriotic Daily*, *TPD* (*Zhengzong aiguo bao*), a vernacular newspaper based in Beijing. Despite not focusing on Islamic matters, the *TPD* frequently covered stories related to Sino-Muslim communities across China. Ding and his fellows wrote several articles in the *TPD*, praising Wang Kuan and other *Imams* for their education reforms and introducing new ideas to address the stagnation of Muslim communities.[42]

[40] *Revue du mondel musulman*, 698.

[41] Zhang Juling, "Xinghui pian yu ding baochen de zhengzong aiguo bao." (Awakening the Hui and Din Baochen's the True Patriotic Daily) *Beifang minzu daxue xuebao* (Journal of Beifang University of Nationalities), no.6 (2012): 5-11.

[42] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 3 February, 1909; 16 March, 1909; 15 October, 1909; 24 November, 1909; 28 December, 1909; 23 January, 1910; 20 March, 1910; 13 June,

When Ding and his fellows praised Wang Kuan's education reform, they indeed mentioned Wang's trip to the Ottoman Empire. However, it is noteworthy that they did not support the idea of Pan-Islamism, viewing it as detrimental to the relationship between Sino-Muslim communities and the Qing government. Some Sino-Muslim intellectuals even hinted that Ottoman scholars were acting as economic spies, investigating cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing. They speculated that the goal of Ottoman scholars was to pressure China into opening up trade and commerce with the Ottoman Empire, which was a move that would bring troubles to Sino-Muslim communities.[43]

The controversy surrounding the possibility of Ottoman scholars acting as spies also sparked concerns among Chinese intellectuals, European consulates and missionaries.[44] Some individuals expressed worry about the presence of Ottoman scholars on a diplomatic mission to China. They feared that the Qing government allowing Ottoman consulates in China would result in the Sino-Muslim communities coming under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire.[45]

The Ottoman Empire did not establish an official relationship with the Qing government. If the two Ottoman scholars did indeed undertake a diplomatic mission, they did not make significant political or economic contributions to the Ottoman Empire, much less bring the Sino-Muslim communities under its jurisdiction. This raises the question of where the anxiety of the Sino-Muslim intellectuals came from. The *TPD* edited by Ding Baochen, provides a clue. During the stay of the Ottoman scholars in Beijing, a German ambassador[46] in China issued a *démarche* to other foreign

1910; 3 July, 1910; 14 July, 1910; 26 July, 1910; 1 June, 1911.

[43] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 18 July, 1908.

[44] Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1910), 292-294.

[45] Wang Zhibin and Ha Baoyu, "Wan qing tuerqi muslim de lai hua ji she hui huo dong yan jiu," 30.

[46] *Zhengzong aiguo bao* did not mention the name of the German ambassador. It is possible that the German ambassador is Arthur von Rex, who served as the German ambassador in China between 1906 to 1911. See: George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa,*

ambassadors in Beijing, asserting that the Ottoman Empire's interest in China fell under the jurisdiction of Germany. In other words, Germany claimed the right to protect the two Ottoman scholars during their stay in China.[47]

This *démarche* alarmed the French ambassador.[48] After the *démarche* was issued, the French ambassador visited the residence of the two Ottoman scholars and inquired whether they were under the jurisdiction of Germany. The Ottoman scholars stated that they neither sought protection from the German ambassador nor received any instructions from the Ottoman government.[49] The German *démarche* likely led to the controversy surrounding the two Ottoman scholars among Sino-Muslim intellectuals, who were concerned about being viewed with suspicion by non-Muslim intellectuals and the Qing government. In response to the *démarche*, several Sino-Muslim intellectuals wrote articles in the *TPD*, disputing the role of the two Ottoman scholars.[50]

The dispute surrounding the two Ottoman scholars' visit to China revealed that Sino-Muslim communities did not fully embrace the idea of Pan-Islamism. Aside from the two Ottoman scholars, the negative perception of Sultan Abdul Hamid II among Sino-Muslim intellectuals served as another indication of their lack of enthusiasm about Pan-Islamism. Specifically, when the Young Turk Revolution took place in July 1908, forcing Sultan Abdul Hamid II to abide by a constitutional monarchy, Ding Baochen closely followed the news regarding the impact of the Revolution, which marked a significant historical transition from the late Ottoman era to the Republican era.[51] However, in the *TPD*, Ding did not attribute any significant role to Sultan Abdul Hamid II as caliph, instead portraying him as

*and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 467.

[47] *Zhengzong aiguo bao* did not mention the name of the French Ambassador.

