Reconstructing Islam: Muslim Education and Literature in Ming-Qing China

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Abstract

During the sixteenth century when Islam was already established in China, Chinese Muslims began to critically examine their understanding of Islamic knowledge and how to transmit it to future generations. Traditional tutelage based on purely Arabic and Persian sources generally evaded a Muslim population that, for the most part, could no longer read the available rare Islamic texts. The subsequent reconstruction of Islamic knowledge and education emphasized the intersections between the Chinese and the Muslim communities' cultural and religious heritages. The new specialized educational system, "scripture hall education" (*jingtang jiaoyu*), utilized Chinese as the language of instruction and incorporated aspects of traditional Chinese literati education in collaboration with newly retrieved Islamic sources from the Muslim heartland.

The ensuing standardization and organization of curriculum and pedagogical techniques enabled peripatetic students to replicate this system throughout China. It also allowed the religious community's leaders to direct the discourse concerning Islam and disseminate a specific interpretation of religious knowledge. This is most clearly displayed through the *Han Kitab*, the canonized corpus of Chinese Islamic texts written, approximately, during

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1600-1750. This literature articulated Islamic principles through the lexicon of literary Chinese and replicated the ideology highlighted by the educational network. This paper analyzes why Islamic knowledge was lost and traces how the new educational system transformed the indigenous Islamic discourse, articulated through the Han Kitab literature, to reflect a distinctive *Chinese Muslim* interpretation of the faith.

Introduction

During the middle of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and into the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Muslims in China were beginning to embrace their heritage's Chinese characteristics. Following centuries of cultural and physical division between local inhabitants and Muslim settlers, Arabs, Persians, and Central Asians were slowly being assimilated. After generations of living in China and intermarrying with the native people, many of the original distinctions, such as language, had begun to wane. Due to their isolation from the Islamic heartland and the need to educate their fellow Chinese Muslims (hereinafter "Muslims") in Islamic doctrine, several Muslims began to incorporate tenets from traditional Chinese education into their promotion of Islamic knowledge.[1] As a result, some Muslim literati established the "scripture hall education" (*jingtang jiaoyu*) system, which featured an Islamic canon made up of Arabic, Persian, and Chinese works.[2] The *Han Kitab*, the collective name of this corpus of Chinese Islamic texts that is unique in the history of Islamic literature,[3] was produced by a group of self-identified Confucian Muslim scholars (*Huiru*).[4]

This is the first instance of Muslims writing major expositions in the language of a predominantly non-Muslim society.[5] The Chinese had already developed an illustrious philosophical and religious lexicon, and this influenced the character of these Islamic treatises. This collection of Islamic works allowed educated and intellectually oriented Muslims to grasp "the principles of the religion" (*usul al-din*) and the Islamic nature of God, the universe, and the soul.[6] These works are the first self-expression of how the Muslim literati understood themselves as *Muslims* and as *Chinese* in premodern China. Their linguistic skills allowed them to transform the traditional understanding of Islam into a compatible Chinese vision of morality, self-cultivation, and livelihood. While using the language of China's rich literary and philosophical traditions, they composed a profile of how to understand being Muslim and to realize this conception in all aspects of one's life.[7]

In devising a spiritual map, the *Han Kitab* authors (hereinafter "authors") were in dialogue with the literary traditions of both Islam and China. The Muslim community's religious leaders were navigating the rhetoric of Islamic and Chinese sources and reconstructing their meaning into a coherent and comprehensible *Chinese Muslim* interpretation. In other words, they were revealing how educated Muslims involved with the educational network discussed their perspective on, and relationship to, the cosmos. They showed Islam's compatibility with Chinese conceptions of morality; but, at the same time, asserted Islam's superiority over these philosophies. By traversing cultural and literary fissures, they began to negotiate this community's unique Chinese Muslim identity, which was at the interstitial space between two strong cultural influences.[8]

From the *Han Kitab* literature, one can determine this distinct Muslim community's character. This self-description was a mutual assertion of their Chinese and Islamic personalities. The Islamic educational network and the *Han Kitab* texts served as the community's vehicles to fashion its distinctive identity. These pedagogical techniques allowed its religious leaders to disseminate a specific interpretation of knowledge that connected all adherents and perpetuated their dual personality. The reciprocal relationship between the discourse (as fixed by canonizing the *Han Kitab*) and the method (developing an educational system) led to the creation of this community's simultaneous *Chinese* and *Islamic* identity.

This article outlines why Islamic knowledge was lost and traces how creating a new religious educational system enabled Islamic discourse to reflect a distinct Chinese Muslim interpretation of Islam and express the community's dual identity. It will also discuss how the authors described Islamic thought through a terminology heavily laden with previous meaning and interpretations. Examining the Islamic and Chinese concepts emphasized in their writings reveals how they saw themselves as both Chinese and Muslim and how they understood the roots and branches of their knowledge. Their use of a specific neo-Confucian lexicon to articulate Islamic teachings reveals their construction of a new Muslim discourse that reflected an identity of simultaneity.[9]

I employ Zvi Ben-Dor Benite's *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Chinese Muslims in Late Imperial China* to outline the community's social history and then attempt to further his work by addressing the content of this *dao* (path or way) and how it took shape. The themes dealt with in the *Han Kitab* literature reveal this community's values and are key to understanding how its members understood themselves. Ultimately, I will show the dialectical relationship of this community's identity and how its leaders nav-

igated the precarious seam between their dual heritages, as shown through the works of the *Han Kitab* canon.

The Historical Legacy of Muslims in China

The factors leading to the loss of Islamic knowledge and its reconstruction are directly related to the community's long-standing social, political, and cultural circumstances. To understand why Chinese became the language of instruction and why this engendered the scripture hall education system, it is necessary to outline the Muslims' history in China,[10] for this legacy has left indelible marks and has shaped the character of Muslim identity up until the present.[11] Further, our understanding of the Muslim-Chinese relationship throughout history will show why the contributions of the Muslim educational network and the *Han Kitab* literature are so unique and worthy of note.

The Muslim and Chinese cultural spheres remained largely separate until the middle of the Ming dynasty. Their relationship was not always amicable and was often marked by disengagement; later, it would be stained with the blood of continuous turmoil.[12] Two results of this passive relationship were the late translation and interpretation of Islamic texts in Chinese and the development of an official system to spread this knowledge. During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the Muslim elite evaded the social isolation of past generations and managed to combine these two cultural traditions and express both their Islamic and Chinese heritages equally.

The Tang Dynasty

Arab and Persian traders had been traveling to China long before the advent of Islam.[13] Although Hui legends assert that the first Muslims were summoned to China to save the empire by Taizong (626-49), the second Tang (618-907) emperor,[14] the earliest historical records provide evidence of a Muslim presence in China only in the eighth century.[15] They came mainly as traders, officials, or soldiers, and were first found in the port cities of China's southeast coast and later along the Silk Road.[16] These first Muslim visitors probably began arriving within the first generation of Muhammad's (d. 632) disciples.[17] They remained segregated from their Chinese neighbors and generally preserved their own languages, customs, religion, and ethnic identity:

> Muslims remained sojourners, obvious and clearly designated by state and society; they were granted a measure of legal and administrative autonomy within their carefully delineated settlements, but they were not supposed to mix with the local population.[18]

The Tang government prohibited foreigners from wearing Chinese clothing and marrying Chinese women. Initially, neither the Chinese nor the Muslims wanted to have much interaction with each other, and only collaborated for business or other official reasons. These Muslims were unmistakably *other* to the Chinese and were referred to as "foreign guests" (*fanke*).[19]

