

Research Article

Sufi Orders and Islamic Sectarianism in China: Origin and Early Development

Min Ke Qin^{*} , Mai Jian-jun

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

In the studies on Islam, Sufism is an unavoidable topic, so is with Chinese Islam. This paper focuses on Chinese Islamic Sufi orders and sectarianism. Since the length of the paper is quite long, it is divided into two parts, under slightly different titles. The first title is above stated, while the second will be “Sufi Orders and Sectarians: The Shattering Chinese Muslims Unity”. It is intended by this paper to provide the reader a fuller and clearer picture on Chinese Sufism and sectarianism, whose introduction into the country since beginning stirred up disputes and conflicts within Muslim community, later spilled out the community, and escalated to common rebellion against Qing government (1644-1911) from 1862 to 1878. In this first part, the author traces the fountain sources of those orders and sectarians, often to Arab nations and Central Asia, even Muslim India. In the discussion, the author redivides those orders and sectarians into three categories: one traditional school (*Qedim* sect), three movements (*Xidaotang*, *Ikhwan*, and *Salafiyya*), and four Sufi orders (*Jehriyya*, *Khufiyya*, *Qadiriyya*, *Kubrawiyya*). Based on the existing materials, mainly Ma Tong’s field research work, which provides the firsthand information on Chinese Sufi orders and sectarianism, the author delineates the formation of those Sufi orders and sectarians, so to lay a solid foundation for further discussion of their later development, analyzing the causes and reasons of later disputes and conflict. This paper does not claim to be creative and all-inclusive but try to provide the reader a fuller contour of Chinese Islam. It best can be complementary to the existing body of similar research.

Keywords

Chinese Islam, Sufi Orders, Origin, Formation, Early-stage Development

1. Introduction

Whenever researchers have put their endeavors into the field of Chinese Islam in the late middle age and early modern time, no matter in general or specified way, they cannot avoid mentioning the fame of Chinese Sufi orders. From earlier orientalist researchers like Palladii (d. 1878), Marshall Broomhall (d. 1937), Samuel M. Zwemer (d. 1952), Issac Masson (d. 1939), Joseph F. Fletcher (d. 1984), Barbara

Pillsbury (d. 2012), Donald D. Leslie (d. 2020), Dru Gladney (d. 2022), Jonathan Lipman, Michael Dillon, Raphael Israeli, Andrew Forbes, among others, to young emerging researchers like Kristian Peterson, Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, James Frankel, and more, all have dedicated in their prominent works at least a paragraph, or a section or even a whole chapter on those Sufi orders in China. Very recently, the

^{*}Corresponding author: omarmin@iiium.edu.my (Min Ke Qin)

Received: 20 September 2025; **Accepted:** 4 October 2025; **Published:** 30 October 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

articles on Sufi orders in China also are uploaded in various websites, e.g. my article “Sufi Orders in China” (2024), a very brief and general discussion on Sufi orders in China.¹ Another article bearing the same title by Mozafar Bakhtyar is also published in *Quarterly Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*,² in which the author focuses especially on Persian influence on Chinese Sufism. In addition, biographical accounts also appeared in recent scholarly journals like *the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*,³ *De Gruyter*,⁴ and more. All in all, the research works on the topic under discussion here are already done by the researchers mentioned above, but all in very general approach. It is very necessary now to provide the readers a full contour of Chinese Sufism. This paper serves to that end.

Islamic Sufism teachings spread to China long time ago, long since rapid rise of Sufi orders in the heartland of Islamic world, the Middle East and Central Asia in the wake of Mongol conquest of Central Asia and Baghdad in thirteenth century, corresponding to Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). Since then, Sufi literature already appeared in the syllabus of mosque education in Chinese mosques. Those books were brought by scholars (*imams*) who travelled along with the caravan of merchants travelling frequently via the so-called silk road by land between China and Muslim heart land of Central Asia and the Middle East. Political envoys also carried with them the books of diverse fields of sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, among others. Thereby the books such as *Qanun fi al-Tibb* (Canon of Medicine) by Ibn Sina (d. 1037), *Euclid* by Euclid (lived around 300 BC), *Almagest* by Ptolemy (d. 170 AD), and astronomical instruments, like “*dhatu al-halaqi* (armillary sphere), *dhat al-shubatai* (azimuth), *kura-i-sama* (celestial globe), *kura-i-ard* (globe), *al-ustarlab* (astrolabe), *rukhmah-i-muwaja* (equinox sundial), *rukhmah-i-mustawiya* (solstice sundial),” [1] among others, were well documented in *Yuanshi* [Annal of Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)]. Sufi literature, of course, was read and studied in the mosques constructed in earlier time or newly constructed nationwide. The case *Galandariyah* group, who was already active in Iran, Syria, Egypt and Baghdad since the thirteenth century, was already mentioned by Ma Zhu (d. 1710) in his work *Qingzhen Zhinan* (Guide to Islam) to be active in Yunnan Muslim communities during Kangxi reign (r. 1662-1723) of early Qing dynasty (1644-1911). [2] Zhang Zhong, a prolific and pioneer writer on Chinese Islam in late Ming dynasty