[48] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 18 July, 1908.

[49] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 21 August, 1908.

[50] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 18 July, 1908; 10 August, 1908; 21 August, 1908; 29 August, 1908.

[51] Sükrü Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918," In: Resat Kasaba (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 4: Turkey in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 63-66.

indecisive and tyrannical.[52] Ding perception of Sultan Abdul Hamid II was indeed influenced by translations of Western news media.[53] As indicated earlier, the image of Sultan Abdul Hamid II was generally negative in the West. Moreover, Ding harboured suspicions toward the two Ottoman scholars dispatched by Sultan Abdul Hamid II during 1907–1908. Given this context, Ding was not inclined to embrace the idea of Pan-Islamism.

Apart from Wang Kuan and Ding Baochen, another contemporaneous group of Sino-Muslim students studying in Japan did not subscribe to the idea of Pan-Islamism. Those students organised an Islamic association entitled 'Tokyo Pure and True Study-Abroad Educational Society' (Liudong qingzhen jiaoyuhui) in Tokyo in 1907.[54] The purpose of this society included 'building bonds of friendship among peers of the same faith, promoting education accessibility and religious reform.'[55] However, their intention was not to connect with the Islamic world. They aimed to elevate the social and political status of Sino-Muslim communities as a priority. In 1908, they published a magazine, *Awakening Muslims* (*Xinghui pian*), revealing their overall thoughts on Islam and Sino-Muslim communities.[56]

Although *Awakening Muslims* is considered the first modern Sino-Muslim magazine, Sino-Muslim students in Japan were indifferent to Pan-Islamism. The Ottoman Empire under the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II was declining in the eyes of those Sino-Muslim students.[57] Therefore, they did not consider themselves part of the Islamic world, but rather worried about predicament of Sino-Muslim communities in China, such as their superstitions,

[52] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 10 August, 1908; 1 May, 1909.

[53] *Zhengzong aiguo bao*, 10 August, 1908; 13 August, 1908; 18 April, 1909; 26 April, 1909; 1 May, 1909.

[54] The English translation of Liudong qingzhen jiaoyuhui is taken from Chen, *Islamic Modernism in China*, 57.

[55] Liudong qingzhen jiaoyuhui, *Xinghui Pian* (Awakening Muslims) (Tokyo: Liu dong qingzhen jiaoyu bianji she, 1908), 94.

[56] *Xinghui Pian* 1908, p.94

[57] Bao Tingliang, "Zongjiao Gailiang lun," (On Religious Reform) *Xinghui Pian* (Awakening Muslims), 44.

ignorance, laziness, stubbornness and lack of modern education.[58] One of the students, Huang Zhenpan (1873–1942), pointed out that the rapidly occurring political and social transitions in China were generally detrimental to the Sino-Muslim livelihoods, arguing that Sino-Muslims should depart from narrow-minded thinking and engage with the public.[59] To help their co-religionists escape this predicament, Sino-Muslim students in Japan suggested setting up investigative institutions, organising Islamic newspapers and building Islamic colleges.[60]

After the collapse of the Qing government in 1912 and the establishment of Republic, Sino-Muslim intellectuals sensed a new era of political change coming. They grabbed an opportunity to promote the social and political status of Sino-Muslim communities. The Chinese Islamic Progressive Association (Zhongguo huijiao jujinhui), established in the same year, could be seen as the first nationwide Muslim organisation in China. The headquarter of the association was in Beijing, with hundreds of branches in other provinces.[61] The purpose of this association was 'Muslims united to support the Republic, uphold unity in order to strengthen the foundation of the country and promote Islamic doctrines as its objective.'[62] Like Tokyo Pure and True Study-Abroad Educational Society, this association did not focus on willingness to connect to the Islamic world. It advocated unity of Chinese nation and places Sino-Muslim communities under its care. The reason that Sino-Muslim organisations avoid connections to the Islamic world is probably that the Republic government would doubt their national loyalty.

[58] Bao Tingliang, "Zongjiao Gailiang lun," 42-43.

[59] Huang Zhenpan, "Xinghui pian fakan xu." (Preface to Awakening the Hui) *Xinghui Pian*, 1-3.

[60] Bao Tingliang, "Zongjiao Gailiang lun," 44-50.

[61] Sun, *Huijiao Luncong*, 156-157; Pei Feifei, "Zhongguo huijiao jujin hui jiceng zuzhi pingshu 1912-1915," (Review of Grassroots Organisation of Chinese Islamic Progressive Association 1912-1915) *Huizu yan jiu* (Hui studies), no.1 (2021): 6.

