

## **Autonomy in Movement:**

### **Informal Islamic Pedagogical Activities among Hui Muslims in China**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper examines how Hui Muslims can assure religious autonomy from the contemporary Chinese state that strictly controls religions. Specifically, it focuses on processes whereby Hui Muslims carry out informal and highly mobile Islamic pedagogical practices in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

A rapid revival of religion has occurred in China because of the abatement of religious policies in the post-Mao Chinese state. However, religious policies have still been strict. Therefore, there have been conflicts between religious groups and Chinese authorities. Recent studies of the religious revival in China have tended to interpret it with an assumption that it is possible for religious groups to expand autonomy through political action either against the state or within it, such as resistance, institutionalization, etc.

However, this paper sheds light on the Hui Muslims' practices that do not involve political action against the state or direct negotiation with the authorities. Rather, they are inclined to evade such politics. Informal Islamic pedagogical activities of Hui Muslims are highly unstable because such activities are in constant danger of prompting the policing and enforcement of governmental regulations. Given this situation, participants often temporarily suspend their activities to shift location and change the ways their activities are delivered to dodge governmental regulations. In sum, instead of direct and situated resistance to the state, religious teaching and learning practices have become a ceaseless flight from state power.

However, through such activities it is impossible to change the dominant structures of the state. Moreover, people involved in these religious practices are mobile and their associations fragile because they are always faced with possible government intervention. Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, this is precisely why the

activities of Hui Muslims cannot be completely suppressed by the government. It is because of such constant movement that the propagation of Islam continues effectively, if intermittently. Indeed, autonomy for Hui Muslims is often found in such constant movement.

## **I Introduction**

This paper examines how Hui Muslims<sup>1)</sup> can assure religious autonomy from the contemporary Chinese state that strictly controls religions. Specifically, it focuses on processes whereby Hui Muslims carry out informal and highly mobile Islamic pedagogical practices in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

A rapid revival of religion has occurred since the late 1970s (cf. Ashiwa and Wank 2009). This is because a lawful liberty for religious beliefs was recovered in the post-Mao era through the abatement of religious policies which had actually banned religious activities during the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Hui Muslim society is no exception. Religious activities by Hui Muslims have also been active since the 1980s (e.g. Gladney 1996; Gillette 2000; Nara 2009; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; 2014; 2015a; 2015b).

In such a situation, previous literature has tended to interpret the revival of religions as politics between the Chinese state and religious groups over broader social interests and rights. One of the frameworks discussed in previous literature is the

politics between “state and society.” The revival of religions was regarded in this framework as the birth of civil society and the process where religious groups assured their autonomy from the state [cf. Madsen 1998]. In the case of Chinese Muslims, Maris Boyd Gillette’s 1990s research in Xi’an focused on the consumption patterns of Hui people (Gillette 2000). She argued that Hui Muslims resist the ideology of the Communist Party of China through alternative modernization that is different from modernization lead by the Chinese state, such as the anti-alcohol movement (Gillette 2000: 167-191).

However, this framework in previous literature that assumes the sphere of resistance outside of state power has been criticized as “the romance of resistance” by Lila Abu-Lughod, who referred to Michel Foucault’s works arguing that resistance and power are inseparable (Abu-Lughod 1990). Foucault does not regard power as an exterior force suppressing people. According to his works, it is necessary to consider power "as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault 1980: 119). Based on this point of view, we can understand that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault 1984: 95). In other words, resistance is one of the effects in

a network of power relationships. After considering Foucault's works, it has also been difficult to assume that autonomy is a condition that can be won or expanded in the process of resistance against power (e.g. Williams 2008: 77).

Easily associating autonomy with resistance has also been criticized in previous literature regarding religious groups in China. For example, there is Adam Yuet Chau's work focusing on the temple of popular religion<sup>2)</sup> that was not recognized by the government in northern Shaanxi province. He noted that the temple has developed into a very influential one in this area since the 1980s. As a result, he argued that the development of this temple is not a result of people winning their autonomy through resistance against the state, but because various actors' interests have been partially shared by them (Chau 2005). According to Chau's work, it was a determinant that the temple of the popular religion was recognized as the temple of Daoism (one of the officially recognized religions) because of partial correspondence of different interests amongst the temple leaders who claimed authority over the temple as a cultural heritage site and sought governmental guarantee, and local officials expected economic gains in the area through development of the temple. Moreover, Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank criticized previous literature that interpreted a relation between state and society in a schema of repression and resistance. They argued for the need to focus not only on

dichotomous actors (state and religious groups), but also various actors with various interests in order to interpret religious phenomena in contemporary China. According to them, it is vital to examine "institutionalization" of religion in various political processes that are developed amongst these various actors (Ashiwa and Wank 2009).

Religious minorities in China could not always win their autonomy through political negotiation with state, or amongst other actors. For example, the Chinese government has used religious sects to stabilize the dominance of the Communist Party of China since the 2000s (cf. Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 327). The words "The Party strives to fully implement its basic principle for its work related to religious affairs, and rallies religious believers in making contributions to economic and social development" were added to Constitution of the Communist Party of China in the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in October 2007 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 2007).

In addition to this, the anti-alcohol movement described by Gillette is also significant in understanding such an effect of power. This movement had succeeded in wiping out alcohol from many areas where Hui people lived together around mosques. Therefore, the Hui Muslims seemingly expanded their autonomy through resistance against state in the movement as Gillette argued. However, the participants of the

movement had no choice but to add Chinese Communist Party members, because the Chinese authorities had problematized informal organization of the movement. It had therefore become easier for the authorities to intervene in the movement. As a result, this movement began to wane immediately. Subsequently, alcohol has begun to be sold in this area again (Gillette 2000: 168-189).

This ethnographic case also shows that it is useful to not just contrast the state and religious groups but to focus on the complicity and the complicated power relationship between the two. However, it should be noted that this previous literature has a common assumption. Both types of arguments assume a political relationship between the state and religious groups. The aforementioned concept of the "institutionalization" of religion regards the domain of "religion" that the state institutionally constitutes as the subject of discussion. As Talal Asad argued in his criticism of secularism, religion has become the proper delimited domain and object of state control through the separation of the religious and the secular in the modern state (Asad 2003: 200-201). However, religions that people practice could not necessarily be reduced to such institutionally enclosed domains, so there are inevitably gaps between them (Asad 1993: 47-54; 2003: 199-200). Asad argued that politics between the state and religious groups around the institutionalization of religion develop because of these

gaps between practices and institutions (Asad 2003: 199-201). The "institutionalization" of religion is a part of this political process.

However, it should be noted here that these gaps between institutional "religions" and religious practices by people do not necessarily constitute politics between the state and religious groups (e.g., Nara 2013b; 2015b). For example, Yukihiro Kawaguchi's research about the revival of shrines and rituals in the rural areas and suburbs of Guanzhou focuses on local practices that do not necessarily bring about "showy politics" (Kawaguchi 2010: 5) or resistance between the state institutionalizing religions and religious groups. Comparing the ritual conducted by just the villagers and those involving local officials, he pointed out that the ritual elements that form the keynote of the former were lost in the latter, and then the latter became a lavish banquet with public implications. Furthermore, he shows how the villagers evaded interference in their religious activities in the shrine by not problematizing the change of the ritual, carrying it out in an ostensibly peaceful atmosphere. He argued, based on this case, that the villagers could paradoxically keep their autonomy in the activities in the shire because the shrine is a popular religion but is not recognized as an official religion, or is "outside of politics" (Kawaguchi 2010: 24).

