Islam in China
Lena Scheen

Terrorism, war, refugees, niqab, Syria, ISIS or Daesh. It is hard to find a recent newspaper article on Islam that does not contain one of these words. But how often do we read about the twenty-five million Muslims living in China? Ever since the first Muslim traders arrived in the Chinese Empire over 1400 years ago, Muslims have played an important role in Chinese history. For this first issue of China Connections – a series on China’s relation to the world and hosted by the Asia Research Center (ARC-FDU) at Fudan University and the Global Asia Center (GCA) at NYU Shanghai – we invited four scholars to write about their research on Islam in China. Together they explore questions such as: Why did the Qianlong Emperor issue an imperial edict to conduct an empire-wide investigation of Hui Muslim communities in 1781? How did a small town in Yunnan Province become a center for Islamic learning? And how do its current residents deal with the haunting ghosts of 1600 Muslims killed in 1975? How does institutionalization play a role in the unification of the spatially dispersed and ethnically diverse Chinese Muslim communities? And how does a Chinese Muslim studying in Egypt experience the Arab Spring? It is through these stories of cultural exchange, conflict, and integration that we hope to provide a deeper, more layered understanding of Islam today.

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Who were the Hui?
The first empire-wide investigation of Hui communities in Qing China.

Meng WEI

ON 29 MAY 1781, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-95) of China issued an imperial edict to conduct an empire-wide investigation of Hui communities. The order was in response to the ‘FanHui’ rebellion (also known as the ‘Salar Rebellion’) by the Hui minority in Gansu province. It was immediately passed down to the lowest levels of Qing government and detailed reports were sent to the governors or governor (zhangjiao) of the eighteen provinces (‘China proper’) for investigation and then made known to the Emperor. The result of the investigation provided the Qing state with a renewed understanding of the Hui landscape of its empire and constituted the basis for future policymaking towards the Hui.

The ‘FanHui’ rebellion was inspired by Ma Mingxin (1719-81), a native of Gansu and a Sufi leader who had introduced the ‘new teaching’ to the region following his return from several years of study of Jahriya Sufi practices in Yemen. In a simplistic view, ‘Fan’ is a term often associated with non-Han populations by the Qing state. On 29 June 1781, the Qianlong emperor issued another imperial edict to command that the investigation had to remain unalarming in order not to cause further disturbances. During the investigation, anyone found involved with the ‘new teaching’ would be seized immediately, interrogated strictly by provincial governors or governor-generals in person, and punished severely. Under this climate of suspicion, the investigators devised various strategies to access and probe into the Hui communities. For example, a Governor of Henan province selected local officials who, dressed in Muslim attire, had to go undercover among the Hui community. In another instance, a Governor-general of Sichuan brought in for interrogation as many as nineteen senior Hui residents from the provincial capital and its suburbs and four ‘headmen’ (xiangbao) selected by local officials and responsible for maintaining public safety as well as managing secular matters. Secret investigations into various Hui communities throughout the province were made afterwards to testify their testimonies.

The main goal of the edict was to find out whether there existed any positions or titles such as ‘imam’ (‘headman’) and ‘imam-superior’ (‘zangzhaoge’), evident by the Han fell under the same legal category, by employing various investigative methods, Qing investigators still found insight into the ways in which the Qing state perceived, identified, and managed the Hui. One striking feature found in the official reports is that, not distinguished from the Han, the Hui were all registered as ‘commoners’ (minren or minren) into the baojia system, an instrument of social ordering implemented by the Qing. However, although the Hui and the Han fell under the same legal category, by employing various investigative methods, Qing investigators still found their ways to single out and identify the Hui, evident by the number of Hui households and mosques they kept record of in their reports. In the very process of exhaustively searching for and recording the quantities of Hui households and mosques at every corner of ‘China proper’, the Qing state envisioned the Hui communities in its various provinces as belonging to a same group, one that the state could keep monitoring ever since.

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1. *Baojia* was a system under which households were registered into nested regional groupings of ten, one hundred, and so on for purposes of assigning collective responsibility in public security and other matters and for fixing personal responsibility for the group on a single ‘headman’ at each level of the hierarchy*. Rowe, W.T. 2001. Saving the World: China and many institutes abroad.
Shadian's Muslim communities and trans-local connectivities: observations from the field

Hyeju (Janice) Jeong

I REACHED SHADIAN TOWN after a three hour drive from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, China. As I stepped out of the car in the chill of a late November night, the site of Shadian's magnificent Grand Mosque and the call to night prayers reminded me that it was in a zone quite different from Kunming.

