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CHINA'S HUI MUSLIMS' WISDOM OF COEXISTENCE

MAI JIANJUN [1]

[1] Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
Email: maijianjun@iium.edu.my

*Corresponding Author: maijianjun@iium.edu.my

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Abstract

The Hui is the largest Muslim minority group in China, descended from ancient Arab and Persian merchants in the 7th century and mid-Asian war captives of the Mongol army in the 13th century. Immersed in an environment where more than 90% of the total population is non-Muslim Chinese, and whose dominant ideology is Confucianism, the Hui Muslims have undergone significant pressures to integrate into the mainstream society to avoid being marginalized on the one hand and retain their Islamic faith on the other hand. Responding to the challenges, the Hui Muslims employed two major strategies i.e. external accommodation policy and dawah with wisdom to survive and coexist with the dominant Confucian ideology in China. This study explores the coexistence strategies employed by the Hui Muslims during Ming and Qing dynasties. It provides important insights for Muslim minority groups to cope with dominant ideologies of the societies where they live.

***Kata Kunci**:* Accommodation policy, China, Coexistence, Hui Muslim.

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INTRODUCTION

There are 56 ethnic groups or nationalities in China based on official designation. The largest ethnic group is the Han Chinese, who account for more than 90% of total population in China. Except a very small number of converts to Islam, the Han is a predominantly non-Muslim ethnic

group in China. Out of 56 ethnic groups, 10 are of Muslim ethnicity, i.e. the Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Salar, Tajik, Bao'an and Tatar. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, the total population of these 10 Muslim ethnic groups were more than 23 million by 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010). The Hui is the largest Muslim minority group whose population is about 10.58 million, accounts for nearly 46% of the total Muslim population in China.

The prevailing historical view regarding the origin of the Hui Muslims in China suggests that the Hui people are the descendants of ancient Arab and Persian Muslim merchants who came to China through both ancient the overland and maritime routes of Silk Road during the Tang-Song dynasties (618-1279 AD) as well as the war captives from Central Asia and Middle East transported to China by Mongol army in 13th century (Bai, 2000; Yu, 2012).

Immersed in a predominantly non-Muslim Han Chinese society that primarily follows Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, the Hui Muslims, owing to their foreign origins and unwavering commitment to the Islamic faith, have confronted a multitude of challenges and adversities over the course of their more than 1300-year history in China. However, unlike some other ethnic minority groups who have been completely assimilated into the Han Chinese, such as Manchu, the Hui has not only survived but also flourished, evolving into one of the largest and most distinct minority groups in China.

Given the purported formidable assimilative influence of Chinese culture, it is both pertinent and timely to address the enduring question of how the Hui Muslims have managed to resist assimilation and coexist harmoniously with the prevailing non-Islamic Chinese cultural milieu dominated by Confucianism for over thirteen centuries.

This study aims to examine the Hui Muslims' strategies of survival and coexistence within Chinese culture during Ming and Qing dynasties when the Hui Muslims encountered the most severe challenges and existential crisis. By examining and analysing the historical precedents, the study can offer valuable insights into the strategies that have enabled the Hui Muslims to persist and thrive amidst the complex dynamics of their cultural context. Consequently, this study holds substantial relevance for contemporary Hui Muslims in China and, more broadly, for minority Muslim communities across the global landscape.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chinese historical records show that the earliest Muslims might have entered China during Tang dynasty in 7th century (Yu, 2012). In the next few hundred years, the population of Muslims in China, primarily Arab and Persian merchants, increased significantly. The Tang and Song governments treated Muslims friendly and respectfully. The Muslims were referred to as fanke (foreign guest). They were allowed to reside in a designated area called fanfang (foreign quarters) within the big cities. Early Muslims in Tang-Song era enjoyed considerable freedom within their designated area fanfang (foreign quarters). They were able to freely practice their own religion, observe their customs, speak their own languages, and build mosques in fanfang (Qiu, 2012; Sen, 2009). Additionally, they were granted judicial authority to resolve disputes among themselves based on Islamic Shariah law (Broomhall, 1910/1987).

