

# ISLAM AND CHINESNESS

## A Closer Look at Minority Moslems in Modern China

### Historiography

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#### Abstract

*This paper will address a historiographical review on how non-Chinese scholars, mostly those Western specialists, describe minority Moslem of Hui in the scholarly narration of modern China. Four scholarly works on China Moslems are comparatively discussed. Although the Hui have formally been recognized as the minority group within the Han majority, Chinese historical materials on Hui are not significant. Recently, works on Hui either written by local or non-Chinese scholars remain artificial, but they are necessarily important to be explored. There has been dominantly known scholars consider two perspectives in dealing with Islam and Chinesness in China, the compatibility and incompatibility of Islam with the Chinese tradition and values, where both are respectively represented by the minority Hui and the majority Han. Finally, in term of understanding Chinese Moslem in modern China, the paper will urge the importance of deploying mixed perspectives and of making Chinese-centered perspective the matter of writing local history while incorporating the minority within the wider historical narration of the majority of Han and the Islamic world.*

*[Artikel ini akan menyajikan pembahasan historiografi tentang bagaimana ilmuwan non-Cina (maksudnya Barat) menjelaskan keberadaan kaum minoritas Muslim Cina (Hui) dalam penulisan sejarah Cina modern. Empat karya ilmuwan Barat tentang Muslim Cina tersebut akan dibandingkan.*

*Sekalipun kelompok Hui Muslim secara formal telah diakui sebagai bagian dari mayoritas Han, narasi sejarah tentang Hui masih kalah banyak dibandingkan dengan kelompok mayoritas. Karya-karya yang ada saat ini tentang Hui baik ditulis oleh ahli asli Cina maupun asing masih belum memadai, tetapi penting untuk disajikan. Terdapat dua pendekatan di kalangan akademisi yang dominan digunakan, yakni kesesuaian dan ketidaksesuaian Islam dan tradisi Cina dalam menjelaskan keberadaan Islam dan Cina yang diwakili masing-masing oleh kelompok Hui dan kelompok Han. Setelah membandingkan keempat karya akademisi non-Cina atas Hui, akan ditutup dengan usulan pentingnya menggunakan berbagai pendekatan dalam memahami sejarah lokal Hui, yang sepatutnya peranan mereka harus lebih ditonjolkan dalam konteks keterkaitan antara minoritas dengan sejarah mayoritas dan dunia Islam.]*

**Keywords:** *Islam, Hui, Han, Modern China, Umma*

## **Introductory**

The bias of Western missionaries and travelers of the 19th and of the 20th Centuries on the narration of Chinese Moslems (Hui) has been obvious. Such unsatisfactorily representation of this minority Moslem group remains continues in the following era. As pointed by Jianping Wang, a Chinese expert on Hui's history, although there are academic efforts accomplished by both local and Western scholars, their inquiries on Hui groups still consist of serious problems. Considering scholarly works on Hui groups in the last two decades—now has been three decades—for instance, Wang asserts, while local Chinese scholars' accounts on Hui groups remain having serious methodological problem, Western scholars' "almost entirely independence on Chinese scholarly works, and the often one-sided nature of the material available from China" are considered as part of disadvantages of Western scholarly efforts on this group. In addition, cultural gap between China and the West together with ideological bias caused by the Cold War apparently

mark their works.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from such disadvantages, many Western scholarly works on Hui group, however show their academic balance and objectivities. To know the way those Western scholars represent this minority group of Hui and Islam in the history of modern China will be giving a helpful understanding to current discourse on Islam in modern China.

The notion of historiography in this paper does not strictly refer to historical works as a discipline in social science, but rather to related works on minority Chinese written by Western scholars, particularly those who were academically trained in American universities. For this regard, I consider four books dealing with Moslem community in more contemporary modern China to be assessed comparatively. Questions pertaining to Chineseness and Islam and the position of those Hui Moslems within modern (Han) China will be addressed through examining the perspective those scholars interpreting and positioning the minority group, namely Hui, within the history of China.