[62] Zhang Juling, "Zhongguo huijiao jujin hui chuchuang ji ping (zhong)," (Review of the Early Development of the Chinese Islamic Progressive Association) *Huizu yan jiu* (Hui studies), no.1 (1998): 16.

With the outbreak of the World War I, the Beiyang Government[63] announced its decision to join the Allied Powers (France, United Kingdom, Russia) against the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire) in August 1917. Since the Beiyang Government considered the Ottoman Empire a belligerent country, it traced several Ottoman Muslims who were instigating Sino-Muslims and Uighurs to oppose Britain and Russia.[64] Chinese newspapers also reported that Muslims from Shaanxi, Tianjin and Xinjiang donated money to the Ottoman Empire.[65] Perhaps, under the monitoring of the Beiyang government, no single Sino-Muslim intellectuals dared to publicly corresponded to a call of Jihad from the Ottoman Empire during the World War I.

One can see that Pan-Islamism was not welcome by Sino-Muslim intellectuals from the late Qing government to the early Republic. They may know the message of Pan-Islamism but being afraid of suspicion of governments, they diverged from the approach of advocating for symbolic political unity in the Islamic world, a stance embraced by many Muslim activists worldwide. Instead, they prioritised the improvement of education within Sino-Muslim communities and promoted their social status. This approach aimed to smooth the relationship between Sino-Muslim communities and governments.

## Sino-Muslim Intellectuals' Engagement with the Islamic World in the Post-Caliphate Era

The view of Sino-Muslim intellectuals held of Pan-Islamism underwent a significant change after World War I. Several Sino-Muslim intellectuals and young students started to engage with

[63] The Beiyang Government was established between 1913 to 1928 in China. It was one of the various competing governments during a period of political fragmentation known as the Warlord Era, which followed the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912.

[64] Beiyang zhengfu waijiaobu dang (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Northern Government's Archive), Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, no. 03-36-033-02-070 (1916), no. 03-36-033-02-054 (1916), 03-32-104-01-012 (1918). 03-11-004-01-001 (1919),

[65] Anonymous, "Huijiaomin shujuanzhutu," (The Islamic People Donations to Turkey) *Shengjing shibao* (*Shengjing Times*), 2 December 1914.

Pan-Islamism, discussing various related topics in the post-Caliphate era. Among them, Wang Jingzhai (1880–1949) could be regarded as the major pioneer. Known as one of the four Great Imams of the Republic, Wang Jingzhai travelled to Cairo, Mecca, Istanbul and Ankara in 1922–1923 to pursue advanced Islamic knowledge, like Wang Kuan did in 1906 and 1907.[66] However, the main difference is that Wang Jingzhai was probably the first Sino-Muslim intellectual to emphasise the importance of the political unity of the Islamic world.

After returning to China in 1923, Wang Jingzhai wrote a number of articles based on his travel experience in Egypt, Mecca and Turkey, many of which focused on Kemal's military achievement.[67] Perhaps due to his intensive coverage, several Sino-Muslim intellectuals viewed Kemal as a hero and a role model. Xue Wenbo (1909–1984), an active Sino-Muslim intellectual, regarded Kemal as a national hero and drew parallels between China and Turkey under imperialism exploitations. Xue argued that Huizu[68] shared the same faith and had historical connections to Turks. Turkey's success in overcoming the 'sick man' label could serve as inspiration for both China and Huizu to resist foreign invasion.[69]

Yet when it came to political and social reforms in Turkey led by Kemal, the opinions of Sino-Muslim intellectuals varied. Some justified the abolition of the Caliphate, the adoption of Latin script and the reform of religious institutions and ritual practices. For example, Hai Weiliang defended both the change in language of the *adhan* (the call to prayer), from Arabic to Turkish, and the adoption of the Turkish translation of the Quran. He claimed that Turkish Muslims, as reported by Turkish newspapers, were deeply moved by hearing the *adhan* in Turkish because they could understand its meaning for the first time. Concerning the adoption of the Turkish translation of the Quran, Hai cited an endorsement from an Egyptian

[66] Wang Jingzhai, "Wushi nian qiuxue zi xu (Fifty-Year Academic Pursuit)," *Yu Gong* (Tribute of Yu) 7, no.4 (1937): 111.

[67] Wang Jingzhai's articles on Mustafa Kemal can be found in *Musheng bao* (The Sound of Muslims), and *Yi guang* (Light of Islam).

[68] Xue indicated Huizu as Sino-Muslim at his time.