In 13th century Mongol army conquered vast lands in Central Asia and Middle East, tens of thousands of Muslim war captives were transported to China by Mongol army. They were then resettled to various parts of China, thus created a huge influx of Muslims to supplement the merchants who were already present in China. The government of Yuan dynasty established by the Mongols employed a vast number of foreigners especially the Muslims to help them to rule over the Han Chinese. Great number of Muslims served in Mongol's army and government. During the Yuan dynasty, the Muslims in China were already considered a distinct ethnic group. The Yuan government created a separate household category for the Muslims called HuihuiHu (Huihui household) among other household categories such as MengguHu (Mongol household), HanrenHu (Chinese household) etc. (Qiu, 2012). From the Yuan dynasty onwards, Chinese historical records referred to Muslims in China as huihui or hui (Yang & Yu, 1995; Qiu, 2012).

In Yuan dynasty the Hui Muslims enjoyed the highest social and political status in history. The first emperor of the Yuan dynasty Kublai Khan created a caste system in which all subjects of the Mongol empire were classified into four classes. The first class is Mongols. The second class is Semuren (literally means people with coloured eyes), this includes Arabs, Persians, Central Asians and other foreigners. The third class is Hanren, includes Han Chinese and some minority tribes in north China. The fourth and the lowest class is Nanren, they were Han Chinese in south China. The Hui Muslims belonged to the second class, high above the ethnic Han Chinese (Jin, 2000).

However, the Hui Muslims' situation in China changed completely after Mongol Yuan dynasty was overthrown by ethnic Han Chinese who established Ming dynasty afterwards. Having been humiliated for nearly a hundred years, the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang set to reassert Chinese supremacy and re-establish the Confucian concept of world order immediately after he ascended to the throne. Series of laws were implemented to sinicize all minority groups, especially Mongols and the Hui Muslims, and force them to integrate to Chinese society. In 1368, a decree was issued to ban foreign dresses, foreign languages and foreign names (Sen, 2009: 99).

Despite the Mongols were driven out of China proper by the Ming army, their military power was not destroyed completely. They continued to pose a significant threat to the Ming dynasty. Zhu Yuanzhang and the successive Ming emperors lived in constant fear of a Mongol resurgence, particularly in relation to both the Mongols and the Hui people within China. They decided that the population growth of the Mongol and Hui group had to be contained and controlled. To "curb the growth of [foreign] communities", in 1372, the Ming government enforced a law which prohibited marriages within the Hui ethnic group. " Since the peoples of Mongol and Semu (mainly Hui Muslims) have settled down in China, they are allowed to marry Han Chinese. （but）marriages within the (respective) ethnic group are not permitted. Those who violate the law will be sentenced to be state slaves" (Sen, 2009: 99).

The ethnic tensions between the Hui and Han Chinese, which originated during the Yuan Dynasty, escalated significantly during the Ming Dynasty. Local Han Chinese officials frequently subjected Hui Muslims to mistreatment in legal proceedings. Particularly in the

southern regions of China, which constituted the traditional Chinese core area, small Muslim communities were compelled to relocate to remote towns and villages to escape the pervasive anti-Hui discrimination perpetuated by the Han population. The formidable social and political pressures of this period ultimately led to the complete assimilation of certain Hui Muslim clans in southern China. (Zhuang, 1996)

In 1644, the Manchu, a nomadic minority group from the north-eastern region of China, seized control of the country, leading to the establishment of the Qing dynasty. During the initial years of the Qing dynasty, the Manchu rulers faced significant challenges in the form of repeated uprisings by the Han Chinese and the Hui Muslims, who opposed their rule. To effectively solidify their authority over the predominantly Han Chinese population and other ethnic groups within their realm, the early Qing leaders adopted a dual approach. On the one hand, they employed military force to suppress and quell various uprisings, thereby ensuring the maintenance of governmental order and the enforcement of laws. On the other hand, they sought to foster loyalty and compliance among the populace through benevolent measures. Regarding early Qing's policy towards the Hui Muslims, Donald Leslie states that "Autocratic rule was to be tempered by imperial benevolence; and religious freedom was allowed so long as it did not interfere with good order and obedience to the state" (Leslie, 1986: 122).

However, starting from the middle of Qianglong reign (1736-1796)， there was a dramatic shift in the Qing government's policy towards the Hui Muslims and Islam. During the mid to late Qing period, the government pursued a policy of stringent control over the Hui Muslim population, employing a range of political and military strategies to ensure unwavering compliance from the Hui Muslim population. These approaches included the utilization of Hui individuals to govern their own community (known as "yi hui zhi hui"), and a simultaneous application of military suppression and political appeasement, often referred to as the "jiao fu bing shi" strategy (Yu, 2012: 135).