The Song Dynasty

During the Song dynasty (960-1278), Arab and Persian travelers began to settle in China and built permanent homes. Some married Chinese women and adopted Chinese dress, traditions, and language. However, most of them still lived in their "foreigners' quarters" (*fanfang*) and were generally not incorporated into the mainstream.[20] The Muslim community, which was small and concentrated in large commercial cities, followed the Shari`ah. The Chinese government also recognized it. Proselytization was minimal, and few Chinese converted.[21]

By the close of the Southern Song dynasty, Muslims had become a common feature of the social landscape in international port cities. But before the Mongols took control of China, few Muslims had become Chinese subjects and it seems that neither community wanted the Muslims to assimilate.[22] In fact, those Muslims who learned Chinese and stayed on in China were still regarded as foreigners.[23]

The Yuan Dynasty

The Mongol occupation of China (1278-1368) brought a vast number of Central Asian, Persian, and Arab Muslims to serve in the court and other official positions.[24] The Mongol conquest of Eurasia united various ethnic, religious, and cultural civilizations under a single administration. The Yuan administrative system, which ruled most of China, adopted a caste system and discriminated against the subordinate orders accordingly. In order, these consisted of the upper echelon (the Mongol oligarchy); Central Asian or non-Chinese people (predominantly Muslims); the northern Chinese, who had been under foreign control before; and the southern Chinese, who had never been ruled by an alien government.

This segregation enabled groups to retain their own culture, language, and religion. The new Muslim inhabitants refused to assimilate and learn Chinese. Yuan institutions, such as the National College for the Study of Muslim Languages, facilitated this disconnection and reinforced Muslim feelings of superiority under the Mongols.[25] The Chinese resented such attitudes, which created an intolerant atmosphere vis-à-vis cultural or religious

exchange. This inhibited each community's understanding of the other's traditional values.[26]

The Ming Dynasty

By the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Muslims had become a ubiquitous feature of the Chinese cultural landscape. However, they were often seen as the purveyors of Mongol oppression. During the dynasty's early years, there was a resurgence of Han pride and a restoration of Chinese culture. Ming rulers sponsored major foreign explorations and trade, but only allowed travel through official venues. Trading activities were limited, and all endeavors had to be conducted through the legitimate tributary system.[27] The Ming government also tried to eliminate all foreigners by decreeing assimilation. Muslims were required to assume Chinese names, but retained their original names within their own communities.[28]

The *Statutes of the Imperial Ming* reflect this policy: "Mongols and Central Asians may marry Chinese. They are not allowed to marry their own race."[29] The bitterness toward outsiders was expressed through these official attempts to show Chinese superiority over their "barbarian" (*yi*) neighbors.[30] As a result, numerous individuals of foreign descent began to assimilate. At this time, Muslim acculturation was predominantly focused on material culture and language. This process was hastened by Ming policies of isolating minority populations from their native lands. In southeast China in particular, Muslim communities found themselves increasingly isolated because of Ming policies and their Chinese neighbors' xenophobia.[31]

Ming repression motivated more Muslims to marry Chinese women. Their local-born Muslim children adopted Chinese names, became articulate in Chinese, and appeared outwardly indistinguishable from the Han residents.[32] After several generations, Islamic knowledge began to diminish, many religious leaders could no longer provide profound interpretations of the holy books, and individuals could not perform hajj or study abroad. Many Muslims felt that the elements of their distinct Islamic identity were beginning to deteriorate.[33] Although ritual practice was maintained through generational transmission, a true understanding of Islamic teaching was lacking even among educated Muslims, because most Muslim families were being assimilated and educated in a traditional Chinese manner. These individuals became well versed in the Chinese classics, but could not read Islamic texts in Arabic or Persian.

These "native-born foreign" children played an important role in amalgamating the Islamic and Chinese cultures. While most foreign Muslims at the beginning of the Ming dynasty tried to preserve their Islamic character-

istics, their children began to take on many Chinese qualities. Muslims who had held prominent social and political status under the Yuan now had to adjust to the new Confucian system of the Ming. In addition, Islam's social influence was now restricted to the local level. This led the Muslim elite to raise their children in a traditional Islamic setting but also incorporate a traditional Chinese education so that they could attain noteworthy positions in the Ming administration.

After several generations, Islamic learning in Arabic and Persian was overshadowed by the Confucian education of the Chinese literati. By the middle of the Ming dynasty, apprehension began to grow over Islam's very survival in China. This led some members of the Muslim elite to search for a way to reverse this process. The new scripture hall educational system enabled this elite to adjust to its circumstances and preserve both Islamic knowledge and the community's Muslim identity.

Islamic Education in China

This new educational system allowed the Muslim elite to counter the harmful effects of acculturation and preserve aspects of their foreign heritage. On their own, Muslims used this educational system to create a distinctive identity that transcended the biased depictions of official Chinese narratives, enabled them to protect the boundaries of their community's identity, and helped them overcome the influences of external forces in forming their character. Establishing a system that disseminated a specific version of how Chinese Muslims should think and act allowed them to move beyond negative historical depictions and establish aspects of their character that they felt encompassed their distinct identity. This pedagogical method established the community's philosophical discourse and produced its members' dual self-understanding.

The *Han Kitab* literature is a direct result of the scripture hall education system and owes its genesis to the community's religious leaders. The religious mentality fostered in this system, which would eventually influence Muslim authors, embraced aspects of both heritages.

Hu Dengzhou and Scripture Hall Education

The life experiences of its founder, Hu Dengzhou (ca. 1522-97), reveal why he felt that China needed this "scripture hall education" system and why it acquired its dual personality.[34] Hu hailed from the city of Wei in Xianyang county, Shaanxi province. Early in his life, he studied the Confucian classics and dynastic histories but decided not to pursue a career as an exam-

ination candidate. He also received a traditional Islamic education in a local mosque, but became frustrated with his inability to penetrate the meaning of the Islamic classics. His elderly teacher's dialogical method lacked precision in grasping the difficult content of many texts, and this caused Hu to seek an education in the Muslim world. Traveling through Central Asia for several years, he eventually reached Makkah and stayed there for many years. He returned to China with a new understanding of Islam and, more importantly, books that authenticated this knowledge.[35] Prior to his return, "there was a shortage of books [and] learned men were few and far between and the transmission and interpretation [of the texts] were not clear."[36] Hu's homecoming occasioned a decisive shift in Islamic education in China.

Hu's pedagogical method introduced a new curriculum, a financial support system for schools (including room, board, and study materials), and the use of Chinese as a language of instruction.[37] This system was similar to madrassahs (religious schools) throughout Muslim communities, but deviated drastically from traditional Islamic schools, for "in addition to books in Arabic and Persian, Chinese Muslims made use of books written in Chinese (both Islamic and non-Islamic, including the Chinese classics and official histories). This trend grew more pronounced with time."[38] Hu's school also employed a Qur'anic primer (*haiting*, Arabic *khatm*) that contained two dozen or so passages, and an elementary Islamic textbook (*zaxue*, *Diverse Studies*) of prayers and Arabic and Persian passages on ablutions, faith, worship, fasting, marriage, funerals, and festivals. These teaching tools were rather basic, due to most of the students' limited command of Islamic languages, and often featured a Chinese phonetic transliteration system to represent the original orthography.[39]

