

The Islamic Studies in China: Research in the Field of History

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A history of the Islamic studies in China, not only includes studies on world Islam, it also includes research on Islam and Muslims in China. Before the Reform and Opening Up, China did not achieve much in this field, since then, the research field of Islam and Muslim in China has been expanding and the results have been published, forming a new trend. In this field, scholars such as Jin Yijiu, Li Xinghua, Qin Huibin, Zhou Guoli, Sha Qiuzhen, Zhou Xiefan, Wu Yungui, and Yang Huaizhong have made the most outstanding achievements. Especially in the collation of reference books and historical materials, in the past 20 years, *The Encyclopedia of the history of Islam*, *The Chinese Encyclopedia of Islam* have emerged, and the *Chinese and World Encyclopedia of Islamic Law* and other important historical books have been published. This paper focuses on the field of historical research and divided into academic research history at home and abroad, which is discussed from several fields such as general history, special history, national history, and regional history.

Keywords: Islamic studies, China, the field of history, Chinese Islam, world Islam

Introduction

In China, the research in the field of Islamic history has no research results before the 20th century according to strict academic standards. In the early 20th century, some achievements in the history of Chinese Islam appeared, and some have a high academic level. During the period of the Republic of China, Chinese scholars wrote monographs on the study of Islamic history, for example, Chen Hanzhang's (1926) "History of Islam in China", Chen Yuan's (1927) "A Brief Introduction to the History of Islam in China", Jin Jitang's (1935) *A Study on the History of Islam in China*, Chuan Tongxian's (1940) *The History of Chinese Islam*, Ma Yiyu's (1940) *A History of Chinese Islam*, Bai Shouyi's (1943) *A Brief History of Islam in China* and Bai Shouyi's (1947) *Outline of Chinese Islamic History*, Ma Liangjun's (1949) *Textual Research on the History of Islam*.

It is an important representative work in this regard, among which the achievements of Chen Hanzhang and Chen Yuan can be called the first work. Many of these achievements have been translated and cited by Japanese scholars, which has high theoretical value. In addition to these representative achievements, the two issues of "special issue of Islamic Research" in *Yugong*, edited by Gu Jiegang in the 1930s, also published several articles by scholars or masters such as Chen Yuan and Bai Shouyi, such as: Bai Shouyi's (1936) "The Earliest Chinese Records of Islam from the Battle of Talas"; Bai Shouyi's (1937) "Islamic Spice Trade in Song Dynasty"; Zhao Zhenwu's (1936) "Overview of Chinese Muslim Culture in the Past 30 Years"; Pang Shiqian's (1937) "The Evolution and Textbooks of Chinese Muslim Temple Education"; Wang Jingzhai's (1937) "50 years of study"; Sanghara's (1936) "The Monument to the Establishment of a Mosque".

Among the few papers published during the period of the Republic of China, some studied the historical context of the introduction of Islam into China from different angles and methods, some investigated the situation of Islam and Muslims in China at that time from the perspective of sociology, and some introduced the research results at home and abroad such as Japan. These research results roughly reflect the trend of Islamic academic research in the period of the Republic of China. It also has a certain impact on the theoretical and practical aspects of later Chinese Islamic research.

Focusing on the Study of Islam and Muslims in China

After the founding of new China, although there have been some research results, unfortunately, due to historical reasons such as the Cultural Revolution, this field has also encountered various setbacks. Until the Reform and Opening Up, the research field of Islam and Muslims in China has been expanding and the results have been published, forming a new trend in the study of Islam and Muslims. The research on the history of Islam in China is introduced in the following interrelated fields.

Firstly, the main research results in the history of penetration are, Feng Jinyuan's (1991) *Islam in China*; Qin Huibin's (1997) *Islam in China*; Li Xinghua, Qin Huibin, Feng Jinyuan, and Sha Qiuzhen's (1998) *History of Islam in China*; Qin Huibin's (1998) *Islamic Records*; Mi Shoujiang's (2000) *A Brief History of Islam in China*; Sha Qiuzhen's (2002) *Islam in China*; Yang Guiping and Ma Xiaoying's (2007) *Halal Changming*.

Feng's book has its own unique views on the name, function, and style of Chinese mosques, sects, and the contribution of Chinese Muslims of all ethnic groups to history. Qin's book discusses several topics, such as the long history, the ideological system of Chinese Islamic doctrine, the main classics of Islam, etiquette, systems and customs, outstanding contributions in science and technology, and various nationalities who believe in Islam. The introduction and analysis of doctrines, ideological systems, classics, etiquette, systems, and customs also have some opinions. However, the representative monograph that has a great influence on the academic circles is still regarded as *The History of Islam in China*.

