SUFI ORDERS IN CHINA

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Abstract

Sufism is one aspect of the wide spectrum of Islamic discipline of sciences. It has not raised any serious socio-political problems as it did to Chinese Muslim communities in China since its introduction into the country in seventeenth century. Its introduction shattered the unity of Chinese Muslim communities, a thitherto unity enjoyed by Chinese Muslims for nearly eight hundred years. Till today it presents a serious challenge to the existence of Chinese Muslim communities there. The entire Muslim population, though it is big in size, is divided by nearly forty different Sufi orders. In this paper the author tries to give a very brief introduction to the all types of Sufi orders of Islam in China, imported or locally established, to their origins and development, and conflict between them.

Field of Research: Sufism

1. Introduction

The problem of Islamic sects, as it is in the whole Muslim world, now presents a serious challenge to the existence of Chinese Muslim communities in China. The entire Muslim population there is divided by nearly forty different sects; each one claims authenticity and orthodoxy over the other; criticizes others wrongness and shortcomings without a thorough thinking of its own problems; defends its own practices by extensively quoting from the Quranic verses, the Prophetic traditions, famous ulama's saying, and even their shaikh's opinions, to one aim: proving others are doing wrong, he alone is correct, and representing all Muslim communities in China. If the problems of those sects remain at the stage of merely verbal argument amongst Muslims themselves, the communities would be saved from unprecedented losses, a truly catastrophe for Chinese Muslim communities, of wealth, lives, and social prestige which they have enjoyed hitherto, at the hands of non-Muslim majority; who for the beginning of eight hundred years kept themselves away from even trying to know scarcely the Islamic culture of their neighboring cousins; thence tried to interfere as deep as possible into the religious affairs of Muslim communities. Hence the restriction of Muslim rights, the prohibitions of religious practices, limits in religious education so and so forth, one after another new policies were promulgated by the central Chinese government, old or new alike.

So the introduction of sectarian organizations; especially sufi orders into the country marked a turning point in their 14 centuries long history, thence a new socio-political conditions in Muslim communities there was developed. In this simple and short paper we will (in sha Allah) try to give a very brief account on the contemporary situation of those sects, plus a very brief discussion on the history of their origins, similarities and differences between them, and a simple analysis of the effect of their activities to the communities, and lastly propose a feasible solution to those problems.

For a clear understanding of our research, we need to explain a few terms in Chinese origin, which we used frequently in the text, but we found no equivalent in English language, and employed them in its original form. The first is “menhuan”, which denotes a system of practice, or a teaching, with its leader (called murshid in certain sects), foundation and organization; and which is a purely intellectual employment. It is a name given by Chinese scholars who engage their studies in this field, to respective sects, without consent of those sects.
Some sects till today do not call their sects as the names given by those scholars. The second term is “tang”, also Chinese term, which normally denotes a religious foundation, or a place dedicated to worship various gods especially ancestors in Chinese tradition. Sufi sects employed it for the similar purpose. Another term is “men”, which is closely related to “menhuan”, to some extend the two terms are overlapping in usage. It is normally associated with founder’s surname, or something related to the founder; for instance, Qinmen, Humen, Zhangmen, and among others. Still another is “ahong”, a Persian term, employed by Chinese Muslims for imams working in masjids. There is nowadays a tendency in its usage to include those students who are studying Islam in the masjids.

2. The Islamic Sects

Muslim communities in China, since the introduction of Islam into China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), continued to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) with no splits. A Chinese Muslim scholar Feng Jin-yuan said the split of Muslims community has no long history; it is only in recent 300 years when various sufi orders introduced into China Muslims communities were shattered (Jin-yuan, 1996). The introduction of sufi orders to China at the end of the Ming and early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) marked a turning point for Chinese Muslims in their history. The peaceful situation they have enjoyed for nearly eight centuries was turning into a terrible bloodshed, fighting between them and against non-Muslims, which later led to general massacre of all Muslims by Qing imperial army in the second half of the nineteenth century. A terrible consequence was:

“The population of Gansu was reduced from 15,000,000 to 1,000,000, and that nine out of every ten Chinese were supposed to have been killed, and two out of every three Muhammadans.” (Broomhall, 1987)

Those sects were of course not introduced into the country at one time, it begun in the mid of seventeenth century, continued till the present time. We will (in sha Allah) here in this section briefly discuss the approximate time of the introduction of each sect into the country, with each one begin with the main brunch, and followed by its sub divisions and sub-subdivisions.

Gedimu is the oldest sect, its meaning is self revealed by its Arabic term qadim, meaning old or traditional; which has no branches, but claims to be the orthodox doctrine of China’s Islam. It is a Hanafi school of the Sunni tradition. Its supporters are living around local mosques, which function as relatively independent units. It is numerically the largest Islamic school of thought in China and the most common school of Islam among the Hui (Dillon, 1999; Ma Tong, 1999b).

