

The Ambivalent Choices of Hui Muslim Intellectuals under the Mengjiang Regime: A Focus on Wu Yaocheng

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The Mengjiang (蒙疆) regime was a puppet regime in Inner Mongolia established by the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Many historians only examine the Mongols in Mengjiang. Few studies focus on the Hui Muslim group under the Mengjiang regime. Wu Yaocheng (吳耀成, 1908-1991) was a prominent post-war minority educator in Inner Mongolia. However, as a Hui intellectual under Japanese colonial rule, Wu became the dean of the Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association of the Northwest (Xibei huijiao lianhehui Baotou fenzhibu 西北回教聯合會包頭支部) in Mengjiang and spoke up on behalf of the Mengjiang Hui Muslims when they were compelled to accept “help” from the Japanese. This study examines the way in which Hui intellectuals developed a modern Islamic education system under the Mongolian regime, the education Wu Yaocheng received at Beiping Normal University (Beiping shifan daxue 北平師範大學) before the war, the manner by which he expressed his ethnic identity in Mengjiang, and his educational activities after the war.

Keywords: Mengjiang, Hui Muslim, education, Wu Yaocheng

The Mengjiang regime was a puppet regime in Inner Mongolia established by Japanese colonizers during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Though many historians only pay attention to the Mongol minority group in Mengjiang, some studies, especially those by Japanese researchers, do focus on the Hui Muslim group under the Mengjiang regime. For instance, the well-known post-war Japanese thinker Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹內好, 1908-1977), who was also studied Chinese literature during the war, visited North China and Mengjiang to study the Hui Muslim group before publishing a detailed report on his findings in 1942 (Takeuchi). In 1944, the prominent Japanese historian of Mongolian history, Iwamura Shinobu (岩村忍, 1905-1988), investigated mosques in Mengjiang and collected primary data on the Hui, while other reports were made by Kobayashi Hajime (小林元, fl. 20th c.) in 1940, Komura Fujio (小村不二男, b.

1037) in 1941, and Shimizu Satoshi (清水敏, fl. 20th c.) in 1943 (Tuoheti). In 1999 and 2000, Atsuko Shinbo (新保敦子) conducted research on the Islamic Association of the Northwest (*Xibei huijiao lianhehui* 西北回教聯合會) and the Mengjiang Shanlin Muslim Girl's School (*Mengjiang shanlin huimin nüshu* 蒙疆善鄰回民女孰), which had already been studied by Takeuchi Yoshimi more than half a century before (Shinbo, "Under the Mengjiang Regime"; Shinbo, "Focusing on the Federation of Muslims"). In China, also in 1999 and 2000, Fang Jianchang provided an outline of the Mengjiang Shanlin Muslim Girl's School ("Formation and Withering"), the Islamic Association of the Northwest, and the Islamic Committee of Mengjiang ("The Hui in Mengjiang"). The Mengjiang Hui intellectual Wu Yaocheng (吳耀, 1908-1991) was first mentioned in Fang's research.

This article reflects on the ambivalent choices Mengjiang Hui intellectuals faced and focuses on Wu Yaocheng's activities during the 1930s and 1940s. Wu was an influential post-war minority educator in Inner Mongolia in the People's Republic of China (PRC); however, as a Hui intellectual under Japanese colonial rule, he became a member of the Islamic Committee of Mengjiang and dean of the Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association of the Northwest. In order to analyze the ways in which Hui intellectuals tried to develop a modern Islamic education system for their own ethnic group under the Mongolian regime, I will examine the education that Wu Yaocheng received at Beijing Normal University before the war, then explore how he expressed his ethnic identity in Mengjiang, and finally outline his educational activities after the war.

The Hui Ethnic Group in Mengjiang

When he changed 1936 into the 731st year of Genghis Khan, the Mongolian Prince Demchugdongrub (1902-1966) also established the headquarters of the Mongolian army in the Sonid Right Banner (*Suni teyouqi* 蘇尼特右旗) and the Mongolian military government in the city of Dehua (德化) with the help of the Japanese (Bulag). After the Lukouchiao Incident of July 7, 1937, P Demchugdongrub founded the Mongolia Federation Autonomous Government (*Menggu lianmeng zizhi zhenfu* 蒙古聯盟自治政府) with the support of Hideki Tojo (東條英機, 1884-1948) on October 27 in Hohhot, formerly known as Guisui which had served as the capital of Suiyuan Province before the war (Lu). On November 22, the Mengjiang Federation Committee (*Mengjiang lianhe weyuanhui* 蒙疆聯合委員會) in Zhangjiakou (Kalgan) was formed, consisting of three puppet regimes: the South Chahar Autonomous Government (*Chanan zizhi zhengfu* 察南自治政府) in Zhangjiakou, the North Jin Autonomous Government (*Jinbei zizhi zhengfu* 晉北自治政府) in Datong, and the Mongolian Federation Autonomous Government in Hohhot (Demchugdongrub). Finally, on September 1, 1939, the three puppet regimes merged into a single regime that was primarily known as the Mengjiang Government (Qi).