In addition, there are many articles on the study of the chronological history of Islam in China, such as Qin Huibin's (1989), Qiu Shusen's (2001), Liu Chengyou's (2002), Ge Zhuang's (2002), Chen Guoguang's (2002), Zhou Yaoming's (2004) articles. Among them, Qin's paper holds that during the Five Dynasties, the focus of the spread of Islam in China has shifted from the West (Chang'an area) to the south. Islam, which focuses on the south, has little contact with Islam developed in the west, and loses relations with each other. Islam is strongly influenced by Chinese traditional culture in the southeast, but it is not so strong in the West. In his article, he put forward the view that there is a belief ladder, that is, the belief mentality of Chinese Muslims presents a ladder with a great gradient from west to East.

The study papers of the special history of Islam are: Ma Tong's (1983) *A Brief History of Islamic Sects and Official System in China*; Yu Zhengui's (1996) *Chinese Political Power and Islam*.

Ma's book is divided into three parts: the first part summarizes the history of Islam, the second part comprehensively records the systems and major historical events of the three major sects of Islam, the four Sufi schools, and their officials. The contents of the book are collected through a large number of practical investigations, including the oral statements, family history, and local chronicles of the leaders of some sects and officials. It is authentic and has great reference value. He is a representative scholar in the field of sectarian history. He discusses the development context of Islam in China on the relationship between Islam and some

Chinese nationalities, that is, the abyss influence of sects and officials. Yu is a representative scholar in the field of political history. From the perspective of the policies of previous dynasties on Islam, the book makes a more in-depth study on the relationship between successive regimes and Islam, and gives Muslims the opportunity to reflect on themselves economically and politically.

Islam in China is mainly divided into Hui and other nationalities dominated by Chinese and Uygur and other nationalities dominated by Turkic. The areas where they live are also mainly divided into Islam and culture in the mainland and Xinjiang. From the perspective of history, there are obvious differences in the introduction of Islam to China in the two regions. After the reform and development, on the basis of the previous compilation of regional Islamic history, an important step has been taken in the research in this field. The research papers and investigation reports have been published successively, and the research results have been published one after another, for example, *Selected papers on Quanzhou Islam* (Quanzhou Overseas Transportation General History Museum and Quanzhou History Research Association, 1983); *Research on Islam in Northwest China*, compiled by Gansu Institute of Nationalities (1985); Liu Zhengyan and Wei Liangzhen's (1998) *A Study of the Zhuo Family in the Western Regions*; Li Jinxin's (1999) *A Brief History of the Islamic Khan Dynasty in Xinjiang*; Wu Yiye's (1999) *History of Nanjing Hui and Islam*; Bai Xianjing and Weng Qianlin's (2000) *Selected Materials of Hui Historical Figures in Southern China*; Chen Huisheng's (2000) *History of Islam in Xinjiang China*.

Among them, Chen Huisheng has sorted out a large number of materials, made many field investigations, and published many high-level papers, which has made special contributions to the study of Islam in China. *The History of Islam in Xinjiang China* is an important achievement in the study of regional Islamic history. The works edited by Wu Yiye are monographs with high reference value involving the history and culture of Southern Hui nationality such as Nanjing, which also shows that Chinese scholars also pay attention to the study of Islam in the south.

New trends have also emerged in the study of the special history of Islam. Representative works can be seen as Shui Jingjun and Yashak's (2002) *The History of Chinese Muslim Women's Temple*, which is a special history related to the history of Chinese Muslim women.

In recent years, in the study of local Islam, it is worth mentioning that Li Xinghua's (2011) series of articles on the study of Islam in famous cities and towns in China have been published in journals such as the *Study of Hui Nationality*. This research topic takes China's Muslim centers such as Linxia, Zhuxian Town, Datong, Nanjing, Xi'an, Kafeng, and Lanzhou as the research objectives. to discuss in detail the history and current situation of Islam in city and the significance of Islam in the city and the history and reality of Islam in China.