### **A Brief on China and Islam**

The connection of Islam and Chineseness has been remarkably apparent in the history of China. It has been such as scholarly debates in various academic disciplines, for the long run of engagement of the minority Moslem in the history of predominantly China. Modern political circumstances have made discourses on Chineseness and Islam in modern China history much ignored. A similar phenomenon also takes place in several countries where Chinese community is ubiquitous, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, for example, although the presence of Chinese travelers and traders, to some extents, cannot be separated from the coming of Islam in the archipelago, the political circumstances prior to the foundation of

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<sup>1</sup> Jianping Wang, "Concord and Conflict: The Hui Community of Yunnan Society in a Historical Perspective", in *Lund Studies in African and Asian Religion*, Vol. 11, 1996, p. 28-9.

the country, particularly in regard to the position of Chinese community within the nation-state of Indonesia, for some reason, has made the minority Chinese group likely excluded from the national history of the country.

Apparently, in the history of Islam the position of China has been a distinct one. Moslems' peculiar impression on China can be flashed back to the prophet Muhammad's say, "Do seek the knowledge until China." The prophet's statement has been widely known among his followers across the globe to consider China as the place of the knowledge the prophet urged them to seek for.<sup>2</sup> This means that China had been known among Moslems in the period of early Islam as one source of knowledge Moslems had to reach.

On the other hand, the presence of Islam in China has been accepted by China, as shown by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, professor of history at New York University. According to him, the history of Islam in China has been well documented by a Chinese manuscript, namely *Huibui yuanlai* (Origin of the Hui), printed in ca. 1712. According to this document, an invitation of a Chinese emperor reached the Prophet of Islam by which his companions came into China. As quoted by Benite:

One night the emperor Tai Zong (626-49) of the Tang dynasty dreamt that a roof beam of his golden palace was collapsing. The roof beam nearly smashed his head, but it was intercepted and pushed back by a man standing to his right hand side of his bed. The man wore a green robe, and a white turban was wound around his hand. Alarmed, the emperor upon waking immediately summoned his counselors. One of them, Xu Mao, knew at once what the problem was: The empire was in danger; this was the meaning of the falling roof of beam. The strange man was Hui, a Moslem from the Western Regions [xiyu, i.e. the Islamic lands.] In conclusion, the great Tang Empire needed the Hui people for its defense.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It has been widely known among Moslems that once upon time the Prophet ever said to his companions, "Seek the knowledge though to China".

<sup>3</sup> Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "From Literaty to Ulama: The Origins of Chinese Muslim Nationalist Historiography", in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 4, Vol. 9, January 2004, p. 83.

As story went on, Benite says, the Ta Zong emperor sent his envoy to Arabia asking the Prophet Muhammad to send a delegation of Moslem to come to China to save the empire. Further, the Prophet sent three thousand Moslems led by his noble companion Sad ibn Abū Waqqās (in the text, *sababa* Wan Gesi.) Having arrived at the palace, as document narrates, Sa'd and the emperor engaged in a discussion on Islam and Confucianism (*zan kong bi sheng*.) According to the emperor, Confucianism and Islam were compatible with one another. The story ends with a statement that today living Moslems in China (i.e., the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) were the direct descendent of these early Moslems sent by the Prophet. Similarly, as noted by Liau Sanjie (ca. 1653-1720), a Chinese Moslem scholars and teacher from Nanjing, that Hui are the children of Moslems sent to China by the Prophet Muhammad and their (Han) Chinese wives.<sup>4</sup> Today this Moslem group has been recognized as one of minority group in modern China, namely Hui.

As the history of China ever changes over centuries, the history of Moslems in the country has also been influenced by its political and cultural circumstances. The most seemingly un-ending debate on Islam and Chinese is the position of Chinese Moslems (Hui) in modern state of China. As Islam and Chinese civilization of Confucianism have differences in politics and social principles, the incorporation of Hui community into Chinese secular state has resulted in various academic discourse. Debates on the root of Hui can be considered as one of those current discourses in contemporary China. Questions have rouse regarding to Hui: Have the Hui fully assimilated into the Han majority? Are they truly Chinese or foreigners in China? How do they assimilate into majority of Han while they have a plenty of differences? how do they identify their identity, and how do they response the state's policy of *minzu* (nationality.)

### **Some Western Accounts on Islam and Chinesness: Incompatibility versus Compatibility of Islam**

There are two major perspectives on Islam and Chinese in modern

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83 & 4.

China: the compatibility of Islam with Chinese, notably Confucianism, and incompatibility of Islam with it. The notion of incompatibility of Islam and Chineseness has been shown much by Raphael Israeli's works,<sup>5</sup> while the later notion can be found in more contemporary work of Dru C. Gladney. Non-doctrinal perspective addressed by Dru C Gladney has been widely followed by Jonathan N. Lipman and Michael Dillon as each work will be discussed soon.