Shadian has ten mosques, with the Grand Mosque - modelled on the Al-Masjid al-Nabawi mosque in Medina - completed in 2009 - as its symbol. Almost ninety percent of Shadian's fifteen thousand residents are Muslims, belonging to the Han Chinese and the Hui ethnic groups. However, Shadian is also known for the so-called Shadian Incident of 1979, in which villagers forcibly opened closed-down mosques during the last years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The 'incident' left 1,600 people dead at the hands of the People's Liberation Army. "The old Islamic schools in Shadian used to have various intake issues, but everything has been burned," lamented my informant, Mr. Ma. Across the Mosque was the Islamic Culture and Arts Center that exhibits and sells Sino-Islamic artworks. Within a few blocks of the Grand Mosque, one senses a mix of forward-looking aspirations and painful memories, reflecting a continuing history of represion and resilience of Islam in China.

Shadian's trans-local networks in history

Islam in Yunnan expanded during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), when short-term trade with Central Asia led to an influx of Muslim traders from Bukhara (current Uzbekistan) who were granted official status by the Mongol rulers. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, trade became so important that, just before the Chinese communist victory in 1949, around 700 out of Shadian's 980 families, had two to three horses conducting commerce across northern Thailand and Myanmar.

In the first half of the 20th century, Shadian also emerged as a significant center for Islamic learning. For example, of the thirty-three students from China who studied in Cairo's al-Azhar University in the 1930s and 1940s, five came from Shadian alone. They were heavily sponsored by Bai Liangcheng (白亮诚, 1893–1965). A scholar and an official, Bai Liangcheng founded the Yufeng Islamic School in 1914, one Islamic School for Girls, and several Islamic periodicals. The old Yufeng Elementary School now displays an exhibition on Bai Liangcheng and Shadian's notable Muslims. Here I readied that Bai had also initiated industrialized tea commerce based in Yunnan's south-west.

Shadian became a part of caravan trade routes between Yunnan and Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and India. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, trade became so important that, just before the Chinese communist victory in 1949, around 700 out of Shadian's 980 families, had two to three horses conducting commerce across northern Thailand and Myanmar.

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China Connections continued

Shanghai Archaeology Forum

13-17 December 2015, Shanghai http://shanghai-archaeology-forum.org/

Founded in 2013, Shanghai Archaeology Forum (SAF) is a global initiative dedicated to promoting the investigation, protection and utilization of the world's archaeological resources and heritage. The 2015 SAF was co-organized by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, and the Shanghai Academy, the Institute of Archaeology at CASS, Shanghai Municipal Government and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences in cooperation with the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, and the Shanghai Academy, the Institute of Archaeology at CASS, Shanghai Municipal Government. The forum aims to provide a better understanding of the importance of the field of archaeology and the protection of cultural heritage for our common future.

To celebrate the excellence of archaeological research the SAF Awards were presented to those individuals and organizations who have achieved distinction by making major discoveries and developing innovative, creative and significant work in the past three years. The World Archaeology Keynote Lecture Series presented case studies illustrating key issues such as diverse forms of social and cultural identities, and transformation of cultural and social identities, the complexities and ambiguities of cultural identities and power relations, the active roles of indigenous agencies, practice and ideology in structuring colonial interaction, cultural persistence and the importance of historical contingency and local context.

The Public Archaeology Lecture Series promoted public awareness and the knowledge of the ever-increasing wealth of archaeological finds. The Public Archaeology Lecture Series invited three important archaeologists, Charles Higham, Lüthar von Falkenhhausen, and Colin Renfrew, to share their experiences on archaeology with students, and the general public. After the public lectures, the audience was given the opportunity to engage with the public archaeologists, discussing archaeological findings, as well as their concerns on the appreciation and protection of cultural diversity and the challenge of vanishing heritage in our globalizing world.

Juming WANG

Jumping WANG

CHINA IS HOME to a large Muslim population. According to the Islamic Association of China, the country has over 25 million Muslims, 40,000 mosques and more than 50,000 imams, a Persian term for the Islamic clerics who serve the scattered communities all over the country. Every year, more than 10,000 Muslims make their pilgrimage to Mecca, while - over the past thirty years - nearly 12,000 Muslim students have completed their Islamic studies abroad, and another 100,000 have studied Islam in the madrasas (religious school) in China. All these figures show that Islam has undergone a revival since the 1980s.