Scripture Hall Curriculum

The curriculum for more advanced students also included Islamic law (*fiqh*), theology (*kalam*), and Sufi philosophy (*tasawwuf*).[40] The Islamic texts available to the Muslim intelligentsia were mainly by Persian authors. While Arabic was the language of the Qur'an and the majority of the Islamic classics, Persian was the primary vehicle for Islamic instruction from Persia eastward.[41] The available Arabic and Persian texts are recorded in the prefaces to two of Liu Zhi's major works from 1704 and 1710. The two lists contain sixty-six to sixty-eight distinct records, providing the title of each work (but not the original titles) in Chinese transliteration and translation.[42] Thus, it is difficult to identify the original texts. Many of the more prominent works were translated into Chinese. In order to acquire a wider audience and

greater prestige, authors would often claim that their original compositions stemmed from an Arabic or Persian original:

> Sometimes such originals are imaginary; but even when these actually exist … the alleged translation implies a total rewriting and remodeling in order to translate the philosophical notions and concepts of Sufism into an acceptable Chinese mode of thought. From this, an original literature has resulted, one unknown to Islamic specialists for want of being studied by Sinologists.[43]

Four texts have been identified as genuine translations of an original Islamic text. All four were written by Persian Sufis and have been held in high regard throughout the Muslim world. The first was *Mirsad al-`Ibad min al-Mabda' ila al-Ma`ad* (The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return), written by Kubrawi master Najm al-Din Razi (d. 654/1256).[44] This text clearly, systematically, and eloquently explains the nature of human beings, the journey to God, and the various stations and states one will experience while progressing toward perfection.[45] It avoids highly technical language and clarifies its message via the imagery of everyday language, and thus is exceedingly popular in the eastern Islamic lands.

The second one, *Maqsad-i Aqsa* (The Furthest Goal) by Kubrawi master `Aziz al-Din Nasafi (d. ca 700/1300),[46] provides a shorter, drier, and more systematic explanation of the relationship between God, the cosmos, and the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*).[47] The final two texts, *Ashi``at al-Lama`at* (The Rays of the Flashes) and *Lawa'ih* (Gleams), were written by the famous Naqshbandi scholar `Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-92).[48] The first one is a commentary on the Persian classic *Lama`at* (Flashes) by Fakhr al-Din Iraqi, a thirteenth-century Sufi of Ibn al-Arabi's school.[49] Jami's text includes Fakhr al-Din Iraqi's original work and explicates the metaphysics of divine love behind his mixed prose and poetry, often word by word.[50]

Many early authors relied heavily on these works when writing their interpretations of terminology and concepts. Among the advanced textbooks used, three were classified as part of the discipline of "learning to know God" (*ren zhu xue*), which covered *`aqidah* (declaration of faith), *usul al-din* (the principles of religion), and *usul al-tawhid* (the principles of God's unity). Two of these were Sufi classics, the *Ashi``at al-Lama`at* and the *Mirsad*, which were regarded as the foundation of *ren zhu xue*. The third work, Abu Hafs `Umar Najm al-Din al-Nasafi's (d. 537/1142)[51] *`Aqa'id* (Beliefs), was a concise and systematic summarization of the Islamic creed, the distillation of a hundred years of previous development.[52]

Zhao Can, who wrote *Genealogy of the Transmission and Lineage of Classical Learning,* labels Najm al-Din Razi's *Mirsad*, Jami's *Ashi``at al-Lama`at,* and `Aziz al-Din Nasafi's *Maqsad* as the three classics of "the principle learning of human nature and mandate."[53] Their widespread use by advanced students led to a certain interpretation of Islam that emphasized issues of belief, the nature of human existence, and knowledge of God.

Hu's new methods primarily sought to preserve this retrieved Islamic knowledge. To achieve this goal, he condoned the use of a non-Islamic language: "His most significant move was to emphasize the transmission and development of knowledge and learning, and not only the training of imams."[54] Prior to this educational system, imams (*ahongs*) were generally of Arab, Persian, or Central Asian decent. Transmitting Islamic knowledge through Chinese allowed the community to produce its own scholars and pass on the resulting knowledge.[55]

Hu's systematic program of study became the standard of Islamic education by the seventeenth century. The standardization and organization of the curriculum and teaching techniques made his system extremely successful and easy to replicate throughout China. In addition, its linguistic flexibility allowed many Muslims to help preserve Islamic knowledge, which resulted in an entirely new discourse and understanding of the faith.

Hu's career indicates that the Muslims' concerns were tangible and realistic. Muslims lived throughout China, but Islamic knowledge was missing. Hu's system incorporated aspects of traditional Chinese education along with his newly retrieved Islamic sources. The recovery of traditional Islamic knowledge (by acquiring texts) combined with the school's accessibility (using Chinese to teach) started a revival of Islamic learning. His disciples traveled from all over China to study in his school and then returned home to open their own schools. The web of connections within China began to grow, and Islamic education became a prestigious endeavor:

> The existence of an extensive, interregional, semi-formalized, and institutionally complex Chinese Muslim educational network demonstrates that Islam not only survived on Chinese soil but developed its own – distinctively Chinese Muslim – institutions, values, and ideals.[56]

Upon their return home, students would implement Chinese-language instruction, systematic methods, and uniform textual resources. These new methods accentuated the community's dual character, and systematizing the educational system and using the same texts established the criteria for Islamic education. As this network spread, it retained the features that had

made Hu's school successful. But as it moved eastward, it eventually began to acquire more innovations that emphasized its members' Chinese heritage. This transformation would reach full development far from Hu's original school and would establish the system's defining characteristics.

Creating an Educational Network

The scripture hall educational system was inaugurated in northwestern China, where Muslims lived in large communities and were often in contact with their Central Asian coreligionists. This environment made the reality of their declining understanding of Islamic knowledge extremely clear. Their regular interaction with other Muslims also led them to express the non-Chinese aspects of their character.

Although the educational network arose in this atmosphere, it was in the large cities of eastern China that it blossomed in numbers of teachers and students, as well as in the production of texts, and assumed its distinctive final character.[57] The urban context of the cosmopolitan cities of the Yangzi delta (Jiangnan) produced the scholars who would compose Islamic works with Chinese characteristics. These cities, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, Ningbo, Suzhou, and Nanjing, were large commercial and intellectual centers with a history of book collecting and printing, many high-ranking degree holders, and numerous affluent and educated Muslim residents.[58] Their Muslim communities blended into the surrounding urban fabric and utilized the educational network to unite their dispersed members.[59]

This education system relied on familial, political, philanthropic, and other types of relationships to unite those involved in their mission to preserve and spread Islamic knowledge. This objective was not sponsored by all Chinese Muslims; however, it was embraced by a variety of individuals, including some Han Chinese, all of whom contributed funds for producing Muslim scholarship:

> The Chinese Muslim educational network's constituency was tied together by various ties, including shared intellectual outlook, kinship, friendship, patronage and clientelism, geography, pedagogy, master-disciple relations, and collegiality.[60]

Nanjing, eventually one of the most eminent centers for Islamic education, housed Wang Daiyu (the first *Han Kitab* author) as well as Liu Zhi (its most prolific author). Here, alongside Islamic education, many teachers and students studied the Confucian classics and often received official titles.[61] The rich cultural life and scholarly community that existed in the large

cities of the Jiangnan region allowed this network to blossom; however, it also propelled its members to incorporate their own Chinese self-perception into their self-expression.[62] The promotion of education and scholarly production provided this community with a way to understand its status as Muslim and Chinese. These Muslims shaped their identity as a Chinese elite via scholarship, through "the foundation and dissemination of a specifically Chinese form of Islamic knowledge, one that claimed to be compatible with – indeed, a subset of – Confucian knowledge and learning."[63] Since they used traditional Chinese structures, education, and scholarship for maintaining literati status, these Muslims understood themselves as participating in a larger intellectual project and being fully part of Chinese elite culture.