(1367-1644), mentioned in his book *Guizhen Zongyi* (General Meaning of Returning to God), which was completed in 1640/1641, that a Sufi sheikh named ‘Āshiq⁵ from India, who had travelled in various regions of China for ten years by 1638, and who already spoke Chinese language, became the teacher to Zhang Zhong and some other students, and taught them about the profound meaning of “Iman Mujmal” (General Creed of Islam) and “Kalimah” (Islamic Confession) from *Qadiriyyah* Sufi perspective, which late became the above-mentioned title and *Kelimo Jie* (Decoding the Islamic Confession) respectively. [3] Recent investigations also show that during Chinghua reign (r. 465-1488) of Ming dynasty (1368-1644), there was a Sufi sheikh, unknown name, looked as at his 40s, frequented the Mosque of Yuhuatai South (in Nanjing), speaking Chinese language, claimed that he was already at his sixties, who daily took only a few dates, without taking any other food, frequently perform meditation inside a small room containing only himself, reciting the verses of the Qur’ān and *dhikr* (remembrance), secluding himself sometimes for a month even months, only his dim voice of chanting *dhikr* could be heard by others. [4] Ibn Battuta (d. 1369), the famous Muslim traveler who visited China under Mongol rule of Yuan dynasty (1267-1368) at the last days of the dynasty, mentioned a venerable sheikh, most probably a Shī‘ai Sufi, who claimed he has lived for two hundred years at the time of their meeting, and “who neither ate nor drank nor excreted nor had intercourse with women, though his powers were intact, and that he lived in a cave outside of the city, giving himself to devotion.” [5] Such and such, many more cases of Sufi sheikhs can be found in the passages of Chinese writers from Yuan on till Qing dynasty (1644-1911), when only the institutionalized Sufi orders were formally established and active in Chinese Muslim communities, especially in the northwestern region, e.g. Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Shaanxi provinces.

In the history of Islam, the development of Sufi orders might be divided to three stage: the stage of theoretical formation of Sufism from seventh to ninth centuries, symbolized by individual Sufi’s writings, like, to name a few, Ja‘far Sadiq (702-765), Hasan al-Basry (642-728), Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah (d. 752), among others; and the anthology of famed Sufis’ words, deeds, and *karamat* (miracle workings), like *Tabaqat al-Sufiyyah* (Hagiography of Sufis) by Al-Sulamy (d. 1034), *Tadhkirat al-Awliya’* (Memorial of God’s Friends) by Farid al-Din Attar (d. 1221), among others. The stage of formation of Sufi theories and inception of various Sufi orders from tenth to twelfth centuries, characterized by writings of Hujwiri’s *Kashfu al-Mahjub* (Discovering the Hidden) (printed in eleventh century), and Qushayri’s *Risalat al-Qushayri* (Epistles of Qushayri) (printed in 1045/6), and formation of small *zawiyas* in individual Sufi’s household, or

¹ See <http://www.scribd.com/document/751460166/20-OMAR-KE-QIN-SUFI-ORDER-S-IN-CHINA>

² See Mozafar Bakhtyar, “The Sufi Orders in China”, in *Quarterly Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 3, (July-September 2000), pp. 37-44.

³ See Rian Thum, “The Naqshibandiyya Mujaddiyya in China”, in *the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 34 (2), April 2024, pp. 1-32. Doi: 10.1017/S1356186322000773.

⁴ See Florian Sobieroj, “The Chinese Sufi Wiqayatullah Ma Mingxin and the Construction of His Sanctity in *Kitab al-Jahri*”, in *DE GRUYTER*, Asia 2016; 70 (1): 133-169. Doi: 10.1515/asia-2016-0006.

⁵ Āshiq is most probably not his real name, but an honorific name of the Sufi sheikh. His real name still remains uncertain to this day.

attached to a mosque. And the stage of establishment of formal institutions from thirteenth century onwards, dedicated to specific Sufi orders, like *Qadiriyyah*, *Shadhliyyah*, *Naqshibandiyyah*, *Kubrawiyyah*, among others, characterized by devotion to prayers, meditation, chanting *dhikr*, nocturnal prayer, reading and memorizing the Qur'ān, living in poverty, traveling to other places, among others. Evidence from historical annals and travelogues show that the institutionalized Sufi orders appeared and rapidly creased from thirteenth century of Islamic history. It is recorded that at the end of Mamluk rule (1250-1517), there were "22 big *khanqahs*, 12 *ribats* and 27 smaller *zawiyahs* besides numerous tombs" in Cairo alone. [6, 7] The similar or a greater number of Sufi establishments rapidly emerged in Syria, Central Asia, and India.

Chinese Muslims were not immune from this cultural trend, individual Sufi sheikhs travelled together with the caravan of traders, with intent of spreading their orders to that vast land. Miserably no institutionalized Sufi order had taken place until the mid-seventeenth century, then only varied Sufi orders were formed one by one rapidly in Chinese Muslim communities, of especially northwest region, the area concentrated with Muslim population. This paper deals not with the mystery of why Sufi orders did not form in China in the time of their rapid formation in Muslim heartland in the thirteenth century, but formed in seventeenth century, almost five centuries later. It however, deals with the origins of sectarians and Sufi orders initially formed in China, and its early-stage development, including earlier sub-orders derived or developed.