Regrettably, this period was also marked by instances of high extent of social and political prejudice against the Hui Muslims, leading to a wide range of persecution and discrimination. The discriminative and racist attitude of the Qing government towards the Hui Muslims was clearly reflected in the Qing's law. The Hui was distinguished as a special category of persons in the law of the Qing. The Qing Dynasty's criminal law exhibited different treatment of the Hui Muslims in comparison to the Han Chinese population. Within this legal framework, Hui Muslims faced significantly harsher punishments than their Han Chinese counterparts for identical offenses (Hu, 1998; Wang, 2000). During this period, the Hui community experienced severe military oppression, including brutal crackdowns and massacres that inflicted immense suffering on their lives. The cumulative impact of these policies and actions culminated in a time of unprecedented hardship for the Hui Muslims. The combination of discriminatory treatment, political marginalization, and harsh military measures cast a shadow over the quality of life for the Hui population during this period.

The ethnic tension between Hui Muslims and Han Chinese during the Qing dynasty was notably more pronounced compared to the Ming dynasty. This contrast was particularly evident at the regional level, where Han Chinese governors and military leaders often held deeply prejudiced and discriminatory views toward the Hui Muslims and Islam.

In 1724, Chen Shiguan, the governor of Shandong, stated in his memorial to Qing Yongzheng Emperor that:

> The evil religion is forbidden by the law. Hui Jiao (Islam) does not worship Heaven and Earth, neither our Gods, but worship its own God, has its own calendar and many followers, bringing harm to the people. Please give order to force the Hui to give up their religion and destroy their mosques (Fu, 2002: 76).

The discrimination and prejudice to the Hui Muslims and Islam did not take place in the Qing's court only, it was also widely spread among the Han Chinese intellectuals. Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), a prominent Confucian scholar, wrote in his book that "the Hui are stubborn and reluctant to change their old customs. They band together like a bandit and harm their neighbours. No matter how long they have lived under the auspice of this empire, their barbaric behaviour has never changed" (Jin, 2000: 77). Some Han Chinese scholars proposed more radical and racist solution to the Qing court. During Emperor Qianlong's reign (1735-1799), a Han scholar named Wei Shu called for sending all Hui Muslims into exile. Wei criticized the court officials for turning a blind eye to Hui's population growth and lamented that China would again fall under barbarian rule if no actions were taken (Qi, 2005: 206).

The discriminative and suppressive policy of the Qing government towards the Hui Muslims and Islam, the ethnic tension between the Hui and the majority Han Chinese as well as deteriorating economic situations led to waves of the Hui Muslims' uprising against the Qing government. Throughout the Qing dynasty, there were more than ten Hui Muslim uprisings. According to Yusuf Chang (1987), as many as ten million Hui Muslims were killed in the process. This was the greatest racial genocide in Chinese history.

STRATEGIES OF COEXISTENCE

Ming-Qing era is the darkest period in the history of the Hui Muslims in China. During this time, their Islamic faith and culture were considered unorthodox heresy. Forceful assimilation, along with racial and religious discrimination and persecution, posed a significant threat to the very existence of the Hui ethnic group. To preserve their Islamic faith and Muslim identity, the Hui Muslims employed two strategies to navigate in an extremely hostile environment and coexist with dominant Confucian culture in China.

External Accommodation Policy

It is a common pattern that the minority group accommodates or acculturates to the dominant culture of the country in order to avoid being marginalized or discriminated by the mainstream of the society. The Chinese culture makes it even more compelling.

The traditional Chinese culture which is based on Confucianism believes that Chinese culture is the most advanced civilization of the world. Confucian view on ethnicity divides all human beings into civilized Chinese (hua or xia) and uncivilized barbarians (yi). However, such

distinction is not based on racial, but on cultural differences (li bie hua yi) (Li, 2009). According to Confucianism the uncivilized barbarians (yi) can become civilized Chinese (hua or xia) if they follow and observe Confucian cultural norms (li) (Chen & He, 2017). Once the barbarians start to learn and observe Confucian cultural norms (li), they should be respected and treated same as Chinese (hua or xia). If the barbarians refuse to learn and change, they should be marginalized or even separated from the Chinese society (yan yi xia zhi fang) (Li, 2009). To ultimately solve the problem between the Han Chinese (hua or xia) and minority barbarians (yi), Confucian believes that the minority barbarians (yi) should be taught Confucian norms and be acculturated and assimilated to Chinese culture and become Chinese (hua or xia) in the end. This multifaceted process, often articulated as "yong xia bian yi," underscores the strategic deployment of cultural influence and educational strategies to facilitate the transformation of individuals initially labelled as 'barbarians' into culturally integrated and harmonious members of Chinese society (Chen, 2011).