Kubrawiyyah was the first sufi order introduced into China in 1660 by a Arab sufi shaikh named Muhyudin Bin Arabi, who came to China three times for preaching his sufi order Kubrawiyyah. The first time he went to the southern provinces Guangdong and Guangxi; the second time went to the eastern provinces Hu’nan and Hubei provinces; of which did not yield any fruits. At the third time he succeeded when he went to the northwestern provinces of Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai, to found a firm stand for his sufi teachings. He settled in Dawantou of Dongxiang of Linxia city, Gansu province. He took a Chinese surname Zhang following the local majority villagers’ surname. His offspring lived there up to this time. The sect founded by him was named after his surname Zhang, and called by other people as Zhang’s teaching or Zhang’s sect. Unlike other sufi orders, this order did not split into sub-sects (Ma Tong, 1999b).

Khufiyya is the second sufi order introduced into the country, also an Arabic word, which means silence or hiding, or extending to mean chanting dhikr silently, opposite of loudly. It follows the Hanafi School of teaching. This sect has many sub-sects and sub-sub-sects, but most of them have no direct relations with each other. The sub-sects spread into China though different line of silsila. Their shaikhs are also different, from various parts of Muslim world. It alone has more than ten sub-sects, including sub sub-sects. Of them are Huasi sect, Mufti sect, Bijiachang sect, Lintao sect, Qingyuntang sect, Humen sect, Beizhuang sect, Hunmen sect, Famen sect, Dingmen sect etc. Of them Huasi is named after masjid’s name, “hua” means nice decoration; Bijiachang,
Lintao, Qingyuntang and Beizhuang are named after the location’s name; Hunmen, Famen and Dingmen are named after its founder’s name (Ma Tong, 1999b).

Qadiriyya is a famous Sufi order in the middle age of Muslim world. Founded in the central Asia following its founder’s name Abdul al-Gadir al-Jailani (1078-1166) in about 12th century, and spread to China in 1674 through its sheikhs’ untiring endeavor in preaching it throughout the Muslim world. Its early sub-sects are three: Qimen, Xianmen (who later turned to khufiyya) and Mamen; which further separated into sub-sub-sect, like Dagongbei, Lingmingtang, Houzihe, Mingyuetang, Wenquantang, Yatou, Gaozhaojia, Samaer sect, Xiangyuantang, Amen sect, Qimen sect, Jiucaping, Mingdetaeng, Xianmen, Tonggui etc.; of which Houzihe, Yatou, Jiucaping and Tonggui are named after their location name, Dagongbei, Lingmingtang, Mingyuetang, Wenquantang, Xiangyuantang and Mingdetaeng are named after foundation’s name, and Gaozhaojia, Samaer sect, Amen sect, Qimen sect and Xianmen are named after the founder’s name.

Jehriyya is also an Arabic word, which means manifesting or showing, extending to mean charting dhikr loudly, opposite of silently. Just like the Khufiyya, it is also following the Hanafi School of teaching. This sect has five sub-sects, Banqiao, Nanchuan, Shagou, Beishan, Xindianzi, all of them are named after their locations of the respective sub-sect (Ma Tong, 1999b).

Ikhwan or Yihewani in some source; is a Hanafi, non-Sufi school of the Sunni tradition. It is also referred to as "new sect" or "latest sect". It is mainly in Qinghai, Ningxia and Gansu, and distributed in Beijing, Shanghai, Henan, Shandong and Hebei. It was in the end of the 19th century when the Dongxiang imam Ma Wan-fu (1849–1934) from the village of Guoyuan in Hezhou (now the Dongxiang Autonomous County was founded in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province), who has studied in Mecca and was influenced by the Wahhabi movement. After his return to Gansu he founded the movement with the so-called ten leading ahongs. The school rejected Sufism. It claimed that the rites and ceremonies not stand in line with the Quran and the Hadith should be abolished. It is against grave and murshid (leader/teacher) worship, and advocates against the preaching and da’wa done in Chinese.

Salafiyya (Wahhabism) is intensely opposed by Hui in China, by the Hanafi Sunni Gedimu and Sufi Khufiyya and Juhriyya. The opposition is so much so that even the Ikhwan sect, which is fundamentalist and was founded by Ma Wan-fu who was originally inspired by the Wahhabis, reacted with hostility to Ma De-bao and Ma Zheng-qing, who attempted to introduce Wahhabism/Salafism as the main form of Islam. They were branded as traitors, and Wahhabi teachings were deemed as heresy by the Ikhwan leaders. Ma De-bao established a Salafi/Wahhabi order, called the Sahaifengye (Salafiyya) menhuan in Lanzhou and Linxia, a completely separate sect.

Xidaotang was founded in 1901 by Ma Qi-xi (1857–1914), a Chinese Muslim from Lintan county of Gansu province. It is a purely Chinese Muslim founded school of Islamic doctrine, based on the special understanding of the founder Ma Qi-xi. His teaching of Islamic faith is relatively strongly fused with traditional Chinese culture.

Its founder, Ma Qi-xi, was heavily influenced by Chinese culture and religion like Confucianism, and Daoism, taking heavily from the Han Kitab.

Muslim scholar Ma Tong recorded in the year 2000 that the 6,781,500 Hui in China were predominately members of Sufi groups. According to him, 58.2% were Gedimu, 21% Ithwani, 10.9% Juhriyya, 7.2% Khufiyya, 1.4% Qadiriyya, and 0.7% Kubrawiyya (http://en.wikipedia.org).