As the educational network grew and developed, Muslim identity gradually began to crystallize. As the system gained prominence, Muslims began to view it as the authoritative possessor of Islamic knowledge. And, as time progressed, this sytem produced more religious scholars and professionals who then launched their own schools. As an authoritative source of Islamic doctrine, the networks' leaders shaped the community's character through their interpretation of Islam.

Forming a self-manifested subject begins with a dialogue about the self between an individual and professionals. In this case, students would decipher the nature of the world from a *Chinese Muslim* viewpoint, in collaboration with the educational system's religious scholars, and internalize their teachers' stylized and distinct discourse to understand the cosmos. The identity of educated Muslims took on a dual character because the system's elite highlighted the similarities between Islam and traditional Chinese values, and the students duplicated this interpretation and upheld this dual identity. The teachers' interpretation of what it meant to be an educated Muslim reconstructed how the students understood themselves. The instructors, thereby, controlled the Muslims by enumerating the principles that made one a member of this community. Ultimately:

> Because Chinese Islam developed scholarly institutions and a literary tradition, it was able to fuel a social-intellectual-cultural movement among the more Sinicized Muslims of eastern and central China. This movement, in turn, was capable of producing outstanding individuals who could promote their accommodative vision of Islam with ever-increasing sophistication, systematization and eloquence.[64]

The *Han Kitab* authors were the most visible of these exceptional figures. Their work was the direct expression of this educational system and

represented the Muslim elite's collective identity by enunciating the discourse of Chinese Islam.

The *Han Kitab* Literature

The most effective technique for establishing and disseminating this dual identity was also its most memorable. The *Han Kitab* literature of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties embraced the Muslim educational system's ideology and proclaimed its distinctive explanation of Islamic doctrine via the language of classical Chinese literature. During this period (c. 1630-1750), a canon of literature emerged. Over a hundred works were published, and many went through several editions and reprintings.[65] These works were written independently and later grouped together conceptually by scholars in the educational network. However, all of them had a direct association with the scripture hall educational system and its teachers.

Among the greatest scholars who were repeatedly referred to in later works were Wang Daiyu (c. 1590-1658), Ma Zhu (c. 1640-1709), and Liu Zhi (c. 1670-1724): "These key scholars and their works symbolize renaissance periods for Chinese Islam."[66] They wrote in Chinese about concepts from Arabic and Persian sources to expound the core of Islamic knowledge to a Chinese audience. Using mainly neo-Confucian (but also Buddhist and Daoist) terminology, they attempted to transmit traditional interpretations of the Islamic faith and its compatibility with Chinese principles while simultaneously asserting Islam's superiority. This literary innovation could only occur "where Chinese learning among Muslims had progressed to the point that literati who knew both Arabic and Chinese could contemplate translating texts and ideas from one idiom into the other."[67]

The *Han Kitab's* content is diverse: translations of Arabic and Persian works, dictionaries, grammatical works, commentaries on Islamic texts, and original philosophical works.[68] Contrary to some commentators' claims, most of these texts were not apologetic treatises addressed toward the non-Muslim literati.[69] Neither were they basic expositions on Islam's tenets for the general Muslim audience. Rather, they were written in the sophisticated language of the Chinese literary tradition for the educational system's intellectually advanced Muslim adepts. Several texts also sought to inform the Han elite about Islam. But this was a secondary aspect of their function.

Additionally, this body of Sino-Islamic texts was "not a work of proselytism, but was primarily aimed at educating in their own religion the Muslim community which already existed."[70] Written mainly to explain how to understand Islamic teachings, they did not focus on how to put these into practice:

> Their primary concern is not to explain Shari`ah or jurisprudence, nor the contents of the Koran and the Hadith in any direct way. Rather, the writings elaborate on the nature of the Islamic perception of God, the universe, and the soul.[71]

For a community that was largely unable to read and interpret its basic religious texts, the *Han Kitab* enabled its members to become familiar with their faith: "In short, the early Chinese texts were written to explain to Muslims why their tradition looks at the world the way it does."[72] But implied by the genre's half-Chinese, half-Arabic name (*Han Kitab*), the contents articulate their Islamic faith through the lexicon of classical Chinese literature, thus underlining its authors' dual Chinese and Muslim identities.

The Authors

The *Han Kitab* authors all belonged to the *Gedimu* school of Islam,[73] the oldest and most orthodox form of Islam in China. Its members are usually understood as upholding the early Muslim settlers' original traditions (*Gedimu* is derived from the Arabic word *al-qadim* [the ancient].). Although they practice traditional Sunni, Hanafi Islam,[74] Aubin notes that "this theology nevertheless evolves from one author to another over the course of two succeeding centuries whilst remaining, so far as it seems, not rooted in any particular time and with no sectarian links."[75]

Most of the network's participants were descendants of Muslim immigrants from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia who had come to China during the Mongols' rule. Over the generations, they attained enough wealth and social position to allow their descendents' children to concentrate on education, both in Chinese academies and local mosques. As the newly trained scholar-teachers moved east and set up schools, the Muslim elite incorporated the dual aspects of its identity and embraced the Chinese means to express its community's Muslim character:

> The gentry setting of the east provided what was lacking in the west: a readymade, highly educated Muslim constituency that has kept its Muslim identity but needed a new content for it. This content was to be produced in the form of Chinese texts, written and taught in a framework that valued scholarship and learning.[76]

This body of literature grew out of this setting. Even though the authors were scattered in various centers of Islamic learning, they were in continuous dialogue with one another. These texts were produced by a conscious intellectual collaboration between several scholars and their students within the

scripture hall educational network. Authors knew each other and were colleagues, related, or had a master-disciple relationship. Therefore, no author's work was the product of isolated innovation: "Just like other Chinese intellectuals, *Han Kitab* authors spoke not as individuals but as members of an established and recognizable intellectual community."[77]

Each author would circulate his work to other scholars for comments or critique and usually received a short preface applauding the volume in return. Sometimes they would even obtain forwards from officials to whom their work had been presented. The texts also arose out of a community that valued Islamic knowledge and supported its preservation. The *Han Kitab* authors "remained close – literally and intellectually – to one another and worked in concert. They were, however, also supported by and in contact with many other individuals – publishers, financial backers, philanthropists, editors, students, and countless others."[78] This larger community, both Muslim and non-Muslim, was directly responsible for enabling these authors to distribute their writings within the community. This creative reciprocal relationship between writer and audience, as well as its creation of texts, would not have been possible without a group of affluent and interested supporters who encouraged and assisted these authors financially.

The Role

The educational system was the immediate stimulus for the *Han Kitab*, and the resulting mutual relationship was a reciprocal reaffirmation of the importance of both aspects of the Muslim self-identity. The educational system was the driving force behind the Chinese Islamic canon, which was the direct product of the pedagogical techniques utilized by Hu Dengzhou and his disciples. Employing classical Chinese texts and Chinese as the language of instruction reminded the students of their Chinese heritage, whereas the use of Arab and Persian sources as the basis of knowledge emphasized the community's Islamic roots. In the *Han Kitab* texts, the Muslim literati clearly defined their dual identity by explaining why their tradition looks at the world the way it does via the Chinese language and symbolism. In their attempt to delineate the Islamic worldview, the authors illustrated how *Chinese Muslims* thought about the world.

As the educational network developed, these texts became an integral part of the curriculum and inspired others to employ traditional Chinese understandings of the cosmos to explain Islam. A specifically Muslim literati identity was being fashioned within scripture hall education, for "the curriculum in the various schools of the network was fairly uniform, and its

members, however separated in distance, were interconnected in myriad ways and were in constant intellectual dialogue with one another."[79] The consistency of materials used contributed to crystallizing the discourse on self-understanding.