[69] Xue Wenbo, "Zhongguo yu tuerqi (China and Turkey)," *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 4, no.15 (1932): 7-11.

*Imam,* who argued that the Turkish religious reforms did not violate *Sharia* principles.[70]

Not all Sino-Muslim intellectuals fully agreed with the Turkish political and social reforms. Wang Zengshan (1903–1961), who studied in Turkey from 1926 to 1930, was more cautious about these reforms. Regarding the Turkish language reform in 1928, Wang studied the background of why and how Kemal adopted the transition from the Arabo-Persian Ottoman script to a modified Latin alphabet.[71] Wang approached the language reform with a rational evaluation. While respecting Kemal's strong determination to reform the Turkish language, he was concerned that this, along with the abolition of the Caliphate and the removal of Islam from the constitution, would jeopardise Turkish society and trigger resentment among the Turkish people.[72]

Wang Jingzhai was another figure who criticised Turkey's new orientation. Despite initially supporting the Turkish War of Independence, he became disappointed with Kemal's policies, such as the removal of Islam from the constitution, and the Turkish elites' attitudes towards Islam after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. [73] He criticised Turkish elites, who were prone to secularisation and observed that they did not attend mosques for *Jumu'ah*, regarded daily prayers and fasting as superstitions and thought of the prohibition on eating pork as mere stubbornness.[74] Additionally, he cited the Egyptian press condemning Turkey's hostility towards Islam. To prevent the deterioration of Islam from in Turkey, he called for Muslims around the globe to unite.[75]

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[70] Hai Weiliang, "Tu guo gai yong tu wen gu lan ji bang ke zhi ping lun," (A Comment on Adoption of the Turkish Translation of the Quran, and the Call to Prayer taken by Turkey) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 5, no.22 (1933): 10-11.

[71] Wang Zengshan, "Tuerqi de wenzi geming," (The Writing System Revolution in Turkey) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 3, no.36 (1931): 3-7.

[72] Wang, "Tuerqi de wenzi geming," 7-9.

[73] Wang Jingzhai, "Duiyu huanying bai zong zhihui you gan," (Reflection on the Commander-in-Chief Bai) *Yi Guang* (Light of Islam), no.10, June 1928.

[74] Wang, "Duiyu huanying bai zong zhihui you gan."

[75] Wang, "Duiyu huanying bai zong zhihui you gan."

In addition to the intensive discussion on the impact of political and social reform led by Kemal, Sino-Muslim intellectuals planned to engage with the Islamic world in the post-Caliphate era. The Muslim World Congresses could be seen as the first Pan-Islamic arena to which Sino-Muslim intellectuals reached out. After the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, Muslim elites in Muslim-majority societies looked for alternative mechanisms of the political unity. Muslim world congresses were organised in Cairo, Mecca and Jerusalem from 1926 to 1931, drawing delegations from North Africa, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Central Asia.[76]

Sino-Muslim intellectuals were aware of the development of the Muslim world congresses. Zhao Bin (1895–1938) was an early Sino-Muslim intellectual who raised the question of whether Sino-Muslims should attend Muslim world congresses. In 1926, he wrote an article entitled 'The question of the Chinese representative at the World Islam Congress in Cairo' (Kailuo shijie huijiao dahui zhi zhongguo daibiao wenti). He emphasised that Islam in China had existed for a thousand years and estimated the number of Muslim populations to be sixty million. Theoretically, Sino-Muslims were part of the Islamic world; however, their engagement was limited, and they showed indifference towards the development of the post-Caliphate era. Therefore, he urged Sino-Muslims to participate in the World Islam Congress.[77]

The World Islamic Congress of the December 1931 hosted by Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, could be seen as an opportunity for Sino-Muslims. The question of Palestine was considered the most important issue in the post-Caliphate era. With the increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, encouraged by the British government, this congress called for Muslims worldwide to defend the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem against Jewish settlers and British manipulation.[78] Upon receiving an

[76] Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: the Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 80-141.

[77] Zhao Bin, "Kailuo shijie huijiao dahui zhi zhongguo daibiao wenti," (The question of the Chinese representative at the World Islam Assembly in Cairo) *MuSheng Bao* (The Sound of Muslims) 19th February, 1926.

