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Chapter 2

The Hajj and Politics in China

In the last thirty years, China's *hajj* has grown slowly and steadily from about 1,000 pilgrims in 1992 to 5,000 in 2004, 10,000 in 2007, and nearly 15,000 in 2015. By international standards, these are modest figures leaving Chinese Muslims with no more than two-thirds of the pilgrimage quota that is normally allotted to communities of comparable size (Bianchi 2004). Moreover, opportunities to participate in the *hajj* from China are very unequally distributed across regions, ethnic groups, classes, genders, and generations. This pattern of restrained growth and selective targeting illustrates the abiding caution that guides China's political and religious leaders as they try to foster more routine contacts between Chinese Muslims and the Islamic world—their clear preference for a series of small steps and half measures they can carefully monitor and regulate.

The government's control over *hajj* traffic from China is far from complete. Pilgrimage officials estimate that one-quarter to one-third of Chinese *hajji*s avoid the state-sponsored program, travelling to Saudi Arabia independently—and often illegally—via third countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, and Malaysia. Beijing is trying to capture greater market share by expanding pilgrims' services and charter flights, but *hajj* officials might stop short of creating a full monopoly if they carve out a niche for private companies offering high-end tours to luxury travelers (Bianchi 2015a).

China's national *hajj* quotas are negotiated annually between Beijing and Saudi Arabia with a tacit agreement to keep the total below international levels until the central government builds up the *hajj* infrastructure and strengthens its capacity. As the government's designated agent overseeing Muslim affairs, the Chinese Islamic Association has sole legal authority for pilgrimage management. The headquarters in Beijing allocates *hajj* quotas to the provincial offices who then distribute places to local districts according to their estimates of the numbers of Muslim residents and the growing

demand from registrants who sign up for long waiting lists that often stretch for a decade or more into the future.

In recent years, the screening criteria have tightened considerably. Prospective pilgrims must be between 50 and 70 years of age. They must provide evidence of good health and good character, including political loyalty and a clean legal record. When their turn comes, they must deposit in advance the equivalent of 8,200 dollar as a financial guarantee.

Local religious and government officials have wide discretion in applying these requirements and there are frequent investigations into alleged favoritism and corruption, leading to several well-publicized dismissals and prosecutions for tampering with the selection process. Every year, more and more provincial and local governments offer prospective *hajji*s on-line registration and open access to all names and numbers on the waiting lists. By providing greater convenience and transparency, pilgrimage managers hope to show their concern for minimizing corruption while earning greater public acceptance of the competitive and controversial process they are rapidly building but still can't fully control.

This essay will summarize nationwide trends in *hajj* participation and highlight important variations between regions and demographic groups. It will examine the spatial distribution of hot spots and cold spots of *hajj* activity, exploring their tendency to support more open or closed social worlds in which some Muslims are well-connected to the dominant non-Muslim society while others remain more isolated in minority enclaves. It will describe how China's *hajj* administration creates both opportunities and barriers to collective action that shape the interplay of social groups and governmental authorities. Finally, it will offer suggestions for rethinking modern Muslim pilgrimage by explaining how the *hajj* benefits from and stimulates the wider processes of globalization that are transforming the Islamic World as a whole.

Regional and Ethnic Variations in Hajj Activity

China's *hajj* services are highly skewed to the benefit of about one-quarter of the Muslim population while leaving the majority neglected or marginalized. Year in and year out, around 65 percent of the pilgrims come from a handful of western provinces that account for only 25 percent of the total Muslim community—Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Sha'anxi, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan. These are China's most ethnically diverse regions. In these districts, most Muslims are Chinese-speaking Hui whose communities commonly overlap with dominant populations of Han Chinese as well as large groups of Tibetans, Mongols, Uyghurs, and many smaller minorities. These regions comprise the strategic borderlands and trade routes connecting China to Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam.

In contrast to these favored zones, Xinjiang, which contains nearly one-half of China's Muslims, accounts for just over 20 percent of the country's legally organized *hajji*s. Hui residents of northern Xinjiang are far more likely to make the pilgrimage than their Uyghur neighbors, but they, too, are clearly underserved compared to Hui Muslims in the other western provinces.

The most striking disparity in *hajj* participation is not between Hui and Uyghur, but between the Hui themselves—particularly between the western and eastern portions of the Chinese-speaking Muslim population. The Hui of the eastern and southern provinces are nearly as numerous as their counterparts in the interior—about one-quarter of all Muslims in China—but their share of pilgrims is less than 15 percent. Hence, the Chinese-speaking Hui of the eastern and coastal provinces, who are commonly described as the most Sinified and indigenized of China's Muslims, are no more likely to go on the *hajj* than the disfavored and disaffected Uyghurs of Kashgar and Hotan in southern Xinjiang.

Students of Hui society frequently refer to the eastern communities as the "inner Hui" and the western groups as the "outer Hui." Such distinctions highlight the supposed contrast between eastern Muslims' greater adaptation to the cultural and political domination of the Han majority versus the western Hui history of resistance, revolt, and relative isolation. By designing a *hajj* program that favors the western Hui and neglects the easterners, China's political and religious leaders are taking a calculated gamble. The ruling party-state is betting that by providing well-publicized and highly valued religious benefits, they can elicit greater support from a potentially troublesome minority in governing vast provinces that are filled with ethnic antagonisms and national security vulnerabilities.

Reasoning that Xinjiang is plagued by Uyghur discontent and that the coastal provinces are well-secured, China's rulers view the 5 million Muslims of the near west as a pivotal swing group. The "outer Hui" comprise an minority that is capable of inflicting serious harm if they are alienated, but that can also become an indispensible partner in mediating between the Han and other ethnic groups who often have weaker connections with one another than with their Hui neighbors.