The Muslim literati's correlation between method, educational network, and discourse (i.e., the *Han Kitab*) enabled Muslims to understand themselves and their place in the world. This discourse's construction, internalization, and reiteration also allowed them to represent their own community in their own terms. Its deliberate formation and dissemination established an effective methodology by which Muslims directed and articulated their religious and cultural identities. The authors were simultaneously following the model of a learned Muslim scholar set forth by the scripture hall education system and innovatively developing a distinct Muslim literati identity by creating Sino-Islamic treatises.

Religious beliefs direct and standardize the self, but in this case, cultural influences also directed how the community wanted to be perceived. Its elite members were part of late imperial China's larger elite culture and expressed this to the larger community with which they interacted: "The network consisted of teachers, translators, authors, grammarians, and students; its clientele included publishers, editors, patrons, and benefactors."[80] All of these individuals, and the rest of Chinese society, perceived this Muslim community through its writings and conduct. The Muslim literati, who viewed themselves as equally Chinese and Muslim, also represented their tradition, composed of the *Han Kitab* canon, as congruent with Chinese culture. They did this not to substantiate their beliefs apologetically for the greater Chinese society, but because they understood themselves as embodying elements of China's cultural legacy. This canon, a skillful blending of Islamic doctrine with traditional Chinese conceptions of morality expressed in neo-Confucian terminology and concepts, instilled, in cooperation with the educational system, this sense of a dual identity and developed the discourse to express this identity.

Neo-Confucianism and Islam

The authors employed obvious neo-Confucian terms and themes to explain Islam, convey the two systems' mutual compatibility, and produce a vision of their faith comprehensible to their Muslim and non-Muslim fellow literati. The use of neo-Confucian ideas grew more pronounced over time and was a distinctive feature of Liu Zhi, the foremost *Han Kitab* author. Leslie notes: "Almost all of the Islamic writings in Chinese are imbued with

Confucianism, quoting the Sage rulers Yao and Shun, Confucius and Mencius."[81] The explicit reference to Confucian ideas was a deliberate attempt to bridge the perceived gap between the two traditions and make a place for the Muslims' tradition in the Chinese philosophical landscape. Painting Islam as the principal *dao* (path) among many helped to situate Islam within a Chinese perspective without forfeiting any of its essential principles. To do this, the authors endorsed

> …a literary corpus that defied conventions by merging Islamic beliefs with Confucian concepts and terminology. Yet they nevertheless made explicit and frequent reference to the fact that they were transmitters of a Teaching (Jiao) and a Way (Dao) as ancient as humankind itself.[82]

The authority of Islam, despite its ancient foreign roots, was corroborated for the Muslims by the barbarian origins of the sage ruler Shun.[83] In their view, one's sagacity did not depend upon family background or locality, and depicting Muhammad as a sage was central to the casting of Islam's Chinese characteristics.

Whether in Makkah or Nanjing, Muslims need to follow the model of righteous exemplars to reach their goal. Remarkably, Islam accepts that past individuals from various traditions and geographical areas might express its central message and doctrine: "We have sent no messenger save with the tongue of his people" (Qur'an 14:4). These authors saw that such Chinese representatives of virtue as Confucius did not contradict the Islamic view of God or morality, and so promoted to their Chinese adherents the "Islamic" actions of such men. In their conception, China's sages were the prophetic archetypes for their people. By using the Chinese philosophers' concepts and imagery to express Islam, the *Han Kitab* authors successfully coupled the familiar Chinese systems of thought with the obligatory spiritual path of Islam by portraying Muhammad as a sage and Islam as his *dao*.

Both traditions manifest a shared appreciation of the sages' importance and the necessity of following their example by cultivating the self. Living harmoniously with the world is impossible without the guidance of those who have traveled the path correctly. From an Islamic perspective, this deals with the second principle of faith: prophecy. God's message was revealed to Muhammad, who abided by His principles to exemplify human perfection: "Muhammad is His messenger." In China, the character of the ancient sages and worthies, as well as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, embodies the nature of the perfect human being:

> In the Chinese Islamic texts, it is completely clear that the ulama saw "learning how to be a human" as the fundamental purpose of all Islamic teachings. When the Prophet said, "Seek knowledge, even unto China," he meant knowledge of how to be human, of how to live up to the models established by the perfect human beings of the past.[84]

Without such examples, human perfection would be beyond reach.

Associating Muhammad with the ancient Chinese sages was one of the authors' most important techniques to articulate their self-understanding as Muslims and represent their community within the literati culture of late imperial China. Uniting their scholarly pursuits with the greater literati tradition allowed them to validate the foundation of their knowledge and make it comprehensible to educated Muslims: "Specifically, Islam becomes a part of the distinct portion of Chinese thought produced, preserved, and disseminated by Chinese Muslim scholars – the Dao of Islam – a constituent of the greater dao comprising all scholarly knowledge."[85] Their work delineated how Muhammad was understood as a sage by portraying him as a divulger of knowledge and a model of righteous conduct. This interpretation "made Muhammad a part of Chinese tradition and rendered him a culturally intelligible figure in the interpretive categories of Han society."[86]

The significance of sages as models of upright conduct was a fundamental characteristic of the Confucian worldview. In China, the character of the ancient sages and worthies embodied the ideal of the perfect human being and thus was an appropriate topic of investigation.[87] Additionally,

> … the depiction of Muhammad as a sage or righteous ruler rendered him not merely an acceptable object of study but a necessary one. Islam thus became the study of the "Dao of Muhammad," one component of the Dao with which all Chinese scholars were concerned and hence a legitimate component of late imperial Chinese intellectual discourse.[88]

Following Muhammad's example was akin to following the conduct of the ancient sage kings Yao and Shun, whose behavior and conduct became a standard for following generations.[89]

Muhammad upheld the traditional Chinese sages' values and principles, but was viewed by the Muslim literati as superior to Confucian sages due to his knowledge, which was derived from God. His conduct was based on his divine knowledge and, therefore, produced the correct path (*dao*) for the Muslim community to emulate. Understanding the "*dao* of Muhammad" as the most accurate among many paths situated the Muslims' worldview between their Islamic belief system and the Chinese literati tradition: "Islam,

then, was viewed not as a foreign knowledge 'compatible with' Chinese knowledge but as part of knowledge itself."[90]

The scholarly attempt to understand the way of the utmost sage, the "*dao* of Muhammad," meant asserting Islam's Chinese characteristics. Painting Muhammad as a sage and Islam's teachings as his *dao* were critical to negotiating the fissures between Islam and Chinese philosophical systems: "Through these two parallel themes, Chinese Muslim scholars made room for Muhammad and for their body of knowledge within Chinese literati culture."[91] Recognizing and articulating these features allowed the Muslim literati to determine their identity and establish the attributes constituting their conception of the Chinese Muslim self.

While these authors found neo-Confucian moral teachings compatible with Islamic piety, they felt that these same teachings were lacking in their conception of a supreme being. Thus, they made God's nature and manifestation explicit and detailed in order to convey the necessary relationship between God and His creatures. They often equated God with terminology from various Chinese schools and delineated His eminence in comparison to them. Their descriptions and explanations were always in dialogue with Chinese traditions, for these indigenous ideas are what shaped the Chinese-educated Muslims' minds. The implicit conversation was between the *Han Kitab* authors and the Confucian intellectual society within which they chose to locate themselves.[92] Explicating Islam through a Chinese idiom enabled the authors to reach their Chinese-speaking Muslim audience and convey Islam's underlying messages in a coherent scheme, which underlined this community's dual identity.