Confucianism also proposes the concept of Great Unity (da yi tong) which advocates that ‘all lands belong to the emperor and all people are his subjects (pu tian zhi xia, mo fei wang tu, shuai tu zhi bing, mo fei wang cheng) (Ma, 2007). Chen Yuping (2011) elucidates that the Confucian concept of Great Unity signifies political unity, wherein all individuals, encompassing both the Chinese populace and those classified as "barbarians," are united under the singular authority of the emperor (tianzi). Culturally, this unity is realized through adherence to Confucian norms, as embodied in the "zhouli". Liu Jinyou (2014) further contends that Great Unity entails the comprehensive unification of the nation across economic, political, ideological, and cultural dimensions, forming an indivisible whole where separation is strictly prohibited.

The Confucian concepts of “li bie hua yi” (differentiate Chinese and barbarians based on Confucian norms), “yan yi xia zhi fang” (separate Chinese from barbarians) , “yong xia bian yi” (using Chinese culture to assimilate barbarians) and “da yi tong” (Great Unity) manifest self-confident cultural supremacy which prioritizes uniformity over diversity, promotes cultural assimilation over differentiation and underscores the importance of obedience, social stability and the maintenance of social order.

Therefore, for the Hui Muslims, as a minority group who adheres to a foreign religion, accommodating to dominant Confucian cultural, social and political norms in Chinese society is an essential step for the survival of the Hui Muslim communities and protecting and preserving the Islamic faith.

Chinese historical records have shown us evidences of Muslims’ accommodation and adaptation to Chinese culture in as early as Tang dynasty. The famous Arab Muslim who took Chinese name as Li Yanshen joined state examination in 848 and obtained a prestigious jinshi degree (Yu, 2012: 23).

Confucian culture reached its zenith in Ming dynasty. During this period the Hui Muslims confronted substantial pressures to conform to dominant Confucian culture in Chinese society. Several major accommodation policies were taken by the Hui Muslims to avoid direct conflicts with Confucian social and political norms.

After the issuance of sinicization laws by the Ming government, the Hui Muslims undertook notable adaptations. They changed their Muslim names to Chinese names, adopted Chinese attire, and, most notably, relinquished their native languages and took Chinese language as their sole language of communication.

During the Yuan dynasty, the Hui Muslims were multilingual, they spoke Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Chinese language. The Arabic, Persian and Turkic were used in their families and among themselves, while Chinese language was spoken in public and with the Han Chinese. However, Arabic was the lingua franca of the Hui ethnic group (Sen, 2009; Qiu, 2012). After the implementation of the Ming government's sinicization laws, the Hui Muslims transitioned towards exclusive use of the Chinese language, thereby forsaking their native tongues.

However, forsaking their native languages of Arabic and Persian had devastating impacts to the Hui Muslims' Islamic faith. Switching to Chinese language rendered them unable to understand the Qur'an and other religious books. By the mid-Ming dynasty most of the Hui Muslims switched completely from Arabic to Chinese language in all walks of life, and only a handful of literati like Imams and Islamic scholars could understand the Arabic and Persian languages (Qiu, 2012).

Another remarkable accommodation was manifested in Hui mosques' architectural style. Commencing from the Ming Dynasty, the Hui Muslim mosques underwent a comprehensive architectural transformation, departing from Arab Islamic design influences and embracing the traditional Chinese architectural style.

Although some of China's earliest mosque structures can be traced back to the Tang, Song, and Yuan Dynasties, nearly all these mosques underwent extensive restoration and renovation during the Ming-Qing era. Consequently, the original architectural styles of these mosques before the Ming Dynasty have become an enigma, as the traces of their original designs have been obscured by subsequent alterations. The sole surviving mosque from the Yuan Dynasty, in which the original architectural style remains discernible through the remnants of its structure, is the Ashab Mosque, known as 'Shen You Si' in Chinese, located in Quanzhou, China. The Ashab Mosque, originally constructed during the Song Dynasty in 1009 AD, underwent a significant restoration during the Yuan Dynasty in 1310 AD. Regrettably, the mosque succumbed to destruction during an earthquake in 1607 AD and has not been reconstructed. Presently, only the primary gate, fragments of walls, and a handful of minor structures endure as silent witnesses to its historical legacy.

