

HISTORY OF METHODOLOGY OF ISLAMIC
DA'WAH AMONG THE HUI MUSLIMS DURING
THE MING-QING DYNASTIES AND REPUBLIC
OF CHINA – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the methodologies of Islamic Da'wah used by the Hui Muslims during the Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China. The goal of the study is to provide important insights into suitable methodologies of Da'wah for the Hui Muslim Da'wah practitioners to cope with the current situations in People's Republic of China (PRC) through exploring and analyzing the historical methodology of Islamic Da'wah in Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China. The researcher has employed historical, descriptive, analytical and comparative methods in the entire research to achieve the research objectives. The study has focused on the following topics to answer its research questions: the origin of the Hui Muslims in China and their historical background before the Ming-Qing dynasties, the Hui's social and political conditions and their methodologies of Islamic Da'wah in Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China, the similarities and differences between methodologies of Da'wah in these two periods, and finally, the implications to the present time. The study finds out that the external accommodation policy and adaptive Da'wah methodology were two general Da'wah strategies that were implemented by the Hui Muslims throughout the Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China. The Hui Muslims used internal, covert and individual Da'wah approaches to cope with unfavorable social and political conditions in Ming-Qing period. Whereas external, overt and organizational Da'wah approaches were employed in Republic of China when the social and political conditions became generally favorable to Islam and the Hui Muslims. Contrasting to non-technological and national characteristics of methodology of Da'wah in Ming-Qing dynasties, Republic of China period shows technological and transnational characteristics. This study concludes that the strategies and methodologies of Islamic Da'wah implemented by the Hui Muslims during the Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China are still applicable in PRC today due to the strong similarities between the Ming-Qing-Republic of China period and PRC in terms of culture, social and political conditions. However, to cope with current situation in PRC the methodology of Islamic Da'wah must take the current social and political conditions into consideration, and should be adaptive to current situation in China.

ملخص البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة في منهجيات الدعوة الإسلامية التي استخدمها مسلمو الهوييا خلال عهد أسرة مينغ- تشينغ الحاكمة في جمهورية الصين. الهدف من الدراسة هو تقديم رؤى مهمة ومنهجيات مناسبة للدعوة لممارسي دعوة الهوييا المسلمين للتعامل مع المواقف الحالية في جمهورية الصين الشعبية من خلال استكشاف وتحليل المنهجية التاريخية للدعوة الإسلامية في عهد أسرة مينغ- تشينغ الحاكمة و جمهورية الصين . يتم استخدام الأساليب التاريخية والوصفية والتحليلية والمقارنة لتحقيق أهداف البحث. ركزت الدراسة على الموضوعات التالية للإجابة على تساؤلاتها البحثية. أصل مسلمي الهوييا في الصين وخلفيتهم التاريخية قبل عهد أسرة مينغ- تشينغ وكذلك الظروف الاجتماعية والسياسية لمسلمي الهوييا ومنهجياتهم في الدعوة الإسلامية في عهد مينغ- تشينغ و جمهورية الصين. وأيضا أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين منهجيات الدعوة في هاتين الفترتين وأخيرا، الآثار المترتبة في الوقت الحاضر توصلت الدراسة إلى أن سياسة التكيف الخارجي ومنهجية الدعوة التكيفية كانتا استراتيجيتين عامتين للدعوة تم تنفيذهما من قبل مسلمي الهوييا خلال عهد مينغ- تشينغ. استخدم مسلمو الهوييا مناهج الدعوة الداخلية السرية والفردية للتعامل مع الظروف الاجتماعية والسياسية غير المواتية في فترة مينغ- تشينغ. في حين تم استخدام مناهج الدعوة الخارجية والعلنية والتنظيمية في جمهورية الصين عندما أصبحت الظروف الاجتماعية والسياسية مواتية بشكل عام للإسلام ولمسلمي الهوييا. على النقيض من ذلك الخصائص غير التكنولوجية والوطنية لمنهجية الدعوة في عهد مينغ- تشينغ ، تظهر فترة جمهورية الصين الخصائص التكنولوجية وعابره للوطنية. وخلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن استراتيجيات ومنهجيات الدعوة الإسلامية التي طبقها مسلمو الهوييا خلال عهد أسرة مينغ- تشينغ- جمهورية الصين لا تزال قابلة للتطبيق في جمهورية الصين الشعبية اليوم بسبب أوجه التشابه الكبير بين فترة مينغ-تشينغ- جمهورية الصين وجمهورية الصين الشعبية من الناحية الثقافية والاجتماعية والسياسية. وفي الوضع الحالي في جمهورية الصين الشعبية ، يجب أن تأخذ منهجية الدعوة الإسلامية في الاعتبار الظروف الاجتماعية والسياسية الحالية ، ويجب أن تتكيف مع الوضع الحالي في الصين.

