

THE HISTORY OF
WOMEN'S MOSQUES
IN CHINESE ISLAM
A MOSQUE OF THEIR OWN

Maria Jaschok
and
Shui Jingjun

CURZON

First Published in 2000
by Curzon Press
Richmond, Surrey
<http://www.curzonpress.co.uk>

© 2000 Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun
Typeset in Sabon by LaserScript Ltd, Mitcham, Surrey
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-7007-1302-6

Dedication

*For our mothers, Hildegard Jaschok and Shao Ximei
For our sisters, Hap Bryant and Yang Dongling*

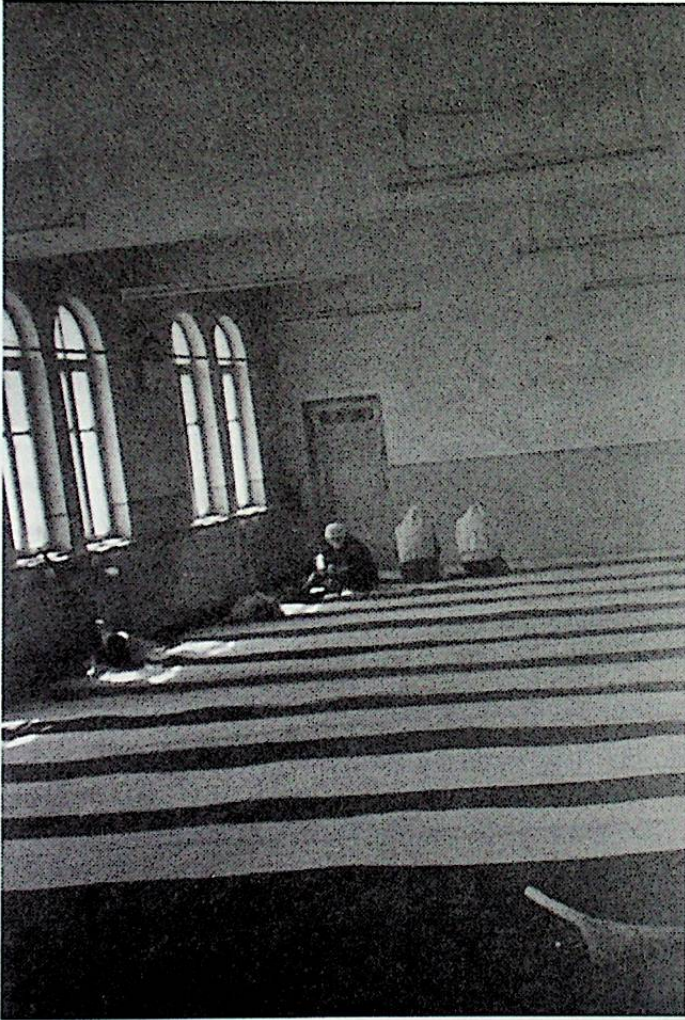


PLATE 1: Women praying as they wait for Friday worship to begin. Women's prayer hall at the Harbin Dongsi (Eastern Mosque) in Heilongjiang Province. 25 April 1997 (Jaschok)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Division of Labour</i>	x
<i>List of Maps and Tables</i>	xi
<i>Illustrations</i>	xii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiv
<i>Collective Preface</i>	xvi
PART I: Introduction	1
I A Mosque Of Their Own: Muslim Women, Chinese Islam and Sexual Equality	3
PART II: From the Margins of Memory	33
II Scholarly Debates: Islamic Faith, Innovation (<i>bid'a</i>) and Constructs of Femininity	35
III The Beginnings and History of a Female Religious Culture	68
IV Growth and Expansion of Women's Mosques and Schools	101
PART III: Women's Mosques, Nu Ahong and their Religious Culture	119
V 'Look Not at the Evil and Hear It Not' – From Ancient Persian Canons to Contemporary Female Sexuality	121
VI 'The Road to Allah's Commandments' – Conflicts of Loyalty under Chinese State Law	138
VII From Dependence to Independence: Women's Mosques, Islamic Patriarchy and the State	154