Creating a Discourse

The *Han Kitab* literature's structure, content, and goals created a distinct discourse that expressed the views of the scholarly Muslims involved in the scripture hall education network. This new discourse brought together aspects of this community's Chinese and Islamic qualities, for these authors' ultimate goal was "to make Islam comprehensible, moral, and effective within a Chinese political, intellectual, and cultural world without compromising its core principles."[93] This task was accomplished by utilizing neo-Confucian reference points to express Islam's theological complexity and moral piety to the Muslim audience.

The Muslim literati first created and then internalized and utilized this discourse to regulate individual and community identities within Chinese society and the systems with which they had to interact. This new identity, which challenged preconceived ideas about what it meant to be *Chinese* and

Muslim, enabled the community to shape its own identity, because identities are shifting constructions communicated to others through interaction. Muslims stressed their identity's Chinese aspects by using Chinese structures and language to communicate their community's character to the larger Chinese society. In addition, their character's Islamic qualities were accentuated by highlighting the preservation of their ancient traditions and the foreign source of ultimate knowledge. Together, these features allowed the Muslim literati to locate the community within both groups and view it as participating in both the Chinese literati community and that of previous educated Muslims. The Muslim discourse employed in the *Han Kitab* literature reflects this conversation with the literary traditions of both China and Islam.

The direct correlation between this new means, the educational network, and the discourse expressed through the *Han Kitab* allowed the Muslim literati to construct a new dual identity by challenging existing religious paradigms and enabling the community to regenerate its identity. Establishing the educational network and creating the *Han Kitab* literature contested conventional understandings of knowledge, authority, and identity. Their work is extremely valuable,

> ... for it provides an extraordinary view into the minds of Muslim intellectuals self-consciously explaining their faith in the idiom of Classical Chinese, and thus a subtle description of the relationship between the two parts of Sino-Muslim identity as these particular men experienced and explained it.[94]

The innovative teaching technique, which generated and circulated this discourse, allowed the Muslim elite to disseminate specific knowledge that united their adherents and perpetuated the dual Chinese Muslim identity.

Language

Due to the limitations of the Chinese language, Muslim authors had to make creative use of the lexicon of other traditions to express Islam's superiority. This has been understood as the Muslims' total incorporation into Chinese society, because the use of Chinese reflects their failure to retain their Muslim ancestry and assert their Islamic identity.[95] However, since they had little choice but to utilize neo-Confucian terminology to convey their messages, this perceived assimilation may have been unintentional.[96]

These texts could also be understood as a retrogressive interpretation of Islam's fundamental stance. According to this view, the authors tried to assert their Muslim-ness but could not maintain an orthodox interpretation of Islam. However, Aubin argues: "Their literature proves that this is not the case: the

use of a terminology and a juggling with images borrowed from Chinese culture has not resulted in a degenerate syncreticism. The message, the Sufi one in particular, has remained distinctively Muslim."[97] When the Muslim elite felt its identity was being compromised by the lack of Islamic knowledge in China, they began to create an indigenous body of literature, to uphold their foreign-born ancestors' prominent Islamic intellectual tradition.

The language utilized in the Chinese texts was selectively chosen and versatile in meaning. An initial reading of the *Han Kitab* reveals a clear and accessible writing style and language that would be intelligible to Confucian-trained literati. Contained within this basic meaning was a text linked to an Islamic worldview, which only an initiated student would understand. The alternate meanings of terminology reflected the general Chinese understanding of terms and also the reinvented Islamic sense. Many of these Islamic texts also appear to have a profound Sufi meaning.[98] By recognizing these texts' Islamic and Chinese origins, one can verify the importance of these two systems in the development of Chinese Islamic thought.

Syncretism or Simultaneity

Much of western scholarship on Islam in China has depicted Muslim identity as accommodative or conciliatory. A common assumption is that Muslims cannot adhere to the Chinese order due to their religious beliefs.[99] When they somehow manage to do so, it is because they have abandoned their Muslim roots and assimilated. According to this view, Chinese Islam is a syncretic (viz., the merging of two or more individual substances to create a new distinct object) combination of Chinese customs and Muslim religious practices. This term is usually applied to a religious praxis in which there is a union of diverse tenets or rituals. But at this level, it more accurately resembles a historical interrelationship.

To retain any utility, syncretism must also incorporate the reconciliation of divergent truth claims.[100] The authors should not be placed into this categorization, for they firmly asserted both their Islamic and Chinese characteristics simultaneously without compromising the ultimate reality of either. In the end, they perceived the inherent supremacy of Islam's doctrinal assertions. As Lipman points out, "the writers of the Han Kitab – and their readers – were and are serious Muslims, not assimilated half-breeds or betrayers of the faith."[101]

The religious dialogue initiated by these authors expressed their self-identity in mutually recognized categories of association. This self-designed identity was dialogically constructed and situated in an imagined space that encompassed both China and Islam. This group of scholarly Muslim literati

understood themselves as being simultaneously *Chinese* and *Muslim*.[102] This simultaneity of identity was supported by myths explaining Chinese Muslim origins that emphasized their significance in maintaining Chinese society and their direct descent from the Prophet's closest Companions.[103] It was also reinforced through a discourse that incorporated the lexicon of the predominant Chinese philosophies of the day. To understand the authors' multifaceted identity, their dual characteristics must be considered equally, because they uniformly presented these features.

This elite's participation in the larger Chinese scholarly endeavor was viewed differently by the Chinese literati and the Muslim community. It is difficult to articulate the former's viewpoint, because Confucian-trained literati largely ignored the *Han Kitab* literature. From the Ming Dynasty on, official Chinese records and personal accounts increasingly mentioned Muslims, but there was little direct recognition of these works or the scripture hall education system. What was mentioned was often stated in prefaces to particular works or inscriptions at mosques.

In fact, not until the events of 1782 did Chinese society validate this body of literature in an authoritative manner. After the arrest and interrogation of a peripatetic Muslim who possessed several *Han Kitab* texts, a copy of Liu Zhi's *Veritable Records of the Most Sagely of Islam* (*Tianfang zhisheng shilu*) was presented to the Qianlong emperor (1711-99) for his inspection. After looking it over, he stamped it with his "read by the emperor" seal (*yulan*) and wrote an approving commentary on it. Upon the emperor's visit to Nanjing in 1784, a new edition of Liu Zhi's book was presented to him with the imperial seal and his review of the text on its first page.[104] This official recognition marked the authors' success as a whole and demonstrated that Chinese society accepted the value of the neo-Confucian Islamic dialogue.

Prior to this imperial confirmation, the Muslim scholarly community understood their members as being engaged in a meaningful process of combining their two cultural heritages. As Muslim Confucians (*Huiru*), they held that their tradition was expanding on truths found within Confucianism and was an essential aspect of the scholarly pursuit. As Benite points out, "[w]riting, study, and scholarship were the activities through which learned Chinese Muslims found a place for themselves within literary Chinese culture."[105] Preserving Islamic knowledge was supported by involvement in scholarly production and participation in the educational network. Muslim authors believed they were included in the larger Chinese literati endeavor because of their involvement in education and literary output as scholars (*shi*). From the Muslim literatis' viewpoint, their *dao* (viz., Islam) was just as legitimate and enlightened as that of the Confucian sages.[106] Through con-

stant implicit dialogues with other Chinese elites, the authors carved out a dual self-identity that incorporated both their local culture and their foreign source of knowledge.

Conclusion

The quest for the *Chinese Muslim* identity was preceded by an inquiry into the meaning of being both *Chinese* and *Muslim*. The *Han Kitab* authors perceived the flexibility of these cultural categories and envisioned themselves as the quintessence of both. Members of the Muslim literati were forced to understand themselves within imperial China's societal circumstances and established notions of Muslim identity. These, in turn, ultimately shaped their conception of Chinese Muslims and their role within larger Chinese society.