Generally, we can divide all sectarians and Sufi orders in China as one tradition (*Qedim* sect), four Sufi orders (*Kubrawiyya*, *Qadiriyya*, *Jehriyya*, *Khufiyya*), and three reform movements (*Xidaotang*, *Ikhwan*, and *Salafiyya*).⁶

A few words must be said on terms in Chinese, which are frequently used in the text, because there are no very equivalent found in English, thus employed them in their original form. The first is "*menhuan*", which denotes both a title and a system of practice or teaching, including its foundation and organization and hierarchical leadership. All *menhuan* under discussion here are exonyms rather than self-given, employed initially by researchers in their research of this field. Some sects till today do not call their sects the names given by those scholars. The second term is "*tang*", which originally denotes a religious foundation, or a place dedicated to worship various gods especially ancestors in Chinese tradition. In the case of Chinese Islam, it is employed by some Sufi sects, e.g. *Lingmingtang* for a similar purpose. Another term is "*men*", which is closely related to *menhuan*, the two

terms to some extent are overlapping in usage. It is normally associated with founder's surname, or in a sense related to the founder, such as Qimen, Humen, Zhangmen, among others. Still another is "*ahong*", a Sinicized Persian term *ākhūnd* (آخوند), employed by Chinese Muslims for *imams* working in mosques. There is nowadays a tendency in its usage to include those students who are still studying Islam in mosques.

2. Chinese Traditional Islam: *Qedimu* Sect

Qedimu Sect is the oldest sect, as reflected by very word "*qedim*", an Arabic word in Chinese pronunciation, denoting a sense of old or traditional, the primordial sect standing in China since the outset of Islam in the country in early decade of Tang dynasty (618-960). This sect has not evolved any offshoot, its adherents claim to be the orthodox of Chinese Islam. They attached since very beginning to Hanafi school of Sunni tradition. The adherents live around local mosques. Numerically it is the largest sect, following the oldest Islamic doctrine most popular among Chinese Muslim communities, the most common school of Islam among Hui Muslims. [8, 9]

Qadim (or *Gedimu* in Chinese) is the earliest sect of Islam in China. It got the first stand in China since 651, the year normally accepted by many scholars as commence year of Islam in China. It began in Chang'an (modern Xi'an), the beginning point of the famous silk road via land, and Guangzhou in the south of China, an international commercial center via sea route since long in ancient Chinese history, and other commercial center like Suzhou, Yangzhou, in the inner part of the country. In Guangzhou and Xi'an still stand today mosques named "The Mosque of Memorial of the Prophet" (*Huashengsi*), and The Great Mosque (*Xi'an Qingzhedasi*) respectively. The Mosque of Memorial of the Prophet, as research testifies, was the first mosque built outside of the Arab Peninsula. Islam also got stand in Zaiton (Nowadays Quanzhou). With rise of Mongol powers in 13th century, after defeating Muslims of Abbasid dynasty and Central Asia sultanate, hundreds of thousand Muslim captives, according to research, as many as two million Muslims (including militaries) were forced to leave their home country, and traveled to the north of China; thence helped Mongols conquer the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), in the aftermath became residents in deferent part of China. They practiced *Qedim* Islam and handed it down throughout history up to the modern time. So, *Qedim* adherents claim the authenticity and orthodoxy of their practices. They do not severely criticize Sufi orders and other sects but go against *bid'ah* (innovation). They follow the *Hanafi* school of Islamic jurisprudence. It is a peaceful sect. *Qedim* Muslims lived in peace with non-Muslim Chinese side by side for nearly a millennium without any serious conflict. The adherents of this sect although respect Sufi sheikh, but they

⁶ My division here defers from Ma Tong's, who divides it to "three schools of Islamic teachings" (*Qedim*, *Ikhwan*, and *Xidaotang*) and four Sufi orders (*Qadiriyya*, *Kubrawiyya*, *Khufiyya*, and *Jehriyya*), for the reasons that *Ikhwan*, *Salafiyya* and *Xidaotang* are actually Islamic movement with clear aims, while *Qedim* is just old tradition formed in long history of Islam in China, tinted with some Chinese characteristics.

prioritized *sharī‘ah* to *tatīqat* while most of Sufi adherents practice the opposite. In the month of Sha‘bān, before Ramadan of Islamic calendar, the *Qedim* Muslims perform “repentance” (*bara’t*), on the fourteenth day of Ramadan celebrate birthday of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, they also celebrate ‘Āshūrā’ day. They wear white cloth like Chinese for a relative who passed away, and chant *dhikr* for the dead on the first seventh day, the second seventh day, the third seventh day, the fortieth day, the hundredth day, anniversary, and third year anniversary, which are clearly adopted from Chinese tradition of mourning the deceased; which became a ready target of criticism by *Ikhwan* imams later. They lost many adherents when Sufi orders established one after another in the seventeenth century onwards. [9]

3. The Sufi Orders: Origin, Formation of Sub-Orders and Their Early-stage Development

Muslim communities in China, since inception of Islam in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), through the Song Dynasties (960-1276), and early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) had not split to groups. A Chinese Muslim scholar Feng Jin-yuan said the split of Chinese Muslim communities occurred not long ago; it is only in recent 300 years when various institutionalized Sufi orders were openly formed in China one after another in the mid-seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, [10] corresponding to the end of the Ming and early Qing Dynasties. The introduction of those Sufi orders into the Muslim communities marked a turning point for the peaceful living of Chinese Muslims in their history, turning their peaceful life they have enjoyed for nearly eight centuries into internal disputes, terrible bloodshed, occasional fighting among themselves and sometimes against non-Muslims, which later led to general rebellion against oppressive Qing in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Those orders were of course not introduced into the country at one time, it begun in the mid-seventeenth century and continued until present time. Here in this section, I will briefly discuss the approximate time of the introduction of each order into the country, normally begins with a main branch, followed by inevitable separation and establishment of subdivisions and sub-subdivisions.