"The art of not being governed" (Scott 2009) that James C. Scott has proposed

is also important to understand such practices that people avoid or that lead to political conflicts with the state. Scott argued for their autonomy in relation to the state, focusing on the hill people in the mountainous areas in Southeast Asia. He shed light on the society and culture of the hill people who have been marginalized in the progressive history centering around the valley states presupposing the civilizations. According to Scott, they have had a mobile social structure whereby they have not settled but made their livelihood with swiddening and foraging. However, it is not because they have been primitive and uncivilized (Scott 2009: 187-219). Instead, Scott argued that the hill people have intentionally not conformed to the norms of civilization in the valley states but have conducted "self-barbarianization" (Scott 2009: 126). Therefore, the hill people could geographically and culturally keep a distance from and evade the state so they could maintain their social autonomy (Scott 2009: 174-177).

Kawaguchi and Scott's arguments are highly significant in examining the autonomy that is incorporated into politics.<sup>3)</sup> However, it is useful to go back to Foucault's argument here again. Foucault argued that "one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case" (Foucault 1984: 95). Given this argument, it is not possible to simply argue that people can maintain their autonomy by keeping a distance

from the state or evading the state. The Hui people in the urban areas of contemporary China whom this paper focuses on do not have an anarchic space that makes it possible for the hill people to evade the state. Consequently, the Hui people have no choice but to be under the influence of state policies. Furthermore, Islam is under the control of the Chinese government because it is one of the official religions of the Communist Party of China.

Based on the above, it might be possible to condense this paper's purpose into the following sentence. Understanding how autonomy can exist without depending on resistance or negotiation in a network of power relationship that people cannot escape from, while thoroughly understanding that people are in such a power relationship, is possible. This paper attempts to answer this question, focusing on the case of the informal religious activities of the Hui people in urban areas. The case is based on fieldwork carried out mainly in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China for about 28 months in total between 2008 and 2015.<sup>4)</sup> In addition, taking into account that religion is one of many sensitive "issues" in China, the reader should note that I have opted to use pseudonyms for people and places in order to protect my informants. The following section is an overview of the state controlled system of religion and the context within which the Hui people conduct informal religious activities.

## II "Religion" enclosed by the state

### 1 Controlled Mosques

When one visits mosques in China, one of the attention-grabbers are golden testimonials inscribed with the words "a model mosque (*mofan qingzhensi*)" or "an advanced group (*xianjin jiti*)" that are displayed at a mosque entrance. These are gifts from the Chinese authorities. Furthermore, there is frequently a sign that says "a religious activity place (*zongjiao huodong changsuo*)" amongst them. This means that the mosque is authorized as an official religious facility by the government.

Religious activities are legally limited to this "religious place."<sup>5)</sup> In contrast to informal religious activities that are strictly controlled by the government (e.g., Kindopp 2004; Nara 2013c; 2014), a certain degree of freedom for religious activities in "the religious activity places" is allowed by the government.<sup>6)</sup> In regard to Islam, it is not problematic to carry out daily worship and Islamic feasts in the officially authorized mosques. However, if religious facilities obtain the right to conduct religious activities by getting governmental authorization as "a religious activity place," they must follow the instructions and controls of the Chinese government. "Religious activities places" are obligated to receive the authorities' regular supervision and inspection,<sup>7)</sup> and to

register the clergymen working there with the authorities.<sup>8)</sup>

In addition, "the Mosque Administration Committee (*qingzhensi guanli weiyuanhui*)" has to be established in each official mosque.

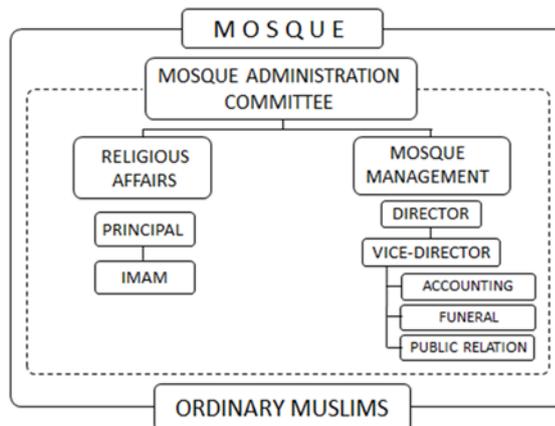


Fig.1 Organization Chart of Mosque

The members of this committee are divided into two groups depending on their services. One is the *Ahong* engaging in religious affairs, and the other is the normal "committee members (*guanli weiyuan*)" who manage mosques (see Fig. 1). The *Ahong* obtain the government-issued license for religious affairs after receiving professional Islamic education in Islamic schools or mosques that are authorized by the government.<sup>9)</sup>

The *Ahong* who engage in religious affairs in mosques basically consist of "a mosque principal (*jiaozhang*)" who is in charge of religious affairs in a mosque and "an imam (*yimamu*)" who engages in daily religious affairs there. Moreover, some mosques have posts of "vice-imam (*fuyimamu*)," "khatib (*haituibu*)," and "mu'adhin (*muanjin*)."

<sup>10)</sup> However, it is not possible for mosques to increase the number of clergy without the approval of the authorities, known as "the bureau of religious affairs (*zongjiao shiwuju*)," that supervises and instructs religious groups and their religious activities.

The other members of the committee who are in charge of management of a mosque also have authority over the personnel affairs of the clergy. The top position among them is "a director (*zhuren*)." Some mosques have a "vice-director (*fuzhuren*)" as well. Moreover, there are also several members who are in charge of accounting, public relations, funerals, etc., in some mosques. It is unclear when and how mosques select members, so local ordinary Hui Muslims commented on the selecting process by saying that "It's dark" or "It's formally an election, but it's a lie."<sup>11)</sup> These members, as well as the clergy, require the approval of the bureau of religious affairs in order to assume their posts.<sup>12)</sup> Furthermore, the gossip amongst ordinary Hui Muslims is that the committee must include at least one member of the Communist Party of China. Such a member is regarded to be "a governmental spy (*zhengfu de ermu*)" amongst ordinary Hui Muslims. In such a situation, the Hui people in Kunming consider the members of the committee to be substantially selected by the authorities (Nara 2014: 104-106; 2015b).

Moreover, the *Ahong* who takes the post such as the mosque principal doubles as a member of the committee, at least in every mosque in Kunming. Furthermore, an imam doubles as a director in a mosque and another imam doubles as a vice-director in another one. In this sense, the committee members' authority over the clergy personnel is not currently independent of the clergy themselves because the distinction between

religious affairs and the management of a mosque is not clear. Some of the clergy are keeping their posts for a long time, although their tenure is supposed to be limited to three years in mosques in Kunming.<sup>13)</sup> In comparison to the management of mosques before the founding of the People's Republic of China as described below, the length of the clergy's tenure seems to be related to the current way of managing mosques.