[78] Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, 168.

invitation letter from the World Islamic Congress, Sino-Muslim intellectuals had high expectations.[79] Wang Menyang, one such intellectual, stressed the significance of the congress. He pointed out that Muslims in China, having lived there for a thousand years, were distant from West Asia and often disregarded news from that region. As a result, Muslims in China had made little progress, and Islamic teachings were in decline. Therefore, he believed that Sino-Muslims should seize this opportunity to discuss important Islamic issues with other Muslim delegations at this congress.[80] However, in spite of their high anticipation, Sino-Muslim intellectuals ultimately failed to participate in the congress for unknown reasons.[81]

## The Role of Chinese Azharites

Compared to the previous generation of Sino-Muslim intellectuals, who were mostly observers of the Islamic world, Sino-Muslim students in Egypt, also knowns as 'Chinese Azharites', could be seen as practitioners. Approximately 33 Sino-Muslim students were sent to Al-Azhar for advanced Islamic studies during 1930s.[82] The numbers of Sino-Muslim students was small but they played a significant role in bridging Sino-Muslim communities and Egypt.[83] They not only brought the idea of Pan-Islamism to their fellows in China but also actively engaged with the Islamic world.[84] Most of

[79] Anonymous, "Shijie yisilan dahui gong han," (Invitation from the World Islamic Congress) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 3, no.32 (1931): 6.

[80] Wang Menyang, "Xiang shi jie yislan dahui jin shu yu," (Suggestions to the World Islamic Congress) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 3, no.32 (1931):1-4.

[81] Sino-Muslim intellectuals did not attend the congress in Jerusalem but they still knew the result of the congress from newspapers. See: Anonymous, "Balishitan yisilan dahui zhijieju," (The Result of the World Islamic Congress) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 4, no.3（1932）: 25.

[82] Ma Bozhong, Na Jiarui and Li Jiangong, *Licheng: Minguo liuai huizu xuesheng paiqianshi yanjiu* (A study on the History of Muslim Student delegations to Egypt during the Republican Period) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 2011), 1.

[83] Benite,"Nine years in Egypt," 4-5; Chen, "Re-orientation the Chinese Azharites between Umma and Third world, 1938-55," 25.

[84] Lin Fengwu, "Zhongguo liu ai xuesheng tuan yu sha rucheng xiansheng," (A delegation of Chinese students to Egypt and Sha Rucheng) *Chen xi xun kan* (Dawn) 1, no.15-17 (1935): 17-18.

the Chinese Azharites had graduated from three modern Islamic schools—*Chengda shifan* in Beijing, *Mingde zhongxue* in Kunming and *Yisilan shifan xuexiao* in Shanghai. These schools were established in the mid-1920s to cultivate new Muslim leaders within Sino-Muslim communities.[85] Prominent Sino-Muslim intellectuals such as Wang Jingzhai, Zhao Bin, Wang Menyang and others actively participated as teachers, and managers in these modern Islamic schools.[86] It is possible that the Chinese Azharites, under their influence, might have widely accepted the idea of the political unity of the Islamic world before heading to Al-Azhar.[87]

For example, two Chinese Azharites, Wang Shiming (1913–1997) and Na Zhong (1909–2008), advocated an idea of "the Islamic nation" (*Yisilan minzu*) before studying at Al-Azhar. They wrote articles highlighting that the Islamic nation was awakening and resisting the oppression of European imperialism, evidence by the resistance activities of Muslims in places such as Turkey, Egypt, Persia, India, Morocco, Syria, Palestine and Iraq. They considered Sino-Muslims to be part of a worldwide Islamic nation.[88] Despite their strong sense of the unity of the Islamic world, they experienced culture shock in Egypt. Soon after arriving, they discovered that the majority of Arab Muslims were completely unaware of the existence of Chinese Muslims, and some even believed that Islam had been lost in China.[89] Lin Fengwu (1913–1991), one of Chinese Azharites, even sensed prejudice when he first met with Arabs, as Chinese

[85] Ma Bozhong, Na Jiarui and Li Jiangong, *Licheng*, 2-4.

[86] Ma Bozhong, "Wang Jingzhai yu cheng da shifan," (Wang Jingzhai and Cheng da Shifan) *Jinan Muslim*, no.2 (2004):25-27; Zhao Zhenwu, "Sanshi nian lai zhi zhongguo huijiao wenhua gaikuan," (The General Condition of Islamic Culture in China over Thirty Years) *Yu Gong* (Tribute of Yu) 5, no.11 (1936): 18-19.

[87] YuKe, "Wu suo gongxian yu liuxue aiji zhujun de ji ge yijian," (My several opinions to students studying in Egypt) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 4, no.16-18 (1932): 18.

[88] Wang Shiming, "Shijie yisilan dahui yu yisilan minzu yundong," (The World Islamic Congress and Islamic National Movements) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 3, no.32 (1931): 1-6; Na Zhong, "Yisilan minzu de xianshi ji women yingyou de juewu," (The Current Situation of the Islamic Nation and the Awakening We should Have) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 3, no.21 (1931): 3-8.