The promotion of Hui history is also obvious. Due to the long-term research and guidance of Bai Shouyi, there are more relevant achievements. For example, in addition to Bai Shouyi's (2000a) *National Figures* (four volume edition) and Bai Shouyi's (2007) *Chinese Hui Nationality History*, there are other works published by Ningxia People's Publishing House: Institute of nationalities of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Nationalities of the Central University for Nationalities's (1984) *Collected Works on the History of the Hui Nationality*; Yang Huaizhong's (1991) *Draft on the History of Hui Nationality*; Li Songmao's (1993) *Research on Hui Islam*; Yang Huaizhong and Yu Zhengui's (1995) *Islam and Chinese Culture*; Yu Zhengui's (1996) *Chinese Political Power and Islam*; Mian Weilin's (1997) *Introduction to the Islamic Religious System of Hui Nationality in China*; Ding Hong's (1996) *Century Old Chinese Muslims*.

And there are other achievements. Since the reform and development, there have been about 1,000 articles and papers on Islam in the field of Hui research. Among them, one of the hot issues is the relationship between the introduction and development history of Islam to China and the formation history of the Hui nationality. Many papers are published, such as: Lin Song's (1983) "On the Decisive Role of Islam in the Formation of Chinese Hui Nationality"; Ma Ruling's (1984) "On the Relationship between Islam and the Formation of Hui Nationality"; Nan Wenyuan's (1991) "On the Leading Role of Islamic Culture in the Formation of Hui Nationality".

Among them, Lin's paper points out that "no matter from any point of view, any characteristics of the Hui nationality cannot completely get rid of the factors of Islam and exist alone" (Lin, 1983, p. 200), and believes that Islam plays a decisive role in the formation of the Hui nationality. But Ma has a unique view, that is, he insists that national consciousness plays a leading role. From the historical investigation of the development of Islam in China, Nan Wenyuan demonstrated that the prosperity and development of Islam in China at the end of Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of Ming Dynasty directly promoted the Islamic culture and played a leading role in the formation of Hui nationality. It can be learned that some scholars believe that without the spread of Islam in China, the Hui nationality will not be formed, that is, the history of the Hui nationality is equal to the history of Islam. But another part of scholars believe that the role of Islam is connection, and national consciousness is initiative. Since then, some research views have reached a consensus, that is, the formation and development of Hui nationality cannot be separated from Islam. Based on this understanding, Islam has also become an extremely important part of Hui research.

These articles and papers not only directly belong to the study of Islam, but also focus on the impact of Islam on the Hui nationality in all aspects. The main papers are: Ding Mingjun's (1992) "On the Influence of Islam on Hui Art"; Nan Wenyuan's (1992) "The Influence of Islam on Hui Education"; Liang Xiangming's (1998) "on Islamic Morality and Its Role in the Formation of Hui Traditional Morality"; Xiao Mang's (2000) "The Influence of Islamic Culture on Hui Business Activities"; Ding Hong's (2002) "On the Significance of Strengthening the Study of Islamic Culture from the Perspective of Hui Han Ethnic Relations"; Tao Hong and Bai Jie's (2002) "Hui Costume Culture and Islam"; Li Lin's (2001) "A Brief Account of the Activities of Islam in the Tang Dynasty"; Chen Guoguang's (2002) "Islam among Uighurs in the Qing Dynasty"; Zhou Yaoming's (2004) "On the Spread of Islam in Helong Area in the Song Dynasty".

In the above various historical fields, the research and achievements from the perspective of national history also occupy an important position. In this field, in addition to the collection of Hui history, there are the following representative achievements: Yang Huaizhong's (1991) *Draft of Hui History*, Bai Shouyi's (2000b) *Chronicles of Hui People*, Li Songmao's (1993) *Research on Hui Islam*, Mian Weilin's (1997) *Introduction to Chinese Hui Islamic Religious System*, Yang Huaizhong's (1995) *Islam and Chinese Culture*, Yu Zhengui's (1996) *Chinese Political Power and Islam*, Bai Shouyi's (2007) *Chinese Hui National History*, etc.

Centered Around the Study of World Islamic History

Compared with the research results in the field of Islam and Muslims in China, the foundation of China's research on foreign Islam is very weak. Before the 20th century, there were no research results. From the 20th century to the 1940s, only the following two books were published: Shui Zili's (1923) *A Brief History of World Islam* and Yuan Dongyan's (1946) *A Brief History of the Development of Islam*. Among them, Shui's book is a

pioneering work of Chinese Muslim scholars systematically studying the history of world Islam, with rich content and data. In the 1920s-1930s, Muslim youth had a wide influence and became a must read.