The Muslims' stylization of self was a product of their scholarly elite's reinvention of their identity, which was shaped by the determining influence of power relations within imperial China. The internal developments of the Muslim literati community and the external powers of Chinese society were forces of subjectivization that constructed the Muslim self. As Benite notes: "To be Chinese Muslim in late imperial China was to be connected, in one way or another, to this [scholarly Chinese Muslim] constituency. Thus Chinese Muslim identity was, like other Chinese identities, institutionally shaped."[107]

Islam's historical legacy within China also affected the perception of Muslims within the broader Chinese society and among individual Muslims. By creating an original discourse and disseminating it through innovative pedagogical techniques, the *Han Kitab* authors and the scripture hall education system's leaders reconstructed Muslim identity. The performative aspect of illustrating the Muslim character by adopting new descriptions and perceptions engendered a new self-fashioned dual identity that was maintained and developed through scholarship and literary production. It understood Islam as compatible, integral, and supplementary to neo-Confucianism, and was both encompassed by and encompassing of that Chinese tradition.[108] The *Han Kitab* authors located their Islamic message in a language accessible to contemporary acculturated Muslims and made their foreign religion familiar to the Chinese. From their work, one can discover how individuals who were simultaneously Muslim and Chinese understood themselves and their world.

Endnotes

1. Chinese Muslims of the scripture hall educational system and the *Han Kitab* authors were more concerned with orthodoxy than orthopraxy. This led them to emphasize the nature of reality and then illuminate how this related to Muslim life and practice. Thus, Islamic knowledge refers to the Islamic intellectual tradition that addresses the Islamic viewpoints' theological roots. Overall, this is how it has been understood by theosophical authorities. In addition, it is not limited to the Shari`ah-oriented science of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) or the philosophy of *kalam* (rational theology).
2. This Muslim community's limited language skills posed a serious problem for understanding Islam. Arabic is essential for the basic exegesis of the Qur'an, and, by the time of the Ming Dynasty, Persian rivaled Arabic as the language of eastern Muslims and was the language of those Sufis who spread Islam throughout Asia. William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Press, 2000), ix; and John Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
3. The understanding of this body of literature by contemporary Chinese Muslims is varied. *Han Kitab* is used by those living in the northwest, transliterated as *Han Ketabu*. However, the genre is typically called *Zhongwen Yisilanjiao yizhu* (Chinese-language Islamic translations and commentaries) by intellectuals in other parts of China. Jonathan Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 74, note 38.
4. This identification first appears in 1680 in a preface in Ma Zhu's *Compass of Islam* (*Qingzhen zhinan*), in which eleven scholars are labeled *Huiru*. Later authors continued to use this term. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Chinese Muslims in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 143, 160.
5. Similar movements were occurring in parts of Africa and South Asia during this period, but emerged from predominantly Islamic societies. Many of these treatises were also written in Arabic or Persian. For Tamil literature, see Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983) and Vasudha Narayanan, "Religious Vocabulary and Regional Identity: A Study of the Tamil Cirappuranam," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 74-97.
6. Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light: Wang Tai-yu's Great Learning of the Pure and Real and Liu Chih's Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 4.
7. The *Han Kitab texts* writings are markedly "neo-Confucian" in style, but I employ "Chinese literary and philosophical traditions" here to also encompass

the terminology utilized in Buddhist and Daoist discourse, which is also often drawn upon and cited throughout their works.

8. Research on minority identities within China has been plagued by a "sinicization" theory, which suggests that "China" is a hegemonic society dominated by a "Confucian" moral and social order that forces minorities to assimilate into "Chinese" society. This theory ignores the ethnic diversity and cultures that existed in pre-modern China. The sinicization debate has dominated the work of historians of the Manchurian-ruled Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), especially that of Pamela K. Crossley, Mark C. Elliot, and Evelyn S. Rawski. This theory has also been addressed by scholars of Chinese Islam, ardently supported by Raphael Israeli and challenged by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. See my sections "Language" and "Syncretism or Simultaneity."
9. I purposely use *simultaneity* to describe this community's dual identity, which is not accommodating, conciliatory, or syncretic. Benite has shown that this term is most appropriate for illustrating their dialogically self-produced identity, because these scholars understood themselves as simultaneously Chinese and Muslim. Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, esp. 12-18.
10. Lipman reminds us that in order to overcome the inherent problems of recalling a hegemonic Sino-centric history of China, the deconstruction process must provide alternative narratives that acknowledge the ambiguity and multiplicity of human existence. Therefore, this introduction only attempts to present the major trends that have been documented regarding the Muslim settlers in various locations throughout China and not the history of the Muslims in China. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, xxxiii-xxxv.
11. See Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "From 'Literati' to ``Ulama': The Origins of Chinese Muslim Nationalist Historiography," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 4 (2003): 83-109.
12. There were numerous "Muslim" rebellions throughout northwest and southwest China during the latter years of the Qing dynasty. These conflicts, which included Han, Muslim, and other minority peoples, were often between differing Muslim factions or a unified Han/Muslim/Other geographical community against Qing suppression. Muslims certainly fought on both sides of every confrontation. See, for example, Joseph Fletcher, "The Naqshbandiyya in Northwest China," *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, ed. Beatrice Manz (London: Variorum, 1995), 1-46; David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); and Bai Shouyi, ed., *Huimin qiyi* (Righteous Uprisings of the Hui People) (Shanghai: Shenzhou guoguang, 1953).
13. Arabs and Persians were called *dashi* and *bosi*, respectively. The former term later became the most common one for Muslims in official Chinese sources until the Yuan Dynasty. Since identifying names for Muslims and their homelands changed throughout history, it is not always clear exactly what these

terms designated. Donald Daniel Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China* (Canberra: Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1986), 195-96.

14. The most famous elements of the mythical literature describing the Muslims' arrival in China is recounted in the *Huihui Yuanlai* (Origins of the Huihui). This story narrates the emperor's dream of a forthcoming disaster, which led him to request a delegation from "the great king" Muhammad. The resulting delegation was led by the Prophet's maternal uncle Sayyid ibn Abi Waqqas (Sahaba Saade Wan Gesi), who, according to Hui tradition, established China's first mosque. English translations can be found in Li Shujiang and Karl W. Luckert, *Mythology and Folklore of the Hui, A Muslim Chinese People* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 237-38 and Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 204-09.
15. Chinese sources place Arab soldiers in China by 760, many possibly Muslims. Arabic sources clearly discuss an Islamic settlement in Canton by 851. Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China*, 35-37.
16. Canton certainly had a considerable Muslim population with extraterritorial rights and its own Muslim judges (*qadi*) by the middle of the ninth century, and most likely earlier. Chang'an probably had a small but significant Muslim population after Arab troops arrived there to aid the An Lushan rebellion in 756. Arab embassies began traveling to Chang'an in 651, and later delegations included Muslims who may have set up mosques. Ibid., 42-55.
17. One Chinese source states that the king of the *dashi* sent a pearl as a gift for the Tang emperor in 627. This is probably due to a mistaken character, making the date 785, but could actually refer to an embassy sent by the Prophet himself. Ibid., 36.
18. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 26.
19. Even the children of Muslims who married Chinese were seen as outsiders, identified as "native-born foreigners" (*tusheng fanke*). Ibid., 195.
20. Rich merchants often bypassed laws prohibiting foreigners from buying houses inside city walls. Ibid., 68.
21. Many of the new Chinese believers were children who had been adopted and raised by Muslim merchants.
22. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 28-30.
23. For the most complete English-language history of Muslims prior to the Yuan dynasty, see Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China*, chapters 4-7.
24. James A. Millward and Peter Purdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 44.
25. Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 194.
26. Lee Cheuk Yin, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms: Wang Daiyu (a. 1580-1658) and his Zhengjiao Zhenquan (Genuine Annotation of the Orthodox Teachings)," in *Islam and Confucianism: A Civilizational Dialogue*, eds.