To begin with, in his spelling *Chinese Islam*, Israeli points out that since Islam and Chinese civilization have many different principles, Moslems have hardly incorporated into the majority of Han, which is predominantly the foundation of the nation state of China. In general, such incompatibility of Islamic tenets with Confucianism has colored the history of anti-Moslem sentiments in China since its early history. Such contradiction can be originally found in the period of Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) once Moslem from Central and Western Asia were pushed into China through Mongol invasion. The rise of Moslems in higher position within Chinese society, as the consequence of civil service policy of the invasion, engendered hatred and enmity between the coming Moslems and the indigenous.<sup>6</sup> This disharmony of Moslems and non-Moslems contributed further social and political clashes between two groups in periods after. In the seventeenth-century of Qing dynasty (1644-1912), for instance, Moslems' rebellions in Northwest and Southwest of China continued until the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

According to Israeli, the difference of basic tenets of Islam and

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<sup>5</sup> Israeli's current work, *Islam in China*, published in 2002, is apparently collection of his writings on Islam and Chineseness published in various publications. Its first chapter, "Moslems in China: The Incompatibility between Islam and the Chinese Order," from which the writer refers to, for example, appeared at first in *Tong Pao*, Vol. LXIII, No. 4-5, 1978, 296-323, then republished by Brill Publisher. See Raphael Israeli, *Islam in China: Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, and Politics* (New York, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), p. x.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Confucianism, not ethnic solidarity as many said, is the major reason Chinese Moslems (Hui) remain not fully Chinese. The principle of filial piety (*xiao*), or Confucian ethical system related to worshipping the ancestors, seemed to be contradiction to Islamic teaching of personal loyalty towards only God (Allah), or *tauhid* (unity of God.)<sup>8</sup>

As the *xiao* principle becomes the center of social and political collectivity among Han, Hui community with their *tauhid* principle, on the other side, apparently manifests in a political solidarity that links them up with the notion of *umma* (Islamic universal community.) The concept of *umma*, to some extent, made Moslems community feeling ‘alien people’ in China. Islamic solidarity, which is rooted in their Islamic teachings, led them to be closer to Moslems in other part of the globe than to their neighbors in China.<sup>9</sup> Socially, in addition to this different basic principle, the prohibition of eating pork for Moslems also contributes to elevate Hui’s feeling culturally different from the majority of Han.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of *khilafah* (Islamic conception of political unity among Moslems) is another Islamic principle that obstacles Hui to incorporate into Chinese national political system. Following this *khilafah* concept, Hui’s submission to their *imam* (religious leaders), Israeli says, enriches their cultural differences above to integrate to Chinese Han tradition of loyalty to both ancestor and a living (modern) leader. From those principles different, Israeli concludes, Hui are unable to become fully Chinese: their religion hampered them to assimilate into dominant culture of Han. To support his conclusion, Israeli adds his work with various stereotypes traveling among Han community towards Hui.

In contrast to Israeli’s perspective of the incompatibility of Islam with Confucianism, Gladney has showed the integration of Hui people into the majority of Han culture. According to Gladney, it is very clear that Moslems in general, and the Hui in particular, may well be engaged

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

in the process of reciprocal notion and mutual understanding between self-identity of Hui and state policy upon them. In his *Moslem Chinese*, Gladney argues that as a minority group Hui has been the most integrated group into the Chinese state and its dominant culture.<sup>11</sup>

The different conclusion between Israeli and Gladney on this matter comes from their different perspectives in putting Hui Moslems in the mainstream of history of China: while Israeli develops his study on Islam and Chinese through theological difference and monolithic Islam, Gladney, presents a picture of harmony of Islam and Chineseness, while opposing westerners widely assumption of monolithic culture of China and of similar picture of Islam with its center in Middle Eastern countries. His focus on the relationship between nationalism and ethnic religious identity among Hui groups makes Gladney's work helpful to understand more contemporary development of Moslems, 'magined community' in modern China as introduced by Benedict Anderson. In this regard, the position of the government of China, which imposes the ethnic minority policy upon Hui groups (*minzu*), and the ways this minority responds has been showed by the author as a way to understand the development of ethnic identity and the character of Islam in China alike. From these two books one sided Islam vis-a-vis multiple sides of Islam are scholarly presented. The most interesting finding of Gladney's work is the Chinese Islam has its own character if compared to those the rest of Islamic world. Localization of Islamic universal tenets brought by its bearers with that of Chinese local, as occurred in other countries, made Islam in China 'another center' of Islam. Through this localized intention Gladney's work can also be analyzed.

