

ISLAM IN TRADITIONAL CHINA :

A SHORT HISTORY TO 1800

BY

DONALD DANIEL LESLIE

On the cover is the first Chinese transcription  
Mo-ho-mo for the Prophet Muhammad; and the famous  
hadīth mentioning China.

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PREFACEAcknowledgements

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Apologia

In the temple of history are many rooms, ranging from the basement where I work, through the lofty living rooms of the great writers of historical synthesis, up to the attic where those who speculate may look up to Heaven.

It may be the case for certain aspects of western history that any competent historian can deal with the simple basic facts needed for the basement and foundations of the building, the real work being the architecture of the space above. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that this is not so for Chinese history, nor for the Muslim world for that matter. The language and bibliographical problems are awesome, and the foundations hardly commenced. We bricklayers do certainly need architects to keep our work in focus, but finding the bricks and laying them out is itself a back-breaking job.

This particular book is not intended to be an analytical study, but rather a sourcebook of essential raw material for future studies. It is, I believe, a serious contribution to the foundations of a future History of Islam in China. Much of the material has already been found by Chinese scholars, Pai Shou-i and others, and even more by Tazaka Kōdō in his monumental work in Japanese, English title "Islam in China : Its Introduction and Development". However, even these secondary sources, in Chinese and Japanese, are difficult to control, and need to be integrated with western analyses. The present work is, I believe, the first in a European language to give a real albeit limited synthesis, urgently needed for a long time.

The essential feature of this kind of history is the use of primary sources. Though at times I have flagged, especially in the later chapters, I have tried to give always the earliest extant source. This is especially necessary in both Chinese and Islamic fields, for a mild form of plagiarisation was an integral part of historical writing in both cultures. However, equally essential is to use the best secondary works, firstly to find and control the primary sources, secondly because in many cases they actually correct the primary sources. An Arabic or Persian source writing about China or a Chinese one writing about Islam naturally makes errors that we with hindsight can correct and improve.

It is important to point out the weaknesses of this work and also the many omissions. Hopefully, most of the Chinese primary sources have been covered or at least mentioned, especially up to the Ming, for this early period has been dealt with by many scholars, in particular by Tazaka. More fundamental research is still required for the Ming and Ch'ing, and here my work is schematic rather than exhaustive.

The time span, from the Han until 1800, means inevitably that several superficialities and naivities, as well as errors, will be found in my text. I hope, nevertheless, that some new material will be found here even by specialists in the T'ang or Sung, Yuan or Ming or early Ch'ing.

For several of the chapters, I have written elsewhere (sometimes in collaboration with others) a more detailed research account. For the Han, for the Persian religions, for the Arabic sources, for the Chinese Muslim writings in Chinese, for Liu Chih's Arabic and Persian sources, I have summarised here the findings of myself and other scholars, whereas in other chapters I have incorporated my own more recent research in more detail.

I have concentrated on two main aspects: the political history; and the mutual knowledge and relations between Muslim and non-Muslim. I have badly neglected the cultural and scientific contribution of Islam to China and of China to West Asia, and also the religious peculiarities of Chinese Islam. Even for those topics that I have stressed, my account is still limited, only "A Short History to 1800". Further research is still needed on many or most of the topics.

The result is thus a patchwork, with segments and strands of differing style and quality. I make no apology, I have attempted a pioneering work rather than a finished polished one. A long journey lies ahead before we can hope to have in English or any European language a complete "History of Islam in China" to rival that of Tazaka Kōdō in Japanese.

I have attempted to integrate Arabic and Persian sources up to the 15th Century, but using only western translations. A new analysis of "China in Arabic and Persian Sources" by an Arabist/Iranianist is needed. I have followed Barthold, Schefer, Ferrand, Minorsky, Reinaud, Gibb, Sauvaget, Boyle, Kim, Frye, Honda, and many others.