3. The Founding of the Sects and their Historical Development in brief

Michael Dillon, a professor who taught Chinese and Chinese history at the University of Durham, has excellent remarks regarding the Islamic sects in China:
“The professed reasons for division are either doctrinal or connected with the interpretation of correct religious practice, but a detailed examination of the emergence of the sects within Chinese Islam reveals a complex interplay of religious, personal, family and the social factors. Because conflict between individuals or groups of followers of different sects has often been behind the inter-communal violence that has blighted the Muslim communities of China, an understanding of their origin and differences is essential in understanding the history of Hui people.” (Dillon, 1999)

Afore mentioned are the Islamic sects existing and active in the contemporary China. Some of them, like Jehriyya, Ikhwan, Salafiyya and Xidoatang still have very strong hold in some places throughout the country, and some others like Kubrawiya, Khufiyya and its sub-sects, and Qadiriyyah and its sub-sects, are largely declined compared to the power they have exercised in 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. To discuss them all here in details is both time consuming and content stretching; which may not be adequate to this short paper. Hence we will select a few of them, as typical samples of various sects, to trace back to their origins, their founding and development in brief, which will suffice us to clarify our topic here. My stories concerning the founders of the sects are mainly from China Islamic Sects and Sufism Institutions (中国伊斯兰教派与门宦制度) written by Ma Tong. But I could not find the name of Jehriyya and Khufiyya in research books pertaining Islamic Sufism, for instance, the Sufi Order in Islam by J. Spencer Trinmingham, wherein it is supposed to include them if the two are the famous sufı orders (Trinmingham, 1971).

The founding of Gedimu sect and its development in brief

_Gedimu or Qadim_ is the earliest sect of Islam in China. It is the original Islam, which got the first stand in China in 651. It began in southern part of China and got the first stand in Kangfu (nowadays Guangzhou), where till today stands a masjid named “Huashiengsi” (The Masjid of Remembering the Prophet). It, as a researcher tells us, was the first masjid built outside of the Arab Peninsular. Islam also got a stand in Zaiton (Nowadays Quanzhou), Yangzhou, Chang’an (nowadays Xi’an, then was the capital city of Tang Dynasty). With the rise of Mongol super powers in 13th century, after defeating Muslims of Abbasid Dynasty and central Asia sultanate, hundreds of thousand Muslim captives, some researcher says as many as two millions Muslims (including militaries) were forced to leave their home country, and traveled to the north of China; thence they helped Mongols conquered China’s Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), and became inhabitant in China. They brought the Islamic practices of qedim with them, and handed down straight to the modern time. So the qedim adherents claim the authenticity and orthodoxy of Islamic practices in China, it does not severely criticize sufı orders and other sects, but it goes against _bida’a_ (renovation). The qedim follows the Hanefi School of Islamic jurisprudence. Generally speaking, qedim is a peaceful sect. Qedim Muslims lived in peace with non-Muslim Chinese side by side for nearly a millennium without any serious conflict.

The founding of Khufiyya sufı sect and its development in brief

Afore mentioned that Khufiyya is a sufı order imported from the outside of China. It has more ten sub-sects; with each has no direct relations to the other. Most of them spread to China independently, with their own _silsila of shaikhs_. Of them, as respect to Bijiachang sect and Mufty sect, their _shaikhs_ or _murshid_ came directly from Arabia or central Asia to China, and disseminated their orders to the local Muslim or converted Chinese, and established in a place called _Bijiachang_. The name of Mufty sect was formally chosen by its _murshid_ Hidayatullah al-Afaq al-Mashhur, a _sufi sheikh_ of Khufiyya order from most probably central Asia, for his Chinese _murid_ (disciple) Ma Shou-zhen (1633-1722). As respect to _Huasi_ sect, its founder was a Chinese Muslim Ma Lai-chi (1681-1766), who went to perform _haj_, thence he stayed for learning Khufiyya sufı order, after returned to his native place he taught the order in the _masjid_ where he was an _ahong_, then build a _masjid_ embroidered with flowering arabesques, which was called by other Muslims as _Huasi_. Hence the order established by him was named _Huasi_ sect. With respect to _Humen, Dingmen, Hunmen, Bijiachang_ etc., they were founded by Chinese Muslim individuals, who were initially student of above-mentioned sects, during or after the completion of their studies; they were illuminated by some new ideas or understandings, thus claimed to be new sect different from their _shaikhs_’.
The founder of the Huasi sect Ma Lai-chi (1681-1766) was an intelligent student, who studied Islam in a masjid of Milagou village in Minhe county, Qinghai province at about eight of this age. Concentrated on his learning for ten years, he got the core of Islamic teachings. As a beloved student his teacher married his daughter to him, thence recommended him to be an ahong in a masjid of neighboring village. He worked as the ahong for nearly thirty years. In 1728, at about 47 of his age, he, accompanied by four persons, one of them was an Arab preacher named Sheikh Abu Jebel, boarded on a ship in Guangzhou port. After two months sail they arrived Aden of Yemen. They visited some masjids and Muslim shaikhs there before they set off to Mekkah for performing haj of the year. Thence he stayed another three years for learning Khufiyah sufi order under the sheikh Muhammad Jibni Ahmad Aqai. Then he travelled to Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo for furthering his studies. He leant in sequence Naqshibandiyya, Gadiriya and Suhrawardiyat sufi orders. Maulana Mahdumi also taught him some sufi traditions, gave him a title Abu al-Futuha and presented him, upon his returning back to China, eight gifts: a sword, a chop with Arabic inscription, the book “Mishal”, and “Maulut”, other 80 books, a sajjadah made by the skin of date palm trees, a white coarse coat and a piece of cover cloth from K’abah. In 1734, after 5 years hard learning, at 54 of his age, he returned by sea route to Hong Kong then Guangzhou of China. Rested there for about a month, he returned to the northwest region, where he firstly preached in Xunhua, where his followers built a masjid for him to disseminate his knowledge of sufi order. Then he travelled to Yunnan, Henan, Shan’xi for preaching, won hundreds of thousand followers, he became a very famous Muslim alim. He even converted some Buddhist Tibetans in Kaligang region to Islam. He worked very hard for preaching his order nationwide for three decades, at 86 passed away in Hezhou (nowadays Linxia). By then his sect Huasi is firmly established, and well known amongst Muslim population nationwide. He won 200 thousand more followers. Upon his death, he passed his leadership to his third son Ma Guo-bao, who was called by the followers “the third grandpa”.

