

Research Article

On the Relationship Between the *Ikhwān* Sect in China and the *Wahhābi* Movement in the Arabian Peninsula

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Abstract

This article is to clarify an intellectual obfuscation which since long has puzzled the scholars involved in the studies of Chinese Islam. For those scholars who always followed the view on the relationship between the *Ikhwān* in China and the *Wahhābi* movement in the Arabian Peninsula as the relationships of fountain source (the *Wahhabi* movement) and stream (the Chinese *Ikhwan*), which was firstly held by a Chinese Muslim scholar, Ma Tong, a pioneer researcher on this problem, have overlooked, I believe, the factual elements, such as time displacement, chronological sequence, opposing stand on theological tenets, different sources of reference books, different reform proposition and more, which are clearly analyzed in this study. Ma Tong's and other pioneer researchers like Bai Shouyi's and Feng Jinyuan's role in this intellectual obfuscation is very important, because their works are only references available for the later researchers. With careful inference it is not difficult for one to find many fractures in their accounts. They linked Chinese *Ikhwan* with Arabia Wahabism simply because they believed that the latter was a popular movement when the Chinese *imam* Ma Wan-fu 马万福 (1853-1934), the founder of the *Ikhwān* sect, performed *hajj*, and afterwards stayed there on for furthering his studies for five years (from 1888 to 1893), before he returned to China. The *Ikhwān* sect was formally established in Monigou of Linxia, China, soon after that. Based on this sole connection, the upholders of the view of presupposed relations thought that the Ma Wan-fu's *Ikhwan* must be influenced by *Wahhābi* movement during his five years stay in Mecca. However, some other scholars like Gao Wenyuan and others believed that there might be least connections between the two, but not source-stream relations, because they are clearly attached to two different ideological schools. This scholarly obfuscation has so far not been dealt with by any researchers. Thus, in this article we try to solve this scholarly conundrum from the six angles mentioned above, aimed at a firm conclusion that between the two movements there exist no source-stream nexus as upheld by many famed intellectuals.

Keywords

Islam, *Ikhwān*, *Wahhābī*, Relationship

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1. Introduction

At the end of the 19th century, Ma Wan-fu, an already established Chinese Muslim *imam* from Gansu province, China, travelled to Mecca for pilgrimage, and afterwards stayed in Mecca for another five more years for improving his religious knowledge in the heartland of the Muslim world, where the *Wahhābī* movement was just foreshadowing its dominance thereat. Largely due to this connection, some researchers, like Ma Tong 马通 (1929-?), a prolific writer on Chinese Islam, holds a view in his book *Sources of Chinese Sufi Sects*, that Ma Wan-fu founded the *Ikhwān* sect upon his return to his native place, saying that “his religious ideas and thoughts are derived from *Wahhābī*’s theology” [1]. Because, he argues, that on returning to China, Ma Wanfu brought with him the books entitled *Kashf al-Shubhāt* (Removal of the Doubts) by Ibn Abd al-Wahhābī and *Ruh al- Ma’ānī* (The Soul of Meaning)¹ by Mahammad al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī (d. 1854), and *‘Ajā’ib Muḥammad* by Muhammad, among others. In the same token, the authors of *The Encyclopedia of Chinese Islam* hold the similar opinion [1, 2]. Following their footsteps, some Chinese *Salafī* scholars hold the same view, advocating that the ultimate goal of Ma Wan-fu’s religious reform was to convert Chinese Muslims from their traditional teaching of *Maturidi* doctrine and *Hanafi* jurisprudence to *Salafī* teachings.² [3] This view gives readers the impression that those *Salafī* scholars are gilding the face of their own sect with gold. Some other scholars, however, hold a different opinion, advocating that Ma Wan-fu’s reform was directed to purify Chinese Islam from some heretic practices in the religious life of Chinese Muslims, thus initiated a reform movement aimed at eliminating those heretic practices. His ideas although bear some similarities with *Wahhābī* ideologies but not directly derived from *Wahhābī*’s.

This article seeks to restore the original appearance of the matter from six angles, e.g. time displacement, chronological sequence, opposing stand on theological tenets, different sources of reference books, different reform proposition and more, for the sake of truth lest it misleads common Muslims or researchers who rely on those inaccurate materials to draw their conclusions on the matter. By this paper, therefore, we hope to clarify the relationship between the *Ikhwān* in China and the *Wahhābī* movement in the Arabian Peninsula.