In Gladney's account both external influences upon Moslem community and internal factors of Han, such as state policy upon Islam, have enabled Moslems in China to have various model of expression

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<sup>11</sup> Dru C. Gladney, *Moslem Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People Republic* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 34.



and interpretation of Islam in modern China.<sup>12</sup> In so doing, compared to Islam's integrative notion into the majority of Han culture, those stereotypes on minority Moslems is not considered by Galdney as a dominant cultural expression within the relationship between the Han and Hui. In this sense, religion (Islam) is not perceived as a static belief; it is a dynamic one that may manifest in different ways regarding to social and political construction.

Furthermore, such integrative notion of Islam into dominant culture of Han can be found in Gladney's assessment on the development of Moslem movements in China, before he draw Hui community in dealing with Chineseness in four regions of modern China. His basic assessment on Hui is on the way Hui addresses their self-identification and their impression on the others, Han. In brief, Galdney's study is accomplished in order to assess Moslem ethnic nationalism and identity in modern China. Through his study Gladney, less attaching with basic different tenets of Islam and Confucianism, draws how Chinese Moslems articulate the notion of Islamic identity (*qing-zhen*/pure and true) with Chinese tradition.

Following Joseph Fletcher's work on Islamic nature in China, Gladney classifies Islamic movements in China into four stages, namely four tides of Islam in China: traditionalists, sufis movements, scripturalist and modernist and ethnic nationalism. The fourth tide can be noted as Gladney's term in order to refer to more contemporary Hui's religious movement as they proudly showed through their long march to protest Salman Rusdie's satanic verses in the nineties. In addition to these classifications, Gladney also enriches these Hui's diverse religious tones with widely used religio-sociological terms: fundamentalist, dualist, transformationists, reformist and synthesists.<sup>13</sup> Hence, different from Israeli's, Islam appears in various faces.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36-62.

From these religious models of expressions Gladney, employing an ethnographic research, examines Hui's self identification resulted from their self-examination and state recognition from which Hui has emerged and determined themselves as a certain group within Chinese community, a *minzu*.<sup>14</sup> Through interview and observations, Gladney has succeeded to comparatively disclose Hui's ethno-religious identity in different regions in China: Ningxia Hui autonomous region where a Sufi village of Na located, Hui's urban enclave of Oxen Street in the capital city of Beijing, the rural village in Changying Hui autonomous village in the Hebei North China plain outside of Beijing and Chendai Ding lineage in the Southeast coast in Fujian province.

No less important of Gladney's anthropological efforts is his comparative features on Hui's different socio-economic, education and cultural expression in each region of the research. During three years field study Gladney discussed how the Hui express their identity in these four different regions.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Hui's understanding and interpretation of their distinct concept of *qing-zhen* (pure and True) has guided Gladney to examine Hui's cultural strategies in those regions with their social and economic differences.

Ample examples of this different articulation of cultural identity of Hui are showed by Gladney. In Na sufi villages the importance of Islam can be seen in the phenomenon of resurgence of Islamic practices, such daily prayers, dress, sufi practices led by sufis masters or learned Moslems (*ulama*) and so forth, and religious conservatism under the imposition of liberalized policy. However, in response to the liberal policy Islam in this region appears cannot be easily classified into a fanatic revivalism; rather as a rerooting movement of Moslem community to their Moslem ancestors of northwestern ethno-religious identity. In this sense, Hui's identity is identified with the notion of purity (*qing*) which is usually tied

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

to the truth (*zhen*) and authenticity of their religious heritage.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to Na sufi villages heavily Islamic expression, Hui Moslems in Urban Oxen of Beijing reflected their *qing-zhen* in very different ways. As minority in huge urban area, most of them do not concern with Islamic teachings and its practices and do not know their Moslem ancestors. The most common different between the Han majority and Hui is eating pork. Therefore, rather than mosques, Hui's restaurants (*qing-zhen* restaurants) in the city of Beijing has appeared as the cultural dissemination. Their professions as workers in factories made them unable to pray five times a day as their colleagues in Navillages and Moslems in general. In weekly ritual (mid-day Friday sermon) only small number of Hui workers come to the mosques to pray and listen sermons from imāms, though there are 40 mosques in Beijing. Modernization, education and industrialization made Hui more flexible and far from religious rigidity.<sup>17</sup>