The founder of Mufty sect Ma Shou-zhen (1633-1722), Muslim name Hadhrat Bushra-al-Rabbani, was from Lintao county of Gansu province. When he was young he tilled land for making a living for his family. Later he also involved in small scale business, transporting goods from Lintao to other places and vice versa. In 1673, a famous sufi Sheikh Al-Afaqi from central Asia was disseminating his Khufiyah sufi order in Qinghai province, many ahongs, student of Islam and even ‘alim from Gansu, also were running to him for getting his blessings and sufi knowledge. Ma Shou-zhen was one of them. When he met the sheikh, his appearance attracted the sheikh. The sheikh liked him very much, taught him his knowledge of Khufiyah order and its way of chanting dhikr. The sheikh named this order as Mufty, and granted him the authority to disseminate it in China, plus other 8 gifts including a bunch of tasbiha, a piece of turban and a few books, as the solid proof of his authority (Ma Tong, 1999a). Besides, the sheikh introduced Ma to another two Khufiyah sufi scholars, Litai Baba (1632-1709) and Tongtai Baba (1672-1735) for improving his knowledge in Arabic, Islam and Sufi orders. After some time, Ma returned to his native Lintao, resumed his old job, tilling the land. At the same time he revised his books and chanting the dhikr. A few years passed before he started preaching his order publicly in 1685. He built a masjid (daotang) especially dedicated to this purpose. Ma was an honest, simple and hard working man, respected by all people, Muslims and non Muslims alike, around his village. Due to this his teaching was also welcomed by many people. He preached about 50 years, his teachings spread to nearby regions and Qinghai province; won 50-60 thousand followers. He died in 1722, at the age of 89. His successors were not so successful in further developing his sect. The sixth successor Ma Xian-zhong (1741-1797) was an able man, who was influenced by local Han culture, advocated establishing Chinese style schools for Muslim children, and encouraged his followers to learn Chinese language and culture, thus improved his relations with local non-Muslim community. He was praised by local government, who appointed him as the leader of all Muslims in the region.
A Dispute between Beizhuang and Humen sect

Afore mentioned that both Beizhuang and Humen were sub sect of Khufiya sufi order. The founder of Beizhuang was Ma Bao-zen (1772-1826), a Dongxiang Muslim. The founder of Humen was Abu al-Dhat (1715-1812). During Tongzhi reign (1862-1875) of Qing Dynasty, the two sect of the same origin engaged into a famous but shameful dispute, which provided a lot of thinking to later Muslim generations. The story tells that Beizhuang’s leader wanted to recite “sami’a allahu limanhami dahu”, while the latter’s leader tended to read as “sami’ allahu limanhami dahu”. With “dahu” or “dahu”, the leaders started argument, each one criticized the other wrong, and he is the most correct. The argument led to fighting between the followers of the two groups. The fighting led to blooding killing. First the Humen followers of Kaory village, armed with knives, rushed into Beizhuang followers of Qianggou village, and butchered 50 more families. Not long after, for revenge, Beizhuang followers gathered a huge mob, run to Kaory village, killed 100 over people. But still no one convinced the other. So each one sued the other to high authority, who was afraid of the situation going out of control, reconciled between them, ordered them keep their practices for themselves, no one disturbs the other. The both were temporarily calmed down, but the dispute continued.