Demchugdongrub supported many Mengjiang magazines and newspapers that used the rhetoric of nationalism to support the independence of Inner Mongolia. This was part of the Mengjiang Government's intention to develop Mongolian culture through education and media. However, the minority cultures in Mengjiang were used as tools for the ideological purposes of Japanese colonization.

The Hui were one such ethnic minority group. They were a Muslim group living mainly in the northwest part of China, especially in Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang, as well as the western parts of Inner Mongolia. Mongols were also a minority group in Mengjiang as the majority group was the Han. According to Japanese records, in 1939 there were 5.21 million Han and 290,000 Mongols in Mengjiang, while the Hui population was ninety-four thousand (Ōnishi). In 1941, data from another Japanese investigation showed that the population of the Han was about 4.86 million, while there were about 300,000 Mongols. However, there appears to have been a significant decrease in the Hui population as only thirty-seven thousand were recorded (Suzuki).

The flag of the Mengjiang regime reflected the ethnic makeup of the regime as it “had seven horizontal stripes of red, white, blue, and yellow. A broad red stripe in the middle represented the Japanese, two narrow white stripes adjacent to the red represented the Muslims, two wider blue stripes represented the Mongols, and the yellow stripes, which formed the upper and lower border, were equal in width to the blue and represented the Chinese and other nationalities. This flag symbolized Japan as the center country toward which all the nationalities of East Asia should incline, unifying harmoniously under a new political regime” (Jagchid 219).

The Japanese intended to make use of the Hui in Mengjiang for their colonization of the northwest of China. Therefore, as an Islamic Association was present in Baotou before the war when the Japanese occupied Baotou, they retained the old name of this association and selected as the chairman the Hui merchant Yang Litang (楊立堂, d. 1939) (Wu and Wang). On December 15, 1938, the Islamic Association of the Northwest was established in Hohhot, composed of four branches: Hohhot, Baotou, Zhangjiakou, and Datong. Then, Jin Chaowen (金朝文, fl. 20th c.), the dean of the General Affairs Department of the Islamic Association of the Northwest, was appointed mayor of Baotou in place of the former mayor Liu Jiguang (劉繼廣, fl. 20th c.), who had been a division commander in the Mongolian Army.

The Hui in Mengjiang developed their traditional religious education taught in mosques into a modernized educational system for schools. It included religious study as well as courses in other subjects, such as the Japanese and Chinese languages. In addition to the Shanlin Muslim Girl's School in Zhangjiakou, there were four Islamic primary schools and four schools for Muslim youth in Mengjiang in 1943 (Fang, “The Hui in Mengjiang”). The non-public Baotou Islamic Primary School and the non-public Salaqi Islamic Primary School were changed into public Islamic elementary schools by the Japanese in order to deal with the schools' financial difficulties. In 1939, there were 99 students in total in the Salaqi public Islamic Primary School. Starting in the autumn of 1938, the Japanese imposed teaching from a colonial perspective for seven terms in Baotou schools for Muslim youth. High-achieving Muslim graduates from these schools then had the chance to engage in further studies. Among these students were Wang De (王德, fl. 20th c.) and Wang Mingjin (王明金, fl. 20th c.), who attended the Muslim Commercial School in Zhangjiakou; Bai Jun (白俊, fl. 20th c.), who attended the Mengjiang College in Hohhot; and Ma Wenxiang (馬文祥, fl. 20th c.) who travelled to Japan (Wu and Wang 54).

According to the remembrances of Cao Zhong (曹忠, fl. 20th c.), a student at the Hohhot Islamic primary school from 1939 to 1941, students received a small copper coin as a prize for high marks. Though Cao himself did not graduate from the Hohhot Islamic primary school, and eventually went to the Hohhot Great Mosque for Islamic studies, some graduates went to the school for Muslim youth in Hohhot after four years of study at the primary school. Their studies included Chinese, mathematics, Japanese,

and even Japanese songs. Cao states that compared with the school for Muslim youth, the Hohhot Islamic primary school was not as politicized by the Japanese colonial perspective (personal communication).