Different from these two regions, Hui of Changying, 20 km east of Beijing, because of its restricted interaction with the outsider world, maintained their ethno-religious identity through intermarriage, as a means to protect their *qing-zhen*. For Hui of this region, their great difference from Han showed, in addition to not eating pork, by banning their women to be married by the outsiders other than their Moslem colleagues either in the region or far beyond.<sup>18</sup>

The most culturally different from those regions mentioned above is Hui community in Chendai region of Southern lineages. Their Hui-ness rises as a response to the government policy of *minzu* that questions Hui's ancestry in the area. Since they have not practiced Islamic teachings nor come to the mosques for generation, Chendai Hui have absorbed their Han Chinese's tradition such as worshiping ancestry and eating pork alike, but deny to be recognized as non-Hui. Their Hui-ness can

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118-69.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173-89.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230-231.

be identified from their claim of the origin. According to them, their family roots were foreign Moslems from Arabian Peninsula and Persian region coming to China in early centuries. Their descents names were Moslems but the Ming dynasty changed their names into Jin and other Chinese names. In addition to this claim of originality, the presence of many tombstones of Arabian and Persian ancestors in Southern region (Quanzhou, Guanzhou and Yangzhou) is claimed as the importance of Islam and their ancestors' role in early China history. Nevertheless, though these living historical sites have maintained the relationship between Hui and the government policy upon their existence, since they are not shared in common with other Hui Moslem in different parts of China, the government does not fully recognize many individuals within this minimalist Hui as members of Hui nationality.<sup>19</sup>

From Gladney's assessment on Hui groups in those four regions, Islam, in dealing with the Chinesness, is presented as one entity with various faces of expression regarding to different social contexts. In this sense, Islam, which is articulated by Hui through *qing-zhen*, is only one marker of cultural identity of Hui people in modern China. The existence of government policy in those different regions also contributes to different articulations of Hui's ethnic identity.

In brief, accordingly to Hui Community in Northwest China, Islam has been taken as the essential marker for their identity. For Na sufi members, to be Hui is to be Moslem, while for Hui in Southeastern lineage, the genealogical descent is the most important element for their identity from which to be Hui is to be linked up to their foreign descent Moslem ancestors while eating pork and worshipping the ancestors like their neighboring Han. By the same token, while to keep Hui's distinct cultural tradition of the pork taboo, together with their entrepreneurship and craft specializations, is considered as the most proper way to maintain their Hui-ness in Urban regions of Beijing, Hui community in Northern

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264-6.

rural area isolated from Han majority have a distinct tradition to prevent their purity (*qing-zhen*). For them, to maintain the purity of their identity is expressed through maintaining internal social cohesiveness through ethnic marriage endogamy. Indeed, this intermarriage has led Hui to establish national networks among them in the northern area.<sup>20</sup>

Despite of their different ethno-genesis expression, according to Gladney, in response to state policy and local tradition Hui of these different regions have showed their willingness to close together. This kind of pan-ethnic nationalization, as noted by Benedict Anderson, Gladney emphasizes, has colored the Hui's ethnic identity within Chinese nation state.<sup>21</sup>

### **Historical Trajectory and Moslem Nationalism**

Islam and Chineseness in China have also been presented through historical evidence and Moslem nationalist perspectives. Both perspectives have shown the history of long integration of Hui into the Han majority. In a more general feature of Islam in China Michael Dillon's *China's Moslem Hui Community* shows the integration of Islam into China history through its historical trajectory. Although Dillon does not specifically draw Islam, rather to disclose a Moslem ethnic group in China, his valuable explanation on historical traces of Hui's present in China, beginning from their migration from the central Asia to their settlements and their breeding in China serves a convincing linkage of Islam and contemporary Chinese.