This work is essentially that of a sinologist. As such, I owe an enormous debt to Ch'en Yüan and Pelliot, Kuwabara Jitsuzō and Chavannes, whose vision was matched by their scholarship. I have tried to build on the solid labours of Palladius and Bretschneider, Hirth and Rockhill, Yule and Cordier, d'Ollone and Vissière, Devéria and Hartmann, which have prepared the ground. Basic Chinese secondary works are by Chin Chi-t'ang, Chang Hsing-lang, Fang Hao, Fu T'ung-hsien, Ma I-yü, and especially Pai Shou-i. In Japanese, besides Tazaka's great work, we

have Kuwata Rokurō, and more recently Iwamura Shinobu, Saguchi Tōru, Watanabe Hiroshi and Nakada Yoshinobu. For certain periods, I have been lucky to find specialist analyses : those of Chavannes, Devéria, Schafer and Chang Jih-ming for the T'ang; Kuwabara, Lo Hsiang-lin and Pai Shou-i for the Sung; Ch'en Yuan, Honda, Rossabi and Pai Shou-i for the Yuan; Mills and Watanabe for the Ming; Fletcher and Ford for the early Ch'ing. Their works must be consulted to supplement what I have summarised and extracted here.

I have concentrated on the Hui, in particular on those who lived in the large cities, and have made no attempt to cover the various Muslim groups of Sinkiang, Chinghai and other western parts of China. Even for those topics considered, several have been badly neglected. I have only scratched the surface in many fields :

1. The mention of Muslims in local gazetteers and local descriptions, in particular for Muslim officials of the Yuan.
2. The contents of the Islamic books in Chinese.
3. The inscriptions, both in Chinese and in Arabic.
4. The religious beliefs and activities of the Muslims in China : ritual, fasts and feasts.
5. Their economic life ; and occupations.
6. Their contribution to Chinese cultural life, in particular in the medical and astronomical fields.
7. The distinct ethnic groups among the Chinese Muslims.
8. The religious groups or sects in China.
9. Demography and population.

Arabic sources on China need a renewed attack, following on Kim's recent excellent work. So do Persian sources and Persian influence in China, developing Tazaka, Honda and Tashakori. In particular, Persian and other western influences on the New Teaching and other Chinese "sects" need more analysis, following on Trippner, Nakada, Saguchi, Mien, Gascoigne, and especially Fletcher.

This work was substantially completed by 1982. Since then, a resurgence of scholarship has occurred in Peking, Ningsia and Chwanchow. New excellent research is being done on the inscriptions, the Islamic books in Chinese, rebellions, religious divisions and groupings, and on several other topics. Though I cannot claim to have incorporated all the most recent findings, I have nevertheless included most of these articles and books in my bibliographies and references. I have deliberately stressed the bibliographical aspects of the problem, for I believe that in the long run the most valuable and essential feature of history is collation. That is to say that when we have all the sources in order, both primary and secondary, many of the problems will prove amenable to analysis and the facts will become clear. I have appended several Indices (note that the major works by Tazaka and Pai Shou-i have none). My bibliographies and indices refer only to items mentioned in my text. For greater coverage of certain aspects, see also my Islamic Literature in Chinese and "The Identification of Chinese Cities in Arabic and Persian Sources".

Donald Daniel Leslie

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1. "Heads on Trees" (from San-ts'ai t'u-hui).
2. "Hagar and Ishmael in the desert" (from San-ts'ai t'u-hui).
3. "Figurines from the T'ang dynasty" (Seattle Art Museum, Royal Ontario Museum).
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5. "Entrance to Niu-chieh street mosque, Peking".
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A collection of beautiful photographs will be found in The Religious Life of Chinese Muslims, Peking, 1981.

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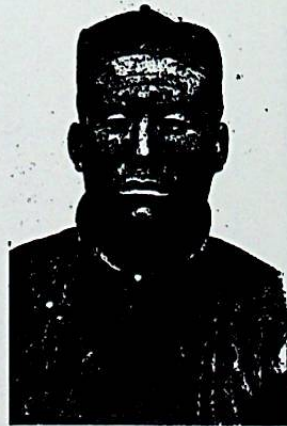
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Arab Hwei-hwei.



Sainr or Turki Hwei-hwei.

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