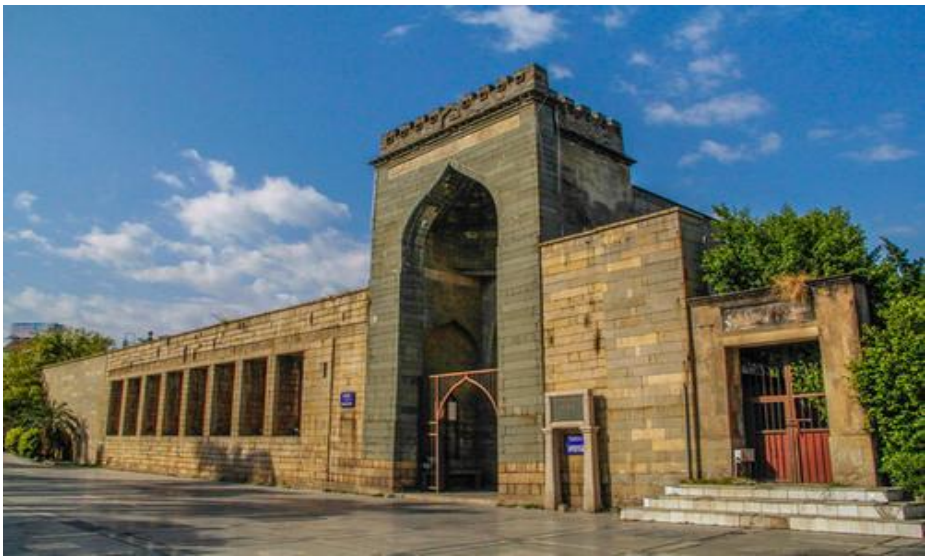

Figure 1 Ashab Mosque Quanzhou. view of entry.

Figure 2 Ashab Mosque, view showing remains of masjid columns in the courtyard

The structure of Ashab mosque was designed in the typical Arabian style of mosques built in the same period, which is completely different from the other extant ancient mosques in China. It is the only ancient mosque in China (except Xinjiang) with a stone pointed arch at its entry (Figure 1). Pointed arches also stand inside the courtyard, some of them open for passage and others closed (Figure 2). The flavour of the granite structures is decidedly Islamic. Another equally unusual and interesting feature is eight windows on the western side of the mosque, west of the entrance, which allow a view inside from the street; when the mosque was active, the windows would have opened onto the main worship space.

On the contrast, all mosques built or restored in Ming and Qing dynasty followed traditional Chinese architecture style completely. From the outside, these mosques are indistinguishable from a Buddhist temple. The remarkably Chinese architectural features –

gates, ceramic tile roofs, octagonal timber-frame pavilion etc. are all present in a mosque building. Similarly, the decorative terracotta elements present on the roof of the wall and ridge of the prayer hall, like figures of dragons or aquatic monsters and traditional dunshou (protective figurines placed one behind the other on the roofs of temples or palaces, such as lion, fish, ox, etc.) do not indicate the nature of the building (Din, 2010). Only the inscription in Chinese "qingzhensi " or "libaisi " (mosque) above the front door informs us about the site's use.

Figure 3 Chinese Nanhua Buddhist temple

Figure 4 Beijing Oxen Mosque, front gate

Figure 5 The ridge decorations of a mosque worship hall

Chinese-style stelae with Chinese inscriptions were set up in various mosques. Some of the stelae inscriptions written by several Ming emperors including the first Ming Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang and three Qing emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong were copied in many Hui mosques (Yu, 2012: 107).

The only difference between Chinese Buddhist temple and Hui mosque is in the prohibition of figurative representations (human beings or animals) within mosques. The layout of the mosques has a specificity linked to the Islamic tradition: its East-West orientation. Buddhist temples and palaces are most often oriented South-North.

The external accommodation policy among the Hui Muslims did not, however, involve a complete compromise or surrender. Fundamental aspects of Islamic doctrine and practices, including daily and congregational prayers, fasting during Ramadan, giving zakat, performing Hajj, and adhering to halal dietary guidelines, remained intact.

Broomhall (1910/1987) cited reports from Christian missionaries who had travelled to various provinces during the late Qing dynasty. These accounts affirm the preservation of Islamic principles within local Hui Muslim communities. His comprehensive study, based on extensive field research, meticulously described many religious practices among the Hui Muslims of that era, including funeral rituals. This wealth of information serves as compelling evidence that the core teachings and practices of Islam endured despite the pressures of forced sinicization during the Ming dynasty and the harsh suppression of the Qing dynasty.