After being banned during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Islam in China has undergone a revival since the 1980s. The three pillars of the Islamic network in China

The three pillars of the Islamic network in China

However, although China has more Muslims than any Arab country, they are in fact still a vulnerable minority in Han-dominated China. While Muslims profit from government policies giving preferential treatment to ethnic minorities ('affirmative action') and officially enjoy freedom of religious practice, they are supervised carefully and restrictions remain in place over the activities of madressahs, religious ceremonies, religious organizations, etc. In order to maintain their Islamic tradition and to uphold their monotheistic identity, it is important for the widely dispersed Muslim enclaves to build a strong network in and outside of China. Three Islamic institutions form the backbone of this network.

Firstly, the mosque plays a central role in the Chinese Muslim community. Besides its religious function as a place for ritual prayer, mosques in China also have social, economic, and cultural functions, such as administrative management, festive celebration, social mobilization, economic enterprises, cultural education, or even daily life affairs. Hence, the mosque is a strong bond that links its local community, while stretching out its external relations with communities in other areas, with the aim of establishing the ethnic identity (Muslim nation) in the context of an uncertain environment.

Secondly, the mole (a local academy, or primary level) and madressah (Islamic college or high level) provides the Chinese Muslim community with education in Islamic knowledge, faith reinforcement, training for elites, and even preparation for the next generation. Most moleks and madressahs in China are attached to the mosques, however, there are also quite a few madressahs set up independently and open to all Muslims in society. They are not only responsible for the maintenance of Islam and to cultivate young Muslims, but also to strengthen and revitalize Islamic consciousness of Muslims of all ages. Moleks and madressahs often regenerate the vitality of the community.

References

1. Ma Weiliang, Yunnan Huizu Lishi yu Wenhua Yanjiu (Kunming, Yunnan Dassu Chubanshe, 1999), 241.
Snapshots of Sino-Muslim students living in Egypt

Shuang WEN
THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA resumed sending Chinese Muslim students to al-Azhar University in Egypt in 1982. A small number of the students are sent by the Islamic Association of China, headquartered in Beijing, and approved by the Chinese Embassy in Cairo. These students can enjoy the benefits of an education exchange agreement between the PRC and Egypt, i.e., they can live in the international student dorms at al-Azhar University and receive a modest monthly stipend. Most, however, travel on their own initiative; they are unable to enjoy the benefits of the education exchange agreement and have to fend for themselves. So when the Arab Spring broke out in January 2011, their lives in Egypt suddenly became uncertain. Below are two snapshots of these self-funded Chinese-speaking Sino-Muslim students.

Nabil
Nabil comes from a pious Muslim family in Henan. He went to Egypt in 2008 to study Islamic law at al-Azhar University, aspiring to become an imam (a Chinese term for imam) upon graduation. Because he did not have much prior knowledge of Islamic studies or the Arabic language, he did not receive a fellowship from the Islamic Association in China. However, he was very driven and passionate about his studies. When the uprising in Egypt erupted, his family members wanted him to return. However, just like many of his fellow Muslim students from around the world, he was excited about the revolution. He saw that people who held prior grades for personal reasons became supportive of each other, as if they were united by a moment of uncertainty. Feeling inspired, he made a conscientious choice to stay in order to witness the unfolding of a historical event in the Islamic world. He believed that this experience would strengthen his faith and enrich his personal growth in life.

Khalid
Khalid is originally from Henan as well, but his family is not particularly strict with religious practice. Not being able to pass the college entrance exam in China, he went to Al-Azhar University simply out of curiosity for the outside world. Although the tuition and living expenses in Egypt are not beyond the affordability of his family, they are still a financial burden. After a few years of trying, Khalid still could not pass the Arabic language exam, let alone enter a degree program. Feeling ashamed and not wanting to return home empty handed, he decided to open a Chinese restaurant in the neighborhood of the international students dorm of Al-Azhar University. Although Khalid had not been particularly good at academic studies, he did manage his business well. Hand-pulled noodles, stone fries and hotspots attracted many curious diners. Khalid not only earned enough profit to pay back the original financial support from his family, but also sent extra money back to Henan. However, as the Arab Spring continued, many international Muslim students—Khalid’s restaurant’s major client—left Egypt. If the political uncertainty continued, he would not be able to keep the restaurant afloat. However, if Khalid returned to China without Arabic language skills or religious training, his employment prospects would be bleak, which was the reason for him to leave in the first place. Khalid found his niche in Egypt, but his way of making a living is threatened by the political instability. To leave or to stay, that was a big question for him when he met him in July 2013. In the end, his choice was no surprise to those aware about students at al-Azhar University. In fact, a majority of them are like him. Not being able to enter a college in China, they went to Egypt without much religious or Arabic language knowledge, or even awareness of what to expect. As a result, they needed to first take prerequisite language classes. However, as the Arabic language is very difficult, most of them cannot pass the language exam after repeated trials, which means they cannot enter the Al-Azhar University degree program either. Out of frustration or financial constraints, they drop out of school, but have managed to make the best of their experience in Egypt by finding different jobs to make a living. Some Sino-Muslim students work in marble-making, shoe-making, and plastic recycling factories. Others sell small made-in-China inexpensive products at the Khan al-Khalili market. Some even become door-to-door sales persons or tour guides. For them, Egypt has become a place of survival rather than religious learning.