According to Shinobu Iwamura's research focusing on Hui communities<sup>14)</sup> in the area between North China and Inner Mongolia before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the management of mosques was carried out by people who were elected from among Hui adult males as community representatives called "*xianglao*."<sup>15)</sup> Moreover, these representatives elected by ordinary Hui Muslims have authority over the clergy personnel. The traditional Hui community was autonomous to some extent from Han society. For example, the authority of the clergy was far reaching in the community as seen in incidents such as the enforcement of a penal system based on Islamic law by the clergy. However, ordinary Muslims could institutionally exert their influence on the clergy via their representatives (Iwamura 1949: 92-95; 1950: 41-45).

As Iwamura showed, the distinction between the clergy engaging in religious affairs and the representative with authority over personnel issues was considerably distinct. In addition to this, ordinary Muslims could have influence on personnel matters

in a mosque, albeit indirectly because they had elected community representatives with such authority.

However, the current circumstances surrounding the Hui people contrasts with the circumstances of the Hui communities before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The rebuilding of mosques concentrated in urban areas and the development of commercial areas around mosques has progressed through the process of urban development since the economic reform in Kunming (The Bureau of Religious Affairs of Kunming and the Kunming Islamic Association (eds.) 2005: 150-152). Consequently, there has been a decline in the proportion of Hui people living together around mosques and a marked increase in living quarters shared between Hui people and Han people (Ma 2003: 35; Nara 2013a: 36). In addition to such social changes, there is a situation in which ordinary Hui Muslims cannot currently be involved in the selection process of the mosque administration committee members. Furthermore, the division of labor between religious affairs and the management of a mosque has become unclear, as the clergy has been in charge of the latter. This means that on the one hand the authority of the clergy to manage a mosque has become greater. On the other hand, ordinary Muslims cannot exert any influence on personnel affairs of a mosque. This situation in which ordinary Hui Muslims cannot participate in the management of a mosque has nurtured a distrust

of the clergy, and has become one of main factors prompting ordinary Muslims to carry out informal Islamic activities as described in the following section.

"The Islamic Association (*yisilanjiao xiehui*)" <sup>16)</sup> is one of religious institutions that balances the bureau of religious affairs as an administrative agency controlling religions and each mosque. The Islamic Association conducts the gathering and storage of information concerning the clergy and irregular investigations of mosques in the jurisdictional area instead of the authorities (Sawai 2002: 32-35). For example, the Kunming Islamic Association conducted an inspection of mosques in Kunming on 10 July, the fifth day after "the Ürümqi riots," which occurred on July 5, 2009 in Ürümqi, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Moreover, the Islamic Association decides the dates of the Islamic feasts in the jurisdictional area. Six mosques in an urban area of Kunming receive notice of these dates from the Association, because they do not have the right to decide on the dates for themselves.<sup>17)</sup> The Islamic Association is under the supervision and instruction of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, one of departments of the Chinese government in each jurisdictional area. To take an example from Kunming, the Kunming Islamic Association is under the jurisdiction of the People's Government of Kunming. Furthermore, this bureau of religious affairs is under the jurisdiction of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of

China in each administrative unit (see Fig.2).

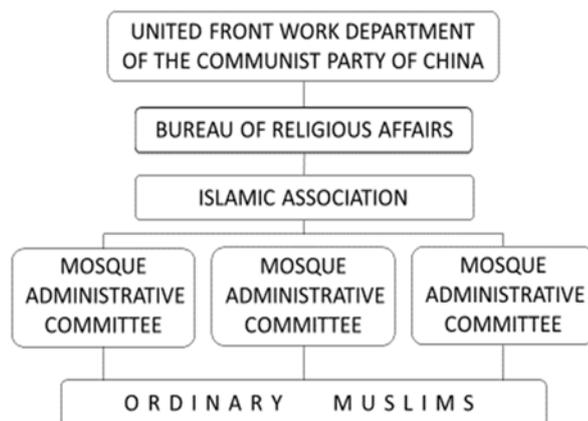


Fig.2 Conceptual Scheme of the Governmental Control System of Religion

As such, mosques could obtain the right to legally conduct religious activities through being recognized as "a religious activity

place" by the government. By doing so, however, they are incorporated into a vertically divided governance system where the Communist Party of China is at the top (Nara 2015b). As a result, while ordinary Muslims could not actually exert their influence on the management and personnel affairs of mosques, the Communist government is able to easily exert their influence on the management of mosque instead of them.

## 2 The Tamed Clergy

The Communist government's policies give preferential treatment to the clergy who have the important posts in the Islamic Association or the members of the mosque administration committee who serve as a mosque principal and a director. One of such policies is to appoint such cadres in mosques to "the Member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (*zhengxie weiyuan*)."<sup>18)</sup> It is a common saying

amongst ordinary Muslims in Kunming that it is possible to obtain various interests through having that post. For example, it was said that a director of a mosque in Kunming was appointed to the Member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference through taking the post of director, and consequently, the utility expenses of the company he managed became free. Moreover, it is also said that mosque principals and imams gain other economic benefits such as "red packets (*hongbao*; red paper bags containing money as a gift)." In other words, the governmental officials directly give cash to them at the time of the Islamic feasts.

Thus, because mosques and the clergy that manage them have been incorporated into the governmental religious control system, they play a role as government agents, actively or not, who work to influence the opinions of ordinary Muslims in order to promote and apply state policies more efficiently. For example, it is common for the clergy to appeal to ordinary Muslims with political slogans, such as "Loving the State, Loving the Religion (*Aiguo Aijiao*)," "National Solidarity (*Minzu Tuanjie*)" or "Harmonious Society (*Hexie Shehui*)," etc., in sermons during Friday prayers at mosques in Kunming (Nara 2014: 106). Furthermore, it is also said that more than a few of the clergymen talk about these political slogans prior to preaching these sermons.

A Hui female company manager, Y, is in her thirties and is one of the main members of the informal Islamic pedagogical activity as described below. She claimed that "Sermons by the clergy from *khutba* [a sermon on the Friday prayer or Islamic feasts] and other sermons are all under the control of the Islamic Association." This kind of "suspicion" is common amongst ordinary Muslims in Kunming. In addition, there is also other gossip that the clergy records who comes to worship in mosques, and reports this information to the Islamic Association.

Whether this episode and other gossip is true or not is unknown. However, these are at least suggestive of what mosques and the clergy represent to ordinary Muslims. In other words, it shows that ordinary Muslims regard mosques and the clergy as a propaganda apparatus for state policies or a part of the government. For example, a Hui male Chinese medicine merchant in his forties who has participated in Muslim charitable work independent of existing mosques (Nara 2013c) complained of a situation where the clergy is coopted by the government as follows:

Mosque principals in urban areas are "the red (pro-Communist Party) *Ahong* (*hongse ahong*)," because they get their "salary" (*gongzi*, meaning of the aforementioned "red packets" in this context) from the Communist Party. All of

the *Ahong* who are members of the Islamic Association are like this. The *Ahong* are under the control of the Communist Party...The tentacles of the Communist Party reach into influential *Ahong* either in urban areas or in rural areas...The Communist Party is really good at doing this kind of thing. They say once (the *Ahong*) get money (from the government), do what they said.