In terms of dietary practices, Broomhall (1910/1987) observed that the adherence to halal rules was widespread among the Hui people, with a strict abstinence from pork being rigorously maintained.

Through the external accommodation policy, the Hui Muslims avoided direct confrontation with prevailing Confucian culture, thereby increased significantly the integration of Hui Muslims to the mainstream Chinese society. This approach played a pivotal role in

preserving the practice of Islam from prohibition by the Chinese government. In contrast, Christianity experienced substantial setbacks in the early Qing dynasty when the Qing emperor expelled all Christian missionaries in China except those in Guangdong and Beijing due to the Pope's rejection of the policy of accommodation (Leslie, 1998). Therefore, Leslie (1998) argues that "Islam survived in China, whereas the Christians of the Ming and early Qing did not, because the former followed through with their accommodation policy".

However, external accommodation policy had adverse consequences. As the Hui Muslims became more acculturated to the Han Chinese, their Chineseness increased, their Muslim and religious consciousness declined. In some Hui communities, particularly in South China, complete assimilation into the non-Muslim Han Chinese population occurred (Zhuang, 1996).

DA'WAH WITH WISDOM

Responding to the declination of Islamic faith within the Hui Muslim communities, the Hui Islamic scholars and intellectuals initiated waves of Islamic Dawah efforts to safeguard and strengthen Islamic faith among the Hui Muslim communities on one hand and propagate Islamic teachings to non-Muslims in China on the other hand.

The Ming government's policy of sinicization and isolation had wide ranging impacts to all aspects of Hui Muslims' life. Islamic education was among the most severely affected. Forsaking native tongues of Arabic and Persian resulted in most Hui Muslims being unable to understand Islamic religious books except a handful of imams. Apart from this, The Sea Ban (hai jin) policy enforced by the Ming government in 1371 and continued into the early Qing dynasty resulted in a considerable reduction in the influx of Islamic scholars, teachers and Islamic books from Islamic countries to China. By the mid-Ming dynasty, "there was a big shortage of Islamic books, and learned men were few, the transmission and interpretation [of the texts] were not clear, propagating the Truth become impossible" (Qiu 2012: 355). To revive Islamic education and promote Islamic faith among the Hui Muslim communities, Sheikh Hu Dengzhou, a prominent Islamic scholar from Weichen Shaanxi China, initiated a new type of Islamic education which was built on traditional Chinese educational methods but focused on the study of Islam. The new Islamic education was known as Jingtang Jiaoyu (scripture hall education). Its aim was to propagate Islamic knowledge to the masses and nurture the next generation of religious leaders. Considering the situation that Hui Muslims had largely lost their Arabic mother tongue, with the younger generation being proficient only in Chinese language, Jingtang Jiaoyu (Scripture Hall Education) adopted Chinese language as the medium of instruction. Numerous religious schools were initially opened in private homes and were later moved to mosques. Financial assistance was provided to attract and support Hui Muslim students studying in these religious schools (Din, 2013). Soon, the Islamic Jingtang Jiaoyu system spread to other provinces, giving rise to a network of Islamic religious schools founded by Sheikh Hu Dengzhou's disciples and adherents across China. Despite some shortcomings such as long length of study duration, Jingtang Jiaoyu (scripture hall education) was proven to be highly effective in fostering a deeper understanding of Islam. Over time, jintang jiaoyu

developed a long line of famous instructors (Ahong), and three main centres of instruction in Shaanxi, Shandong and Yunnan (Wang, 2013).

Jintang jiaoyu (scripture hall education) made a significant and enduring contribution to Islam and Hui Muslims in China. Ever since Sheikh Hu Dengzhou opened the first school, this educational system has been a source of immense benefit for hundreds of millions of Hui Muslims over nearly five centuries. Jintang jiaoyu (scripture hall education) has remained the main channel of cultivating religious talents until 21st century (Din, 2013: 1). Especially during the Ming-Qing period, jintang jiaoyu (scripture hall education) cultivated a great number of knowledgeable and pious Islamic scholars who devoted their entire lives to the cause of Islam and welfare of Muslims in China (Din, 2013).

While jingtang jiaoyu (scripture hall education) catered to Hui Muslims, Hui Islamic scholars also undertook a delicate Islamic dawah effort by producing books and writings to disseminate Islamic teachings to non-Muslim Han intellectuals.