[89] Na Zhong, "Na zijia jun zhi lai han," (A letter from Na zijia) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 4, no.10-12, 36-37.

people were perceived by Egyptian intellectuals as antiquated, uncivilised and corrupt.[90]

To challenge this prevailing negative perception, Chinese Azharites vigorously engaged with Arab intellectuals through their participation in local Islamic associations, delivering lectures and publishing books in Arabic.[91] The dedication of these Azharites– especially Ma Jian (1906–1978), Hai Weiliang and Pang Shiqian (1902–1958) – to engaging with Arab intellectuals stood out. Between 1934 and 1950, each of these Azharites published books in Arabic aimed at introducing Islam in China.[92] The primary motivation behind their Arabic writing was to foster a better understanding of the Chinese Muslims among Arab intellectuals.[93] Despite variances in their focus on Islam in China, two common themes frequently appeared.

First, they considered Sino-Muslims as an integral part of the Islamic nation, but one that had been forgotten by the rest Islamic nation for a long time. For instance, Ma Jian's *Overview of the History of Islam in China and Conditions of Muslims therein* (*Nathrat jamiat al-tarikh al-islam fi al-sin wa ahawal al-muslimin fiha*) emphasised that 'Chinese Muslims had been isolated from their brethren in distant lands for the past five centuries, leading to a lack of awareness regarding religious, literary, economic and political movement in the Islamic kingdoms'.[94] He further argued that Chinese Muslims' isolated status was not their fault but rather a consequence of the Islamic world's neglect, as renowned intellectuals rarely visited China.[95] While Ma acknowledged the historical visit of

[90] Lin Fengwu, "Zhongguo liu ai xuesheng tuan yu sha rucheng xiansheng," 17-18.
[91] Lin Fengwu, "Zhongguo liu ai xuesheng tuan yu sha rucheng xiansheng," 19.
[92] Muhammad Makin (Ma Jian), *Naẓrat Jāmiʿat Al-Tārīkh Al-Islām fī Al-Sīn wa Aḥwāl Al-Muslimīn fīhā* (Al-Qāhira: Al-Maṭbaʿah Al-Salafiyyah wa Maqāntuhā, 1934); Muḥammad Tawāḍuʿ(Pang Shiqian), *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām* (Al-Qāhira: Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimūn, 1945); Hai, *Al-ʿAlāqāt Bayn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Ṣīn.*
[93] Makin, *Naẓrat Jāmiʿat Al-Tārīkh Al-Islām fī Al-Sīn wa Aḥwāl Al-Muslimīn fīhā*; Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām*; Hai, *Al-ʿAlāqāt Bayn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Ṣīn*.
[94] Makin, *Naẓrat Jāmiʿat Al-Tārīkh Al-Islām fī Al-Sīn wa Aḥwāl Al-Muslimīn fīhā,* 42-43.
[95] Makin, *Naẓrat Jāmiʿat Al-Tārīkh Al-Islām fī Al-Sīn wa Aḥwāl Al-Muslimīn fīhā,* 43.

the two Ottoman scholars to China in 1907, following Wang Kuan's visit to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, symbolising the initial reconnection between the Islamic world, he lamented the interruption that occurred after their departure.[96]

Secondly, Chinese Azharites articulated a concise historiography when introducing the general history of Sino-Muslims to Arab readers. According to this, Sino-Muslim communities were prosperous and enjoyed high political and social status in the Yuan (1271–1368) and Ming dynasties (1368–1644) due to their harmonious relationships with governments.[97] However, during the Qing dynasty (1636–1912), Sino-Muslims' development was stagnant and they were deprived of their social and political privileges. This led to rebellions by Muslims from the northwest and southeast regions against the Qing government, which ultimately failed and resulted in severe suppression.[98] The miserable situation of Muslims improved after Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) overthrew the Qing government in 1912. The new republican government granted Muslims citizenship in the constitution, and they began to strive for revival, creating modern Islamic associations, modern Islamic schools and Islamic magazines.[99]

This historiography reflects the collective memory of Chinese Azharites' regarding the fluctuating status of Sino-Muslims over the past five centuries. They observed that the Republican era provided an opportunity to enhance Sino-Muslims' social and political status. In Pang Shiqian's *Islam and China* (*al-sin wa al-islam*), he argued that Sino-Muslims, as part of the Islamic nation, should collaborate with other Muslims to combat poverty, and ignorance, as stated in a

[96] Makin, *Nathrat jamiat al-tarikh al-islam fi al-sin wa ahawal al-muslimin fiha,* 43.