2. Wahhābī Movement

WahhtĒbĒ movement was and still is discussed and analyzed by many prominent scholars like John J. Donohue, Jon L. Esposito, John O. Voll, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Kath-

leen Moore, David Sawan,³ and many more, their studies on the history of Modern Saudi Arabia absolve me from indulging into the sea of those works. However, a very brief account on the founder of Saudi Arabia is still indispensable. Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, full name “Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhāb” (hereinafter Ibn Abd al-Wahhab), a Ḥambalī scholar in the Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula, was born in 1703 and died in 1792, studied the Ḥambalī school syllabus in his early years, and took fancy of especially the works of the famous scholar of the Ḥambalī school, Ibn Taymiyah (1263~1328). Upon witnessing the resurgence of “obscurantism” and the prevalence of “heresy” in some parts of the Muslim World of the time, and feeling that people’s understanding and practice of Islam seriously deviated from the *sunnah* of the Prophet, Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb initiated a religious reform movement at the age of 35, put forward a series of reform proposals, which include: reviving the religion based on the teachings of the Qur’an and Ḥadīth; acknowledging the oneness of God in cognition and worshipping; renouncing the worship of holy tombs, holy relics and other heretic rituals; advocating the practice of religion and governance by the theology of the Ḥambalī school; cleansing social customs, purifying people’s mind and eliminating all kinds of ugly and corrupt phenomena; calling on Arab Muslims to unite for dealing with external threats; standing against the Turkish Ottoman’s rule over the Arabian Peninsula, among others. [2, 4] He expressed his reform ideas in his books *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (Oneness of God), *al-Usūl al-Thalāthah* (Three Principles) and *Kashf al-Shubhāt* (Revealing Doubts), which later became the ideological sources and theoretical basis for the *Wahhābī* movement. Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb’s followers who initially called themselves “Muwahḥidūn” (oneness expounders), [5] encountered great resistance to their reform movement, hence later united with the Saudi family, who was then seeking independence from Turkish rule. This union marked a turning point for Wahhāb’s reform movement, which thenceforth achieved remarkable progress, turned to the most influential religious revival movement in the modern Arab history, which had a profound impact to the Muslim World. The Saudi family helped promote the reform movement, for return Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers served as the sheikhs to Saudi government. The two united into one entity. [2, 6] With establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the *Salafī* ideology advocated by the *Wahhābīs* was widely spread in Saudi Arabia in particular, and around the world at large. It was introduced to China in the early 40s of the twentieth century. [7]

¹ The complete title: *Ruh al- Ma’ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa al-Sab’a al-Mathānī* (The Soul of Meaning in the Exegesis of the Great Qur’ān and the Repeated Seven), by al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī (1802-1854).

² In *Xinyuanbaojian* 信源宝鉴 (Precious Mirror of the Faith), the author places Ma Wan-fu as the most outstanding *Salafī* personage in Chinese Islamic history, see this, 51.

³ In their compilation (1991) *the Contemporary Islamic Revival: A Critical Survey and Bibliography*, they have enlisted hundreds of works, both of journal articles and books, on modern Islam in general and Saudi Arabia in particular.

3. Chinese *Ikhwān* Sect

The *Ikhwān* sect in China, as *Wahhabi* movement in Arab peninsular, is also extensively discussed in their works by Chinese scholars like Ma Tong, Bai Shouyi, Jin Yijiu, as well as Orientalists like Mashall Broomhall, Jonathan Lipman, Michael Dillon, Dru C. Gladney, Barbara Pillsbury, Raphael Israeli, and many other prominent scholars worldwide, who have enthusiastically pursued their studies on Chinese Islam in general and *Ikhwan* sect movement in particular, and whose works often evinced their erudite expertise in the field, which have exonerated me from a detailed delineation of the Chinese *Ikhwān* sect. But, as with the case of *Wahhabi* movement, a cursory look into its history of foundation is indispensable.

The Chinese *Ikhwān* was founded by Ma Wan-fu, whose biography will be briefly dealt with before we deal with the *Ikhwān* sect. Ma Wan-fu (1849~1934) whose Muslim name as Nuoh (Nūḥ), a native of Dongxiang, Gansu province, well known as “Ma Guoyuan”,⁴ [8, 9] was a gifted and intelligent man, fond of learning since childhood. Already in his childhood he had a solid foundation in Arabic and learned various subjects of Islam from several local *imams*. He excelled in learning and outstripped others, stood out as a learned young man. Soon, upon his graduation, he was employed as an *imam*, teaching religious sciences, and cultivating students. In 1886, Ma Wan-fu went to Mecca for a pilgrimage together with the *imam* Walijia 瓦里家 and Ma Hui-san 马会三 and others. Upon completing the rituals, they stayed on for another five more years therein. During this stay he studied and refined his learning of the Qur’ān, Ḥadīth, and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). In 1892, they returned to China, Ma was venerated by people as “Guoyuan Ḥaḥzi” (Guoyuan Hajj). According to Ma Tong and others, on their return to China, they brought along several books written by Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb. Referring to those books, and at the same time collaborating with some other *imams* from Linxia, they came up with a book titled the *Bukhari Zand*,⁵ [9, 10] a book which is not found until today, in which they systematically expounded their ideas for the reformation, and this marked the foundation of “*Ikhwān*” sect.