As this discontent shows, mosques and the clergy are losing their influence amongst ordinary Muslims in Kunming. However, it should be noted that all clergymen do not actively cooperate with the government. A Hui Imam in his forties, B, who engages in religious affairs at a mosque in Kunming complained of a situation in which mosques are under the control of the Communist government:

The situation is better than it was before (the economic reform), though. But religious activities are still limited since the economic reforms as well. Everything becomes "politicized (*zhengzhihua*)" in China. But you know, the government aims to control anything that it can.

However, the clergymen who work in officially recognized mosques have no

choice but to follow governmental guidance because their posts in mosques are guaranteed by the government, even though they are dissatisfied with religious policies of the government like Imam B. In such a situation, as the aforementioned criticism against the clergy shows, more than a few ordinary Muslims believe mosques and the clergymen work for the interests of the government rather than the interests of Muslims and are discontented with them. In this sense, while mosques and the clergy are empowered by the government through being incorporated into the religion control system, guaranteed the religious position, and given the political position by government, their influence as a traditional religious authority are in decline in Hui society.

Furthermore, this incorporation of mosques and the clergy into the governmental control system of religion is also related to ordinary Muslims' evaluation of the clergy as “cultureless (*meiyou wenhua*)” (Nara 2013a). It is often said amongst the Hui people in Kunming: “The Hui people go to recite the *Qur'an* without going on to a school of high grade, the Han people go to enter the military without going on to school of high grade (*Huizu buchengqi qu nianjing, Hanzu buchengqi qu dangbing*).” In fact, those who go on to receive Islamic education for entrance into the clergy are often failures in schools of secular or civil education. It is the popular evaluation of the

clergymen as "cultureless" that reflects such a situation. The word "culture (*wenhua*)" is used primarily in the sense of Chinese literacy in this context, although this word also can mean having an academic career, refinement of character, etc. Therefore, it can be said that calling someone "cultureless" is a criticism of the low education and low Chinese literacy of the clergy. However, there is more significance to this criticism, as the Hui people consider it impossible to interpret and preach scriptures, whether Arabic or Chinese, without "culture," or Chinese literacy or the reading comprehension represented by it.<sup>19)</sup>

This "culture" is understood to be gained through a modern general education. However, while the position of the *Ahong* has been institutionalized and privileged as a national qualification in the framework of the governmental religious policies, they have been separated from the secular educational system, such as completion of university studies. Therefore, the *Ahong* who is trained in official mosques or Islamic schools are not considered to have learned "culture." In addition, those who received Islamic education abroad at Islamic universities from the beginning or who learned Islam by themselves cannot obtain the *Ahong* license, so it is exceedingly difficult for them to enter the religious sector in China. In other words, as a matter of practice, only graduates of officially recognized Islamic schools (where it is difficult to learn

"culture") are eligible for the *Ahong* license. As a result, those who are considered "cultureless" by ordinary Muslims monopolize the *Ahong* license.

In sum, while the clergy engaging in religious affairs in mosques are guaranteed their legal positions and politically and economically empowered by the government, this leads to a decline of the religious authority of mosques and the clergy amongst ordinary Muslims. In particular, that the effect has been actualized in a field of Islamic education is itself problematic. This is because the "cultureless" *Ahong* is considered to not be able to deeply understand and preach Islam. Under such a situation, Islamic pedagogical activities have emerged outside of the state system controlling religion.

### **III "Religion" Dodging the State**

#### **1 To "the Outside" of the System**

Every mosque offers Islamic education by the clergy for ordinary Muslims. However, it is generally considered to be "the class for elderly people (*laonian ban*)."

The content is centered on learning basic Islamic knowledge. For example, the clergy teaches elementary literacy of Arabic letters, how to recite the *Qur'an*, and relays the interpreted meaning of scripture to ordinary Muslims. Participants recite the *Qur'an* by

learning basic Arabic letters and then mimicking an *Ahong* and listening to his explanation of passages in the *Qur'an* that they have recited. This method is common in each mosque in Kunming, although whether the Arabic pronunciation is good or not is dependent on each clergyman.

As the phrase "the class for elderly people" shows, Islamic education is mainly for elderly people. Therefore, most of them are held on weekday mornings. In general, there is no Islamic educational activity other than "the class for elderly people." Thus, Islamic education in mosques basically excludes those who attend school or work full time.

Such a situation is related to the concept of "culture" to no small extent. A Hui imam in his twenties at a mosque in Kunming told me during an interview in regard to the Islamic education in Kunming that "It's easier to teach Islam to the elderly, because it's enough to just teach them basic literacy in Arabic and how to recite the *Qur'an*. But [to teach Islam to] young people is difficult. Young people's problems are too complicated." Young Hui people have many chances of coming in contact with non-Muslims at schools or companies centered on Han people, so they are required to be prepared with answers to questions that come out of such contacts, such as relationships between Islam and the equality of the sexes, a contradiction between the

Islamic knowledge and the scientific knowledge taught in school, etc. However, the clergymen evade to teach Islam to young Hui people as the aforementioned imam said "young people's problems are too complicated," because the "culture" or having an academic career, refinement of character in a broader sense is vital to answer these questions (Nara 2014: 108-109).

Thus, there is a situation wherein mosques and the clergy are not only losing their influence amongst ordinary Muslims, but they also are seen as not being able to provide Islamic education, especially for young Muslims. In such a situation, informal Islamic educational activities independent of existing mosques and the clergy have emerged.<sup>20)</sup> It is possible to view the Islamic educational activities without the *Ahong* license of a Hui male, Z, as an example of such activities (Nara 2014: 109-112). First, I would like to introduce what kind of person he is.

Z is in his thirties and was born and raised in Kunming. He was a teacher of Arabic and Islamic culture and other classes at a college. His father was a university graduate and an engineer. Moreover, he worked as a director of a mosque in Kunming after retirement. Z had taken two baccalaureates from each secular university in China and in an Islamic state, and then earned a master's degree in a Western country. Furthermore, he is a haji because he had completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the

mandatory Islamic duties, during his studying abroad.

He was considered to have a better command of Arabic and a richer knowledge of Islam than the average *Ahong* amongst ordinary Muslims in Kunming because he is an elite with a high educational background and has lived for a long time in an Islamic state. Therefore, he was often called “the *Ahong*” by ordinary Muslims although he did not have the *Ahong* license.

Z did not only make reference to a sect of Islam that he belongs to but also took notice of the difference in sects. Moreover, he considered conflicts between Islamic sects to be a situation that should be avoided. However, on the other hand he criticized the improper Arabic pronunciation of the *Ahong* in Kunming and religious practices considered to be influenced by Chinese culture such as *Yisike*<sup>21)</sup> as not "genuine Islam." Furthermore, his way of prayer was the same as *Santai* (the way of prayer in which a person raises their hands three times) that is symbolic of Salafism.<sup>22)</sup> As such, his Islamic thought seemed closest to Salafism.