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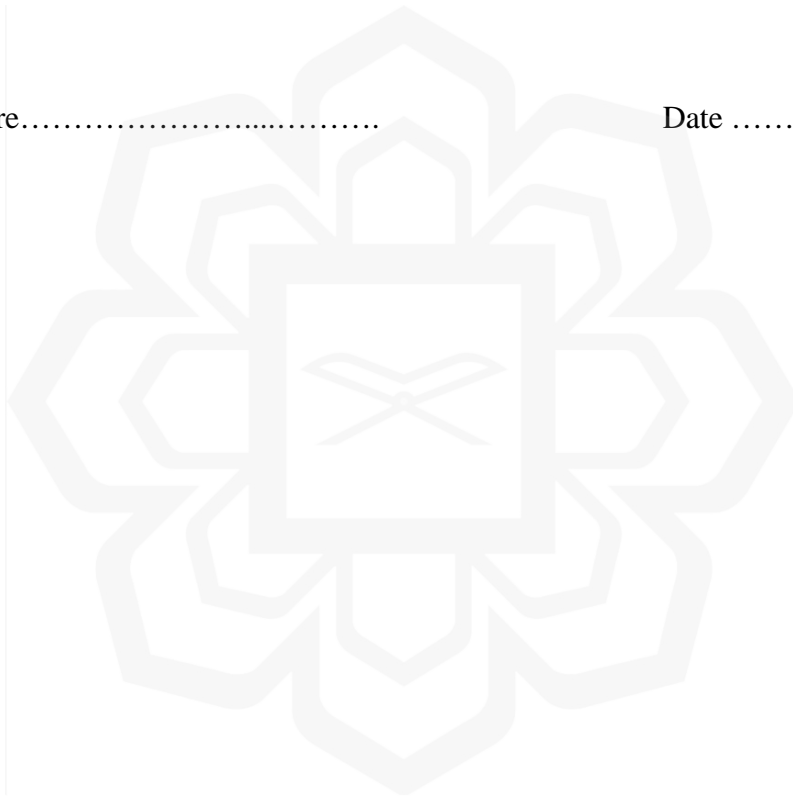
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This dissertation is dedicated to all those who made efforts on the path of Allah, especially to those who have made great sacrifices and contributions to the development of Islam in China, past and present.

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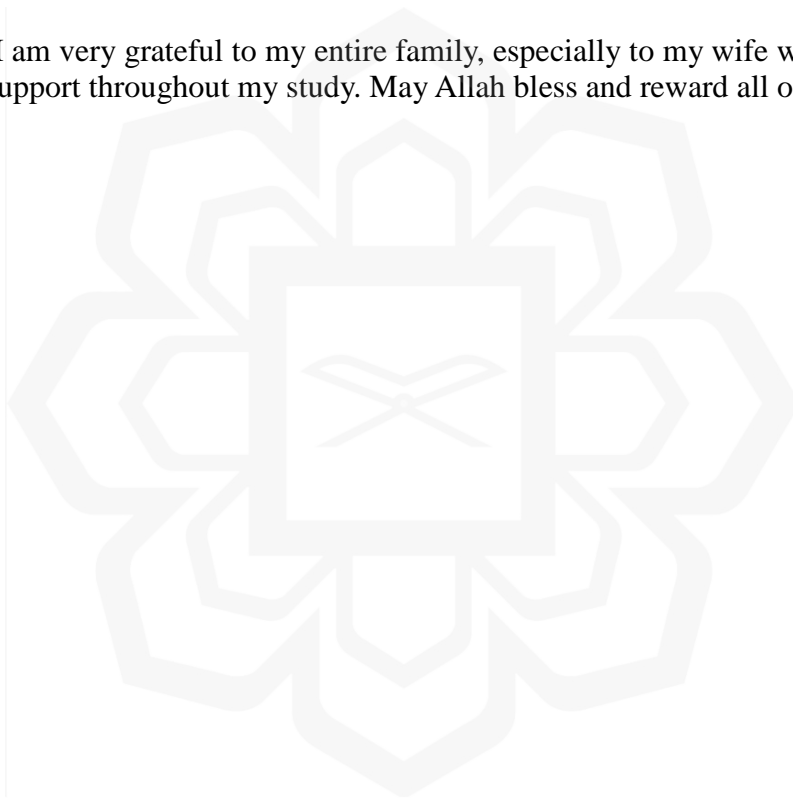