The systematic over-representation of the western Hui in China's *hajj* reflects their potential role as a dual bridge in contemporary Chinese statecraft—reinforcing China's still fragile national integration and promoting its burgeoning ties with the Islamic World. Chinese planners are not merely trying to unite the country's disparate regional economies into a single nationwide market. They also hope to lead an even more ambitious integration of transcontinental and transoceanic commerce throughout Eurasia and Africa. The proposed trade routes of the "One Belt, One Road" venture—Beijing's shorthand term for the Eurasian Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road—crisscross the major lands of the Islamic world throughout Afro-Eurasia and connect the sea lanes of the Western Pacific, the Indian Ocean Basin, and the Mediterranean (Bianchi 2014).

More than ever, China stands to gain politically and economically by portraying itself as an Islam-friendly country and as a sister civilization of Muslims and other non-Western peoples. As the United States and the European Union become increasingly entangled in civil wars and anti-terrorist battles in Islamic countries, China not only publicizes the growing participation of its Muslims in the *hajj*, it also trumpets the leading role of Chinese workers and engineers in building the new rail lines that carry pilgrims from every country between the holy sites around Mecca itself (Deng 2010, 1).

China's Hajj Belts: The Silk Road, the Yellow River, and the Red River

The heartland of *hajj* activity in China is the north central region. The consistent hot spots of pilgrimage tend to cluster along two diagonal lines that crisscross the interior provinces forming a giant "X" with its intersection at Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province. The line running from southeast to northwest traces the historical Silk Road and the modern rail links from Xi'an (near the former Tang dynasty capital) to Lanzhou, through the towns of Jinchang and Jiayuguan in the Gansu Pass, and into the north Xinjiang districts of Hami, Ürümqi, and Karamay near the border with Kazakhstan. The line running from southwest to northeast follows the Yellow River from the Qinghai towns of Xining and Haidong, to Linxia and Lanzhou in Gansu, through the Ningxia towns of Tongxin, Lingwu, Yinchuan, and Shizuishan, and then to the upper reaches of the Ordos Bend in Inner Mongolia and the towns of Bayannur and Hohhot (see Figure 2.1).

Lanzhou has long served as the military and political control center of north central China and as the key base for expansion to the northwest. In recent years, several districts in the wider Lanzhou Military Region have become sites for big Air Force bases, for much of China's nuclear missile deterrent, and for the country's growing space program. Ambitious new projects to develop and integrate the economies of "the Great West" will further strengthen Lanzhou's role as the region's leading hub of transport, commerce, and industry.

Yunnan is a secondary center of *hajj* organization in the southwest. Pilgrimage is popular in the western mountain region of Dali and in the provincial capital of Kunming. But the highest rates of participation are to the south and southeast—in the town of Yuxi and along the Red River valley districts of Honghe and Wenshan near Vietnam.

All of the evidence suggests that China's *hajj* program is geared toward engendering support from the segment of the Muslim population that is most pivotal to the settlement and economic development of the western interior, particularly the sensitive borderlands where interethnic relations are historically troublesome and military resources are increasingly concentrated. Lanzhou and Kunming are the northern and southern epicenters of widespread regional networks connecting the upwardly mobile commercial, farming, and professional classes of Muslims in scores of towns and rural communities that link the coastal provinces of the Han dominated heartland with western China and with neighboring countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, in South Asia, and in Southeast Asia (Ping 2008).

The regional imbalances of China's *hajj* program are clearly displayed in aerial photographs of the pilgrims' lodgings near the Grand Mosque in Mecca (Chinese *Hajj* Workgroup 2014, 1). In 2014, Chinese *hajji*s stayed in nine rented dormitories. Xinjiang's pilgrims occupied only two of them. Gansu *hajji*s had a large building to themselves and Ningxia pilgrims took over two smaller complexes. Qinghai Muslims occupied a building on their own plus seven floors of a nearby twelve-story structure. Yunnan pilgrims filled up eight floors of another hotel, leaving two floors each for *hajji*s from Sha'anxi and Inner Mongolia. Pilgrims from the 21 other provinces—from Heilongjiang in the far north to Hainan and Guizhou in the south—managed to fit into the

single remaining building except for a small group that had to share two floors of the Qinghai *hajji*s' lodgings.

Figure 2.1. Important cities of China's Hajj Belts

Nodes and Enclaves

China's *hajj* belts are vibrant networks connecting diverse and far-flung communities, but they also contain many gaps and backwaters. It is common to see districts with very high and very low rates of pilgrimage right next to one another. Variations in *hajj* participation strongly correlate with several factors that reflect the degree to which local Muslims are enmeshed in or detached from the Han-dominated societies that surround them. The more open and well-connected Muslim districts support stronger *hajj* activity whereas the more self-contained and inward-oriented districts have the lowest *hajj* rates.

In general, *hajj* participation is higher in districts where Muslims are a small portion of the total population and lower where Muslims are strongly concentrated or numerically dominant. In China, the Muslims who are most likely to make the *hajj* are not those who are surrounded by other Muslims, but who are less conspicuous residents of urban neighborhoods dominated by Han Chinese or of mountain towns populated by other

minorities who are not Muslims. Ironically, Muslims living in districts that are officially designated as Hui Autonomous areas make the *hajj* less frequently than those who live elsewhere, including the Muslim residents of regions that are nominally Tibetan, Mongol or shared in common by several minorities.