Moreover, Z was concerned about a deterioration of the *Ahong* in the sense that "cultureless" *Ahong* behave as government agents, as mentioned above. Therefore, He has hoped to make use of his own knowledge and skill regarding Islam for the development of Hui society. However, he did not have a government-issued license of

the *Ahong*. He was therefore in a situation whereby he could not freely conduct Islamic educational activity. However, he has nonetheless begun to engage in Islamic educational activity because of requests from ordinary Muslims.<sup>23)</sup> The aforementioned Hui female, Y, requested that he hold a class for reciting the *Qur'an* in a training room in a company managed by her.

This began when Y got a textbook called *IQRO*<sup>24)</sup> from a Hui male who returned to China from studying in Malaysia. Y requested the aforementioned imams B and Z to examine the usefulness of the text. According to Y, because imam B was not cooperative with conducting Islamic education with this textbook (although both of them recognized the usefulness), she requested Z only. She explained to me why the clergymen in mosques are uncooperative with them: "Because (they are) under the control of the Islamic Association."

*IQRO* is a learning method to recite the *Qur'an* for children that has spread in Indonesia and Malaysia since the 1990s. One of its features is that learners start by pronouncing the Arabic letters, and then progress up to repeating and reciting short words or sentences in the *Qur'an* correctly, eventually becoming able to recite full passages of the *Qur'an*. As stated above, Islamic education in Kunming has participants recite short phrases or sentences in the *Qur'an* by just mimicking the *Ahong* after

learning basic Arabic letters. Correct or standard pronunciation of Arabic is not emphasized there. IQRO is a learning method that is different from traditional Islamic education, so it is a new kind of Islamic education, at least in Kunming (Nakata 2005: 36-37).

Y hoped to learn Arabic and Islam from pious Muslims with rich Islamic knowledge along with modern knowledge learned through general education like Z. However, she could not conduct Islamic education in official mosques because she could not obtain the cooperation of imam B. Thus, she decided to participate in Islamic educational activity under Z in an office of her company outside of the governmental control system of religion.<sup>25)</sup> Those participating in this activity were about thirty Hui Muslims who cover a wide range of generations, from those in their twenties to those in their sixties, although they were mostly working young adults in their twenties and thirties.<sup>26)</sup> The participants unanimously esteemed Z's Arabic ability and his rich Islamic knowledge, saying that "The teacher [Z] has a great Arabic ability" (a Hui male in his twenties), "[Z is] superior to other *Ahong*" (a Hui female in her fifties). Furthermore, some of them, like Y, participated in this activity because Z was an intellectual with "culture."

## 2 Nominally “into” the System

This educational activity had been conducted in a room of Y's company once per week since the beginning of 2007. However, a campaign for the establishment of an Islamic NGO that Y and her comrades waged in order to conduct charity work for Muslims was halted by the public security forces at the end of 2008 (Nara 2013c: 50). Y herself played a leading role on this NGO establishment campaign, but many of the participants in this informal Islamic education also participated in this campaign. Therefore, governmental regulations were able to expand into their Islamic educational activity. In fact, according to Y, her company established new limits enforced on its ability to borrow from banks after this incident.

Thus, the participants of the Islamic education conducted by Z voluntarily stopped their activity because the risk of intervention by the public security forces was increased. However, not long after, Y and other participants resumed their activity in a way that did not nominally deviate from the governmental control system of religion, or an activity "inside" of the system, in order to continue reciting the *Qur'an* under Z to minimize the risk of violating governmental regulations.

Y and some of the participants tried to ask a Hui woman in her thirties, *Ahong E*, who engaged in the Islamic education in an official mosque (K) in Kunming, to

conduct their activity in her mosque in the name of *Ahong E* in early 2009. *Ahong E* was not only a friend of Y and Z, but also participated in Islamic charity works that Y and her comrades took the initiative in. As a result, they succeeded in reestablishing their meetings in this mosque with the support of *Ahong E*, adding her as a participant in their study activities. Their suspended activity resumed, and included E as a member in a classroom in the mosque that E belonged to.

*Ahong E* had an Islamic background that she gained in an Islamic school heavily affected by Salafism. The aforementioned "sinicized" Islamic practices such as *Yisike* and speaking Arabic with a heavy Chinese accent have been criticized amongst Muslims affected by Salafism in Yunnan Province. In particular, regarding the recitation of the *Qur'an*, they believe it should be recited in standard Arabic, otherwise it could not reach Allah. *Ahong E* accepted their request for cooperation in this activity led by Z, who had higher Arabic ability than an average clergymen although he was not licensed. She evaluated Z as possessing "Not only Arabic ability but also Islamic knowledge." Moreover, she was one of the members of the mosque administration committee at that time, although she did not have the posts such as a mosque principle or imam.<sup>27)</sup> Therefore, it was relatively easy for her to accommodate the Islamic educational activity by Z with a place for their activities in her mosque.

As such, the Islamic educational activity continued with *Ahong E*. Moreover, this activity has been conducted in three separated groups depending on Arabic-speaking skill level. *Z*, *Ahong E*, and a Hui male company employee in his twenties, *J*, who has relatively high Arabic ability because he studied Arabic by himself (albeit unlicensed), led each group.

Thus, *Z*'s Islamic pedagogical activity resumed as an activity that did not nominally deviate from the governmental control system of religion, although it stopped once in order to avoid the intervention of the authorities. As mentioned above however, mosques are actually under the control of the authorities. Because the mosque administration committee is thought of as "a governmental spy," their activity still had a potential risk of intervention by the authorities.

### **3 Ignoratio Elenchi**

This potential risk was suddenly realized. The class for reciting the *Qur'an* was planned in mosque *K* at 2 p.m. on November 7, 2009 as always. However, the classroom was tumultuous when I arrived before the starting time. While all of the participants had not yet gathered there at the beginning time, the participants who had already been there were anxiously observing a conversation between *Z* and *E*. It was

obvious to everyone that Z was angry because he was speaking harshly, a departure from his usual attitude.

According to Z, he received a call from mosque K administration committee the previous day and was urged to dissolve his class on the grounds that Z did not have the *Ahong* license. He complained in a fit of anger: "Even though I'm teaching Arabic and Islam at a college that is a national institution, why is it impossible to do so here in our Muslims' place, the mosque?" He continued by saying that "If only the committee recognize our class, the problem would not be getting bigger." Moreover, he later told me this was "because there are spies in mosques," using this committee member who urged him to dissolve the class as an example of this situation.

*Ahong* E apologized to Z for her inadequacy in tears, saying "I had been removed as a member of the mosque administration committee in a previous meeting, now my position is the same as a part-timer, so if I'm told to get out (by the committee), I have no choice but to leave here," and "I don't have any power to negotiate (with the committee) in order to continue this class, I'm so sorry."

While the conversation continued, the participants gradually arrived at the classroom. In the presence of such an inordinate state of affairs, however, they tentatively tried to grasp the situation while taking their seats. When most of the

participants were gathered there around 3 p.m., Z started to explain the situation to them. He told them that their class faced a crisis of existence and there were two reasons for it.