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There are 56 ethnic groups or nationalities in China based on official designation. The largest ethnic group is the Han, who accounts for more than 90% of total population in China. Except a very small number of converts to Islam, the Han is a predominant non-Muslim ethnic group in China. Out of 56 ethnic groups, 10 are Muslim ethnic groups, 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 10 Muslim ethnic groups were more than 23 million¹ by 2010. The Hui Muslim is the largest Muslim minority group whose population was about 10.58 million, accounts for nearly 46% of the total Muslim population in China.

The Hui Muslims in China are descendants of Arab and Persian Muslim merchants in seventh century and Central Asian Muslims who entered China in twelfth

1. This is an official figure. However, this figure is very much questionable. Contemporary scholars have very different opinions about the total population of Muslims in China. According to Syed Khalil Chisti, the total Muslim population in China had already reached 115 million in 1979. Yusuf Chang made a convincing argument about unreliability of Chinese government's official figure. He estimates that the total Muslim population in China is about 40 million by 1982. However, all scholars agree that the accurate figure of Chinese Muslims' population, especially the Hui Muslim, is still a myth. See: Chisti, Syed Khalil, "Muslim Population of Mainland China: An Estimate" *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol, 1, No. 2. (1979/1980) pp. 75-85. Yusuf Chang, "The Hui (Muslim) Minority In China: An Historical Overview" *Journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1987. pp 62-78. Pillsbury, Barbara L.K., "The Muslim Population of China: Clarifying the Questions of Size and Ethnicity" *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol, 3, No. 2. 1981, pp. 35-58. National Bureau of Statistics of China, "The Population Of Nationalities". <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/html/A0201.htm>. Accessed September 5, 2021.

and thirteenth century.² Unlike other Muslim ethnic groups who are distinguished from the Han Chinese and other ethnic groups by virtue of their distinct language and culture, the Hui, who are very much acculturated to the Han Chinese and almost indistinguishable in the physical appearance from the Han due to generations of intermarriage, are differentiated from the Han mainly by their Islamic belief.

Islam played a major and decisive role in the formation of the Hui ethnic group. Lin Song argues that Islam is the core and a main identifier of the Hui's ethnic identity.³ Hudson points out that Islam is the most important way through which the Hui keep their ethnic distinctiveness.⁴ Without Islam, neither could the Hui ethnic group have come to exist, nor could the Hui's ethnic identity have been maintained.

However, immersed in a predominant non-Muslim Han Chinese society who mainly follow Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, the Hui Muslim's foreign origin and Islamic faith have caused numerous troubles for them in their more-than-1300-year-history in China, such as the coercive assimilation in Ming dynasty (1368 -1644 AD), the ethnic genocide in Qing dynasty (1644 -1912AD), the catastrophic anti-religious campaign in Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), etc. to name just a few. Responding to various unimaginable pressures, challenges and difficulties, the Hui Muslims have shown great wisdom, perseverance and resilience in protecting and maintaining their

2. Huizu jianshi bianxiezu, *Huizu jianshi* [Brief History of the Hui]. Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press 1978. p 1.

3. Lin Song, "Lun yisilanjiao zai huizu xingchen zhong de jue dingxin zuoyong" [Discussion About The Decisive Role Of Islam In The Formation Of The Hui Ethnic Group]. *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian*, No. 3, 1983. pp 200-210.

4. Hudson, Mark J. "Religion and Ethnicity in Chinese Islam" *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vo, 8, No. 1, 1987. pp. 156-160

Islamic faith and ethnic identity. Except a few the Hui Muslim communities were assimilated to the Han Chinese, the fundamental elements and practices of Islam have been kept intact and retained among the majority of the Hui Muslims.

China's history has witnessed the Hui Muslim's resurgences along with renaissance and revival of Islam after each great setback and blow. Islamic jintang jiaoyu (Scripture Hall Education) system and Chinese translation and writing of Islamic texts movement emerged after the coercive assimilation during Ming dynasty, the Sufism and the Islamic new culture movement flourished after the ethnic genocide in Qing dynasty, the great development of Islam took place after Cultural Revolution.