From 1938 to 1942, the schoolmaster of the Baotou Islamic primary school was Wu Yaocheng, who was also the dean of the Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association of the Northwest.

Wu's Early Time at Beiping Normal University

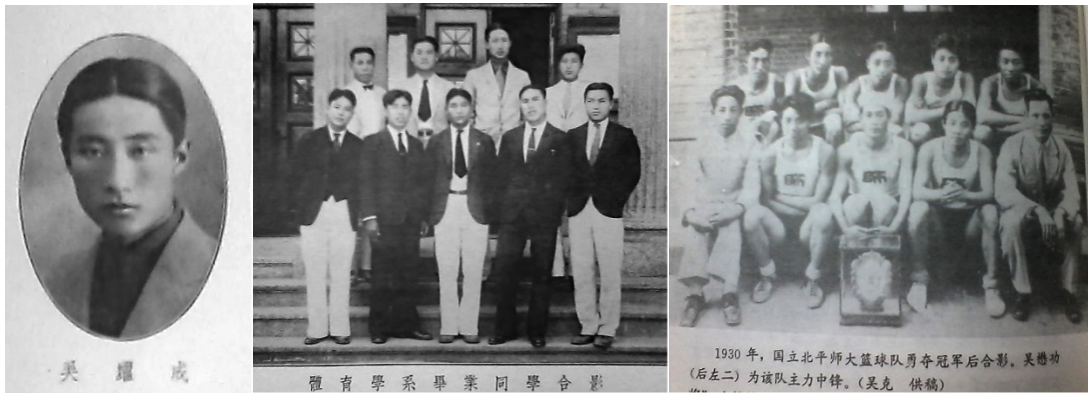
Wu Yaocheng, whose courtesy name was Maogong (懋功), was born in a Muslim district in Baotou. Wu Yaocheng and his brother Wu Yaoting (吳耀庭, fl. 20th c.), also known as Wu Youlong (吳佑龍), graduated from an Islamic primary school that was built by the Baotou Islamic Promotion Association (Baotou Huijiao jujinhui 包头回教俱进会) in 1913. After their graduation, Wu Yaocheng and his brother studied at Suiyuan Middle School for the Five Ethnic Groups (Suiyuan wuzu zhongxue 綏遠五族中學). Wu Yaocheng then studied at the Department of Physical Education at Beiping Normal University (now Beijing Normal University), while Wu Yaoting studied at the Department of Civil Engineering at Beiyang College of Technology (now Tianjin University). Both brothers received twenty-five silver dollars per year from the Baotou Islamic Promotion Association. The brothers were the only two Hui college graduates in Baotou in the 1930s (Deng).

The dean of the Department of Physical Education at Beiping Normal University in the 1930s was the well-respected educator Yuan Dunli (袁敦禮, 1895-1968), who had graduated from the Department of Foreign Languages at Beijing Normal University in 1917 when it was known as Beijing Normal College. He then earned his master's degree in physiology from Columbia University. Yuan considered physical education to be an integral part of education overall. In the physical education department, Yuan taught the course, "Theories of Physical Education." Under Yuan Dunli's new philosophy of physical education, the department provided multiple courses such as English elocution, Chinese elocution, physiology experiments, educational psychology, singing, dancing, and even music history, as well as instruction in playing the two-stringed Chinese fiddle. There were many well-known physical educators in Beiping Normal University at that time, including Dong Shouyi (董守義, 1895-1978) and Zeng Zhonglu (曾仲魯, 1891-1963), and even the adjunct professor John Ma (馬約翰, 1882-1966) from Qinghua University, and Beiping Female Normal University. Most of them had graduated from Columbia University, Springfield College, or Tokyo Normal College.

In his first academic year, Wu Yaocheng's scores in his English elocution and Chinese elocution courses were very low. However, in his second academic year, Wu Yaocheng received very high scores for these two courses, according to his transcript in the archives of Beijing Normal University. Though there was no formal course of basketball training, Wu became the captain of the basketball team at Beiping Normal University and won many games under the training of the renowned basketball coach Dong Shouyi, who became the only Chinese member of the International Olympic Committee. Wu earned a silver statuette in the form of a little

basketball as a prize for his contribution to the university team in more than three competitions within one year (Asha).