The stories pertaining to the founders of the orders are mainly from *Brief History of China Islamic Sects and Sufi Institutions* (*Zhongguo Yisilanjiapai yu Menhuanzhidu Shilue* 中国伊斯兰教派与门宦制度史略) (hereinbelow *Brief History*) by Ma Tong. It should be clearly noted that these Sufi orders and sects under discussion here are not included by J. Spencer Trinmingham in his prominent work *the Sufi Order in Islam* (1971) (hereinbelow *the Sufi Order*), [11] most probably due to shortage of scholarly information. This study can sufficiently fill that gap.

3.1. Qadiriyya Order

Qadiriyya order is a famous Sufi order established since the middle age of Islamic history, and still active today. Founded in Central Asia following its founder’s name Abdul al-Qadir al-Jailani (or al-Jilani) (1078-1166) in about 12th century and spread to China in 1674 through its sheikhs’ untiring endeavor in preaching it throughout the Muslim world. Much research on its history and development and spread throughout Muslim world have been put forward. Trinmingham’s abovementioned work is one of them one must read. [11] Although founded in 12th century and well established in Central Asia and the Middle East and spread to almost all centers of Islamic learning in the Muslim world, it did not spread to China until the mid-seventeenth century, at the time of dynasty transit from Ming (1368-1644) to Qing (1644-1911), which was five hundred years late. Why is this gap so huge? There must be sociopolitical reasons for this, but so far, no research has dealt with this topic.

Spread of *Qadiriyya* order to China is associated with a Sufi sheikh named Khwaja Abdullah (d. 1689), whose biography not very clear, who claimed to be 29th generation offspring of the Prophet. According to *Brief Biography of Pioneer Saint of Dagongbei* (Dagongbei Xianxian Shilue) (hereinbelow *Biography*), [9] he was born in Madinah (date unknown), studied Islamic sciences, philosophy, medicine, astronomy among others, in Egypt, Baghdad, Tehran, and Jerusalem and other places. He was already a respected scholar famous in Baghdad and Medinah. He taught and practiced *Qadiriyya* Sufi order in the places he worked. However, he longed for China and decided to preach his *Qadiriyya* to China. He, together with other adepts, departed Mecca, so tells in the *biography*, in 1673 [12th year of Kang-xi reign (r. 1662-1723)], after three months, arrived in Guangzhou port. He at beginning preached at Hunan, Hubei, Yunnan and Guizhou, then in June, the next year 1674 came to Hezhou (now Linxia), whereby he took Qi Jing-yi as his *murid* (adept), who later founded Qimen (Dagongbei). In his 16 years preaching in various places in China, Khwaja Abdullah not only learned Chinese, but also learned Chinese classics of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. He also took a fancy to Chinese poems and paintings. He accepted several *murids* who later became the founders of different orders. Besides aforementioned Qi Jin-yi, his other *murids* were Xian Mei-zhen, the founder of Xianmen, Ma Shangren from Changsha, who did not form any independent order, Yunnan Ma (whose name unclear), from whom stemmed Houzihe order of Qinghai and Jiucaiping order (also Yangmen) of Haiyuan, Ningxia. [12]

Thus, from this *Qadiriyya* order stemmed in its early stage three suborders: Qimen, Xianmen, and Mamen (Yunnan Ma), which were formed in the mid seventeenth century, from which later stemmed other sub-suborders with deferent features. Of those sub-orders some, like Xiangyuantang were formed in eighteenth century; some others, like Houzihe,

Lingmingtang, Wenquantang, Amen and Qimen were formed in nineteenth century. This does not mean that all later formed orders are derived from the earlier orders. Some of them, like Lingmingtang, Amen, Qimen, Xiangyuantang, and Wenquantang, among others, though formed in nineteenth century, their formation, however, directly connected with their sheikhs from outside of the country. [9]

Qimen (Dagongbei), namely Qi's order. Gongbei is a transliteration of Arabic "qubbat قُبَّة" to Chinese, denoting especially in Chinese Islamic literary milieu domes built over tombs of Sufi sheikhs for venerating them. This order was founded by Qi Jing-yi (d. 1719), honorific name Hilal al-Din, in 1674. The name of *Dagongbei* was used instead of Qimen (Qi's Order) by the sixth *murshid* Qi Dao-he and Ma Dao-jin and seventh *murshid* La Yong-gui due to that the dome built for the founder Qi Jing-yi was the biggest and most gorgeous in contrast to the domes erected for honoring other sheikhs. This order was and still is famous in building domes for their "monks" (*chuijiaren*).⁷ In 1674 [13th year of Kangxi reign (r. 1662-1723)], Khwaja Abdullah (d. 1689), as already mentioned above, came to Hezhou (now Linxia) for preaching his *Qadiriyya* Sufi order, Qi went to visit him, and expressed his willingness to learn the teaching of the order. Qi was accepted, was told that *Qadiriyya* order is unique, he must leave family and practice it in seclusion. Abided by all requirements, Qi set to seclusion, with meditation and chanting *dhikr* and performing prayers in a secluded room of Yang Tuo's house, later moved to Beisi (North Mosque) of Xixiang County, Shaanxi, whereat he stayed in seclusion for three years. Later, he moved to Dishuiya, 60 miles away from Xixiang, for another 3 years in seclusion. One day, Khwaja Abdullah came to Beisi to monitor his meditation. The sheikh, upon questioning Qi, was not satisfied, saying that Qi's worldly desires were still not totally cut off, thereby ordering Qi to go to Caijialing (not far from Xixiang) for another 40 days of meditation, to which Qi was fully dedicated and focused. Throughout those years, Qi performed 36 long meditations, and 27 short meditations. Aftermath, Qi was highly praised by the sheikh, saying, "My order spread to the east now." "My order is yours now," [9] thereby taught him all teachings of *Qadiriyya* order. Qi's experience later became standard of *Dagongbei*, followed by all *chuijiaren* of later generations. Exemplified by Qi, all *chuijiaren* do not marry, stay away from home, and seclude themselves during hard meditation. Those *chuijiaren* who are recognized by the authority of *Dagongbei*, all their expenses are provided by *Dagongbei*, they have no worries of their lives, provided they must comply with those regulations set by Qi Jing-yi, the founder of the order. Khwaja Abdullah died in 1689 (28th year of Kangxi reign) in Langzhong County, Sichuan. On hearing this, Qi Jing-yi rushed to Langzhong day and night, for his funeral. Soon they erected the dome for the