During the late Ming and early Qing period, some extraordinary Hui Muslim scholars who were well versed in Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism started translating and writing Islamic books into Chinese. This Chinese translation and writing Islamic text movement, as it is referred to by Chinese literature, produced a body of Islamic texts that became known as the Han Kitab: Han means Chinese, and Kitab is an Arabic word, means book (Yang & Yu, 1995: 383). The purpose of this movement was to "use Han, Liu, Ou and Su's (the four great Chinese literati in Tang and Song dynasties) words to elaborate the wisdom of Islam", "not only to make Islam easily understood by our own people, but also to make Confucian literati understand that our religion is not an unorthodox heresy." (Zhou, 2005: preface).

The first full length Chinese Islamic book was zhengjiao zhenquan (The True Commentary on the True Religion) by Wang Daiyu in 1642. This was followed by the qingzhen zhinan, (Islamic Guidebook), by Ma Zhu, in 10 volumes, in 1683. The most significant and sophisticated writings were produced by Liu Zhi. His tianfang xinli (Islamic Philosophy) reached the high point of Chinese Islamic literature. His biography of the Prophet Muhammad, tianfang zhisheng shilu (Veritable Records of Prophet) when published in 1782, was prefixed by the term yulan "inspected by the emperor". Moreover, his tianfang dianli (Rituals of Islam) was accepted into the prestigious siku quanshu (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries), China's largest encyclopaedia made by Qing Qianlong Emperor (Peterson, 2018). Other important writers include Ma Dexin, Lan Xu, Jin Tianzhu etc. Through these books the Hui Islamic scholars presented systematically and comprehensively all aspects of Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims, from complicated metaphysical topics such as Islamic theology, cosmology to Islamic law and daily rituals.

The Islamic scholars of Han Kitab were well versed in Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. When they tried to introduce Islam to non-Muslims in China, they presented Islam as being not only unthreatening to Chinese culture and society, but also consonant with the fundamental teachings and values of Confucianism, the dominant political and moral philosophy of Ming-Qing China.

In the preface of his famous book tianfang dianli (Islamic Rituals), one of the most famous Hui Islamic scholars in Ming-Qing era, Liuzhi (ed, 1998) wrote:

> …although these principles are expressed in Islamic writings, they are no different from what is found in Confucian canon. Observance of rituals of Islam is tantamount to the observance of the teachings of ancient Chinese sages and kings. The teachings of sages are same in the east and the west, ancient and present (20).

Another Han Kitab writer, Lanxu (ed. 2005) stated in his book tianfang zhengxue (Islamic Righteous Knowledge):

> …(we should) know that the two teachings of Islam and Confucianism have same origin, there were no different teachings at the beginning. Why (do we) focus on a little difference in language and pondering whether they are same or different (141).

To facilitate the comprehension of Islamic doctrines among the Chinese educated Hui Muslim community and Confucian literati, Han Kitab authors employed a pragmatic strategy. This approach involved the incorporation of terminology and concepts primarily drawn from Confucianism into their written works. For example, the Neo-Confucian concept of wuji (the ultimate of non-existence) and taiji (the supreme ultimate） were used by Wang Daiyu to bring out Islamic concept of Tawhid (Sen, 2009: 117). Liu Zhi employed the core concepts of Confucianism, i.e. sangang（Three Guiding Principles）and wuchang (Five Constant Regulations) to expound the Islamic concepts of Five Pillars and Five Islamic human relationships (Sen, 2009: 117).

However, it is essential to clarify that the process of incorporating Confucian terminology and concepts into Islamic discourse, as reflected in Han Kitab, should not be misconstrued as a wholesale Confucianization of Islam. There are several critical points to be considered in this regard:

Firstly, the pioneering Hui Islamic scholars, exemplified by figures like Wang Daiyu, encountered a myriad of technical, philosophical, and linguistic challenges when composing the foundational texts of Chinese Islamic literature. Utilizing pre-existing terminology and concepts to expound Islamic ideas represented a pragmatic and practical choice for these Muslim writers. Notably, translators of Buddhism and Christianity confronted analogous difficulties when initially introducing their respective scriptures to the Chinese audience (Dillion, 1999: p 38).

Secondly, it is worth noting that certain Confucian concepts, such as "wuchang" (Five Constant Regulations), while not found verbatim in Islamic texts, share similarities with principles embedded within Islamic teachings (Mansure, 2007). These conceptual commonalities provide a basis for cross-referencing and elucidation.