The *Ikhwān*, also known as “Ahl al-Sunnah”, initially implies “those who adhere to the ‘Sunnah’ (the way) of the prophet”, or Sunnis. Chinese Muslims in Pingliang of Gansu and Ningxia, called themselves the “Kitāb-Sunnah”, which initially implies “al-Qur’ān and al-Sunnah”, but virtually denotes “observant of the Qur’ān and Sunnah”, evincing a meaning of “obedient sect” or “orthodox”. However, they are named by Gadīm sect (the earliest sect of Chinese Islam) and others Sufi sects in China as “xin jiao” (new sect) or “xin xing pai” (new-practice sect). The followers of this new sect adhere

to Māturīdī tenets in theology and Ḥanafī school in jurisprudence in their religious practices, as well as in dealing with social issues. [2]

It is said that when Ma Wan-fu returned from Arabia to Hezhou, his native place, he discussed with the 10 *imams*⁶ [7] from Hezhou (Modern Linxia) on issues related to theology and jurisprudence. Taking the Qur’ān and the Sunnah as the primary sources, they enlisted some customs and practices popular among Chinese Muslims for quite a long time, which they thought as not conforming with the teachings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah, and suggested abolishing them, in a drive to make Islam restored to its original form. For achieving this goal, they put forward 10 reform proposals: [7, 11-13] (1) no erection of Gongbei (Tombs of Sūfī Sheikh) and directly worship them; (2) perform ‘*amal*’ (religious duties) by oneself, perform ‘*Tawbah*’ (repentance) by oneself. No admittance to intercession of the leaders of Sūfī orders;⁷ (3) fulfill the *al-Fardh*’ (individual obligation) before fulfilling *al-Nawāfil*’ (optional obligation), which is otherwise accounted as *bi-da’ah*’ (innovation), like putting the cart before the horse; (4) no wearing mourning dress⁸ in a funeral, and no bawling to the deceased; no celebration of the seventh day, hundredth day and anniversary day for the deceased; forbid to recite “*Khatm al-Qur’ān*” (the thirtieth book of the Qur’ān) on specific days for remembrance of the dead; (5) no celebration of ‘*mawlid al-Rasul*’ (birthday of Prophet) and ‘*Āshūrā*’ day (10th of Muḥarram), because none of the companions of Prophet had celebrated them, and ‘*Ashura*’ is Shi’ā’s festival; (6) forbid singing banquet songs in weddings and forbid presenting needles and threads as dowries;⁹ (7) forbid using the Qur’ān but money in funerals to expiate for misdeeds of the dead in the past (*fidya* in Chinese); (8) Muslim women must wear *hijab* (scarf), obey the God’s decree, forbid binding their feet; (9) forbid reciting the Qur’ān collectively in a cemetery, but recited by an individual, and listened to him by the rest; (10) Muslim men should keep their beards, because it is a Sunnah practiced by the Prophet.

These ten items of proposition are also known as the “Ten Prohibitions of Guoyuan”. And to these items, later, another *Ikhwan imam* Ma Wei-shi 马维世 added seven more items,¹⁰ further enriched the reform content of the *Ikhwān* sect.

As seen from the list abovementioned, that some reform

⁴ Guoyuan is the name of a village located at Dongxiang County, Gansu province.

⁵ Gao Wenyuan in his work states: “Ma Wan-fu was once an *imam* in the mosque of Dahejia village, Hezhou, in the last year of this tenure, he published his *Bukhari Zand*, in which he expounds his propositions of purifying Chinese Islam from heretical customs. Quoting extensively from the Quran and hadith, he criticizes unlawful religious practices by some Chinese Sufi sects. This book is taken by some researchers as the manifesto of *Ikhwan* sect.”

⁶ 10 *imams* include: Dabeī *imam*, Laoxiao *imam*, Imam Zhang Bo, Dabi *imam* of Hongya, Gaoyao *imam*, Tanzi *imam*, Dakang *imam*, Xinwafang *imam*, the *imam* of Zhezigou, and *imam* Ma Hui-san.

⁷ In some Sufi practices, the followers need to seek consent from their sheikh (s) before they proceed to do something, including worldly matters.

⁸ Wearing the mourning dress in a funeral is clearly a Chinese culture, adopted by some Chinese Muslim Sufi sects.

⁹ These practices also adopted from Chinese culture.