When Wu Yaocheng graduated in 1934, a yearbook entry said that in four years he had not only achieved high scores in many competitions but had also been successful at writing books, making translations, and publishing articles (Han and Yao). The students in the physical education department received a thorough education in both traditional Chinese culture and modern Western culture. After graduation, Wu Yaocheng returned to Baotou as a middle school teacher. In 1935, he became the president of the Suiyuan Public Stadium in Guisui and renovated it. However, after the Japanese occupied Guisui in 1937 and changed the Chinese name of the city back to the Mongolian name Hohhot, Wu Yaocheng returned to Baotou. In 1938, he became the schoolmaster at the Baotou Islamic primary school, the same school from which he had graduated.



Figs. 1a-c. From left to right: Fig. 1a. Wu Yaocheng; Fig. 1b. Graduation photo of the Department of Physical Education (Han and Yao). Fig. 1c. Coach Dong Shouyi can be seen in the right corner of the photo wearing a suit and a tie (Asha).

Wu Yaocheng appears to have received a solid Islamic education during his childhood as well as a modern education in his college years. The financial support provided by the Baotou Islamic Promotion Association was indispensable for his studies. All of the above factors were important for his later educational activities as a minority and Muslim educator.

Appointment as the Dean of Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association

Before the war, Wang Zhiwu (王質武, fl. 20th c.), Wu Yaocheng's brother-in-law, had served as the schoolmaster of the Islamic primary school in Baotou since 1936. Then, under the Japanese occupation, Ding Guanying (丁冠英, fl. 20th c.) became schoolmaster. Wu Yaocheng took over the role after Ding's resignation in 1938. To "help" the Hui people develop their education, the Japanese changed the non-public Islamic primary school into a public Islamic elementary school. New facilities were established, and the campus was renovated. However,

Japanese was the main course of study, while other courses included Chinese and mathematics (Ma). In 1939, with the financial support provided by the puppet regime, there were 252 students in the Baotou public Islamic primary school, including 90 Hui students, 5 Mongol students, 15 Manchu students, and 142 Han students. About 28 percent of the students were Hui.

Between 1938 and 1940, the Japanese organized four visits of Mengjiang Muslim groups to Japan. From Baotou, Wu Yaocheng, along with Ma Yizhu (馬逸塵, fl. 20th c.), Chen Jun (陳俊, fl. 20th c.), Yang Linshan (楊林山, fl. 20th c.), Yang Wanli (楊萬裡, fl. 20th c.), Chen Guangren (陳廣仁, fl. 20th c.), Ma Chengji (馬成驥, fl. 20th c.), Bai Zixuan (白子璿, fl. 20th c.), and Hui Lianyu (惠連玉, fl. 20th c.) visited Japan in order to describe modern Japanese society to Mengjiang Muslims (Wu and Wang 49).

On December 5, 1938, the Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association of the Northwest was established with the support of the Japanese. Wu Yaocheng, without his consent, was appointed as the dean of the Baotou Branch (Tuimer 71). Ding Fu (丁福, fl. 20th c.), Bai Yuheng (白玉衡, fl. 20th c.), Chen Jun, and Yang Wanli were selected as committee members. The Baotou Branch was made up of four sections: Chen Jun was appointed as the section chief of General Affairs; Li Xianting (李顯廷, fl. 20th c.) was appointed as the Civil Affairs Section Chief and the Economy Section Chief; and Hua Zhensheng (華振聲, fl. 20th c.) was the Education Section Chief (Li).

A declaration from the Baotou Branch was published in the 1357th year of the Islamic calendar (1938): “Today, the Baotou Branch of the Islamic Association of the Northwest was established. We Hui people should congratulate each other. Since the July 7th Incident last year, the friendly state of Japan has warmly supported the Hui people culturally, economically, and in other aspects, in which they made great achievements. The full extent of what we Hui people gained cannot be written ... Rise! Fellow Hui! We should hold the hands of that friendly nation forever and eradicate the red devils together in order to realize peace for East Asia ...” (Fang, “The Hui in Mengjiang” 96). Though this declaration might not be the genuine inner thoughts of Wu Yaocheng, some issues relevant to the Hui ethnic group under the Japanese occupation can be seen in this declaration: “Recently, under the oppression and extortion of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, and without land on which to live, most Hui face the danger of being gradually eradicated.” This declaration shows that the Japanese supported the Hui in the development of their own culture in order to use it in their resistance against the Nationalist government of China as well as the Communist Party.