In terms of academic standards in a strict sense, the basic starting point of methodology and epistemology is very important, that is, the translation and citation of foreign Islamic and Muslim research results is an important link in academic history. The study of world Islam in the past 20 years began with the translation and introduction of foreign works, such as: *A Brief History of Islam* (Masse, 1978); *General Arab History* (Hitti, 1979); *A Brief History of Islam* (Mahmud, 1981); *Arabs in History* (Lewis, 1981); *Arab History of Islamic Culture* (Muhammad, 2007); *History of Islamic Nationalities and States* (Brockman, 1980).

These translated works are rich in materials and detailed in content. Some reflect the views of Muslim scholars and some reflect the views of international academic circles. In the 1980s, Jin Yijiu edited and published it: *Introduction to Islam* (Jin, 1987); *History of Islam* (Ren & Jin, 1998).

Jin's book is objective and fair, with full and accurate historical materials. It makes a systematic introduction and exploration in various knowledge fields of Islam, which has a certain reference value for understanding and studying Islam. It can even be regarded as the first step forward in China's research on foreign Islam. At the same time, the general history works of Islam are actually the basic authors of China's world Islamic research. Their research level is directly related to the construction of Islamic discipline. In order to try to improve the backward situation of Islamic research, we not only continue to translate and introduce representative relevant works in foreign academic circles, including general history or special works. We should also continue to accumulate materials, organize forces, carry out research on core topics, and compile Islamic history or monographs reflecting the views and achievements of Chinese scholars.

After more than 10 years of unremitting efforts, China's world Islamic research has made remarkable progress. Now we have a number of academic works on Islamic research and have established preliminary contacts with international academic circles, thus laying a solid foundation for in-depth research in various fields of world Islam. *The History of Islam* is the product of this research background. While making a comprehensive investigation of Islam, the book also makes a profound analysis of the relationship between Islam and politics, society, economy and culture, and puts forward many new opinions on some important historical events and academic issues. Someone commented:

this book is rich in content, stable in argument, concise in description, and absorbs the latest research results of Chinese and foreign Islamic scholars in recent 10 years. Its role is far beyond the scope of textbooks. It is a good teaching book for Contemporary Chinese scholars to understand the history of Islam. (Yu & Yang, 1993, p. 398)

A book of the same name was published two years later: *History of Islam* by Wang Huaide and Guo Baohua (1992). In terms of the definition and understanding of Islam, the book does not intend to describe Islam as an ideological system, social system and lifestyle, so as to "contain everything", but focuses on the elaboration of the core content of Islam itself, and the contents of other aspects are simplified as much as possible, so as to ensure clear organization and prominent theme. Therefore, in terms of compilation style, it not only takes the historical development context as the main line, but also takes into account the system and integrity of religious knowledge. It also sets up another chapter on the contents of doctrines, teaching methods, rituals and sects, and discusses them in accordance with their own development process, which is different from the traditional history books. To put it simply, this is an introductory book based on history, which may be more suitable as a textbook.

In addition, research on historical topics has also been carried out, and a number of works of good academic quality have emerged: Ma Mingliang's (2001) *A Concise History of Islam*; Wang Yujie's (2006) *Islamic History of Iran*; Wu Yungui and Zhou Xiefan's (2001) *Modern Islamic Thoughts and Movements*.

Among them, Wu Yungui and Zhou Xiefan are the latest progress in this field. In fact, this book is also a history of modern Islam. Facing the contemporary Islamic revival movement, the author should not only follow history in order to understand reality, but also clarify the historical context of various ideological trends and movements under the background of colonialism since modern times. It is also necessary to make a scientific induction and analysis for various contemporary manifestations, so as to become a summary work of the previous research.

Conclusion

In China, the research in the field of Islamic history has no research results before the 20th century according to strict academic standards. In the early 20th century, some achievements in the history of Chinese Islam appeared, and some have a high academic level. During the period of the Republic of China, Chinese scholars wrote monographs on the study of Islamic history. Among the few papers published during the period of the Republic of China, some studied the historical context of the introduction of Islam into China from different angles and methods, some investigated the situation of Islam and Muslims in China at that time from the perspective of sociology, and some introduced the research results at home and abroad such as Japan. These research results roughly reflect the trend of Islamic academic research in the period of the Republic of China. It also has a certain impact on the theoretical and practical aspects of later Chinese Islamic research. After the founding of new China, although there have been some research results, unfortunately, due to historical reasons such as the Cultural Revolution, this field has also encountered various setbacks. Until the Reform and Opening Up, the research field of Islam and Muslims in China has been expanding and the results have been published, forming a new trend in the study of Islam and Muslims.

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