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References
1. Sino-Muslim is a term coined by scholar Jonathan Lipman in his book Familiar Strangers (University of Washington Press, 1997). Names of the Sino-Muslim students in this essay are not their real names.

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that is in perpetual competition with a non-Muslim Chinese community over the limited economic resources, and has to survive in a context of social and cultural tension. Islamic education is like the soul of the Chinese community, binding all Muslims into a strong organization, regardless their social, economic, or political background.

Thirdly, the qubba (tomb of a Muslim scholar or elderly) forms the nexus of the Sufi community of Islamic Mysticism. More than one third of the Chinese Muslims are affiliated to one or another Sufi order. Many qubbas do not merely function in the burial places for the Sufi saints or Sufi leaders, but are places of pilgrimage for Sufi followers, turning them into a religious complex that combines the functions of a mosque, madrasa, qubba, and mausoleum, and the tomb. The qubba thus plays a comprehensive role in the Sufi social network.

In conclusion, Chinese Muslims have strategically formed a religious, social, and cultural network that has made Islam in China an institutionalized entity binding the widely dispersed and ethnically diverse Muslim communities or enclaves into a considerably coherent, partly unified Muslim umma. Confronted with increasing Islamophobia in the wake of recent terrorist attacks around the world, these networks are crucial for the survival of a minority living in a country dominated by a culture of atheism and materialism.

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You Must Create!
7-9 April 2016, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

http://acgs.una.nl/news-and-events/news/content/2016/04/you-must-create.html

You must create—to be less bored, to be more authentic, to be free in the digital world! These questions were the kernel of a three-day event of conferencing and site visits held early April in Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

The event took place in the historical juncture when creativity has become a global enterprise, where China appears to move from a ‘made in China’ towards a ‘created in China’ country (Kwan 2011), to transform creativity and culture into a crucial source for innovation and financial growth as well as part of its ‘soft power’ to both the citizenry as well as the outside world.

“You Must Create!” was jointly organized by the Amsterdam Centre of Globalization Studies, University of Amsterdam and the Department of Humanities and Creativity Writing, Hong Kong Baptist University, as part of the European Research Council funded project “From Made in China to Created in China – A Comparative Study of Creative Practice and Production in Contemporary China”. The five-year project is led by Professor Jeroen de Kloet (UvA).

Explorations during the event will be organized and developed into an open source set of (audio-visual) materials, scheduled to be published by the Amsterdam University Press in the summer of 2017.

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World Forum on China Studies
20-21 November 2015, Shanghai
www.chinastudies.org.cn/eng/lish.htm

Sponsored by the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China and the Shanghai Municipal Government, the World Forum on China Studies is a Shanghai-based biannual academic event jointly organized by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and the Shanghai Municipal Information Office. Founded in 2004, the Forum is held every two years in Shanghai and has convened seven times including this year. The Forum has served as a platform for distinguished scholars to communicate with each other and explore the past, present and future of China studies. It also dedicates to professional experts and opinion leaders in China Studies while fostering an informed mutual understanding between China and the world.

The forum has established its fame internationally in academia, with the attendance of around 1600 scholars, experts and veteran politicians from over 40 countries and regions all over the world. Meanwhile, diplomatic institutions and representatives of the think tanks from more than 100 countries have participated in the Forum, which received extensive cover-age by dozens of professional media outlets as well. Academic circles at home and abroad speak highly of the forum. Scholars from Russia, the United States, Japan, India and other countries have widely quoted the important academic points of view proposed during the forum.

Themed “China’s Reform, Opportunities for the World,” the 6th World Forum on China Studies was held in Shanghai on 20-21 November 2015. Over 200 scholars and opinion leaders of different professional specialties and cultural backgrounds discussed a range of topics on China’s reform in the current global setting.