Osman Bakar and Cheng Gek Nai (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1998), 76-77.

27. Joseph Fletcher, "China and Central Asia, 1368-1884," in *Chinese World Order*, John Fairbank ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 207-08.
28. Tsai Yuan-Lin, "Sufism in Wang Daiyu's San Yi (The Threefold of Oneness) Theory: The Advent of a Creative Dialogue between Islam and Confucianism" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, 20-23 November 2004).
29. Quoted in Lee, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms," 77.
30. Commonly seen by the Chinese as strangers living among them, hence, Lipman's apt title *Familiar Strangers*.
31. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 46.
32. Lee, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms," 78.
33. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 73.
34. He also appears in some sources by his style name (*zi*) Hu Puzhao or his Arabic name Muhammad Ibrahim Ilias.
35. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 39-42.
36. Zhao Can, *Jingxue xi chuan pu* (Genealogy of the Transmission and Lineage of Classical Learning), quoted in Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 41. This pandect, written circa 1677, reflects the success of the scripture hall education system and outlines its scholastic history, including teachers, students, curriculum, literary output, and the establishment of mosque schools.
37. Some even lived with Hu in his home on a work-study program. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 50.
38. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 75.
39. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 50
40. Yuan-Lin Tsai, "Confucian Orthodoxy vs. Muslim Resistance in Late Imperial China: The Ideological Origin and the Development of the Hui Rebellion in Yunnan under the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)," Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University (Ann Arbor: UMI - Dissertations Publishing, 1997), 102.
41. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 13-14.
42. Donald Daniel Leslie and M. Wassel, "Arabic and Persian Sources Used by Liu Chih," *Central Asiatic Journal* 26 (1982): 78-104.
43. Francoise Aubin, "Tasawwuf 8. In Chinese Islam," *The Encyclopedia of Islam* CD-Rom Edition v.1.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
44. This was translated as *The Essentials of the Return to Truth* (*Guizhen yaodao yiyi*) by Wu Zixian in 1651. This text was so popular that several people created their own translations, under other titles, to use in the scripture hall. All references in later Chinese Islamic texts employ Wu's title *Guizhen yaodao* to designate this book. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 127 note 20.
45. For an English translation and an explanation of this text's importance throughout the Islamic world, see Hamid Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1982).

46. There are two translations of this text, which could be written by the same author. The first, *The Scripture of Studying the Truth* (*Yan Zhen Jing*) was translated by She Yunshan in 1679. The second is an undated copy attributed to Po Nachi (possibly She Yunshan's pen-name): *The Outline of the Way Returning to the Truth* (Gui Zhen Biyao).
47. For an English translation, see Lloyd Ridgeon, *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism: Selected Treatises of `Aziz Nasafi* (Richmond: Curzon), 2002.
48. The former was translated as *The Mysterious Secret of the Original Display* (*Zhao yuan mi jue*) by Po Nachi, but was not published until 1927. The latter was translated as *Secret Method for Illuminating the Origin* (*Zhenjing Zhaowei*) by the great Liu Zhi circa 1751. For an English translation of this latter book, see Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 113-210.
49. For an English translation of this text, see William C. Chittick and Peter L. Wilson, *Fakhruddin `Iraqi: Divine Flashes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).
50. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 33.
51. Abu Hafs `Umar Najm al-Din al-Nasafi, one of the greatest Sunni and Hanafi jurists and theologians, belonged to al-Maturidi's (d. 333/944) school. For a discussion of this text, see Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the `Aqa'id of Al-Nasafi* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1988).
52. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979), 249-76.
53. Zhao Can, *Genealogy of the Transmission*, 19 and 90. Quoted in Tsai, "Sufism in Wang Daiyu's San Yi."
54. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 42.
55. Muhammad Usiar Huaizhong Yang, "The Four Upsurgences of Islamic Culture in Chinese History," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 16, no. 1 (1996): 15.
56. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 37.
57. Ibid., 21.
58. Ibid., 21-22.
59. These Muslims were strewn throughout the cities and tightly incorporated into Chinese society where, unlike the Muslim communities of northwest and southwest China, they often lived in large isolated rural communities. See Lipman, "Patchwork Society, Network Society: A Study of Sino-Muslim Communities," in *Islam in Asia* vol. 2, ed. Raphael Israeli (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984).
60. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 30.
61. The title *mingjing* is used several times in *Genealogy of the Transmission*. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 54-57.
62. The authors of the *Han Kitab* literature and the scholar-teachers of the scripture hall educational system deliberately employed such terms as classical teacher (*jingshi*), scholar (*xuezhe*), upright literati (*duanshi*), or simply literati (*shi*) to refer to members of its own community, rather than such terms as imam (*ahong*), which have been used by contemporary scholars and Chinese Muslims. See Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 36, 100-06; and Jin Jitang, "Wang

Daiyu Aheng zhuan" (A Biography of Imam Wang Daiyu), in *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaoshi cankao ziliao xuanbian, 1911-1949* (Selection of Reference Materials on the History of Chinese Islam), eds. Li Xinghua and Feng Jinyuan (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubansh, 1985).

63. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 6.
64. James D. Frankel, "Liu Zhi's Journey Through Ritual Law to Allah's Chinese Name: Conceptual Antecedents and Theological Obstacles to the Confucian-Islamic Harmonization of the Tianfang Dianli," Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University (Ann Arbor: UMI - Dissertations Publishing, 2005), 12-13.
65. Leslie discusses fifty-nine of these works at length in his *Islamic Literature in Chinese*, 1-59.
66. Ibid., 4.
67. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 73.
68. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 119.
69. "To preserve their culture in the face of Chinese ridiculing and negative stereotyping, the Muslims engaged in literary apologetics that pathetically attempted to show that Islam was not incompatible with the prevailing Confucian system." Raphael Israeli, *Islam in China: Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 61.
70. Joseph Ford, "Some Chinese Muslims of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Asian Affairs* 61 (1974): 147.
71. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 4.
72. Ibid., 4.
73. Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement, and Sects* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1999), 96.
74. Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991), 37-41 (distributed by Harvard University Press); and Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community*, 95-100.
75. Aubin, "Tasawwuf."
76. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 68-69.
77. Ibid., 121.
78. Ibid., 29.
79. Ibid., 37-38.
80. Ibid., 38.
81. Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China*, 119.
82. Frankel, "Liu Zhi's Journey," 70.
83. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 230.
84. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 10.
85. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 179.
86. Ibid., 171.
87. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 9-10.
88. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 171.

89. Ibid., 172.
90. Ibid., 171.
91. Ibid., 181.
92. Ibid., 229.
93. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 211.
94. Ibid., 74, note 38.
95. This position is epitomized by Raphael Israeli's work.
96. Lee, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms," 91.
97. Aubin, "Tasawwuf."
98. Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community*, 97.
99. Raphael Israeli, "Muslims in China: Islam's Incompatibility with the Chinese Order," in *Islam in Asia*, eds. Raphael Israeli and Anthony D. Homes (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1984), 275-304.
100. Rodney Leon Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 71-73.
101. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 226.
102. Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 13.
103. See the *Han Kitab* text, the *Huihui Yuanlai*; Benite, *Dao of Muhammad*, 232.
104. Ibid., 215-31.
105. Ibid., 232.
106. Ibid., 230.
107. Ibid., 62.
108. Ibid., 232.