The founding of Jehriyya sect and its development in brief

Jehriyya was founded by Ma Ming-xin (1719-1781) in 1760. The founder was a very intelligent man, who began his studies of Islam at 6 of his age in Xiguan masjid of Linxia, Gansu under his uncle’s guardianship. His own father passed away before he was born. In 1728, at about 9, his uncle decided to perform haj, brought him along. Partially sponsored by local Muslims, they made their way to Makkeh on their foot. There were two ways for Chinese Muslim to perform their haj. One was sea route, which began from Guangzhou, whereat a traveler take a ship; the other was desert land route going through Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq then Mekkah, which normally in those days took the traveler a year more. The two men took the latter route. The hardship and sufferings they experienced was unimaginable. Anyhow they managed arriving Yemen in the next year. But an unfortunate sandstorm set them apart. One source said his uncle died there, but his later generation preferred the former story. The 10 years boy met an old Arab man, who pitted the poor boy and took him home. Knowing Ma’s pious intension the old man sponsored him and sent him to the sheikh of the Shadiliyya sufi order. The sheikh’s name was Muhammad Buruy al-Sini, who found the boy was very intelligent and hard working, hence liked him very much. Taught all his knowledge of Islam and the sufi order to him. The sheikh also supported him for performing his haj. The boy was happy with this chance, and stayed on till he grown to an adult handsome man, when his sheikh ordered him to go back to China for disseminating his sufi teachings there. Upon his departure the sheikh presented him the books related to his order, “the history of Shadiliyya sufi order”, “Maulut”, “Al-Quran”, “Medaih” and “Muhames”, besides a bunch of tasbih, a piece of prayer mat, an arm stand, a bowl and a sword, together with 100 small sand stones, 10 bigger sand stones for the purpose of counting numbers of chanting dhikr. The sheikh ordered him to chant the dhikr laud, and named it Jehriyya sufi order. In 1744, the young man set on his way on foot northward to Iraq, then turned northward to Bukhara, Afghanistan, entered Hash and Yerqiang of Xinjiang, then to Xunhua of Qinghai, his native land. He spent 16 years for this trip, and lastly returned home with the full knowledge of Jehriyya. The young man was ambitious in disseminating the new order, at the same time he advocated a reform of the old Islamic tradition, for instance shortened Juma’a’s prayers from sixteen raka’at to ten. And encouraged ahongs (imams) to distribute the alms they received from others to help poor Muslims, instead of keeping it for themselves alone. With regard to choosing a successor, he preferred a good and pious man to his own son, against the practices of other sects. His teaching and ideas won a strong support from a fraction of Xunhua Muslim community, including two ahongs, He Maluho ahong and Su Sishisan ahong. Some previously Huasi sect followers also changed to Jehriyyah sect. This trend agitated the leader of Huasi sect, Ma Guo-bao, the elder son of Ma Lai-chi.

Seeing his adherents were turned to Jehriyya sect by crowds, Ma Guo-bao lost a good temper of toleration, he decided, supported by his ahongs, qadhis and gentry, to condemn Ma Ming-xin and his Jehriyyah, saying Jehriyyah was a heretic, not a true Islam, especially the simplification of prayer was not conformed with
Islamic Sharia’. Ma Ming-xin reacted with counter attack, saying Huasi sect receiving too much alms from poor Muslim community, and put it all in the leader’s pocket, which was an evil practice, not conformable to Islamic teaching. The situation got worse with the passing of time. Verbal attacks led to physical attacking, and bloodshed. One day in 1762, Ma Ming-xin was praying *jumu’a* in a masjid, accidentally met Ma Guo-bao, the two started arguing, accusing each other doing wrongly. Ma Guo-bao was a bit elder than Ma Ming-xin, and was also well established compared to the latter, who was a very new, and just beginning to establish himself. Ma Guo-bao, using his good human relation with government personal, sued Ma Ming-xin to local government, accusing him as a heretic.

The founding of Xidaotang and its development in brief

The founder of *Xidaotang* Ma Qi-xi (1857–1914), was a Chinese Muslim *xiucai* (scholar), a follower of *Beizhuang* sect by origin. He had his fundamental studies in a local *masjid*. At 11, transferred to a Chinese private school owned by Fan Shen-wu, he studied Chinese classics, Four Books and Five Doctrines. He was an intelligent boy, passed all exam papers, and obtained the status of *xiucai*, which was an admired title by many of his contemporaries. He then devoted himself to study the Islamic classics written in Chinese by a famous Muslim scholar Liuzhi (1660-1739). In 1891, at about 34 of his age, he started teaching others at his house, of the Chinese classic and Liuzhi’s Islamic doctrines. His teaching was attractive to many people, over hundred of both Muslims and non-Muslims. His teaching was not without problems. The leader of *Beizhuang* sect challenged him, and criticized him as heretic, his teaching as heresy. They appealed each other to provincial authorities, who were normally non-Muslims, who reconciled between the two. But Tiaozhou authorities wanted to arrest the leaders of both sides. Ma Qi-xi got the news and fled with his three followers to Xinjiang province, thence they wanted to perform haj, but one of them died on the way, buried there. The remaining three cancelled the haj, and returned to Tazhou in secret. He resumed his teaching in secret, and formally named his teaching as *Xidaotang*, announced that “Liuzhi planted the seed, Ma Ming-xin made it blossomed, and I would get fruit of it.” He tried to reform the old practices of the other sects, especially *Beizhuang* sect. With regard to religion, he emphasized performing the five pillars of Islam at the expense of other religious obligations, stressing personal moral ethics, rejecting collection of alms from lay Muslims. In education, he advocated girls and boys have equal chances in education, emphasized education in Chinese more than in Islamic. He did not stress Islamic education to small kids. In economy, he emphasized agriculture and business, called his followers to live a collective life; that is to live together in the organization, *Xidaotang*. His reform proved to be very feasible to the context of the social situations of that time. Xidaotang attracted many poor Muslims of both the local and adjacent Muslim areas, but incurred envies of his opponents, *Beizhuang* sect. *Khafiya Sufi* leaders called the *Xidaotang* adherents infidels (Gladney, 1991).