According to his view, one reason for the crisis was that *Ahong* E's position in the mosque became unstable because of her relationship with the committee members. The other reason was that Z did not have the *Ahong* license. The aforementioned Hui male J, who has assisted Z and E, engaged in the educational activity for reciting *Qur'an*, showed his anger after hearing Z's explanation, saying "[He is] not just the *Ahong* of the Communist Party!" In response to his remark, Z said "Exactly, I'm an International *Ahong*, I wanna show [the committee member who urged him to stop this class] my gown for the graduation ceremony at a university in an Islamic state." Moreover, Y also said in anger, "I'm not going to let them ruin our class, over my dead body! I want my son to take this class as well."

Thus, there has been an atmosphere in which both the teachers and the participants have been emotional and willing to come into conflict with the mosque administration committee. In such a situation, Z suggested the possibility of resistance to the committee, claiming "The Constitution stipulates religious liberty!" However, a Hui female in her thirties who worked as a judicial officer disagreed with Z's remark:

"Your claim cannot be accepted by them, although it is right." Subsequently, they have started to consider other options such as conducting their class in the participants' houses in separate small groups. However, Y, who experienced the governmental regulations, disagreed with this proposition because of the risks of intervention by the public security forces outside of official mosques.

It was difficult for the participants to continue their activity in Z's class because Z was "unlicensed," an unsolvable problem. Moreover, they all knew the difficulty of continuing the activity outside of official mosques, as the aforementioned discussions amongst them demonstrate. The focal point of their discussion inevitably moved to another problem: how to keep *Ahong E* in mosque K. Z told them to leave his own problem aside for the moment, and then said "If only teacher E can remain in this mosque, she will just have to be in charge of our class alone, and then, I could participate in it as a student for a while. When this problem calms down sooner or later, I can just start teaching again gradually." Most of the participants agreed with his idea. They decided to dispatch three participants with relatively high social status, such as a Hui male class leader in his sixties who was a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and a Hui male in his fifties who was an elementary school principal, as their class representatives to a director of mosque K in order to make a

direct appeal to keep *Ahong* E. According to them, the director explained to them that the mosque committee had no intention of dismissing *Ahong* E in the first place when they made a direct appeal to him. Consequently, *Ahong* E has never been dismissed from the mosque, although she has not been reappointed as a mosque administration committee member. As mentioned above, *Ahong* E has been in charge of educational activities, while Z has not given his lessons and temporarily participated as a student. However, this only lasted until the following week because the problem never escalated to a serious situation. Subsequently, Z led his class again as before.

The educational activity of reciting the *Qur'an* by Z resumed nominally as an activity "inside" of the system, or an activity in accordance with the governmental control system of religion. However, that is precisely why their activities have been intervened in again through a pro-government member of the mosque administration committee whom Z described as "a governmental spy." The fundamental problem with their activity, from the government's perspective, was that Z did not have the *Ahong* license. However, faced with government intervention, the participants were more focused on whether *Ahong* E could stay in the mosque or not.

It should be noted that the concern over *Ahong* E's status never became a real issue at that time. As mentioned above, the clergymen often hold the post of the mosque

administration committee member in Kunming. However, it is traditionally and institutionally impossible for clergymen to hold the committee member post, because committee members have the power to appoint or dismiss the clergy. In fact, more than a few clergymen engage in Islamic education without being a committee member. Moreover, the participants did not take objection to *Ahong E*'s dismissal from the committee member. As *Ahong E* said; "I don't have any power to negotiate in order to continue this class." The dismissal of the committee member is not directly connected to ineligibility for the clergy, although that might weaken her influence in the mosque. In fact, as *Ahong E* said, "if I'm told to get out, I have no choice but to leave here." She has not yet been dismissed from her role as clergy at this point.

In sum, the problem that the participants negotiated with the administration committee of mosque K was neither that Z was unlicensed nor *Ahong E*'s dismissal from the committee member, but a problem whether *Ahong E* could stay in the mosque or not which is an issue that has not been raised as yet. Therefore, their direct appeal to a director of mosque K was not intended to change the situation surrounding them through negotiation. Rather, the participants continued the activity while avoiding conflicts with the mosque administration committee by switching the problems and waiting for intense scrutiny to die down.

#### 4 “De-Religionalization”

The situation as previously described changed drastically about three months later. Because *Ahong E* moved to an Islamic school of Salafism in another area in Yunnan Province,<sup>28)</sup> the participants had to suspend their activities again. Those who aimed to resume asked the clergymen, such as imams working at mosques in Kunming, to accept their activity in order to operate in other mosques. They did not receive a favorable response. A Hui female participant in her forties described the situation: "Z is a threat to the clergy members in mosques because his Arabic skill and Islamic knowledge is better than theirs."

They could not resume their Islamic pedagogical activities for half a year after that. However, a class for Islamic education in a room of Y's company was planned again in October 2011, and the participants were recruited again.

However, this activity was renamed as a “Lecture on Marriage and Love for Urban Muslims (*chengshi musulin hunlian kecheng*).” In other words, the Islamic pedagogical activity by Z has taken on the appearance of a "non-religious" activity. However, the contents of the classes were the same as before.

As previously mentioned, there was a situation in which the Hui and Han

peoples increasingly shared living quarters because the traditional Hui community adjacent to mosques was basically dismantled in the post-Mao era. Therefore, finding a marriage partner has become one of the major social problems amongst the Hui people because it was difficult for them to find suitable partners in Kunming (Nara 2013a; 2013b; 2013c). Therefore, the act of seeking a spouse could serve to unite Hui people regardless of their differing degrees of religious piety. In such a situation, Y and her comrades have held a matchmaking party for Muslims that doubles as an Islamic missionary activity (Nara 2013b). Lectures were aimed at providing Islamic education, albeit the name is without a formal religious atmosphere. In fact, Y also told me that she “was going to resume the activity in a new form.” Thus, she regarded this lecture as an extension of the aforementioned Islamic educational activity by Z. Moreover, any Muslim could attend the lecture as “unmarried Muslims without a partner, Muslim unmarried couples, and Muslim married couples are eligible for the lecture.” To avoid state interference, the activity was named “Lecture on Marriage and Love for Urban Muslims.”

In sum, the participants resumed their activity when the nominally legitimate activity in a mosque faced difficulty to continue.<sup>29)</sup> Because the activity was a “Lecture on Marriage and Love for Urban Muslims,” it was perceived differently from the initial

activity that was susceptible to governmental regulations. They were able to continue their activity while minimizing the risk of intervention by public security forces through making the activity appear “non-religious.”

## **IV Conclusion**

In conclusion, I examine autonomy as a condition independent of resistance or negotiation within a network of power relationships that is inescapable. The political situation surrounding the Hui people is a case of informal religious activity in which people negotiate the complexities of such a power network.

Islam is assured its legal position as an official religion by the government as far as it adheres to the system of religious control managed by the Communist government. This means that it falls under the purview of governmental regulations. The mosques authorized by the government have to reflect the intentions of the government on their personnel affairs of the mosque administration committee members.