¹⁰ (1) No gathering of Muslim man and woman for loudly eulogy of the prophet; (2) one must himself/herself recite the scriptures (here implies the verses of Qur’ān), instead of reciting it by other people on behalf of him/her; (3) in a mosque, only the *imam* or religious teacher recite Qur’ān, other attendants listen to the recitation; (4) invocations after every *salat* is only once, needless to repeat twice or more; (5) beside a dying person, only one person reminds him (the dying) of confessional words (*al-kalimah al-tayyibah*), and reciting the chapter “Yasin”; (6) no recitation of the chapter “Taha” during the wash of the dead; and (7) read invocation (*Du’ā*) for a meal after having the meal without lifting hands.

items were directed to the unislamic practices of some Chinese Sufi sects, which touched the “red line” of their leaders, hence, the reform activities of Ma Wan-fu incurred furious reactions and relentless attacks from especially the leaders of those sects. Ma Wan-fu himself was landed in jail, cost him so dearly that nearly lost his life. His reform was of course effectively interrupted, almost stopped. Very fortunately, he was saved by Ma Lin 马麟 (1876-1945), the warlord and then the defense guardian of Ningxia and Qinghai, later actual governor of Qinghai province, who provided protection to Ma Wan-fu and his reform activities. Thereby, the reform movement revived, and thenceforth swiftly spread to the whole province and nearby provinces like Gansu, Ningxia, the whole northwest region, and later even the whole nation.

In fact, Ma Wan-fu did not oppose the tenet of true Sufism, nevertheless, he believed that some unislamic practices intermingled with Chinese Sufi practices. He wanted to cleanse those unlawful elements. While *imāms* usually quote the phrase “إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ”, meaning ‘all believers are brothers,’ (Q. 49:10), expecting the unity of all Muslims under one banner, Ma Wan-fu gives the word “brother” a more specific meaning, denoting that all Muslims are equal, none override other fellow Muslims, as some Sufi leaders virtually do.

Ma Wan-fu’s reform proposition and the ideal of “following the Qur’ān and Sunnah and abolishing unlawful customs” soon received positive response from some portion of Chinese Muslim populace, especially some Muslim *ulama’* like Wang Jing-zhai 王静斋 (1870 ~ 1949) who strongly supported the reform ideas. By this support, the reform movement soon spread to all provinces across the country, eventually putting *Ikhwān* sect on equal foot with *Gedīm* sect, the oldest Chinese Islamic sect. The reform movement finally triumphed and spread nationwide, yet with some aspects varied in different places. But the principal ideas are the same: to cleanse Islam from unislamic practices based on the teaching of the Qur’Ēn and Hadith.

4. The Relationship Between the *Ikhwān* and the *Wahhābī* Movement

In the light of above discussion, one can hardly fail to see some significant parallels between the proclaimed ideals of *Ikhwān* sect and that of *Wahhābī* movement in Saudi Arabia. These parallels led some researchers to advocate that the former’s reform ideals are directly derived (or borrowed) from the latter. This assertion is, however, untenable. In support of this claim we provide the proof as follows.

4.1. From a Historical Perspective

To clarify the relationship between the two movements, it is necessary to briefly review the history of sectarianism in Islam. Those who are familiar with the early Islamic history know that the earliest formidable theological sects were Sunni

(Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah), Shī’a (al-Shī’ah), Mu-Ṣṭazilāh and other lesser powerful sects. The famous four *madhhabs* (schools of laws) of Islam, Hanafi, Mālikī, Shāfi’ī, and Ḥanbalī all belong to Sunnī sect. Their views in Islamic theology are in principle unanimous but varied in jurisprudence. Those schools are named after their founders: Abu Ḥanifa al-Nu’mān (d. 767), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 795), Muḥammad Idris al-Shāfi’ī (d. 820), and Ahmad ibn Hanbalī (d. 855). Hanafi and Shāfi’ī school are most influential while the other two, Maliki and Hanbal schools are at lesser degree. [14]

In the 9th-10th centuries, two Muslim theologians emerged among Sunnī Muslims, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 936) in Iraq and Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944) in Central Asia. The theological theories proposed by them were later formed Ash‘arīsm and Maturidism theologies. Ḥanafī school adherents mostly attach to the Māturīdīsm theology while Mālikī and Shāfi’ī schools’ adherents mostly attach to the Ash‘arīsm theology. [14] A portion of Ḥambalī school adherents embrace the doctrine of the Ash‘arīsm, while the rest of them adhere to a new theological school called al-Athariyyah or Ahl al-Ḥadīth (textualism) by themselves, and al-Ḥanābilah by other school members.

There was no serious antagonism between Ash‘arīsm and Maturidism, but these two with al-Ḥanābilah, because they (the former two and the latter) relegate each other as non Ahl-Sunnah based on some hairsplitting theological arguments.

Chinese Muslims exclusively, apart from a very small portion of them who adhere to Shī’a theology, belong to Sunnī sect, Maturidism in theology, and Ḥanafī school in jurisprudence. Ma Wan-fu did neither criticize Ḥanafī jurisprudence nor deny al-Māturīdī doctrine but opposed to some heretical practices existing in the religious life of Chinese Muslims of the time. He claimed that, when he returned to China from the pilgrimage, he brought back from Mecca the “Orthodox” belief, that orthodox was “Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’a”, not particularly Wahabism.