After its founding, the Islamic Association of the Northwest started its own publication, the *Islamic Association Publication*. In December of the 1358th year of the Islamic calendar (1939), the association held its anniversary, which was reported by the *Islamic Association Publication* in January of the following year. Wu Yaocheng published the following comment on this anniversary:

With a population of 450 million fellows and a history of more than thirteen hundred years, our Muslim nation should have the same development as other nations and should not be lost alone. However, after the time of the Prophet Mohammed, not only has no progress

been seen, but there has been a trend of decline. As a result, in the period of the old regime, we were always expelled and despised. Thinking of the past and the present, do we not feel ashamed?

Fortunately, since the incident in the year before last, Islamic associations have been founded everywhere with the warm help of the friendly nation [Japan]. Masses of schools were established for our nation's revival and to proclaim our doctrines. With this great opportunity, we should rise up and do all we can to catch up, so that we will feel no regret for the painstaking work of our Prophet. Nowadays, the new fortune of China has been made, and the great cause of Mengjiang has been completed. Society makes progress every day, and human affairs are made new according to the will of Allah. Our future must be bright, and our Islamic Association of the Northwest will quickly progress with great achievements today and next year. Though I am not wise enough, I intend to do my best to follow the pioneers we Hui Muslim's self-determination as the basis for the harmony of all nations and resistance against the Communists ... (Wu, "Xiabei huijiao" 22).

The self-determination of Muslims here becomes a narrative of nationalism. Just as the Japanese traded in Mongolian culture, the Islamic culture of the Hui was used as a tool for the ideological purpose of splitting the Muslim region from China. The independence, and even autonomy of the Muslim groups was proclaimed with the support of the Japanese. However, there was still the question of how the minority groups could obtain genuine self-determination against the hegemony of the old autocracies with the help of the new colonizers.

In 1941, the association changed the name of its own publication, the *Islamic Association Publication*, to the *Islamic Monthly*. Yang Chongde (楊崇德, fl. 20th c.) served as the editor, while Komura Fujio was the supervisor. The fundamental purpose of this monthly was to "develop Islamic culture, raise the status of our ethnic group, develop the Northwest, promote Islam, and extinguish the Communists in order to build the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, as well as to facilitate all Muslim nations in the world to moving forward hand in hand" (Yang, inside back cover). The *Islamic Monthly* made great efforts to report the demonstrations against Britain that were organized by the Islamic Association of the Northwest. On June 3, 1941, about five thousand Hui in Baotou attended the Meeting of Resistance to Britain, while similar meetings were held in six areas in Zhangjiakou on June 6 (Fang, "The Hui in Mengjiang" 96). Just like building the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere," helping all East Asian nations to resist Western imperialist powers became another form of the nationalist narrative in the colonies of Japan.

The ambivalence of this nationalist narrative can be seen in the conflicts between the colonies and Japan. Though the Mengjiang government proclaimed nationalism as a motivation for the independence of Inner Mongolia, the Hui people in Mengjiang still identified themselves as Chinese. For instance, while the Mengjiang Government used the calendar of Genghis Khan, the Baotou Great Mosque still used the calendar of the Republic of China and marked the 30th year of the Republic of China on carpets in 1941.



Fig. 2. Wu Yaocheng's photo and biographical introduction in the Mengjiang publication *For the People Semimonthly* (《利民》半月刊) 1(1941): 9.



Fig. 3. This carpet was found in the Baotou Great Mosque in the summer of 2013. It marked the 30th year of the Republic of China, instead of the 736th year of Genghis Khan (photo by author).

Wu's Educational Activities after the War

After the defeat of Japan in 1945, the western part of Inner Mongolia belonged to the Suiyuan Province of the Chinese Nationalist government and was controlled by the Kuomintang General Fu Zuoyi (傅作義, 1895 -1974). The Hui officer Ma Bingren (馬秉仁, 1894-1951) was appointed as chief of the Baotou Council. Li Changqing (李長清, fl. 20th c.) was selected as the director of the Muslim association in Baotou, and Wang Zhiwu served as the vice director. Wu Yaocheng and his brother, Wu Yaoting, were selected as committee members. In 1946, Wang Zhiwu took over from Li Changqing as the director and Wu Yaoting became the vice director.