However, the Hui people cannot necessarily expand their religious interests through formal negotiation with the authorities via official mosques in the framework of government control. It has prompted a shift in the religious authority in Hui society. The

clergymen in official mosques are empowered by the authorities as members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or as an executive of the Islamic Association. In other words, religious activities are officially sanctioned and clergymen are given political positions, at least in Kunming. In this sense, it can also be said that the interests of Islam, or the Hui people believing in Islam, have institutionally expanded in the post-Mao era.

However, as this paper has demonstrated, this institutional expansion is seen by ordinary Muslims as a process whereby mosques and the clergy have been incorporated into the government. Therefore, it has paradoxically brought about a decline in clergy authority amongst ordinary Muslims because they have come to regard the clergy and the committee members in mosques as pro-government.

Moreover, there is a similar situation in the professional education of the clergymen. This kind of Islamic education is also sanctioned by the authorities within the framework of the governmental control system of religion. This simultaneously serves to separate the professional Islamic education from secular general education. Consequently, institutional Islamic education fosters “cultureless” clergymen, and thus encourages the decline of the clergy authority among many Hui Muslims.

In sum, there has been a divergence between the “religion” controlled by the

government and the way of Islam that ordinary Muslims aim for. As the terms “red *Ahong*” or “spy” show, ordinary Muslims are intensely critical of the Communist government’s influence in managing mosques and religious activities. However, because implementation of religious activities is legally recognized only as far as the government allows, it is extremely difficult to autonomously manage mosques or carry out religious activities in official mosques setting without government influence.

Moreover, it is obvious from the fact that ordinary Muslims seek clergymen with “culture” that Islamic knowledge is inseparable from secular knowledge from their perspective. As the government only allows Islamic education within the framework of institutional “religion” (separated from the secular domain), the Islamic education recognized by the government diverges from the one that ordinary Muslims want.

In other words, if ordinary Muslims regard a Muslim who has “culture” as a religious leader practicing Islam independently of the state, they have no choice but to deviate from the government standards to achieve their desire for a cultured leader. However, there is always a danger in deviating from the system (Kindopp 2004; Nara 2013c). The Hui people in Kunming have performed informal Islamic education in various ways. However, it has always been intervened by the authorities and the participants forced to suspend their activities. It is therefore extremely difficult for the

Hui people who practice Islam to be "outside of politics" since Islam is considered an official religion under state control, unlike the people practicing popular religion centered on the temples (Kawaguchi 2010: 24). Therefore, the Hui people are in a dilemma. They are forced to carry out their religious activities within state-controlled mosques if they are to adhere to the government regulations. If they carry out activities deviating from the system, they are forced back into conformity. In other words, there is no "anarchy space," or secure autonomy, whereby the Hui people living in urban areas in contemporary China can avoid governmental regulations, unlike hill peoples before the modern period (Scott 2009).

Based on the above, I would like to return to the problem presented in the first section: how autonomy not dependent on resistance or negotiation is possible within a network of inescapable power relationships . If we consider the case presented in the third section, as an individual instance, we must conclude that the power network surrounding religion is inescapable. However, if one views them within a series of processes, we can consider the Hui people's activities as not necessarily reduced to a relationship between resistance and state power.

The Hui people who participated in the Islamic pedagogical activity that this paper described do not directly confront the government, although they sometimes

express their anger at government regulations. They have altered their activities in order not to be controlled directly by the government: they temporarily suspend their activities, wait for the problem to die down, sometimes use the governmental control system of religion, switch the focus of problem, and furthermore make their activity “non-religious.” Such practices are neither resistance against the structure surrounding them nor changing practices through negotiation with the state. These practices of the Hui people are similar to “the art of not being governed” that Scott argued (Scott 2009). However, it should be noted that there is no “anarchy space” outside a network of power relationships for the Hui people in Kunming. Therefore, they cannot escape from government regulations. This is exemplified by their continued dodging of governmental regulations through constant movement: shifting locations, switching the problem, changing the name.

The dominant structure surrounding the Hui people cannot be changed through such practices. The risk of government interference is still present. On the other hand, however, the Hui people do not instigate a situation in which their activity is completely oppressed by the authorities. Instead of direct resistance to the authorities, they immediately suspend the activity, if only temporarily, when they face governmental regulation.<sup>30)</sup> Consequently, the possibility that the activity can continue remains.

As mentioned above, there is no space whereby the Hui people in Kunming can stably conduct the activities that they aim for, so they cannot flee from the state control of religion. However, the possibilities of continually dodging it are open to them. If one considers their activity as a series of processes, it is possible to argue that they can continue their activity, if only intermittently. Their movement itself is not autonomous from the state because it is conditioned by government regulations. Therefore, the constant movement whereby the Hui people continue to evade government regulations cannot be permanently established, so it always remains uncertain. However, as the cases in this paper show, such a constant movement can enable the desired activities in a space free of government interference. Therefore, autonomy for the Hui people can emerge (always with uncertainty) through constant movement and clever evasion, but always remains within a network of the power relationship.

## **Notes**

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- 1) The Hui people have been shaped through repetitious intermarriage between foreign Muslims (for example the Arabs, Persians, and Turks who migrated to China from the Tang dynasty until the Yuan dynasty) and the Han people (Nakata, 1971: 8-9). Not all of the Hui people are Muslims, because some of them claim other religions or abandoned their Islamic faith. However, the Hui people whom this paper focuses on are all Muslims, albeit with different degrees of religious piety among them. Therefore, this paper conveniently adopts Nakata's definition of the Hui people. Moreover, the ethnic category of the Hui has been adopted in the ethnic policies of the Communist Party of China (Minzu Wenti Yanjiuhui (ed.) 1980). They have been called "*Hui min*" or "*Huijiao tu*" (e.g., Iwamura 1949; 1950). However, these categories basically refer to the people called the Hui today, so this paper uses the name "Hui people" for descriptive purposes.
- 2) The religions officially recognized by the Communist Party of China are Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The popular religions that are not included in these official religions have some risk of government interference, and are sometimes labeled as "superstition (*mixin*)."
- 3) "Politics of piety" that Mahmood describes while focusing on the Islamic practices of Muslimas in Cairo, Egypt is also important to understanding such autonomy (Mahmood 2005). The Muslimas in her research attempt to cultivate pious selves through conforming to Islamic norms. Their practices meant to cultivate themselves as pious Muslimas do not necessarily resist the dominant structures such as patriarchy. However, they unexpectedly ended up increasing women's influence on their husbands who do not practice Islamic practices piously. This paper does not regard piety as a main problem, but this kind of agency through piety is important in order to examine the autonomy of religious minorities.
- 4) Kunming is the capital of Yunnan Province and the political and economic center of the province. Kunming has about 158,000 Hui people. This is about 2.47 percent of the total population of Kunming (Yunnan-sheng Renkou Pucha Bangongshi and Yunnan-sheng Tongjiju (eds.) 2010). Therefore, the Hui people are an ethnic minority group in Kunming.
- 5) On the one hand, religious activities are recognized in "the religious activity place" authorized by the government in Article 12 of *The Regulation on Religious Affairs*, but on the other, religious activities outside "the religious activity place" are prohibited in Article 20 (ZhongguoRenmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 2004). *The Regulation on Religious Affairs* was the first comprehensive laws and regulations enforced on 1 March 2005 in the People's Republic of China.