As for the designation “*Ikhwān*”, Gao Wen-yuan 高文远 (1911~2010) made the following explanation in his book mentioned above, that, “*Ikhwān* in Arabic means ‘brother’, a word mentioned in the Qur’ānic verse ‘all believers are brothers,’ (Q. 49:10) implying that all believers in Islam, regardless of race, color, nationality, and region, are as brothers and sisters, which is almost a mantra casually said by any Middle East Arab to any Muslim from elsewhere, in the sense that all Muslims are servant to Allah, the followers of one prophet, Muhammad, they all are one family: the very foundation to Chinese *Ikhwān* sect advocated by Ma Wan-fu. All Muslims are equal in spirit and status, no distinction of nobility and inferiority, master and slave, wealthy and poor. This assertion is diametrically opposed to the actual practices of some Sufi sects. Less wonder that his reform was severely counteracted by those Sufi sects, especially of their sheikhs (or *murshid* in some sects), who extracted, sometimes forcefully, levies as well as alms from their adherents; stood aloof

over them and lived a much better life than them. Obviously, Ma Wan-fu and his *Ikhwan* are not in the same line with those *Sūfī* sheikhs and their sects.” [10]

Wahhābīs however vary. As mentioned earlier, that the founder of the *Wahhābī* movement, Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, was a scholar of the Hambalī school, which gives more importance to *al-naql* (text), while less to *al-‘aql* (reason), more to *al-riwāyah* (narration), while less to *al-dirāyah* (cognition). Furthermore, *Wahhābīs*, as Hambali successors, went further, they adhered to the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth literally, opposed commentaries (*al-ta’wīl*), personal opinions (*al-ra’y*) and analogies (*al-qiyās*): propositions similar to that of the textualism in the history of Islamic theology, represented by Daud bin Ali al-Zāhiriyya (d. 883) and Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhiri (d. 1064); who both casted doubt to rational judgment on theological creed, denied the role of reason, and opposed Ash‘arīsm and Māturīdīsm schools who used the reasoning intellect as the basis for judgment. Influenced by Ibn Taymiyya, who strongly advocated the “Salafism”, *Wahhabi* adherents called themselves “*Salafīyah*” (the followers of three earliest Muslim generations). “*Wahābī*” or “*Wahhabiyyah*” is an “exonym” imposed on them by their opponents.

4.2. From the Standpoint of *Ikhwan*’s Theological Position Against Ibn Taymiyya and the *Wahhābī* Movement

Because of their different historical traditions and school affiliations, the Chinese *Ikhwān* sect and the Chinese *Salafi* which split from the *Ikhwān* sect hold diametrically different positions towards Ibn Taymiyya and the *Wahhābī* movement. Derived from the *Wahhābī* movement, the most followers of the Chinese *Salafi* are skeptical, even opposing to the four Sunnī schools of jurisprudence and two major doctrinal schools (Ash‘arīsm and Māturīdīsm), asserting themselves as “*Lāmadhhabīyyah*” (no school-ism). Criticizing many preeminent scholars, they revere only Ibn Taymiyya as their supreme religious and academic authority, or as they labelled him *Sheikh al-Islām* (the scholar of Islam), taking his writings as the second source after the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, quoting therefrom for questioning others “orthodoxy”. On the other hand, Chinese *Salafi*, as a part of the world *Salafi*, also revere highly Ibn Taymiyya and his thought, exactly as their Saudi masters did and doing. They praise Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb and revere his thought, taking his works as classics.

The *Ikhwān* recognizes as orthodox the four major schools of jurisprudence, including the Hambalī school, and the two major doctrinal schools. They praise the scholars of all schools and their works, instead of rejecting or criticizing them due to their different views. Nevertheless, they reject Ibn Taymiyya and his writings, with a view that he had made many “heretical” doctrinal claims and “erroneous” jurisprudential views. Some extreme *Ikhwan* imams label Ibn Taymiyya as a “heretic”, “*Salafi*” as “*Wahhābī*”, and “*Wahhābī*” as a “heretical” faction, treating them as followers of “wrong way”.

Those extremists believe that the two holy places (Mecca and Medina) are under control of “*Wahhābī*”, who are *bid‘a* (innovation) practitioners, whose prayers are invalid and unaccepted, therefore, their prayers (*al-salat*) should not be followed. Whereas the moderate *Ikhwān* imams acknowledge that Ibn Taymiyya was a great scholar, meanwhile, considering him as a controversial historical figure, and his writings as such. This is truly in sharp contrast with that Chinese *Salafi*.