The founding of *Ikhwan* and its development in brief

*Ikhwan* was founded by the Dongxiang imam Ma Wan-fu (1849–1934), from the village of Guoyuan in Hezhou (now the Dongxiang Autonomous County in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province); who had studied in local *masjid* under the control of *Beizhuang* sect of *Khafiyya Sufi* order. He was a very intelligent boy, well versed in Arabic and Persian. At the age of 22, he became an *ahong* (imam). In 1888, sponsored by local Muslim gentry, he, together with his *ustadh* Ma Hui-san, set off for performing haj, through the way of central Asia, crossed Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, reached Mekkah. Thence, they stayed there to improve their knowledge of Islam. The *ustadh* passed away, and buried there. Ma Wan-fu stayed for another five or six years, he found through thorough study of Islamic doctrine, especially the *Wahabism*, which was then a strong Islamic movement in Saudi Arabia, the practices of Chinese Muslim were problematic, he felt he has a mission to adjust wrong Islamic practices. Upon his return to his native place, he immediately announced his disengagement with *Beizhuang* sect, criticized the *sheikh* of the sect has led astray its adherents from the straight path, which Islam advocates since its very beginning. He lined up with ten *ahongs* (Imams), as Geru *ahong*, Said *ahong*, Heizhuang *ahong*, Nanling *ahong*, Nalesi *ahong*, Numuruoshun *ahong*, Wang Da-han *ahong* of Beizhuang sect; and Fa De-ming and Wang Hui-shan of *Gedim* formed a union which they called it *Ikhwani*, which literally means brothers, like Muslim brothers in Egypt but not of it. They made the Holy Quran

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as only guiding book, advocated practicing Islam in accordance with the Holy book, putting off the practices which are not conformed to the Quranic teaching. They set ten guidelines, later called “Guoyuan Ten Guidelines”. (1) Do not recite the Holy Quran by mess; (2) do not praise the Prophet laud; (3) do not recite du’a too much; (4) do not visit shaihk’s grave; (5) do not do repentance in mess; (6) do not do the remembering of the dead; (7) do not use the Holy Quran for isqat; (8) do not do tatawwua; (9) Islamic law being observed; (10) oneself must perform religious obligations. Thus, Ikhwani members began their propagation in the region of northwest of China. It was fiercely rejected by all sufi sects at beginning.

The founding of Salafiyyah (Wahhabiyya) and its development in brief

The founder of Salafiyya (Wahhabiyya) was Ma De-bao (1867-1977), originally from Guanghe County of Linxia Hui Muslim autonomous prefecture, was originally a famous Ikhwan ahong. In 1936, he with other four Muslim gentry performed haj, upon returning they bought some books promoting salafiyya ideas back to Linxia, their native home. They studied the books, at the same time, taking the advantage of their ahong status, they taught the ideas to their student, and disseminated it through the talks on Friday prayers. At beginning it was not welcomed by both of the student and audience, plus intense criticism from Ikhwani leader of ahongs, who actually called the salafiyya as heretic and against the straight path. In view the difficult situation, Ma De-bao and his supporters stopped preaching this newest sect temporarily. In 1949, the communist party ascended onto political stage of China. The Salafiyya revived activities of preaching their ideas. With increase of its popularity, conflict with Ikhwani sect intensified. They condemned each other as heretic, till near bloodshed. But the new government favored nobody, so situation is under control, did not cause any larger conflict which involved a mess of people, like previous time. In this aspect alone we must appreciate peaceful situation provided by the present government (Ma Tong, 1999b).

4. The Similarities and Differences between Those Sects

Afore discussed the various Islamic sects and discussed in brief about their origins and founding. They shared some similarities, such as all of them uphold the Holy Quran as highest guide, one of the major sources of Islam and all sufi orders. All arduously and piously practiced the five pillars of Islam, which are (1) The confession of there is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; (2) establishing of five time prayers (Salat); (3) paying Zakat; (4) fasting in Ramadan, and (5) performing the pilgrimage if economically possible. All believed in six beliefs, which are belief in Allah, His messengers, angels, His holy books, predestination good or bad, and the life in hereafter. They all follow the same madhhab, al-Hahafi, accept other Muslims as fellow Muslims, and above all they all claimed following correct teaching of Islam respectively. They all have their leaders, and respect their leaders, no matter what ever name they called their leaders. In addition to this they all live in an environment wherein Muslims are only tiny minority group compared to the vast majority Chinese population; an environment which was for the first time in entire Chinese history, malicious to the whole Muslim population living in China, under Qing dynasty’s reign. Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was established mainly by Manchu people, a minority ethnic from the northeast region of China. In order to stay on throne firmly, Manchu emperors played political tactics wisely. On the one hand they won support from some Chinese gentries, on the other they created hatred between Chinese community and Muslim community, who have been living in peace and side by side for more than eight centuries in the country. If the two groups are united, Manchu’s reign would be in big problem. So Manchu initially planned creating hatred between Muslims and Chinese, and erected it a basic policy of the Qing Dynasty. As Chu Wen-Djang put it Manchu’s policy was “to keep a delicate balance of power between the various peoples so that Manchu could rule them all.” (Wen-djang, 1966) Raphael Israel termed it as “a cultural confrontation”, which envisioned that a mass confrontation between guest minority Chinese Muslims and the host majority Chinese is inevitable (Israeli, 1974).

