

# Familiar Strangers

A History of Muslims  
in Northwest China

JONATHAN N. LIPMAN



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Jonathan N. Lipman

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A History of Muslims in Northwest China

JONATHAN N. LIPMAN

The Chinese-speaking Muslims have for centuries been an inseparable but anomalous part of Chinese society—Sinophone yet incomprehensible, local yet outsiders, normal but different. Long regarded by the Chinese government as prone to violence, they have challenged fundamental Chinese conceptions of Self and Other and denied the totally transforming power of Chinese civilization by tenaciously maintaining connections with Central and West Asia as well as some cultural differences from their non-Muslim neighbors.

*Familiar Strangers* narrates a history of the Muslims of northwest China, at the intersection of the frontiers of the Mongolian-Manchu, Tibetan, Turkic, and Chinese cultural regions. Based on primary and secondary sources in a variety of languages, *Familiar Strangers* examines the nature of ethnicity and periphery, the role of religion and ethnicity in personal and collective decisions in violent times, and the complexity of belonging to two cultures at once. Concerning itself with a frontier very distant from the core areas of Chinese culture and very strange to most Chinese, it explores the influence of language, religion, and place on Sino-Muslim identity.

"No published study comes close to providing this kind of comprehensive and informed study of the history of Islam and Muslims in China."—**John Voll**, author of *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*

"By far the most developed historical treatment of Muslims in China, lucidly written and useful for readers from undergraduate to specialist."—**Pamela Kyle Crossley**, author of *Orphan Warriors* and *The Manchus*

**Jonathan N. Lipman** is professor of history and chair of Asian studies at Mount Holyoke College. He is the author of numerous articles on Muslims in China and a coeditor of *Violence in China: Essays in Culture and Counterculture* and *Remapping China: Fissures in Historical Terrain*.

Cover illustration: Muslim child with bone "slate" inscribed with Arabic lesson. Photograph by the Rev. Claude Pickens, Jr., c. 1930s. Pickens Collection, Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University

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