4.3. On the Plane of Time

Mecca and Medina are two holiest cities of Islam, over them who hold political sways will have the stronger say in the affairs of the Muslim World. The Saudis took the control over Mecca in 1803~1804, gained independence from Ottoman Empire in 1811, but soon, after seven years, was overthrown. By 1843, they established sovereignty only in the Najd region in the eastern Arabia peninsula but lost again in 1892. As mentioned earlier, Ma Wan-fu’s pilgrimage and stay therein for study was between 1886 and 1892. By that time, Mecca and Medina were not yet controlled by *Wahhābīs* but still administered by Awn Rafiq Pasha (d. 1905), the Emir and Sharif of Macca appointed by the Ottoman authority. The Ottomans were virtually more tolerant of other religions existing in its territory; they, however, could not tolerate the *Wahhābīs* who were undermining their sovereignty. Moreover, the Ḥussein family, [2] who virtually administered Mecca at the time, would not allow the *Wahhābīs* to use Mecca as a base for spreading their ideas.

Ten years later, 1902, when the Saudis captured Riyāḍ and regained control over the Najd region, Mecca and Medina were still under the control of the Ottomans, administered by the Hussein family. About 1924~1925, the Saudis occupied two holy places. Seven years later, in 1932, they gained independence, named it as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 1910, Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Saudi (1880-1953) founded the *Ikhwān* group, a radical group nothing in common with Chinese *Ikhwan*, in the Najd region, the center of their power. This implies that, eighteen years after Ma Wan-fu’s leave of Mecca, the Saudis began to promote *Wahhābī* ideas in the Najd regionwide, when Mecca was still under the jurisdiction of the Ottomans. As the custodian of the Holy Land, the Turks knew well what the spread of *Wahhābīsm* meant to them. They prohibited establishment of any schools teaching *Wahhābīs* ideologies in Mecca, the Holy Land, banned *Wahhābī* teachings, neither could anyone dare to openly disseminate *Wahhābī* ideas. Books containing *Wahhābī* ideas were likely to be burned. Under these socio-political circumstances, although Ma Wan-fu possibly had heard of the *Wahhābī* movement and his teachings but not necessarily had accepted their doctrinal ideas. [1, 2]

In 1936, forty-eight years after Ma Wan-fu’s return to China and four years after the founding of the Saudi state, when Ma De-bao 马得保 (1867~1977) and other Chinese

Ikhwan imams performed their pilgrimage, then only that they found the “Salafism” was overtly propagated by the *Wahhābīs* as the authoritative doctrine in the Islamic holy places. Ma and some of his retinues accepted the Wahhābīsm, and upon returning, took with them some works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Gayyim al-Jauzi (d. 1350), and Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb; soon afterwards, they started propagating Salafism in China.

4.4. About the Books Brought with Them by Ma Wan-fu and His Advocates

Ma Tong mentioned that when Ma Wan-fu returned home, he brought with him *Kashf al-Shubhat* (Removal of the Doubts) by Ibn Abd al-Wahhābī and *Ruh al-Maʿānī* (The Soul of Meaning)¹¹ by Mahammad al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī (d. 1854), and *ʿAjāʾib Muḥammad* by Muhammad, of them the last book, for time being, could not be located.

Kashf al-Shubuhāt is one of the highly regarded compositions by Abd al-Wahhab, and one of the most important reference books for Wahhābīsts or Salafis. Ālūsī (d. 1854), the author of *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* was a famous scholar of the Ḥanafī school, had nothing to do with Wahhābism. As for *ʿAjāʾib Muḥammad*, whose status is unclear to us. According to Ma Xiao-xu’s research entitled “Probing into Ma Wan-fu’s Religious Thought,” [15] Ma Wan-fu brought with him the books which included *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by Muhammad al-Bukhari (d. 870) and other books, which are not mentioned by Ma Tong in his writings of any sorts. Furthermore, due to the pressing tension between the *Wahhabis* and the Ottoman authority of that time, we can safely say that it was very difficult to find books promoting the ideas of Wahhābīsm in Mecca at that time.

Afterwards, according to Ma Tong in his *Sources of Chinese Sufi Sects*, in 1931, Ma Xiang-chen 马祥臣, Ma Wan-fu’s second son, and Ga Su-ge 尕苏哥 performed their pilgrimage, upon returning, they brought with them eight books: *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyyah* (the Way of Muhammad), *Inqāz al-Naʾimīn* (Awakening Sleepers), *Irshad* (Guidance), *al-Shāmīl* (Comprehensiveness), *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* (Collection of Juristic Judgement), *Majmūʿ al-Rasāʾil* (Collection of Letters), *Bidaya* (Beginning and Ending), [1] and one more unclear of its title. Ma Tong believes that “these books present the orthodoxy of the *Wahhābis* theology.” However, a cursory look at the content of those books, one can find that among them, beside *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* written by Ibn Taymiyya, the most reverent scholar of Wahabbism, the rest are written not by *Wahhabi* scholars. Even *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, the only book in the list written by Ibn Taymiyya, was most probably in handwritten form, because its publication was virtually impossible due to political circumstances. To our knowledge, the first publication of *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* by Ibn Taymiyya was in 1977. The other

five books listed above all were written by Ḥanafī scholars, least to do with Wahhābīsm. Conversely, some of them, e.g. *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyyah*, *Irshad* among others, are forthrightly rejected by the Salafi scholars.