In last two decades, however, there has been a growing anti-Muslim sentiment and development of "Hui-phobia" in China. After examining and analyzing 10-years of news reporting in China, Luwei Rose, Luqiu and Fan Yang found that Chinese news reports projected an overall negative view of Muslims, non-Muslim Chinese hold a negative stereotype of Muslims and Islam.⁵ Ma Haiyun observes that since 2000s non-official social media has emerged as a major platform for fomenting and spreading accusations about the Muslims and their loyalty to China. Han supremacism and outright hostility toward Islam and Muslims has increased magnificently especially on two the most popular Chinese social media platforms: *xinlang weibo* (sina micro-blogging) and *weixin* (WeChat).⁶

5. Luwei Rose Luqiu & Fan Yang, "Islamophobia In China: News Coverage, Stereotypes, And Chinese Muslims' Perceptions Of Themselves And Islam". *Asian Journal of Communication*, vol. 28, No. 6, 2018. pp.1-22.

6. Ma Haiyun, "The Anti-Islamic Movement in China". <<https://www.hudson.org/research/15095-the-anti-islamic-movement-in-china>> Accessed July 4, 2021.



Figure 1.1 A non-Muslim Chinese posted on *xinlang weibo* (sina micro-blogging) a picture showing Quran was urinated in the toilet.

The most important and worrisome, however, is a change of political attitude and policy towards Islam and Muslims in China. According to Amnesty International, in China's Xinjiang province, up to one million Muslims were sent to detention centers.⁷ The majority are Uighurs but there are thousands of Hui Muslims too. In December 2018, a 34-year old Arabic school in Pinliang Gansu province was demolished by local authority on the excuse of no legal license.⁸ By the time this research is about to complete, tens of thousands of the Hui mosques' Arab doom style roofs have been demolished and changed to Chinese temple style in so called Islam sinicization campaign.

7. Amnesty International, "Up to one million detained in China's mass re-education drive". <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/china-up-to-one-million-detained/>> Accessed December 24, 2018

8. Mimi Lau, "Chinese Arabic school to close as areas with Muslim populations are urged to study the Xinjiang way" < <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/> > Accessed December 24, 2018.



Figure 1.2 The Hui mosques in China are forced to change Arab Islamic style of architectures to traditional Chinese style.

Under such circumstances, the Hui, as the biggest Muslim minority group in China, is once again facing a big crisis to its very survival.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In recent years Chinese government made a dramatic change in its policy towards Islam and Muslim minorities. Millions of Muslims were sent to the so-called reeducation centers, a great number of Arabic and religious schools were demolished or closed, thousands of the Hui mosques' Islamic architecture style were forced to change to Chinese temple style in a so-called Islam sinicization campaign. While at the meantime, there has been a growing hostility and malicious attacks on the social media from non-Muslim Chinese to Islam and Muslims in general, and the Hui Muslims in particular. Islam and the Hui Muslims in China are once again facing great pressures and

challenges after Cultural Revolution.

The Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China are two the most critical periods in the history of Islam and the Hui ethnic group in China. During this time the Hui Muslims went through various crises from assimilation, discrimination and persecution to genocide, the Hui Muslims' Islamic faith, ethnic identity, and even their life were under threat. However, not only did the Hui Muslim ethnic group survive and grow but also Islam achieved great development in the waves of Islamic revival. One of the most important reasons for such astonishing success is the Hui Muslims kept their Islamic beliefs alive through various kinds of internal and external Da'wah activities, such as education, masjid building, publications and secret preaching etc. What they did and how they did it becomes so relevant a question for all those who concern about the current situations facing the Hui Muslims in China.

This study attempts to explore and examine the history of Islamic Da'wah methodology used by the Hui Muslims during the Ming-Qing dynasties and the Republic of China to protect and preserve their Islamic faith while coping with various kinds of situations and crises in China, consequently to retain their ethnic identity. By studying the methodology of Da'wah and Da'wah activities done by the Hui Muslim pioneers in the past, this study intends to provide important insights into the ways to cope with current situations facing Chinese Muslims in general and the Hui Muslims in particular in China.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant in two aspects. Firstly, based on researcher's humble knowledge there has no research been done about the Islamic Da'wah in China especially related to the Hui Muslims. This study contributes to the literature by filling this gap. Secondly, this study provides some important insights about how the Da'wah was conducted in different social and political settings in the history of China, as such it will help the Hui Muslims in general and Da'wah practitioners in particular to adjust and improve their methodology of Da'wah in order to respond to the current challenges in China accordingly.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Who are the Hui Muslims? What is the historical background of the Hui Muslims before the Ming-Qing dynasties?
2. How were the historical social and political situations faced by the Hui Muslims in Ming-Qing dynasties ? What kind of methodology of Da'wah was employed by the Hui Muslims during this period?
3. How were the historical social and political situations faced by the Hui Muslims in Republic of China ? What kind of the methodology of Da'wah was used by the Hui Muslims during this period?