The sharpest division appears in the *hajj* rates of urban and rural communities, but farming districts also vary widely depending on whether they produce for the market or benefit from seasonal wages. Overall, *hajj* participation correlates most positively with measures of wealth such as per capita income and per capita gross product and with literacy rates for both males and females. *Hajj* rates correlate most negatively with the percent of the workforce engaged in agriculture and with the Muslim percent of the total population. Population density also correlates with *hajj* activity, but at a slightly weaker level than the other variables (see Table 2.5).

Female Hajjis

Women commonly make up half or more of the *hajj* delegations from most provinces and they increasingly dominate the registration lists of intending pilgrims for future years. In many ways, Muslim women in China resemble their counterparts in other Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore as well as northeastern Pakistan, western Turkey, and southern Nigeria. The role of Chinese women in making the *hajj* a distinctly family affair reflects their wider importance in the workforce, in managing businesses, and in owning property (Bianchi 2015, 33).

In today's China, Muslim women also have less difficulty in meeting security tests that usually focus on men, particularly young males who are Central Asian in appearance. In Ürümqi, the capital of Xinjiang province and the site of frequent clashes between Han and Uyghurs, the barriers to Uyghur pilgrimage are targeted primarily at men rather than women. In fact, Uyghur women in Ürümqi make the *hajj* in greater numbers than the city's Hui men.

The economic and demographic factors that encourage the *hajj* in general have an even stronger effect in promoting female pilgrimage. Most variables correlate with women's *hajj* rates at higher levels than with the combined rates for men and women together. Literacy is a particularly important predictor of women's *hajj* activity—and the influence of male literacy often equals or surpasses the role of female literacy.

Urban-Rural Gaps in Gansu

Gansu provides many examples of the sort of regional and social disparities that shape *hajj* participation throughout the country. Gansu consistently sends one of China's largest pilgrimage groups—about 2,500 per year—most of whom come from the Linxia Hui Autonomous Region where Muslims make up a majority of the population. However, looking beyond the mere number of *hajji*s to the per capita rates of pilgrimage participation, Linxia residents lag behind Muslims in many other districts (see Figure 2.2, Table 2.1, and Table 2.2).

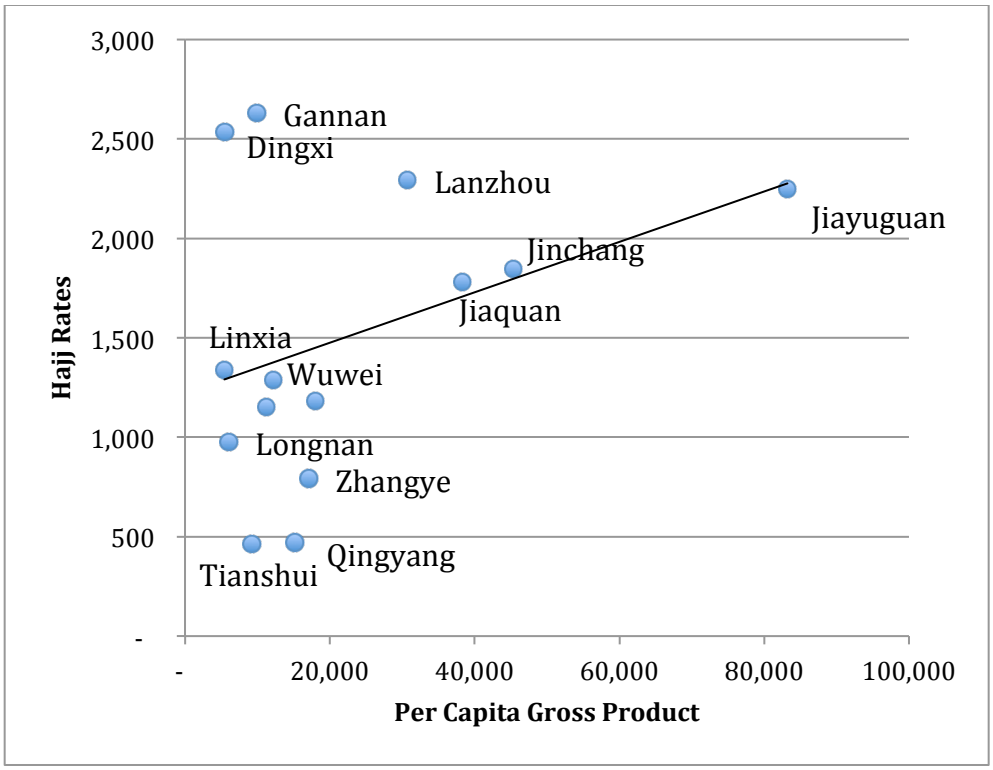

Figure 2. 2. Gansu *Hajj* Rates 2006-2014 and Per Capita Gross Product

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Gansu 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses; 甘肃省穆斯林朝觐报名网 (Gansu Muslim Pilgrimage Registration Network)* http://www.gscjbm.gov.cn

Compared to the provincial capital of Lanzhou, only Linxia city has a high pilgrimage rate whereas the surrounding rural districts trail the province as a whole. The urban core of Linxia has prospered by promoting stronger trading connections between Lanzhou to the north and the Tibetan highlands to the southwest, but the city's good fortune has not spilled over to the neighboring countryside (Xu 2014). Income levels drop sharply as distance from Linxia city increases—and *hajj* activity plummets as well.