Thirdly, it is crucial to emphasize that the employment of Confucian terminology and concepts within Islamic discourse was undertaken with the specific intent of advancing Islamic principles and knowledge, rather than the reverse. The objective was to facilitate the

dissemination and understanding of Islamic doctrine among the Chinese populace, thereby contributing to the propagation of Islam in China.

As pointed out by Frankel (2009: 53), the Han Kitab authors "did not deliberately or explicitly promote an agenda of reconciliation of Islam and Confucianism. Their writings reflect a tacit attempt to portray themselves, their community and their faith as 'orthodox'."

Evidently, their endeavours proved fruitful. In the preface to Wang Daiyu's zhengjiao zhenquan (The True Commentary on the Correct Religion), a non-Muslim Confucian scholar He Hanjin wrote "only Islam (among all religions)… is similar to our Confucianism" (Wang, trans. 1999). Liu Zhi's Rituals of Islam, when published about 1710, had preface by three high-rank officials. One of them was the Vice-Minister of the Board of War. In the preface the Vice-Minister noted that after discussing Islamic religion with Liu he had found that it upheld the Confucian principles of loyalty to the sovereign, respect by sons for their fathers, brotherly love, and so forth. Islamic religion, he added, was not to be spoken of in the same breath as heretical and vicious sects (Liu, ed. 1998).

During this historical period, Hui Islamic scholars engaged in a broader outreach strategy that extended beyond the Hui Muslim community and common Confucian literati. Notably, concerted efforts were made to propagate Islamic teachings to the highest echelon of authority in China—the emperor. Ma Zhu, for instance, wrote letters to the Qing Kangxi emperor, urging him to follow the precedent set by his predecessors by composing a eulogy in honour of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Additionally, he diligently submitted his written work to the Kangxi Emperor on multiple occasions (Fu, ed. 2000: 104) . Regrettably, neither his appeal nor his literary contributions reached the Emperor directly. In a parallel effort, another distinguished Hui scholar, Jin Tianzhu, who held a prominent position within the Hanlin Academy (the Royal Academy), authored a book titled "Qing Zhen Shi Yi" (Answers to Doubts on Islam) in 1738. This book aimed to elucidate the foundational tenets of Islam for the Qing Qianlong Emperor (Fu, ed. 2000: 107).

The Islamic dawah carried out by Hui Islamic scholars during the Ming-Qing era played a vital role in safeguarding the Hui Muslims' Islamic faith and preserving their Muslim identity. Both Jingtang Jiaoyu and Chinese translating and writing Islamic texts movement significantly enhanced and solidified religious understanding and consciousness within Hui Muslim communities. Furthermore, their efforts in engaging with non-Muslim Confucian literati through Han Kitab propagated Islamic principles and helped reduce misunderstandings about Islam and Hui Muslims. Consequently, Hui Muslims and Islam were tolerated at certain extent, and allowed to coexist with Confucian culture in non-Muslim Han Chinese society.

Yusuf Chang (1987) pointed out that:

> Islam, Judaism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Zoroastrianism came to Tang China at about the same time. But by the end of the Ming Dynasty, Islam was the only faith which survived, developed, gained strongholds, evolved into a Sinicized minority and obtained permanent ethnic membership in the formation of the Chinese nation. The other four religions either went underground or disappeared in the 14th century (62).

CONCLUSION

The historical journey of Hui Muslims as a minority community within China, particularly during the Ming-Qing era, highlights their exceptional wisdom of coexistence. Faced with the challenges of maintaining their Islamic faith and preserving their unique Muslim identity in a predominantly non-Muslim Han Chinese society, Hui Muslims demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability.

Two main strategies contributed to their successful coexistence: external accommodation policy and dawah with wisdom. Through external accommodation policy, the Hui Muslim adapted to the dominant Chinese culture by changing external cultural elements while keeping the core Islamic principles and values intact.

Simultaneously, Dawah with wisdom, which encompassed Islamic education through Jingtang Jiaoyu and Chinese translating and writing Islamic texts movement, played a crucial role in strengthening and preserving Hui Muslims' Islamic faith and sustaining Muslim identity. Equally significant was Hui Muslims' engagement with non-Muslim Confucian literati through the dissemination of the Han Kitab. This bridge between two distinct cultures and faiths helped to dispel misconceptions about Islam and increased the mainstream Chinese society's tolerance towards Islam and Hui Muslims.

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