sheikh, named it Jiuzhaoting (Forever Illuminating Pavilion), and appointed Qi's student Ma Chun-yi to look after the dome and administrate the religious activities therein. Aftermath, Qi travelled between Langzhong and Xixiang, left the traces of his steps in many places of Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces. 1719 (58th year of Kangxi reign), he died at Luling Mosque of Xixiang, one year later his Linxia followers moved his remains to Hezhou, his native place, whereat they erected dome for him, together with a cluster of buildings, of a mosque, a meditation room, gardens and a school. Thus, Qi Jing-yi has two domes, one in Luling mosque, and another in Hezhou, the former is only a cenotaph. The most famous students trained by Qi were six, among them two were outstanding, Ma Ru-heng (d. 1744) and Ma Teng-yi (d. 1758), who owned dome for their rights. The dome erected for the former was named *Dataiye Gongbei* (Grand Master Dome), and for latter named *Taizi Gongbei* (Taizi Dome). This order, from the outset, developed strict rules for meditation as well as for leadership. For meditation they claim that beside Qur'ān and Hadith being practiced, seclusion (*dhikr*) and meditation are also essential for knowing God and getting close to God. This seclusion and meditation must be done in secluded areas, with calmness and loneliness, staying far away from family and living a celibate life. For the lay adherents, some of them just pray to Qi's dome and other *murshid*'s dome, who are intercessors between them and God, instead of praying directly to God in their mosques, because that job is done by *murshid* on behalf of them. This practice was later severely criticized by especially *Ikhwan* imams. [9]

Xianmen (who later turned to *khufiyya*), was founded by Xian Mei-zhen (d. 1739), honorable name Arif Fakhr, who was guided by both Khwaja Abdullah, 29th generation of Prophet's offspring and Hidayatullah, 25th generation of Prophet's offspring. He started teaching his *Qadiriyya* Sufi order in Xining area, Qinghai province, and won over many followers. In his late years, he put forward some work which unfortunately could not survive to this day. His followers erected a dome for him and named it Fushoutang (Blessing and Longevity Hall). When he passed away, he did not appoint any successor, but his sons made it a hereditary system. Thus, his elder son made himself the *murshid*, which was, after him betrothed to Xian Cheng-de, then Xian Xiang-hui, Xian Lin-bo, Xian Yu-zhen, among others.

From this order stemmed Mingdetang order, the founder Liu Bo-yang (d. 1737) was a student to Xian Mei-zhen. Liu might have separated from Xianmen during lifetime of his teacher Xian Mei-zhen. His dome was erected upon his death by his follower at Xijingqiao, Lanzhou, which was named Mindetang. [9]

Mamen, the founder Yunnan Ma, whose life and actual name unclear, was an adept to Khwaja Abudullah, in other words, a contemporary of Xian Mei-zhen and Qi Jing-yi. According to the saying of Houzihe order, the chain of transmission of this order is: Khwaja Abudullah, Yunnan Ma,

⁷ The word "chuijiaren" in Chinese is also used for Buddhist monks, who live a calibre and secluded life.

whose dome erected at Baiyatou, Yunnan, the third *murshid* Zhou (unclear of his name) from Gongchang, whose dome erected therein, the fourth *murshid* Ma (unclear of his name) from Guangdemen of Xi'an, the fifth *murshid* Feng (also unclear of his name) from Gedashan, Shaanxi, whose dome was moved from Gedashan to Jiucaiping, the sixth *Murshid* An Yu-he from Beijiuyuan, Shaanxi, the seventh *murshid* Yang Bao-yuan (d. 1873) from Houzihe, Qinghai, the founder of Houzihe sub-order. [12]

Thus, from Mamen stemmed Houzihe sub-order and Jiucaiping sub-order, the former locates at Qinghai while the latter locates at Haiyuan, Ningxia.

Above mentioned are *Qadiriyya* order and its sub-orders developed in the mid-seventeenth century. In the mid of the next century, *Xiangyuantang* developed, which was also named Haimen or Shamen (Hai's Order or Sha's Order), after the name of its founder, Hai Kuo (whose life unclear), a native of Lanzhou, who was an officer in the prison of Gaolan County, when the captive Babaye (Baba Grandfather). This Babaye was no less than a figure of Sufi sheikh, who imparted Hai Kuo all his Sufi teachings, and soon after Hai Kuo started teaching others and established *Xiangyuantang*.