Prefecture	Population 2010	Muslims 2010	*Hajji*s, 2006-2014	*Hajj* rates, 2006-2014	Female percent, 2012-2014
Lanzhou	3,616,163	120,447	2,480	2,240	52.66
Jiayuguan	231,853	3,235	66	2,349	27.27
Jinchang	464,050	4,148	69	1,591	42.86
Jiuquan	1,095,947	17,818	286	1,347	33.06
Zhangye	1,199,515	4,281	31	888	44.44
Wuwei	1,815,054	6,035	70	1,458	26.67
Baiyin	1,708,751	24,006	256	1,016	43.88
Tianshui	3,262,548	226,835	945	367	45.34
Pingliang	2,068,033	147,661	1,533	1,027	49.66
Qingyang	2,211,191	5,093	22	275	58.33
Dingxi	2,698,622	25,549	584	2,834	41.24
Longnan	2,567,718	34,396	303	849	46.34
Gannan	689,132	45,024	1,066	2,812	49.67
Linxia	1,946,677	1,093,360	13,140	1,240	42.55
Total Gansu	25,575,254	1,757,888	20,846	1,233	44.50

Table 2.1. Muslims, *Hajji*s, and Female *Hajji*s by Prefecture in Gansu
Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Gansu 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses; 甘肃省穆斯林朝觐报名网 (Gansu Muslim Pilgrimage Registration Network)* http://www.gscjbm.gov.cn

Prefecture	Muslim percent	Pop'n density	Gross product per capita	Rural income per capita	Urban income per capita	Non-agric'l workers	Female illiteracy
Lanzhou	3.33	1,585	30,672	4,587	15,228	52.21	12.35
Jiayuguan	1.40	79	83,214	7,865	18,791	73.81	6.64
Jinchang	0.89	52	45,374	5,953	20,396	41.82	20.31
Jiuquan	1.63	6	38,305	7,234	16,348	33.97	15.16
Zhangye	0.36	29	17,093	5,575	11,817	18.54	21.57
Wuwei	0.33	55	12,250	4,551	12,267	14.84	19.29
Baiyin	1.40	81	17,956	3,386	16,101	20.26	13.71
Tianshui	6.95	230	9,202	2,825	12,348	12.83	28.46
Pingliang	7.14	180	11,202	3,136	12,575	13.23	36.42
Qingyang	0.23	82	15,095	3,154	13,353	10.91	19.03
Dingxi	0.95	133	5,530	2,701	11,789	7.93	26.87
Longnan	1.34	95	6,020	2,299	11,216	8.14	47.08
Gannan	6.53	17	9,876	2,689	11,453	15.63	55.57
Linxia	56.17	238	5,441	2,375	8,430	9.82	60.51
Total Gansu	6.64	60	15,363	3,909	14,989	19.08	27.81

Table 2. 2. Socioeconomic Characteristics by Prefecture in Gansu
Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Gansu 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses*; Lu Qingzhe, Chinese Urban-Rural Income and Consumption in 2012, in Peilin Li, Guangjin Chen, and Yi Zhang, *Chinese Research Perspectives on Society*, vol. 2, Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Opportunities for female *hajji*s are sharply curtailed by the relative poverty and isolation of rural life in Linxia and most other parts of southern Gansu. In contrast to the uniform weakness of women *hajji*s in the countryside, there is wide diversity in the prominence of female pilgrims in the urban districts of Lanzhou. Muslim women contribute to strong *hajj* rates in the central business and residential districts of Chengguan and Qilihe where they regularly account for the majority of pilgrims. Female *hajji*s are more common in suburban Xigu and Honggu, but they are less frequent in working class Anning and much less common in the outlying semi-rural areas of Yongdeng and Yuzhong (see Figure 2.3, Table 2.3, and Table 2.4).

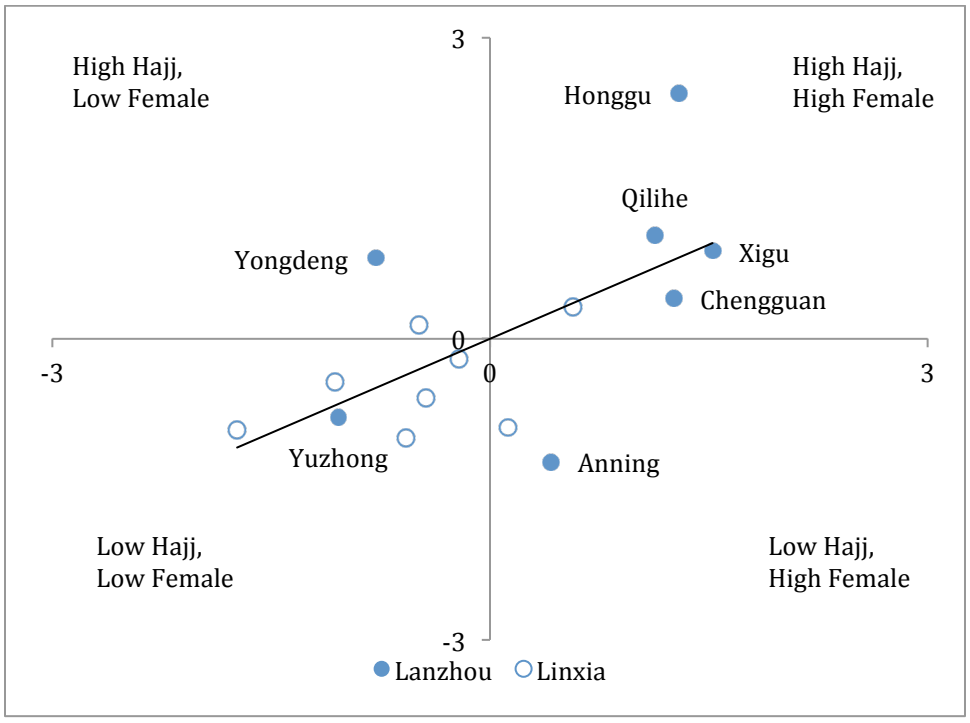

Figure 2.3. *Hajj* Rates and Female Participation in Lanzhou and Linxia, Standardized Scores