Though the similarities between them are abundant, differences set them apart. They, especially their leaders, adored difference as more important than the similarities. They treated particulars as absolute, but principle as unimportant. What kind of logic is this! The same kind of logic is prevailed in contemporary Muslim world;
of some indulge into trivial matters, but turn blind to Islamic principles. We are always hearing voices of blaming others, but seldom praising others. This is a totally madness, which could cause a total destruction of whole Islamic civilization, just as small conflicts amongst Chinese Muslims have caused irreparable destruction of their hardly established communities, which took them centuries to build.

The differences between them were so trivial that it could cause nothing to their belief or religion if they have neglected it. But the reality was opposite. The trivial differences led to physical conflict, the physical conflict led to larger scale fighting, causing hundreds death. And worse still the hostile government stepped in and butchered the majority of Muslim population in the northwest region of China.

Mentioning one or two cases would suffice to clarify this point. A typical one is afore mentioned conflict between Huben and Beizhuang, which caused hundreds of casualties. The root cause of that was an argument on whether to recite as “dehe” or “dehu”. That was only an external sparkle point, the internal cause went deeper, involves economic dispute and even political manipulations. Ma Lin and Ma An-liang, warlords then in the northwest region, in control of Hui military power, were the fervent followers of Beizhuang sect, used their power to repress Huben soldiers, and killed a few of them by excuses. Those Huben soldiers were also disliked by national army, so they resented Ma Lin and Ma An-liang, hence Beizhuang sect. When “dehe” or “dehu” dispute rose up, they poured their anger toward those innocent followers of Beizhuang sect.

5. Current Status of Those Sects: Infighting between Sects

It is claimed by some scholars that the introduction of Sufi orders into China caused massive tensions in the Hui community which led to the Dungan revolt. Sufi groups initially engaged in violent disputes with each other, and with the "old teaching" (lao jiao), non-sufi Gedimu Sunni Muslims who had been in China for centuries.

Fighting between aforementioned sects has been common (http://en.wikipedia.org), as if it has become a standard culture amongst Chinese Muslims deeply embedded in its convulsive body.

The Qing authorities took advantages of the conflict, instead of reconcile between them, decreed that the Muslim rebels who were violently attacking others were merely heretics, not representative of the entire Muslim population, like the heretical White Lotus did not represent all Buddhists. The Qing authorities also decreed that there were two different Muslim sects, the "old" religion and "new" religion, and that the new were heretics and deviated like White Lotus deviated from Buddhism and Daoism, and stated its intention to inform the Muslim community that it was aware that the original Islamic religion was one united sect, before the new "heretics", saying they would separate Muslim rebels by which sect they belonged to.

Different sects used the Chinese legal system trying to outdo others. The first of these lawsuits came around 1748 by a Gedimu Imam against the Khuffiya Sufis; which was dismissed, and the Imam left the province. The Dungan revolt (1895–1896) started with a lawsuit when rival Sufi orders fought against each other. They accused each other of various misdeeds, and filed a lawsuit against each other to the office of the Xining prefecture. The Judge decided not to issue a ruling on which group was superior to the other in matters of all Islamic affairs, and urged them to behave themselves. This decision led to an increase in violation which eventually led to the large scale revolt.

The Qing government was apprehensive and distrust of the Sufi orders, since heterodox Buddhists and Daoists, which were also banned, looked similar to the Sufi orders with their extensive organized structures and chanting rituals all night. Muslims who were not Sufi filed lawsuits against the Sufis, saying that they were breaking the law by being heterodox and planning conspiracy. These factors helped keeping Sufi orders away from Lanzhou. (http://en.wikipedia.org).
Other Muslim sects used the legal system trying to crush Ma Qi-xi’s Xidaotang sect. The defendants in the court case, Ma Qi-xi and others received lashes for punishment before the second investigation was held and the case was dismissed.

The Khufiya Sufi general Ma An-liang, particularly hated the Ikhwanii leader Ma Wan-fu, so much that when the Han general Yang Zeng-xin captured Ma Wan-fu, Ma An-liang arranged to have him shipped to Gansu in order to execute him. As Qing authority broke down in China in the later nineteenth century, the Gedimu Sunnis and Khufiya Sufis went on a vicious campaign to murder Ma Wan-fu and wipe out his Ikhwanii teachings. The leaders of the most Sufi sects attacked Ma Wan-fu, and Gedimu requested the Qing governor in Lanzhou to enforce a punishment upon Ma Wan-fu. (http://en.wikipedia.org).

The Kuomindang general Ma Bu-fang, a Muslim Hui who backed the Ikhwanii Muslims, persecuted the Salafis. The Ikhwanii forced the Salafis into hiding. They were not allowed to move or worship openly. The Ikhwanii had become secular and Chinese nationalist, and they considered the Salafis as ”heterodox” (xie jiao) and a foreign teaching (waidao). Only after the Communists rose to political power were the Salafis allowed to come out and worship openly. Before the communist government, the General Ma effectively repressed all non Ikhwanii groups, including the traditional Sunni Gedimu, the oldest sect of Islam in China, forcibly appointed Ikhwanii Imams to them. However, when the Communist party took over, the Gedimu used the Communist party’s rules on freedom of religion to wipe off the Ikhwanii practices and Imams.