Its suborders developed in the nineteenth century were *Lingmingtang*, from which stemmed *Mingyuetang*; *Wenquantang*, from which stemmed *Tonggui*, *Yatou* (from it *Gaozhaojia* derived), *Salaer* sect, and *Jiang Yu-ru* sect, *Amen* sect, and *Qimen* sect, among others.

Of all those orders, *Houzihe*, *Yatou*, *Jiucaiping* and *Tonggui* are named after their location, *Dagongbei*, *Lingmingtang*, *Mingyuetang*, *Wenquantang*, *Xiangyuantang* and *Mingdetang* are named after foundation's name, and *Gaozhaojia*, *Samaer* sect, *Amen* sect, *Qimen* sect and *Xianmen* are named after the founder's name. [9]

3.2. Kubrawiyya Order

Kubrawiyya Order was the first Sufi order introduced to China in the mid-seventeenth century by an Arab Sufi shaiikh named Muhyudin Ibn Arabi,⁸ of uncertain extraction, who came to China for preaching his Sufi order *Kubrawiyya*.⁹ No concrete evidence shows when this Sufi sheikh came to China. The hearsays from members of this order tell that he came to China three times for preaching his teaching. On the first trip he went on to the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, which yielded no fruit. The second time he went on to the eastern provinces Hunan and Hubei, also yielded no fruits. In the third time he succeeded when he went to the northwestern provinces of Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai, in founding a firm stand for his Sufi teachings at the time of dynasty transit from Ming to Qing.

He then settled in Dawantou of Dongxiang County of Linxia prefecture, Gansu province. He later took a Chinese surname 'Zhang' for himself and his family, following the local majority villagers' surname. He named himself Zhang Yu-huang, self-appellation as Puji. His offspring lived there up to this time. The order founded by him was named after his surname Zhang and called by other people Zhangmen (Zhang's teaching or Zhang's order). The Zhang's resided at Dawantou were originally Han (non-Muslims), lived in two villages, Yinwa and Yangwa. Under Muhyuddin's hard preaching and smooth persuasion, Yinwa villagers converted to his teaching, e.g. Muhyuddin's *Kubrawiyya* order. When he passed away, Yangwa villagers were still not Muslims. He was succeeded by his son Ahmad Kabir al-Baghdad who was born in Arabia, came to China together with his father Muhyuddin. Under his leadership and preaching, Yangwa villagers also gradually converted to *Kubrawiyya* order. This conversion led to enmity of some people who disliked Islam, thus, sued Ahmad to local officials, who sent him to prison. Soon Ahmad died in prison. His five sons were all exiled to various places. Among them the fourth son Abu Osman was imprisoned in Xi'an and released later. This Abu Osman succeeded his father as the third leader of this *Kubrawiyya* order. This order betrothed within Muhyuddin's family until now for 14 generations.

Unlike other Sufi orders, this order did not split into sub-sects. [9]

In this order, the *murshid*, the highest authority, normally perform meditation in an isolated location, or a cave. Besides the servant who brings food to him, he does not meet any other people. He wakes up every day at 3 o'clock in the morning, takes ablution, and starts meditation, chanting *dhikr*, reciting Qur'an, etc. until 12 o'clock mid-night, for 40 days, 70 days or even 120 days. He eats once a day, and takes only 7 dates, and few cups of water. In occasions of religious festivals, they also chant *Maulid* and *Madā 'ih* beside reciting the verses from Quran. [9]

3.3. Khufiyya Order

Khufiyya order is the second Sufi order introduced into the country, *khufiyya* or *khafiyya* is an Arabic word denoting silence or hiding. In Sufi terminology it implies charting *dhikr* silently, opposite to loudly. It follows the *Hanafi* School of teaching. This order, after getting firm stand in China, evolved many sub-orders even sub-sub-orders, but among most of them there are no direct relations. Although most of them claim that they attach to *Khufiyya* order, yet some sub-orders were not direct offshoots of the earlier main orders but spread to China through different link from outside of the country or from Xinjiang, e.g. Xiyu (Western Region) in Chinese historical annals. The founders were also different, hailing from various parts of Muslim world. *Khufiyya* order alone has evolved more than ten sub-orders, including sub-sub-orders. No hierarchical relations developed

⁸ Obviously, this Ibn Arabi is a namesake of the author of *Futuhat al-Makkiyyah* and *Fusus al-Hikmah*, who passed away in Damascus in 1240.

⁹ The Sufi order of *Kubrawiyya* was named after the name of Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221) from Khiva (Khwarism) of Central Asia (Trimingham, 1971; pp. 55-58).

between them besides their claims of that they attach in their practices to *Khufiyya* order.