4. What are the similarities and differences between methodologies of Da'wah in these two different periods?
5. What are important insights on suitable methodology of Da'wah which this study can provide for the Hui Muslim Da'wah practitioners to cope with the current situations in PRC?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the research:

1. To explore the historical background of the Hui Muslims before the Ming-Qing dynasties;
2. To examine the historical social and political situations faced by the Hui Muslims and explore the history of their methodology of Da'wah and Da'wah activities in Ming-Qing dynasties;
3. To examine the historical social and political situations faced by the Hui Muslims and explore the history of their methodology of Da'wah and Da'wah activities in Republic of China;
4. To identify and analyze the similarities and differences between the methodologies of Da'wah in Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China;

5. To provide important insights into suitable methodologies of Da'wah for the Hui Muslim Da'wah practitioners to cope with the current situations in PRC.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study relies on historical textual reference, and is qualitative in nature. The historical, descriptive, analytical, and comparative methods are used in the entire research. Before describing and presenting any relevant historical information, historical method is firstly used to carefully review and analyze Chinese and English primary and secondary sources related to history of Islam and the Hui Muslims in China. The historical examination and analysis of the social-political background and conditions which the Hui Muslims lived in each historical period is applied to understand what, why and how the Hui Muslims did in terms of Islamic Da'wah in responding to specific circumstances.

In order not to be influenced by subjective interpretation and analysis of historical information from some secondary sources, cross-examination and analysis of different texts are applied. Moreover, for Chinese and the Hui Muslim classic literatures, earnest efforts have been made to find and understand the original books to avoid being misled by misinterpretation, misunderstanding or misrepresentation by other authors especially western scholars whose native languages are not Chinese.

Comparative method is mostly applied in the final stage before the research conclusion is made. The similarities and differences between methodologies of Islamic

Da'wah in two different periods are discussed and analyzed through comparative analysis approach.

Apart from many Chinese classical historical books, a great number of Chinese and English books, journals, and online research papers and articles studying Chinese Muslims in general and the Hui Muslims in particular are studied and analyzed. Except library, internet is the most important source of information as a great number of books and journal articles are free to read or download.

In addition to above mentioned approaches, this study relies in part on the researcher's personal life experience. The researcher was born in a religious family. The researcher's father, two uncles and two elder brothers served as Imams in local mosques in China for many years. The researcher used to study Islamic knowledge at home and follow his father to join various kinds of religious activities till his graduation from high school. The researcher has personally witnessed and participated in various kinds of Islamic Da'wah related activities and works in China since 1980s. The researcher's personal life experience in this respect helps to understand Chinese Islamic terms widely employed by the Hui Muslims in China. It also helps the researcher to have a better understanding about the Hui Muslim traditions and various kinds of Da'wah activities which are transmitted through generations since Ming-Qing dynasties.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the objectives of this study is to provide important insights into suitable methodologies of Da'wah for the Hui Muslim Da'wah practitioners to cope with the

current situations in PRC through exploring and analyzing the historical methodology of Islamic Da‘wah in Ming-Qing dynasties and Republic of China. However, historical approach always has its limitations to deal with current problems due to the change of environment. For example, there is a significant difference between previous regimes and PRC in terms of political system which produces different religious and ethnic policies which in turn, impact the Hui Muslims’ Da‘wah activities. Moreover, the geopolitical and economic environment in which PRC is living now is much more complicated than the one the previous regimes had. This again has strong influence to the Hui Muslims’ Da‘wah work. Apart from this, there is a huge diversity among the Hui communities in various parts of China, the methodology of Islamic Da‘wah in one part of China may or may not be practical in another part.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a number of previous studies on the Hui Muslims in China by both Chinese and western scholars. However, as noticed by Lipman, the Hui Muslims in China “remain nearly unnoticed in Islamic studies and are visible only at the margins of Chinese studies”.⁹ Most of the previous studies concerned themselves primarily with questions of history, politics, the Hui’s ethnic identity and cultural practices. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there has not been a comprehensive and systematic study on the Hui Muslims’ Islamic Da‘wah activities in China. In this section

9. Lipman, Jonathan N., *Islamic Thought in China: Sino-Muslim Intellectual Evolution from the 17th to the 21st Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. p 3