[97] Makin, *Nathrat jamiat al-tarikh al-islam fi al-sin wa ahawal al-muslimin fiha,* 45-49; Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām,*10-16; Hai, *Al-ʿAlāqāt Bayn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Ṣīn,* 289.

[98] Makin, *Nathrat jamiat al-tarikh al-islam fi al-sin wa ahawal al-muslimin fiha,* 48-49; Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām,*13; Hai, *Al-ʿAlāqāt Bayn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Ṣīn,* 289-292.

[99] Makin, *Nathrat jamiat al-tarikh al-islam fi al-sin wa ahawal al-muslimin fiha,* 52-69; Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām,* 16; Hai, *Al-ʿAlāqāt Bayn Al-ʿArab wa Al-Ṣīn,* 288.

famous Quranic verse: "Hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not be divided."[100]

Through the efforts of Chinese Azharites, some Arab intellectuals were willing to cooperate with them. Renowned Pan-Islamist intellectuals and activists such as Rashid Rida (1865–1935), Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (1886–1969) and Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), praised the commitment of Chinese Azharites to the Islamic revival and unity.[101] Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, wrote a preface in Pang Shiqian's book that recognised Chinese Muslims as part of the Islamic union (*jamiat al-Islam*) and expressed the expectation that the Muslim Brotherhood would seek cooperation with Muslims worldwide in this revival stage.[102]

Furthermore, other senior Sino-Muslim intellectuals were also pleased with the efforts of Chinese Azharites. Zhao Bin strongly praised the role of Chinese Azharites in bridging the gap between China and the Islamic world. He argued that 'since the dispatch of students to Egypt from 1931 onwards, the previously isolated Chinese Islam has entered the stage of the Islamic world and gradually formed an intimate group with Muslims around the world.'[103]

Sino-Muslims' participation to the Islamic world looks positive and promising, but this connection raised a doubt from the National Government. In 1934, He Yaozu (1889–1961), a high-ranking official from the National Government, sent a letter to Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), its president, accusing Sino-Muslim students of Japan's puppets.[104] He Yaozu argued that the works that the Islamic school (*Chengda shifan*) promoted such as dispatching students to Egypt, inviting Egyptian teachers to China and

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[100] Please refer to the preface. Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām*.

[101] Chen, *Islamic Modernism in China*,131; Makin, *Naẓrat Jāmiʿat Al-Tārīkh Al-Islām fī Al-Sīn wa Aḥwāl Al-Muslimīn fīhā,* 3; Tawadu, *Al-sin wa al-islam*.

[102] Tawāḍuʿ, *Al-Ṣīn wa al-Islām.*

[103] Zhao Bin, "Bianzhe shuo," (The editor's saying) *Yuehua* (Radiance of the Crescent-Islam) 6, no.13, (1936), 1.

[104] Jiang Zhongzheng Zongtong Wenwu Dang (President Chiang Kai-shek Archive), Academia Historica, no: 002-080200-00175-045, 1934.

proclaiming Pan-Islamism to be aligned with Japan's strategy.[105] The National Government' worry has its grounds. After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japanese officials regarded Sino-Muslims as potential allies against communism. Thereafter, Japanese intelligence agencies made efforts to gain support from Sino-Muslims.[106]

Sino-Muslim intellectuals affiliated to the Islamic school denied their connection to Japan, but the tension between Sino-Muslims and the National Government persisted up to the World War II. Under the order of Chiang Kai-shek, Sino-Muslim elites organised the Chinese Muslim Salvation Association (Zhongguo huimin jiuguo xiehui) in June 1938. One its purposes was liaison with the Islamic world to counter the Japanese propaganda.[107] Chinese Azharites also contributed to the missions, during 1937 to 1940.[108] Despite these diplomatic missions failing to effectively stop Japanese propaganda in the Islamic world, many Chinese Azharites were assigned as Arabic professors in universities or diplomats in liaison with the Islamic world after World War II.[109] It can be said that they paved the way for stronger cultural and diplomatic ties between China and the Islamic world.

## Conclusion

A comprehensive discussion on the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world in the early twentieth century from all aspects is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, it primarily examines the evolving views of Sino-Muslim intellectuals

[105] Jiang Zhongzheng Zongtong Wenwu Dang, no: 002-080200-00175-045, 1934.

[106] Wang Ke, *Minzu zhuyi yu jindai zhong-ri guanzi* (*Nationalism and Modern Sino-Japanese Relations)* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2015), 193-229.