Contents

PART IV: Claiming Heaven	177
VIII Between Allah and Modernity: Re/Engendering the Past	179
IX <i>Xiuti</i> ; 'From Head to Toe' – Shaming and Concealing the Body	211
X The Feminisation of Purgatory: Mediating Spiritual Faith and Equality	237
PART V: Chinese Muslim Women: Communitas, Choices, and Conversion	259
XI Aisha, A Chronicle of Conversion and Collective Survival	261
XII Lives and Testimonies: Living in God's Shadow	276
Yang Huizhen <i>Abong</i> , Social Activist in Zhejiang	276
Ba <i>Abong</i> , Henan, Preserving Female Religious Tradition	283
Yang Yinlian <i>Abong</i> , Harbin, Heilongjiang: My Work Report	287
Daughters-in-Law in an <i>Abong</i> 's Family, Recalled by Shui Zhiying	292
Epilogue	304
Appendix I Profiles of Two Leading Women's Mosques and their Religious Leadership	307
Appendix II <i>Nusi</i> in the Republican Era (1912–1949)	312
Appendix III Questioning Hui and Han Women and Men on Quality of Life (Survey)	315
Appendix IV Unpublished Documentation on Central China's Muslim Culture and Women's Lives (lodged with Henan Provincial Library, Zhengzhou, Henan Province)	320
<i>Glossary</i>	324
<i>Bibliography</i>	337
<i>Index</i>	355

Acknowledgements

This book was produced over a long, at times arduous, but always challenging period of international collaboration. It could not have succeeded without a community of support which extended from Zhengzhou, Beijing, Hong Kong via Melbourne to Oxford. We are grateful to the Henan Academy of Social Sciences, Hong Kong University (Centre of Asian Studies), Oxford University (Centre of Cross-Cultural Research on Women), Monash University (Centre of Women's Studies & Gender Research) for facilitation of research and writing and to the Ford Foundation for generous funding. We received support, at different stages of project gestation, from colleagues and friends too numerous to mention whose interest and unflagging patience carried us through several difficult phases. Particularly crucial were the many opportunities we enjoyed over the years for debate and critical reflection, for encouragement and inspiration, but also for respite and revitalisation, which came to us from Cecilia Young, Elizabeth Sinn, Carl T. Smith, Edward Chen, Maryanne Dever, Denise Cuthbert, Ludmilla Kwitko, Elisabeth Croll, Cecilia Milwertz, Shirley Ardener, Helen Callaway, David Faure, Nadia Abu-Zahra, Mary-Ann Burris, Anthony Saich, Feng Jinyuan, Lin Changkuan, Hap Bryant, *Du Nu Ahong*, *Guo Nu Ahong*, *Dan Ye Shetou*, Zhao Baoyou.

The History of Women's Mosques in Chinese Islam

A mosque of their own

Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun

This book is an historical exploration of the relationship between Hui ethnicity, Islam, the Chinese State and Gender. It contextualises the ethnography of diversely situated contemporary Chinese Muslim women's lives within a secular Communist paradigm of womanhood. Cross-cultural issues addressed are religious indigenisation, collective survival and their multiple implications for expressions of women's agency.

Jacket illustration: Yang Yinlian Ahong
on her day of ordination, 6 August 1958

The History of Women's Mosques in Chinese Islam

Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun, collaborators with outsider/insider perspectives, have presented a comprehensive, scholarly study of Chinese Hui Muslim women's historic and unrelenting spiritual, educational, political, and gendered drive for an institutional presence in Islamic worship and leadership: 'a mosque of one's own' as a unique feature of Chinese Muslim culture. The authors place the historical origin of women's segregated religious institutions in the Chinese Islamic diaspora's fight for survival, and in their crucial contribution to the cause of ethnic/religious minority identity and solidarity. Against the presentation of complex historical developments of women's own site of worship and learning, the authors open out to contemporary problems of sexual politics within the wider society of socialist China and beyond to the history of Islam in all its cultural diversity.

The authors argue that perplexities over the multiple meanings of women's liberation, and the multiple paths to this liberation, in a modernising and diversifying Chinese society grant opportunities to religious women at the same time as the re-connection with international Islam also increases pressures to surrender precious historical rights.

Here women's hostility to inroads on their religious sphere interfaces with state opposition to foreign intervention to produce a mutually advantageous alliance in defence of self-determination, both gendered and political. How to safeguard the most powerful symbol of women's rightful place in the diverse Muslim culture of China, an independent women's mosque, and yet make its tradition relevant to a modernising society? How to negotiate pressures from secular and religious patriarchy alike without neglecting the imperatives of internal educational reform?

This study suggests that when we consider questions of gender and social transformation in contemporary China, its Muslim women are equal and vital participants in internal discourse on change.

The book will appeal to a diverse audience: to general readers with an interest in women's lives in Asian Muslim societies and, more specifically, to students of Chinese Women's Studies, Chinese Social History, Chinese Islam as well as of the Anthropology of Asia and cross-cultural study of Islam and Gender.



CURZON

ISBN 0-7007-1302-6



9 780700 713028