Huasi order, the founder Ma Lai-chi (Muslim name Abd al-Halim) (1681-1766) was an intelligent student, who studied Islam in the mosque of Milagou village in Minhe county, Qinghai province, at about eight of his age. Later moved to Wangsi (Wang Mosque), whereat Tai Baba was the imam. Concentrated on his learning for ten years, he got the core of Islamic teachings. As a beloved student Tai Baba married his daughter to him (Ma Lai-chi), thence recommended him to be an imam (*ahong*) in a mosque of neighboring village. He worked there and thence in Sanjiaji of Guanghe County as an imam for nearly thirty years. In 1728, at about 47 of his age, he, accompanied by four people, one of them was an Arab preacher named Sheikh Abu Jebel, boarded on a ship in Guangzhou port. After two months sail, they arrived at Aden of Yemen, whereby visited some mosques and sheikhs before they set off to Macca for performing *hajj* of the year. In the aftermath, he stayed another three years for learning *Khufiyah* Sufi order under sheikh Muhammad Jibni Ahmad Aqli. Then he travelled to Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo to further his studies. He learned in sequence *Naqshibandiyya*, *Gadiriyya* and *Suhrawardiyya* Sufi orders. Maulana Mahdumi also taught him some Sufi traditions, gave him a title Abu Futuh and presented him, upon his returning to China, eight gifts: a sword, a chop with Arabic inscription, the book “*Mishal*”, and “*Maulid*”, other 80 books, a prayer mat made of the skin of date palm trees, a white coarse coat and a piece of cover cloth from Ka‘bah. In 1734, after 5 years hard learning, at 54 of his age, he returned by sea route to Hong Kong thence Guangzhou of China. Rested there for about a month, he returned to the northwest region, where he firstly preached in Xunhua, wherein his followers built a mosque for him to disseminate his knowledge of *Khufiyya* Sufi order. Meanwhile, he travelled to Yunnan, Henan, and Shaanxi for preaching, won over hundreds of thousand followers, he became a very famous Muslim ‘*Ālim*. He even converted some Buddhist Tibetans in Kaligang region to Islam. He worked very hard to preach his order nationwide for three decades and passed away in Hezhou (nowadays Linxia) at about 86. By then his Huasi order was firmly established and well known amongst Muslim populace nationwide. He won over 200 thousand more followers. Upon his death, he passed the leadership to his third son Ma Guo-bao (d. 1773), who was called by the followers “the third master”, hence the leadership of this order became hereditary, of which ten years later was criticized by the founder of another Sufi order, *Jehriyya*. Ma Guo-bao passed the leadership to Ma Guang-zong (d. 1826), who passed down to his elder son Suddiq (d. 1842), who passed to Nuruddin (d. 1861), then to Ma Gui-yuan (d. 1874), to Ma Zhen-yuan (Ibrahim) (d. 1897), whose successors were later involved in fighting between and rebellion against Qing government. [9]

Mufti order, the founder of *Mufti* sect Ma Shou-zhen (1633-1722), Muslim name Ḥaḍrah Bushra al-Rabbani, was

from Lintao county of Gansu province. He since youth farmed land to make a living for his family, meanwhile also involved in small-scale business, transporting goods from Lintao to other places and *vice versa*. In 1673, a famous Sufi Sheikh al-Afaqi from Central Asia came to Qinghai to disseminate his *Khufiyya* Sufi order therein, on hearing this, many *ahongs*, student of Islam and even ‘*Ālim* from Gansu, also run to him for getting his blessings and Sufi knowledge. Ma Shou-zhen was one of them. When he met the sheikh, his appearance attracted the sheikh’s attention. The sheikh liked him very much, taught him his knowledge of *Khufiyya* order and the way of chanting *dhikr*. The sheikh named this order as *Mufti* order and granted him the authority to disseminate it in China, together with other eight gifts including a bunch of *tasbiha*, a piece of turban and a few books, as the solid proof of his authority. [12] Apart from this, the sheikh introduced Ma to another two *Khufiyya* Sufi scholars, Li Taibaba (1632-1709) and Tong Taibaba (1672-1735) for improving his knowledge in Arabic, Islam and Sufi knowledge. After some time, Ma returned to his native Lintao, resumed his old job, farming. At the same time, he revised his books and chanted *dhikr*. A few years passed before he started preaching his order publicly in 1685. He built a mosque (*daotang*) especially dedicated to this purpose. Ma was an honest, simple and hard-working man, respected by all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, around his village. Largely due to this virtue, his teaching was also welcomed by many people. He preached for about 50 years; his teachings spread to nearby regions and Qinghai province; won over 50-60 thousand followers. He died in 1722, at the age of 89. His successors were not so successful in further developing his sect. The sixth successor Ma Xian-zhong (1741-1797) was an able man, who was influenced by local Han culture, advocated to establish Chinese style schools for Muslim children, and encouraged his followers to learn Chinese language and culture, thus improved his relations with local non-Muslim community. His deeds were praised by local government, who appointed him as the leader of all Muslims in the region.

From this order, stemmed *Lintao* order, the founder Ma Yu-huan was brother to Ma Jin-huan, the elder son of the fifth *murshid*, who at his deathbed chose the elder son Ma Jin-huan as inheritor of his leadership. To this choice, Ma Yu-huan disagreed. He then accompanied by some followers moved from Beixiang of Lintao to Wayaobao of Linxia, thereby separated from *Mufti* order, and named his order as *Lintao menhuan* (*Lintao Order*). As one can see, this separation was not caused by any new teaching but dispute over leadership. [9]

Bijiachang order, founded by Ma Zong-sheng, Muslim name Abd al-Rahman, born in 1639 (the end of Ming dynasty), passed away in 1719 (of Qing dynasty). By one record, his ancestor was from Persia, in 661, Tang army pacified Central Asia till Persia, and founded Persia prefecture, assigned Fairus (Beilusi in Chinese) as the governor of the prefecture. This Fairus travelled, on a mission, to Chang’an

(modern Xi'an), the capital of Tang dynasty, soon passed away there. Ma Zong-sheng claimed to be a descendant of this Fairus. He in youth attended mosque education in Daxuexiang Mosque (the Great Mosque), till the age of 25, when he was elected an imam therein. From which he declined, on the pretext of that he was still young, lack of knowledge of being the imam. In the aftermath, he decided to go to perform his *hajj*, departed Xi'an, passed by Hezhou (now Linxia), whereby he stopped his journey, quartering at Beisi (North Mosque), wherein he later became the imam.