Much relying on Hui's own accounts on their existence in China while critical towards foreign sources, Dillon turns out Islam in China by making the coming of earlier Moslem traders in south east coast of China in the seventh or eight centuries AD the demarcation of his narrative. In addition to those primary local sources, to supplement the history of the presence of Islam in China Dillon also employs works on Hui history

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321 & 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

written by the Chinese Communist Party and Ma Tong's extensive work on the development of religious practices among Moslems in Linxia in recent period. Ma Tong is a scholar in North-West University in Xi'an whose articles on Chinese Moslems were published in Green Leaves journal. Since the 1950's he had engaged in academic research on Moslem minority sects in the region.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Israeli's perspective of the incompatibility of Islam with Chineseness, Dillon, based on historical evidence, concludes that there is no contradiction between Islam and Chineseness. Chinese practice of filial piety (*xiao*), for instance, is not understood in contradictive notion to Islam. Rather, it is valued as an assimilation of Islamic tradition of respecting the elderly (*birr al-wālidayn*) or visiting Moslem saints (*ziyāra*) to Chinese tradition of *xiao*. Indeed, according to Dillon, although those Hui community have social difficulties to become fully Chinese as asserted by Hudson, in fact, they are able to fully participate either in their internal community or in wider Chinese social life when they were allowed to do so. Since Dillon also draws cultural barriers faced by Hui in their integration into the Han majority, it seems similar with Gladney's conclusion that the level of integration of those diverse Hui community in earlier eras was varied individually and collectively from one dynasty to other dynasties.<sup>23</sup>

To begin with his historical narrative, Dillon starts to look back Hui's shared history in China by mentioning earlier Indian Ocean trade route connecting Sassanian and Arab traders and China and Moslem grave stone as historical evidence. The seventh-century Arab was noted as the starting point of the coming of Islam into Chinese land. Furthermore, the invasion of Mongol in the thirteenth century can be noted as a significant historical event through which Moslems migrants from central Asia were increasingly promoted to handle strategic positions within

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Dillon, *China's Moslem Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), p. xx-xxi.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

Chinese court under Yuan dynasty.<sup>24</sup> As a result, those earlier Moslems community not only engaged in political affairs within the court but also in local farming and agricultural activities from which they developed their urban settlements. In Yunnan, for instance, the movement of central Asian Moslem was associated with a Moslem aristocrat Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Dīn, circa from 1210 to 1279. After sent to Yunnan by the Mongol authority, in order to recover social integration in the region, while building mosques for Moslems, Sayyid Ajall kept establishing and renovating Chinese temples and Confucian education systems in northern and central China.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the social impact of Mongol invasion can also be looked at in the increasing number of intermarriage between those of central Asian Moslems with Chinese women.

The period of Ming dynasty (1368-1644) was one of the greatest era for Hui community. Under Ming authority those of central Asian Moslem migrants were no longer recognized as, referring to Donald Leslie's term, the outsiders or "Moslems in China", but as integrated Chinese or "Chinese Moslems". According to Dillon, "From this time onwards it is possible to speak of a group of Moslem Chinese with common bonds who can be called the Hui."<sup>26</sup> From this time also the cultural and political integration of Hui into Han majority became more increased, which was characterized by Hui leaders and scholars' engagement in Ming dynasty. Such cultural integration can also be shown from changing Moslem names of those of Hui Moslem from their Persian, Turkish, and Arabic names with Chinese words. As Ming dynasty accommodated Hui's social and political importance, the spread of Islam followed by the rise of Hui communities and the emergence of Islamic schools were obvious across China, though the level of such cultural integration was not a single notion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 & 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28 & 31.

The relationship between Hui and Han in Manchu rule (1644-1911) has rarely been presented by historians in an integration notion through which Moslem rebellion and political resistances are dominant. In contrast to such a sweeping generalization, Dillon's book tries to put such "conflicts" into very careful consideration. According to the author, rather than direct confrontation of Hui against the Manchu Qing, internal conflicts within Hui community that led the central government to deal with them for political stability seemed to a more appropriate angle to understand widely assumed antagonist feature between Chinese and the majority of Han under Manchu power. What happened between two groups, in fact, was a complex realm where ethnic and religious affiliation, classes, and communal violence had interacted. According to Dillon, rather as separate rebellions, Moslems often joined Chinese rebel groups, so to identify those of rebellions as Islamic is difficult. More surprisingly, in regard to those rebellions historical sources hardly distinguish specifically between Hui and Han.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than presenting Hui and Han groups in opposition manner, Dillon draws distinctively the role of Moslem scholars and Sufi masters (spiritual Moslem teachers) in the development of cultural integration of Islam into dominant Chinese tradition. Wang Daiyu, a Moslem scholar of Southern China, for example, translated Islamic texts into Chinese as a means to introduce Islam among Han elites, trying to convince that Islam was not inferior to Confucianism. Wang Daiyu's intellectual efforts were followed by other Hui scholars such as San Jie and Liu Zhi. Indeed, Liu's work on Islamic teachings which use Confucian terminologies, such as Islamic philosophy (*Tianfang xingli*), Islamic ritual (*Tianfang dianli*), the last prophet of Islam (*Tianfang zhibheng shilu*), have been recognized as part of Chinese scripture (*Hanjing*).<sup>29</sup> In addition, Dillon addresses the development and contribution of Sufism associations in the spread of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43-4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.