4.5. The Sourcebooks Used by Ma Wan-fu and His Advocates

Ma Tong mentioned that Ma Wan-fu and some *Ikhwan imāms* “selected eight classics, including *Ihyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, *Tafsīr al-Baiḍāwī*, *Irshād*, *Kalām*, and *Fiqh*, from which they extracted and compiled a sutra titled *Bukhari Zand*, in which they systematically presented the ideas of the *Ikhwān*” [1]. In respect to the *fiqh* book brought back by Ma Wan-fu, some scholars believe that it is *Kitab al-Mabṣūṭ* written by Imām al-Sarkhaṣī (d. 1097), one of the famous scholars of the Ḥanafī school. The author of *Ihyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* is Imam al-Ghazzali (1058~1111), and that of *Tafsīr al-Baiḍāwī* is Abdullāh bin Umar al-Baiḍāwī (died 1291), both follow the Ashʿarī school in theology and the Shāfiʿī school in jurisprudence. The author of *Irshād* is a Turkish scholar of modern time named Haj Muhammad Amīn Afandī (whose life unknown). *Kalām* book might be “*al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyyah*” written by Umar Nasafī (1068~1142), which is one of the famous classics of Māturīdī school of theology. As for the *Mabṣūṭ*, as mentioned above, it is a representative work of Sarkhaṣī, a Ḥanafī jurist. From the foregoing, we may conclude that these books have nothing to do with *Wahhābis*, none of them is a reference for *Wahhābīs*. Conversely, most of these books, especially *Kalam* book, are criticized and rejected by *Wahhābīs*.

In addition, Ma Tong said that the “Ten Prohibitions of Guoyuan” formulated by Ma Wan-fu and his advocates were based on the ten “*bidʿa*” (innovations) from *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyyah* (the Way of Prophet Muhammad) by al-Bar Kalī (d. 1573), as an important source for forming *Ikhwān*’s theological theory. Al-Bar Kalī was one of the Ḥanafī scholars, died in 1573. His book afore mentioned is one of the textbooks accepted and taught by the *imams* of all sects in China except *Salafī*. In it the author discusses ten “*bidʿa*”, whose content is roughly the same as in the “Ten Prohibitions of Guoyuan”.

4.6. On the Plane of the Proclaimed Reform Proposition

The *Wahhābī* movement in Arabian Peninsula and the *Ikhwan* sect in China both belonged to the reformation movement. Both similarities and differences are found in their reform propositions. On the former, the similarities, we find that both advocate earnest attachment to the teachings of the Qurʾān and Sunnah, sincere performance of prayers, and criticism of extreme Sufism; both forbid “nocturnal religious activity” (inviting *imāms* and their students to people’s house in Rajab month, to read the Qurʾānic chapter “Tawbah” and

¹¹ The complete title: *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm wa al-Sabʿ al-Mathānī* (The Soul of Meaning in the Exegesis of the Great Qurʾān and the Repeated Seven), by al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī (1802-1854).

istighfār for the forgiveness of their sins, or for the dead person); forbid wear of white clothes in a funeral, and celebration of parents death days. On the later, the major differences, we find that Chinese *Ikhwān* advocates that a Muslim man should put on a turban (*Tastār* in Farsi) while *Salafī* advocates that he should wear a headscarf as the people in the Persian do; *Ikhwān* allows followers to whisper the their *niyyah* (intention) when starting their prayer, encourages those who had committed sins to atone their sins with money (*al-fida*), allows recitation of the Qur'anic verses when burying the dead in the cemetery; while *Salafī* allow not, conversely, they deliberately oppose those practices. Furthermore, some doctrinal and didactic tenets brought forth by *Salafī*, such as the theory of three articles of Islamic faith, increase and decrease of one's *imān*, three-time of raising hands during prayer, and repeat the recitation of “al-Fātiḥah” (opening chapter) after *imam*'s reciting, and shouting “amīn” afterwards, etc., are also not accepted by *Ikhwān*. [7]

The gravest cleavage between the two reform movements is that the *Wahhābī* movement is essentially political while the Chinese *Ikhwan* is religious. The *Wahhabis* called on Arab Muslims to unite against the Ottomans who are also Muslims, thus it was an expression of nationalism and even tribalism based on the ideas of ethnicity or tribal independence. They unequivocally acclaimed that only Arabs could shoulder the mission of restoring the purity of Islam, declared “jihad” (holy war) against the Ottomans for the unity of the Arabian Peninsula and national independence, and issued the ruling of the country with the theology of the Ḥambalī school. All these motives reflect the political and military nature of *Wahhabi* movement; in sharp contrast with Chinese *Ikhwan* movement who does not involve any political and military issues, nor did they even attempt the “jihad”.