[107] Bao Hsiu-Ping, "Zhong-Ri zhanzheng yu Huimin guomin waijiao, 1937-1941," (The Sino-Japanese War and the Public Diplomacy of Hui Muslims, 1937-1941) in: Mitsuo Sawai (eds.), *Japan's Policy of Assimilation and the Memory of Muslim Collaborators in Japan: A polyphonic Ethnography of Colonial Experience*) (2020): 118-132.

[108] Bao, "Zhong-Ri zhanzheng yu Huimin guomin waijiao, 1937-1941," 120-122.

[109] Bao, "Zhong-Ri zhanzheng yu Huimin guomin waijiao, 1937-1941," 131.

on Pan-Islamism, which determined the extent of their engagement with the Islamic world.

The topic of Chinese Azharites, who were expected to bridge the gap between Sino-Muslim communities and the Islamic world from the 1930s, has been extensively discussed in previous scholarly literature. In particular, Chinese Azharites considered themselves part of the Islamic nation, indicating their successful integration into the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the engagement of Sino-Muslim intellectuals with the Islamic world was not always harmonious, as it depended on their degree of acceptance of Pan-Islamism.

From 1906 to 1922, Sino-Muslims did not embrace the idea to the extent that other foreign Muslim intellectuals did. While Wang Kuan sought educational support from Sultan Abdul Hamid II, he did not advocate for the political unity of the Islamic world. Furthermore, Ding Baochen, and other young Sino-Muslim intellectuals were suspicious of the intentions of the two Ottoman scholars dispatched by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. They were worried that Pan-Islamism would hinder their relationship with the Qing government and non-Muslim intellectuals.

The situation gradually changed after 1922, when Wang Jingzhai, possibly the first Sino-Muslim, introduced the idea of the political unity of the Islamic world following his trip to the Middle East. Subsequently, a growing number of Sino-Muslim intellectuals were inclined to accept this idea and engaged in discussions on various topics. Their efforts facilitated the engagement of Chinese Azharites with the Islamic world in the 1930s and 1940s.

# TRANSLITERATION TABLE

## CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

| | Ar | Pr | OT | UR | | Ar | Pr | OT | UR | | Ar | Pr | OT | UR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ء | ʾ | ʾ | ʾ | ʾ | ز | z | z | z | z | گ | – | g | g | g |
| ب | b | b | b | b | ڑ | – | – | – | ṛ | ل | l | l | l | l |
| پ | – | p | p | p | ژ | – | zh | j | zh | م | m | m | m | m |
| ت | t | t | t | t | س | s | s | s | s | ن | n | n | n | n |
| ٹ | – | – | – | ṭ | ش | sh | sh | ş | sh | ہ | h | h | h[1] | h[1] |
| ث | th | th | th | th | ص | ṣ | ṣ | ṣ | ṣ | و | w | v/u | v | v/u |
| ج | j | j | c | j | ض | ḍ | ẓ | ż | ż | ی | y | y | y | y |
| چ | – | ch | çh | ch | ط | ṭ | ṭ | ṭ | ṭ | ۃ | -ah | | | -a[2] |
| ح | ḥ | ḥ | ḥ | ḥ | ظ | ẓ | ẓ | ẓ | ẓ | ال | al[3] | | | |
| خ | kh | kh | kh | kh | ع | ʿ | ʿ | ʿ | ʿ | | | | | |
| د | d | d | d | d | غ | gh | gh | ğ | gh | | | | | |
| ڈ | – | – | – | d | ف | f | f | f | f | | | | | |
| ذ | dh | dh | dh | dh | ق | q | q | k | q | | | | | |
| ر | r | r | r | r | ك | k | k/g | k/ñ | k | | | | | |

[1] – when not final
[2] – at in construct state
[3] – (article) al - or 1-

## VOWELS

| | | Arabic and Persian | Urdu | Ottoman Turkish |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Long | ا | ā | ā | ā |
| | آ | Ā | Ā | – |
| | و | ū | ū | ū |
| | ي | ī | ī | ī |
| Doubled | ي | iyy (final form ī) | iy (final form ī) | iyy (final form ī) |
| | و | uww (final form ū)<br>uvv (for Persian) | uv | uvv |
| Diphthongs | و | au or aw | au | ev |
| | ى | ai or ay | ay | ey |
| Short | ـَ | a | a | a or e |
| | ـُ | u | u | u or ü<br>o or ö |
| | ـِ | i | i | i |

## URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. جھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

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*Contents*



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