Islam in China from its very earlier period to modern time, together with their diverse thought and frictions that, to some extent, influenced the articulation of Islam in modern China.

The integrative perspective of Islam can also be found in Jonathan N. Lipman's *Familiar Strangers*. Different from the previous authors, Lipman has succeeded to present Chinese Islam in a quite different feature; he tries to discover inner dynamism within differing groups of Moslems in regional level together with their local nationalist figures. More than as a local narrative of Islam in a part of China, namely the frontier Gansu, the book can also be considered as a historical account from within majority of Moslem living in the edge of mainland China.

Escaped from the hegemonic narrative of Chinese history that makes its *Minzu* as the greatest determination to classify human beings into civilized (Han) and uncivilized guys (non Han), Lipman considers what he calls "Sino-Moslems" through their own history differing from the fabricated general pattern of history of China. Therefore, after he assessed bit on Islam and Chineseness in China, Lipman progressively moves to narrow his narrative into a regionally frontier ground, local, and ends up with individual story.<sup>30</sup> Through this book Lipman wants to say that Moslem Chinese in Gansu, though they are minority and viewed as strangers by many, they have confidently shared with their Han colleagues in the development of the history of their nation, China.

To attain this aim, Lipman assessed historical materials, mostly dynasties' documents dealing with those Moslems since earlier centuries onwards and enriched them by observation and interviews Moslem leaders in Gansu on issues related to state policy upon the minority groups in modern China. As the central powers have produced different terms to designate those of minority groups over centuries, in this book Lipman contextually uses Hui term for limited Chinese modern period.

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<sup>30</sup> Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Moslems in Norwest China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. xxxiv.

As Gansu has both agriculture and nomad tradition, geographically it is a region where various external cultures, particularly from the central Asia where Islam came from, might easily interact and acculturate. Its physical feature has led Gansu to have been a fertile land for frontier tradition people with different languages, such as Tibetan, Salars, Chinese-speaking Moslem, Mongols and Mongolian-speaking Moslems, might share in the development of a distinct tradition in China. For this given cultural realm of Gansu, in order to avoid misrepresentation among minority groups Lipman emphasizes the need for study social system of those frontier people, coupled with their adaptation to the outsiders and their way of self-identification.<sup>31</sup>

To begin with, Lipman draws the way Islam came to China in its very early century during Tang dynasty (618-1279). However, very critical to myth narration on the presence of Islam brought by Sa'd ibn Waqqās in the period of the prophet, as drawn by Benite above, Lipman depicts the coming of Islam in a more sophisticated way. The spread of Islam has been placed by the author in the earlier economic connection played by Yangzi River and Grand Canal, where Moslems and non Moslems traders from Central and West Asia engaged in their main maritime trading activities. At the same time, such economic networks also interlinked with the Silk Road trade in the northwest and maritime trading in southeast coasts where Arabian and Persian merchants played a significant role in Chinese economy of Tang dynasty.<sup>32</sup>

Such trading environments brought Moslem sojourners more than instrumental for Chinese economy but also politically important to Chinese politics. As a resulted, after three generations resided in China, many Moslem figures were noted to have held official positions in Tang Dynasty, particularly within the Southern Song (1127-1279) of the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> Similar positions were also noted in the period of

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Yuan dynasty (1279-1368).