The Gedimu forbade Ikhwanii from worshipping at their mosques, using knives to threaten them. They accused them as non-Muslims, and treated each other as enemies. Intermarriage between the two is forbidden and family members belonging to either of the two split apart. (http://en.wikipedia.org).

The Gedimu and Ikhwanii accused the Salafis of being extremist, opposing their reform. The Hanafi Sunni Gedimu clings fiercely to Chinese customs and the mosque educational method of education, refusing to pronounce Arabic correctly, even in the time of learning the correct pronunciation. Ikhwanii criticize the Gedimu for practicing Islamic customs fused with Chinese culture, including mosque education, Ikhwanii are pride themselves of speaking correct Arabic, accusing the Gedimu Muslims of practicing Han and Buddhist customs and ”Chinese Arabic”. One Ikhwanii Imam said of the Gedimu, “blindly followed the traditions of their ancestors” (http://en.wikipedia.org). So and so forth, their argument focuses on trivial matters.

6. The Future of Chinese Islam in the Mid of Those Sects

In April 1994, my friend and I set on journey to the eastern provinces of China, visited Muslim communities in some selected places. A masjid in Taiyuan city of Shanxi province left me a deep impression. The masjid is big, can contain five hundred worshipers, with traditional structure, magnificent Arabic decoration on its walls and pillars. When we entered the masjid for our maghrib prayers, we found only a few old man were waiting for azan (the call of prayers). After we introduced ourselves, one old man responded that “young Huis from there (he means the northwest of China) are coming to masjid, whilst our youngsters here never come to the masjid.” I quite understood his remark. The young Huis are not Islamic educated; they are communist rather than Muslims, due to the systematically enforced education by the central government.

As Lin yi, an associate professor of sociology at Xiamen University, said in his book Cultural Exclusion in China, based on extensive original research, “underlying economic inequality are educational inequality and cultural exclusion” (Lin Yi, 2008). A standardized and unified public education is strongly enforced through government law, upon all minorities residing in China. The text books and references are exclusively produced by the ministry of the centralized government. No single elements of religious materials are permitted to be included in those texts. Besides, the kids of minorities who reach schooling age are not legally allowed to be enrolled at any religious institutions; though there might be some choices for them to be educated in religious institutions. Muslims as one of the minorities, who are composed of only 1.2 percent of the total population, and who are living in this environment, their future of living as practical Muslims, is very dull and pessimistic rather than...
bright and optimistic. We can reasonably conclude to that end. Huoda, a Chinese Muslim novelist, also foretold her reader through the life story of the figure Jade, that her future is a totally sinicization, a complete merge into Chinese population (Huo Da, 1997), just like a gold ring buried in the sea of massive desert sand.

In the mid of this absorbent general environment embeds the internal social problems of Muslims communities, such as high illiteracy, poor living condition, plus internal quarrel, fighting, argument, killing each other etc. all kind of malign social diseases, in the face of this situation, how can one possibly expect a better future for them?

China’s Muslims are clearly a minority group, who should have stayed united in order to face challenges posed by majority Chinese, like Tibetans who are united by their spiritual leader Dalai Lama, who, with the strong support of his co-religious followers, is dare to challenge giant Chinese culture, but Muslims only can be tools used by other stronger power to kill each other, and sometimes others, at the time of general upheavals. So to keep Muslim Huis Islamic is not educationally possible for the time being, unless the present government willingly changes its policy of enforced assimilation. Though we have recently, starting from 1980th, when Deng Xiao-ping announced “open door policy”, see a trend of reviving Islam, but that serves little for general public of Muslim communities, which has a population of about 20 million. We need thousand schools specialized for Muslim kids, in which must contain the subjects of Islam, especially the basic tenets of Islam. But that is only an impossible dream. What Chinese Muslims can do is only to keep tradition, which is manifested through their special dietary custom, which is respected and even lawfully protected by the government. Maris Boyd has observed this phenomenon perfectly. “A community of urban Chinese Muslims uses consumption to position its members more favorably within the Chinese government’s official paradigm for development.” (Gillette, 2000) The dietary problem faced by Chinese Muslims is much similar situation faced by Muslims in Canada (Yousif, 1993), in respect of that minority Muslim community is facing overwhelming majority non-Muslim.

Very recent trend may be little encouraging to Muslims in China. Dozens of government owned public universities opened Islamic studies or Islamic Institutions, or Islamic centers for a profound understanding of Islam and Muslim nations. Some Muslim graduate from oversea Islamic Universities are employed, and to do researches, a trend which never have expected before. Hope it goes favorable to the advantages of Muslims in China and Muslim world at large.

Another new trend is economical. The Chinese companies involving international business in Muslim World; are also employing Muslim workers and translators, for a simple reason, that Muslims can facilitate a smoother business transfer than other non-Muslims (Dillon, 2009).

Acknowledgement

This paper is under the scholarship of International Islamic University College Selangor.

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