Source: Author District	*Hajj*s 2006-2014	*Hajj* rate 2006-2014	Female pc 2006-2011	Female pc 2012-2014
Anning	37	582	43.33	42.86
Chengguan	1,060	1,953	49.10	55.25
Honggu	409	3,662	49.37	51.56
Qilihe	664	2,477	48.23	52.40
Xigu	139	2,345	50.94	49.02
Yongdeng	140	2,287	35.09	44.00
Yuzhong	31	955	33.33	54.55
Total Lanzhou	2,480	2,177	48.18	52.66
Dongxiang	2,800	1,249	33.14	39.91
Guanghe	2,884	1,442	39.02	44.79
Hezheng	810	845	28.55	30.95
Jishishan	1,199	1,117	37.47	42.08
Kangle	935	784	36.51	41.80
Linxia city	2,347	1,873	44.34	49.24
Linxia county	2,003	1,724	37.13	42.32
Yongjing	161	866	41.30	35.59
Total Linxia	13,139	1,310	37.81	42.55

Table 2.3. *Hajj* Rates and Female Participation in Lanzhou and Linxia
Source: *甘肃省穆斯林朝觐报名网 (Gansu Muslim Pilgrimage Registration Network)* http://www.gscjbm.gov.cn

District	Muslim population	Muslim percent	Pop'n density	Non-agric'l pop'n	Gross product per capita	Rural income per capita	Female illiteracy
Anning	7,067	2.45	2,442	72.63	24,586	7,869	5.61
Chengguan	60,350	4.72	4,000	79.84	29,524	12,381	4.29
Honggu	12,394	9.11	243	56.72	45,589	7,480	22.75
Qilihe	29,760	5.30	1,134	67.68	38,246	6,905	12.27
Xigu	6,609	1.82	831	70.79	59,123	7,587	8.77
Yongdeng	6,803	1.62	82	12.86	17,240	3,524	19.78
Yuzhong	3,608	0.83	125	7.72	19,705	3,156	20.30
Total Lanzhou	125,590	3.63	1,585	52.21	30,672	4,587	12.35
Dongxiang	249,006	87.52	194	2.69	2,785	1,814	80.27
Guanghe	222,253	97.71	409	4.01	3,901	2,542	69.36
Hezheng	106,623	57.61	193	4.81	3,999	2,230	73.50
Jishishan	119,248	50.59	259	3.37	2,942	2,011	77.67
Kangle	132,390	56.78	171	4.66	3,810	2,354	67.93
Linxia city	139,225	50.73	3,189	48.82	9,738	4,749	12.91
Linxia county	129,081	39.58	269	3.01	4,736	2,351	66.49
Yongjing	20,718	11.50	97	16.06	12,929	2,382	30.45
Total Linxia	1,118,544	57.46	238	9.82	5,441	2,375	60.51

Table 2.4. Demographic Characteristics of Lanzhou and Linxia Districts
Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Gansu 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses.*

Literacy effects female *hajj* activity even more than income and social status. The polarization of the more literate urban districts versus the less literate towns and villages is particularly dramatic (see Figure 2.4). Even the most basic levels of formal education make a difference in expanding Muslim women's social world, including the possibility of foreign travel for religious reasons (Hannum & Adams 2007, 71).

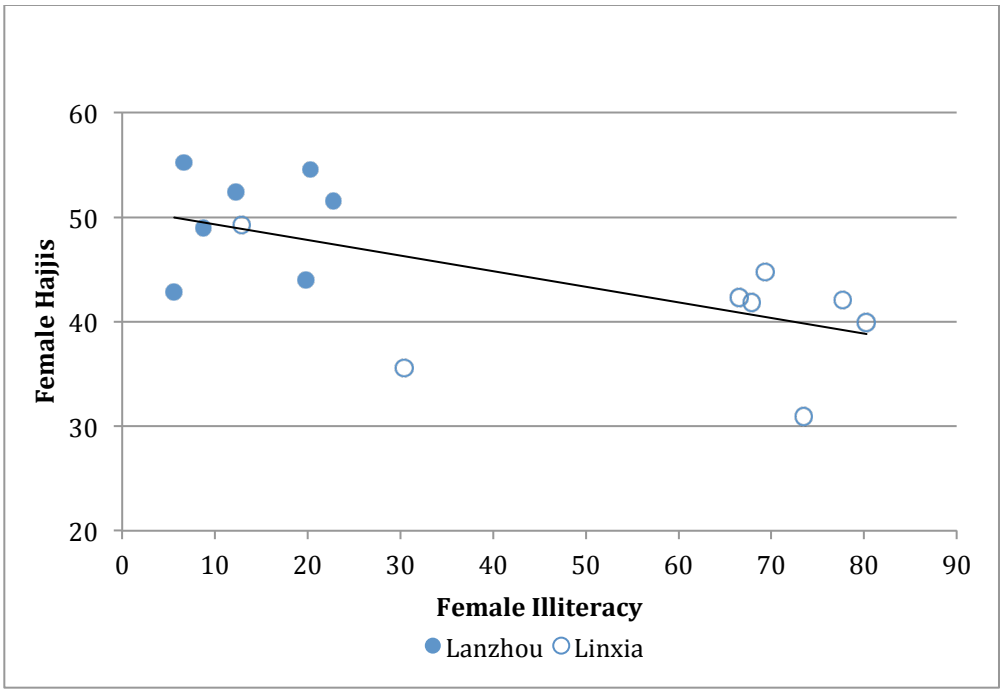

Figure 2.4. Percent Female *Hajji*s 2012-2014 and Female Illiteracy in Lanzhou and Linxia