- 6) By “to some extent,” I mean that religious activities in “the religious activity place” are also legally limited by the government. For example, missionary activity by foreigners is prohibited in Article 4 of *The Regulation on Religious Affairs* (Zhongguo Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 2004).
- 7) See Article 19 of *The Regulation on Religious Affairs* (Zhongguo Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 2004).
- 8) See Article 27 and 28 of *The Regulation on Religious Affairs* (Zhongguo Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 2004).
- 9) Islamic clergymen are called *Ahong* in Chinese. The etymology of *Ahong* comes from the Persian word *ākhund* which means a scholar or a teacher (Otsuka *et al.* (eds.) 2002: 63). It is written as 阿訇 (*ahong*) or 阿洪 (*ahong*) in Chinese.
- 10) Khatib means a preacher who conducts *khuṭba*, a sermon on Friday prayer or Islamic feast and *wa’z* is another sermon. *Khuṭba* is written 呼圖白 (*hutubai*) in Chinese. Moreover, *Wa’z* is written 臥爾茲 (*woerzi*) in Chinese. Mu’adhin means a person who conducts “adhan,” the Islamic call to prayer. In general, adhan is called *bangge* and written 邦格 in Yunnan Province. It is a transliteration of the Persian word. Moreover, “adhan” is also called 宣礼 (*xuanli*) or 喚礼 (*huanli*) in Chinese translations.
- 11) “Nancheng Mosque Administrative System” at Nancheng Mosque in Kunming stipulated that the member of the mosque administration committee is directly invited and appointed by the Islamic Association described below, and is examined by the authorities.
- 12) The committee member’s tenure is three years, the same as the clergymen. However, there are some that continue to serve without any procedure for reappointment. This is why ordinary Muslims distrust mosque management. They receive rewards of several hundred yuan from mosques each month. That is from 200-300 yuan to 700-800 yuan, although that differs depending on the mosque.
- 13) An imam in Kunming has held his post in a mosque for about fifteen years as of February 2013. Moreover, he has doubled as a director of the mosque.
- 14) The Hui people traditionally live together around mosques and form communities politically and religiously centering on mosques. These communities are called 教坊 (*jiaofang*), 寺坊 (*sifang*), 坊 (*fang*), 哲瑪提 (*zhemati*) or 哲麻爾提 (*zhemaerti*).
- 15) This is called the Xianglao System and was widely seen across Hui society including Yunnan Province (Mian (eds.) 1997: 208-209). However, there is no person who is called Xianglao in Kunming at present. However, there were such people who held the post of mosque administration committee member in rural areas in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region located in the northwest of China in the late 1990s, although it is unclear how they were elected (Takahashi 2000: 66).

- 16) The Islamic Association has an organizational structure corresponding to the administrative division in which the China Islamic Association at the national level is on the top and the Islamic Association at each local level is under its jurisdiction. In Yunnan Province, the Islamic Association in each local government such as Kunming is under the jurisdiction of the Yunnan Islamic Association. Moreover, the main posts of the Kunming Islamic Association consist of a president and several vice presidents that are shared by the clergymen at each mosque in Kunming.
- 17) For example, the date of the Eid ul-Fitr, called 開齋節 (*kaizhajie*) in Chinese, can differ depending on the mosque in Yunnan Province because it depends on whether it is possible to confirm a new moon or not. However, the date is previously decided by the Islamic Association.
- 18) The members consist of representatives from various sectors such as the Communist Party of China, each democratic party, each organization, each ethnic minority, and each religious group. These range from members at the national level conference to the members at the local level conference corresponding to the administrative division. They are expected to contribute to expand democracy, achieve multi-party cooperation, and establish the United Front (Zhongguo Renmin Zhengzhi Xieshang Huiyi Quanguo Weiyuanhui 2004).
- 19) This situation resonates with the recent expansion of religious intellectuals with an advanced secular educational background but without professional Islamic education in the Islamic world (e.g., Eickelman 2000; Yagi 2011). However, the reconciliation between Islamic education and the education of mainstream society is one of the important problems that have emerged in various forms in Hui History (e.g. Li and Wang, 2003).
- 20) There are other informal religious activities in “the Prayer Hall (礼拝堂 *libaitang*),” managed mainly by Hui university students, other than the cases presented in this paper. “The Prayer Hall” is an informal religious facility aided by the financial support of affluent Muslims such as entrepreneurs. The earliest Prayer Halls of this kind were founded in Kunming in the late 1990s. A typical Prayer Hall is an apartment room that Hui Muslim students rent near a university where they collectively worship and hold Islamic study meetings (Nara 2013a; 2014)
- 21) This means donations in general that are conducted in the name of the dead. Specifically, it generally indicates money that a bereaved family distributes to attendants at a funeral or money that a bereaved family donates to a mosque in the name of the dead. *Yisile* is considered to come from the Persian word.
- 22) “Salafism” was derived from the Arabic word *Salaf*, meaning ancestors or predecessors. In this context, this word specifically indicates the Prophet Muhammad and Muslims who lived in the era of early Islam and the companions of the prophet (*sahabah*). Salafism is an ideology promoting an Islamic state based on Islamic law (*Shari'a*) through eliminating heretical contaminants in order to approach the ideal Islamic community achieved in the era of *Salaf*.

- Moreover, it includes self-reflection on one's way of life as Muslim (Otsuka 2000: 238-239).
- 23) The Islamic educational activities mentioned below were all free of charge.
  - 24) IQRO is a method for rapidly learning recitation of the *Qur'an* that is prevalent in Indonesia. It is called 快速学会读古兰 (*kuaisu xuehui du gulan*) in Chinese.
  - 25) This kind of Islamic education is not dependent on existing religious organizations and is similar to the informal church activities in individual houses, universities, or restaurants by the Chinese Protestants in China called 家庭教会 (*jiating jiaohui*) or 家庭聚会 (*jiating juhui*) (Kindopp 2004: 128; Murakami 2010: 31).
  - 26) Islamic activities in Kunming have also been developed as activities amongst local Muslims such as job hunting, partner seeking, and recreational activities. Therefore, they cannot be reduced only to Islam (Nara 2013a; 2013b; 2013c). However, this point is not considered as a main problem in this paper.
  - 27) In general, it is impossible for the female *Ahong* to hold a post such as a mosque principle or an imam. However, there are mosques for women called 清真女寺 (*qingzhen nvsi*) in some areas. The female *Ahong* can hold posts at such mosques. Moreover, the female *Ahong* is called 师母 (*shimu*).
  - 28) Most of the participants believed that *Ahong E* had no choice but to move because of bad treatment at the mosque. They said that her income was about 600 yuan a month. However, they heard of her transfer ex post facto from Z but did not hear the reason directly from her because this event happened during the long vacation of Spring Festival.
  - 29) This plan was postponed because Z was busy preparing for studying abroad for his doctoral degree. As a result, it failed to materialize because he went abroad to study shortly after.
  - 30) How the authorities consider the informal religious activities by the Hui people is an important problem. However, I would like to continue this research in a following study because it was difficult to carry out fieldwork on the governmental authorities.

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