As said, one may assume that if Ma Tong's suggestion of that Chinese *Ikhwān*'s ideas and thoughts were derived from *Wahhābī* theology is true, there must not be so many blatant dissimilarities between them. What in common for them is that both movements started in the same epoch, and both adhered to the Sunnī school. Besides these, one hardly can draw a conclusion that one is the source, and the other is its derivative.

5. Significance of This Clarification of the Relationship Between the Two Reform Movements

Clarification of the relationship between the Chinese *Ikhwān* and the *Wahhābī* movement bears the values of academic credibility and sociopolitical security.

First, the idea of the derivation of *Ikhwān*'s ideas from *Wahhābī*'s does not comply with the true facts. There are, as mentioned, not only many blatant dissimilarities in ideologies between the Chinese *Ikhwān* and the *Wahhābī-Salafī*, but also many serious contradictions on the plane of communal life,

which have earnestly taken place in some localities, led to a series of serious family and social problems. Therefore, the clarification of the relationship between the two movements is of tantamount importance.

Second, although the *Wahhābī* movement was also a religious reform movement, it nevertheless directly involved the struggle for sovereignty over the Arabian Peninsula, especially of the two holy cities, against the Ottomans. Soon after establishment of Saudi Arabia, *Wahhāb*'s reform ideas were elevated to the level of Kingdom's national ideologies with strong political implications. Soon upon the establishment of the kingdom it already started the open propagation of ideologies worldwide. Funded by Saudi money and strongly supported by Saudi authority, the *Salafī* adherents soon emerged in most part of the Muslim world, even Muslim minority countries like China, wherein all sociopolitical movement were under scrutiny of Chinese authority, who would suspect of Chinese *Ikhwan*'s tendency in political quest, which is completely a whimsical matter. If the relationship between the *Ikhwān* sect and the *Wahhābī* movement is not clarified, it would lead to unnecessary tension between Chinese Muslims and Chinese authority. It is equally important to point out that although the Chinese *Salafī* is a part of the *Salafī* world, a fruit of the *Wahhābī* movement, its goal is “purification of people's faith” and “regulation of their behavior”, a purely religious intent which, it seems, has nothing to do with any political organizations in the Arab world. Any conflicts occurred between the Chinese Islamic sects in the early stages of their spreading was inevitable, but with passage of time, with the process of integration and adaptation, the Chinese *Salafī* has generally become much lenient than ever.

Moreover, this clarification is even more important in the Chinese political shift from “economic reform” to “ideological prevalence” in recent years. It looms especially large amid the recent Chinese political atmosphere. Still more important is its scholarly values in restoring the truth, correcting cognitive errors and avoiding misunderstanding and misjudgment based on imprudent assumption.

6. Conclusion

Chinese Muslims had always adhered to the Ḥanafī school in jurisprudence and the Māturīdī school in theology. Ma Wan-fu performed his pilgrimage and stayed there for five years, a solely proof for some scholars like Ma Tong and his followers who imprudently believe that Ma Wan-fu was influenced by the *Wahhābī* movement during his stay in Mecca, and upon his return to China, founded the *Ikhwān* sect, and propagated the *Wahhābī* ideologies. We might now, based on the above discussion, conclude that Ma Wan-fu's hearing of, learning from the *Wahhābī* movement for his *Ikhwan* movement was impossible. The reason is that Mecca and Medina at that time were still under the firm control of the Ottomans. On the one hand, *Wahhābīs*' activities were most probably clandestine; on the other, Ma Wan-fu's reform was aimed at

“purifying” Islam, not attempting to overthrow the Ḥanafī jurisprudence and Māturīdī theology, which had been prevailing in China for centuries. Not only the Chinese *Ikhwan* was not derived from *Salafī*, but, conversely, the *Ikhwān imams* fiercely criticized, and still criticizing, the religious ideas of the *Wahhābī* movement. Furthermore, the source-books for Chinese *Ikhwan* movement are mostly not *Wahhabi* books. Therefore, we can safely conclude that the Chinese *Ikhwān* sect is not derived from the *Wahhābī* movement in Arab Peninsula, nor is there “close relation” with Chinese *Salafī* either. To sum up, between the two reform movements there lies very serious epistemological and methodological differences. Thus, to bring or link them together, arguing for their derivation of one from the other is a baseless and unfounded scholarly presupposition.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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