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Gansu 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses; 甘肃省穆斯林朝觐报名网 (Gansu Muslim Pilgrimage Registration Network)* http://www.gscjbm.gov.cn

North of Lanzhou, *hajj* rates in the towns of the Gansu corridor closely track income levels. Non-agricultural sectors such as mining, transport, and defense support both commerce and pilgrimage along the railway lines to northern Xinjiang and Central Asia. On the other hand, the mostly farming districts south of Lanzhou contain some striking examples of unusually strong and weak *hajj* activity.

Gansu's highest *hajj* rates appear in the far southwestern towns of Gannan, a Tibetan Autonomous Region bordering Qinghai. Muslim residents are small in numbers, but they are concentrated in the handful of trading centers that dominate the growing commerce between Lanzhou and Tibet. Closer to Lanzhou, the farming county of Dingxi has developed into another hot spot of pilgrimage. In a region that is widely plagued by drought and erosion, the hills of Dingxi are one of the few places where terraced agriculture produces reliable cash crops for the market. In recent years, the townsfolk of Dingxi—but not the farmers themselves—have been frequent travelers to Mecca.

The weakest *hajj* activity in Gansu appears southeast of Lanzhou in the rural backwaters of Tianshui and Qingyang near the border with Ningxia (Nolan and others 2008, 13). Tianshui is home to another Hui Autonomous Region—much smaller than Linxia, but with a solid Muslim majority. Its *hajj* rate is one of the lowest in the province. If Linxia is a Muslim enclave with a narrow window to the outside world through its county seat, then Tianshui's Hui district is an enclave with no window at all—except perhaps to the dry and poverty stricken hinterland of southern Ningxia where Muslim farmers are equally prevalent and the *hajj* is similarly depressed.

	Hajj rate 2006-2014	Female percent 2006-2011
Muslim percent	-0.3340	-0.4974
Population density	0.0782	0.5428
Non-agricultural population	0.4741	0.8783
Rural income per capita	0.4731	0.8060
Gross product per capita	0.6639	0.7963
Female illiteracy	-0.4080	-0.6960

Table 2.5. Correlates of *Hajj* Rates and Female Participation in Lanzhou and Linxia (N = 15)
Source: Author

Ethnicity and Gender in Xinjiang

Xinjiang sends over 3,200 pilgrims to Mecca each year, amounting to a participation rate of about 350 *hajji*s for every one million Muslim residents. This is less than one-half of the current national rate for China as a whole and only one-third of the international quota designated by Saudi Arabia and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—the so-called United Nations of the Muslim World that officially supervises global *hajj* policy.

Islamic and human rights organizations around the world have long criticized China's government for imposing onerous restrictions on prospective *hajji*s from Xinjiang that violate basic religious freedoms (Unrepresented 2007). In response, Chinese authorities have begun to publicize increased *hajj* services and direct charter flights from Ürümqi to Saudi Arabia. In many advertisements, government and airline officials explicitly appeal to Uyghur Muslims—particularly older married couples—pledging courteous and deferential treatment from young Han men and women who are specially instructed in the customs and needs of non-Han passengers (Bo 2015b). In 2015, the provincial government also launched a prosecution of more than thirty *hajj* officials in one of the Kazakh districts where friends and relatives were allegedly put at the top of the waiting list for intending pilgrims (Bo 2015a).

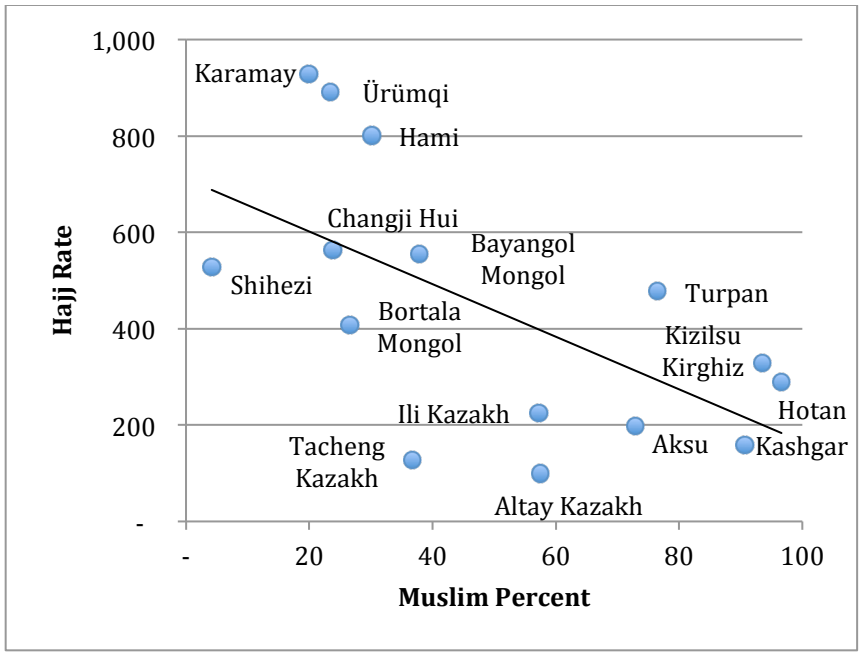

Figure 2.5. Xinjiang *Hajj* Rates 2012-2014 and Muslim Percent
Source: 新疆民族宗教网，朝覲管理办公室 (Xinjiang Nationalities and Religion Network, Office of *Hajj* Management) http://www.xjmzw.gov.cn