In 1946, the Nationalist government changed the name of the Baotou Islamic Primary School to Zhaoguai Primary School (*Zhaoguai xiaoxue*, 召拐子小學) and ran it as a non-Islamic school. The Hui people in Baotou intended to resist this change. After meeting in June 1947, they decided to start a new Islamic middle school using donations from all the Hui people in Baotou. The name of this Islamic middle school was Baotou Non-Public Chongzhen Middle

School (*Chongzhen zhongxue*, 崇真中學), and the president was Wu Yaoting. When the first new term began on September 15, 1947, there were 118 students in total, including 40 Hui students. In 1948, Wu Yaocheng was engaged as the director of teaching. Before this he had taught at Suiyuan Second Middle School. In 1949, Wu Yaocheng became the president of Chongzhen Middle School. In November 1951, following the Communist defeat of the Nationalist government, this Islamic middle school was merged with the Tümed Middle School (*Suiyuan shengli tumote zhongxue*, 綏遠省立土默特中學) and was moved to Guisui with the new name Suiyuan Ethnic Middle School (*Suiyuansheng minzu zhongxue*, 綏遠省民族中學). Wu Yaocheng then became the vice president (Zhao).

In 1961, Wu Yaocheng was transferred to the Hui Middle School in Hohhot (*Huhehaote huimin zhongxue*, 呼和浩特回民中學) and served as president. During the Cultural Revolution, the Hui Middle School's name was changed to the Red Flag Middle School (*Hongqi zhongxue* 紅旗中學). As an eminent educator and prominent leader of the China Association for Promoting Democracy in Inner Mongolia, Wu Yaocheng worked in the Hui Middle School after the Cultural Revolution until 1984. He died in 1991.

Unlike the many intellectuals who had collaborated with the Japanese colonizers, Wu Yaocheng did not face much persecution after the war, as his educational activities were not considered to have been influenced by the imperialist problems in Mengjiang. However, many other intellectuals from both majority and minority ethnic groups met with political persecution, especially during the Cultural Revolution. It should be noted that after the founding of the PRC, Wu Yaocheng was considered a successful minority educator by his students in the Suiyuan Ethnic Middle School, yet not by the students in the Islamic schools in which he had worked. One of his post-war Mongol students, Yun Bulong (雲布龍, 1937-2000), who became the chairman of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in the 1990s, praised Wu Yaocheng as a model of national unity (Tong and Li).

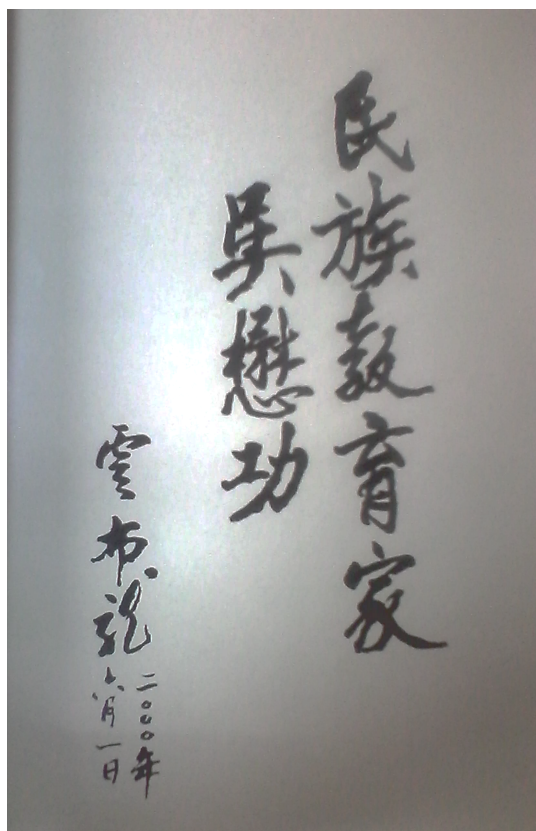


Fig. 4. Inscription by Chairman Yun Bulong of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region commending his former teacher Wu Yaocheng as a model minority educator at the end of the 20th century (Tong and Li, frontpiece).

Concluding Remarks

Based on an analysis of the different choices made by Wu Yaocheng at the different stages of his life, it becomes apparent that Hui Muslim intellectuals of Inner Mongolia made great efforts to develop Islamic culture through education, both under the Nationalist government and under Japanese colonization.

Wu Yaocheng's ambivalence under the Mengjiang regime was a typical example of Hui intellectuals operating in a system of Japanese colonial ideology, which was packaged as helping all Asian nations gain independence or autonomy. The hybridity of Wu's inner identity and his declarations shows the difficulty of developing minority culture in times of despotism and colonization. The Islamic culture of the Hui in Mengjiang was used as a tool for the ideological purposes of both colonization and autocracy. In spite of such dual oppression, Hui intellectuals like Wu Yaocheng seized whatever opportunities were available to support and develop Hui culture.

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