It was Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century had made the political and economic position of Moslem sojourners more increased. As noted by Lipman, continuing their natural way of economic engagement in Chinese politics in the twelfth century, the presence of Mongol, to some extent, made those of Sino Moslems more important in the periods after Tang and Yuan dynasties, notably Ming dynasty (1368-1644.) As far as those of Moslem migrants involved deeply in Chinese economy and politics in the seventeenth century, the role of Moslem preachers under Sufi organizations, or Gedimu (Arabic *qadim*, meaning old) and their along (Arabic *imam*) emerged as important element in the spread of Islam and the foundation of Sino Moslem community in northwest China. In addition, the existence of Naqshbandi sufism order, originally from central Asia, with their Islamic curriculum (*jingtang jiaoyu*) furthermore became the center of Islamic education. In modern period, such sufi orders, or Islamic spiritual organizations, have proliferated in various Moslem organizations and individual charities, one of them is *Hu Dengzhou* from Shaanxi province who is very concerns with Islamic education for Moslem generation in the province.<sup>34</sup>

According to Lipman, the role of sufism order in the seventeenth-century Islam in China can be referred to its prominent figure, notably Muhammad Yusuf from Althishar in central Asia, who traveled eastward seeking disciples in Turfan and Hami, before crossed to Ming's frontier of Gansu. With his son, called Khoja Afaq, known as Hidayatullāh (*Xidayetonglabei*) moved farther into northwest China in 1670s. Both were Sufi teachers teaching Jalaluddin Rumi's, *Mathnawī*, a Persian Sufism treatise, to their students in Naqshbandī order. In China, Naqshbandī metamorphosed under the name of Khafiyya (*Ch Hufeiyē or Hufuyē*, meaning silent.) Although Khoja Afaq lived in Gansu he had regular visits to Xining (today Qinghai province) where people from neighboring

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

regions were attending to his Sufis sermon. In Gansu Khoja's teaching were continued by his students: Ma Tong and Abū al-Futūh Ma Laichi. The second came from military family, his grandfather and father were respected military generals in Ming dynasty and the Qing.<sup>35</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century northwest China had received Islam from Central Asia introduced by those sufi masters (*menbuan*).

As the coming of sufi masters was characterized by their different teaching, the reputation of Khafiyya in Gansu had been interrupted by the presence of it Jahriyya sufism order. In contrast to Khafiyya's teaching, Jahriyya order was more emphasized on exposure of chanting (*dhikr*), or remembrance of Allah. This basic difference in fact led both to have discredited each other and caused social disorder among their members. Since such social disorders have been correlated to economic and political stability, the intervention of the central authority was inevitable. As noted by Lipman, once the central power's policy failed to satisfy each group, other social disorder and rebellions were the result.

From this socio-religious competition between these two Moslem groups Lipman has successfully shown how Moslem rebellions against the central government should be put on its own social context. Therefore, what Lipman dealt with inner Moslems in Gansu can change a widely accepted view of long lasting antagonism of Chinese Moslems towards the majority of Han or the emperors, as narrated in most of Chinese historiography. Political affiliation, such as highly military and political positions held by Moslem leaders in local regions, and syncretic efforts of those of Sufi teachers to integrate Islamic teaching and Confucianism can be accounted as earlier political as well as cultural integration of Moslems in frontier Gansu into their homeland civilization. In addition, the engagement of Moslem leaders from Gansu and other region in Chinese national struggle against Japanese invasion can also be considered as the convincing continuation of Sino-Moslems nationalism in modern China.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64 & 6.

## Conclusion

In sum, there are differing perspectives in looking at Islam and Chinesness in the history of China: incompatibility of Islam with Chinesness, or Confucianism, for its very different foundational doctrines and compatibility of Islam with Confucianism that has led to result in the integration of Islam and Chineseness. From this integration perspective, then, historians have proved it through presenting historical trajectory of the role of Islam and Chinese Moslem nationalists in a wider history of China. Many scholarly works has been done based on this perspective by which the position of minority groups more equal and more proportional in making their own history. In this sense therefore, considering what promoted by Cohen in a need for a China-centered history of China, instead of heavily western centrist on history of China,<sup>36</sup> what has been done by those integrative scholars above can be considered as an academic attempt of making the history of minority group, say Hui, inseparable from the history of the Han majority. For further academic inquiry on Hui community, considering its cultural diversity and social ramification, scholars may situate to employ combined scholarly perspectives, together with making Hui's history interconnecting with Han majority and Islamic world history.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 153 & 4.

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