Xinjiang's greatest *hajj* activity is concentrated in the predominantly Han-populated cities of the north—Ürümqi, Karamay, and Hami (see Figure 2.5). In these districts where Muslims comprise no more than twenty to thirty percent of the residents, pilgrimage rates are close to the national average and they are gradually approaching the international standard. Across the mountains to the south, pilgrimage is weakest in Kashgar, Aksu, and Hotan—predominantly Uyghur districts where residents have clashed with security forces many times over the last decade. Non-Uyghur Muslims in the Kazakh and Kirghiz areas are similarly alienated from the state-sponsored *hajj*. In between these extremes, pilgrimage reaches modest but steady levels in ethnically mixed districts where state enterprises are important and where Hui form a sizeable part of the Muslim society (Toops 2004).

Ürümqi's *hajj* participation is notable not only because of its relative strength and growth, but also because of the sharp disparities between genders and ethnic groups (see Figure 2.6). The selection of *hajj* candidates is increasingly skewed toward women instead of men. The imbalance appears in both Hui and Uyghur communities, but mostly regarding Uyghur males. Between 2012 and 2014, women made up 58 percent of the Hui pilgrims and 71 percent of the Uyghur pilgrims.

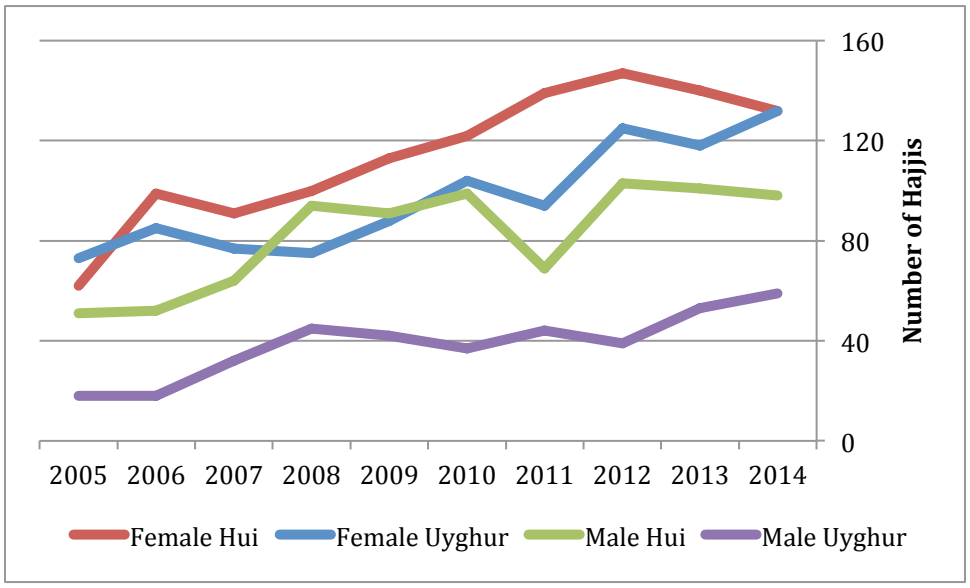

Figure 2.6. Ürümqi *Hajji*s by Ethnicity and Gender 2005-2014
Source: 新疆民族宗教网，朝觐管理办公室 (Xinjiang Nationalities and Religion Network, Office of *Hajj* Management) http://www.xjmzw.gov.cn

In the aftermath of the 2009 riots, tighter controls on travel had unequal effects on genders and ethnic groups. Hui women were barely effected—in fact, their numbers increased steadily after the riots and tapered off just in the last few years. Uyghur women suffered a temporary decline, but they soon rebounded and reached near parity with the female Hui. The most serious decreases appeared among the men in both groups, but in quite different ways. The number of Hui males dropped sharply just after the violence, but gradually regained it previous strength. In contrast, pilgrimage for Uyghur men was virtually frozen both before and after 2009, leaving them far behind the others.

Because Uyghurs make up about 55 percent of Ürümqi's Muslim residents compared to only 35 percent for the Hui, the ethnic and gender disparities in local *hajj* rates are far greater than the aggregate numbers suggest (Howell & Fan 2011). Among the Hui, pilgrimage levels are about 1,670 per million for women and 1,200 for men. The rates for Uyghurs, on the other hand, are just 940 per million for women and 380 for men. Kazakhs account for about 10 percent of the Muslims in Ürümqi, but they received less than two percent of the district's *hajj* quota.

The sharp ethnic segregation of Ürümqi's neighborhoods also influences pilgrimage activity (Li and others 2013, 744). *Hajj* rates are higher in the newer, more Han-dominated areas, particularly the northern district of Gaoxin, and lower in the older business district of Tianshan where Uyghurs are most prevalent.

In general, Muslims who live in neighborhoods with heavier Han concentrations make the *hajj* more frequently than Muslims who live close to co-religionists. The effect of living outside of the traditional ethnic enclaves is stronger for Uyghurs than for the Hui—another indication that travelling to Mecca often becomes easier for Chinese Muslims who are able to establish regular contacts with Han people and their culture.

Small-Scale Pilgrimage in Henan

The province of Henan is a model of efficient *hajj* management at the local level. Clustered near the southern branch of the Yellow River in China's central plain, the one million or so Hui Muslims of Henan, support a small but consistent flow of *hajji*s that is still quite rare in eastern China. Each year, Henan sends about 400 pilgrims to Mecca. This level of activity is close to the average number from Ürümqi and at about the same low per capita rate as Xinjiang in general. However, it is only a small fraction of the elevated *hajj* rates prevailing among the western Hui—rates that regularly reach 2,000 or 2,500 pilgrims per million Muslims in the north-central provinces and Yunnan. Thus, even though Henan's *hajj* seems impressive in the context of eastern China, it still lags far behind the growing number of hot spots where Chinese pilgrimage activity has reached two or three times the global average.

Henan's pilgrims travel together in nine buses that depart from collection points throughout the province and carry them to Beijing where they board two charter flights for Saudi Arabia. Two-thirds of the *hajji*s come from just two neighboring districts in the far north— the towns around Jiaozuo and Jiyuan on the northern shore of the Yellow River and the provincial capital of Zhengzhou on the southern side of the river. All of the other districts in Henan contain about two-thirds of the Muslim population, but they account for only one-third of the pilgrims. *Hajj* rates drop dramatically in Kaifeng, the former Song Dynasty capital, and near the borders of the neighboring provinces of Shandong, Anhui, and Hubei.

The spatial organization of *hajj* activity in Henan is quite distinct. In contrast to the broad networks of the western Hui and the sharp segregation of Xinjiang, Henan's communities appear stacked in a set of regional layers running from north to south. As pilgrimage traffic traces the course of the Yellow River, the *hajj* itself resembles a weakening current that loses force downstream. Moving east toward the sea, the *hajj* diminishes gradually and, moving south toward the lands of rice and fishing, it slows to a mere trickle. The centrally located district of Xuchang marks a threshold between the vibrant *hajj* of the north and west versus the negligible pilgrimage of the south and east.

The Hajj as a Collective Action Problem

The uneven organization of China's *hajj* reflects the wider dilemmas of collective action that permeate Chinese society and politics. Regularly mobilizing thousands of Muslims for international travel requires great expenditures of resources and broad delegations of authority. Both the officials who enable such activities and the groups that benefit from them tend to harbor mixed feelings about the consequences.

Political and bureaucratic leaders are eager to garner support and recognition at home and abroad for providing valued public services with modern and equitable systems. But they are also worried about losing control of the processes and people involved lest they blossom into power centers that develop social roots and minds of their own.

The communities and local officials who profit from a more vigorous pilgrimage are equally ambivalent. They welcome the government's shift from indiscriminate

suppression to selective sponsorship, but they know too well the traps of division and dependency that can disempower passive clients of the party-state's largesse.

Promoting the *hajj* is another means of encouraging the emergence of stronger interest groups that are likely to demand greater representation and autonomy. China is similar to most countries with a growing population of middle-class Muslims who are increasingly educated and involved in world affairs. The relatively high income and status of pilgrims makes them deeply invested in preserving existing institutions, but their history of political exclusion and cultural marginality creates a strong desire for wider power sharing. In this sense, the dilemmas of China's *hajj* typify—and perhaps reinforce—many other mounting tensions across the country.

Rethinking Pilgrimage as a Dimension of Islamic Globalization

The *hajj* is one of several channels through which China's leaders hope to negotiate a gradual opening to the modern mainstream of the Islamic World. In addition to sponsoring pilgrimage, state agencies are discussing a host of projects in Islamic banking and finance and for special economic zones to boost investment and trade with Muslim countries. Educational exchanges are sending Chinese students to Islamic universities and bringing Islamic modernists to teach in China. China's most important multinational alliance—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—is planning to include key regional powers such as Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. More and more Chinese scholars and diplomats are describing world religions—especially Islam—as a valuable resource for enhancing China's "soft power" in global politics. In China's academic journals and mass media, discussions of "geo-politics" and "geo-economics" now include frequent references to "geo-religion" (Yihua & Lei 2013, 26).

The developmental processes that have stimulated the *hajj* and other Muslim pilgrimages are the same forces that have transformed the Islamic World as a whole. Economic growth and technological advances have spurred rapid urbanization, higher education, and greater consumption among the middle-class, female, and youth segments. Those, in turn, have created popular demands for elected governments to increase public services and accountability. In all regions of the world, we have seen the spread of international regimes regulating world commerce, migration, health, and crime. Today's pilgrimages are an integral part of the larger process that I describe as Islamic Globalization—interconnected changes in economics, politics, religion, and diplomacy that are propelling more and more Muslim countries into the middle ranks of world power (Bianchi 2013).

By promoting the *hajj* and other pro-Muslim projects, Chinese leaders seek to benefit from Islamic Globalization in several arenas at the same time. Domestically, they want to garner support from Chinese Muslims while suppressing religious dissenters and separatists. In Muslim countries, they expect broader commercial and diplomatic influence along the continental and maritime Silk Roads of Afro-Eurasia. And in great power politics, they hope to show that China can rally the rest of the non-Western world behind demands for a more inclusive international system (Bianchi 2015).

China's leaders join a long line of authoritarian regimes and colonial rulers that also tried to use pilgrimage to bolster crumbling political systems. In the past, such efforts usually backfired against both Muslim and non-Muslim governments. Similar policies are

even less likely to succeed in the future because the modern *hajj* is inextricably tied to means of empowerment that are within the grasp of Muslims everywhere—widely-shared access to information and action that make universal ideals of freedom and equality more urgent and realizable than ever.

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