1672, a Sufi named Khwaja Hidayat Allah Afaq Mashhur (also known as Afaq Khoja), acclaimed 25th generation of Prophet's offspring, who came, via Xinjiang, to Fenghuangshan (Phoenix Mount) of Huangzhong county, Qinghai, to preach his orders. On hearing this news, Ma Zong-sheng, together with other two imams, Tai Baba (an Arab man) from Shang'ershe Mosque of Bafang, and Qi Jing-yi from Qi Mosque, and a businessman named Ma Shi-wan, went to Huangzhong for meeting Afaq Khoja. The latter was very pleasant, accepted them and answered all questions posed by them individually. Meanwhile when Afaq saw Qi Jing-yi, advised the latter to meet another sheikh, saying "your sheikh is coming from the east, you must go to meet him as soon as possible." Afaq inculcated Ma Zong-sheng, and Tai Baba, and Haidrah Liu (A source says he was adopted son of Ma Zong-sheng) the teachings of *Khufiyya* order, the way of chanting *dhikr*, and granted them authority to impart this order in the places they reside and work. Ma Zong-sheng, as mentioned, was already an imam, he had all advantages to pass this new knowledge to his adherents in Beisi (North Mosque) of Bafang. He taught his people of that: they must worship God, follow the prophetic tradition, be loyal to the ruler and nation wherein they reside, and sincerely observe all human relations, like filial to parents, love their brothers and sisters, and relatives and neighbours. He encouraged them firstly to sincerely practice five pillars of Islam, then embark on *tariqat* (Sufi moral cultivation), no other way round. He also advocated that they practice their own way, avoiding criticism of the practices of other Muslims, and never trying to win adherents from other sects or Sufi orders over their side. By virtue of these pronouncements, Bijia-chang maintained since beginning good relations with other Sufi orders, especially *Gedim* sect. This order adopted a system of hereditary for their *murshid* (the supreme leader), the founder Ma Zong-sheng betrothed his leadership to his fifth son, Ma Yi-qing (honorific name Mahammad Kabir) (d. 1750), with a stamp engraved with his Arabic name Abdu al-Rahman, the proof of the leadership, who in turn betrothed to his elder son Ma Dawude (Ma Dawud) (d. 1773), then Abdullah (d. 1795), Ibrahim (d. 1816), Idris (d. 1852), Ma Fang (d. 1874), Ma Xue-zhong (d. 1902), Ma Husaini (d. 1925), Ma Guo-zhen (d. 1963), Ma Wan-de (d.), and Ma Guang-ming (current supreme leader). [9]

Qingyuntang order, also Liumen (Liu's Order), was founded by Abd al-Qahhar (unclear of his life), his Chinese

surname as Liu, who was a contemporary of Ma Zong-sheng, the founder of Bijiachang, both studied with the same teacher, Hidayatullah, who authorized them to be founders of their own orders. Their teachings, however, are similar.

The orders who claim to be *Khufiyya* order and were formed during eighteenth and nineteenth century are:

Dingmen order, the founder Ding Xiang (d. 1819) was a native of Lintan, 1766, he and his brother Ding Yun departed for *hajj*, passed by a place named Badakhshan in Afghanistan, whereat locates a *Khufiyya* center, whereat they stayed and studied for some time. It is said that they studied the teachings of *Naqshibandiyya*, *Qadiriyya*, *Jehriyya*, and *Suhrawardiyya*. In the aftermath, they continued the journey to Mecca for *hajj*. His brother passed away there. After the pilgrimage, on the way return, Ding Xiang passed by *Rabaniyya* center in Xinjiang, stayed therein for another year, obtained *ijazah* (certificate) for preaching Sufi order, thereby he started preaching of his order, which later named Dingmen (Ding's Order).

Humen order, the founder Ma Fu-hai (d. 1812), Muslim name Abu al-Zarr, was Dongxiang ethnic, a native of Hongnitan, Hezhou. He began his studies on Islam since seven in local mosque, 1746 [11th year of Qianlong reign (r. 1736-1796)], he together with some friends went to Xi'an to further their studies under Wang Gazui *ahong* at Chongwenxiang Mosque, Xi'an, whereat they stayed for three years. Ma Fu-hai claimed that in the night of 27th Ramaḍān 1749, he met the prophet Khidr, a legendary figure of Islam, who taught him the knowledge of esoteric Islam, unity of man with God, and unfathomable subtleties; thus, he started his teaching, which was later called Humen by others.

Beizhuang order, founder Ma Bao-zhen (1772-1826), born to a farmer family of Beizhuang village, Dongxiang County, was an intelligent student, studied in Laowangsi (Old Wang Mosque), distinguished himself by learning, and attached to Huasi order. In 1800 (5th year of Jiaqing reign), at age of 28, upon hearing a sheikh named Uniya, who claimed to be 28th generation of Prophet's offspring, hailed from Badakhshan of Afghanistan came to Yarkant (Shache in Chinese), Xinjiang, to preach his *Khufiyya* order, Ma, together with the blind man (Xiataiye in Chinese), travelled to Yarkant to meet him, unfortunately, they failed, since the sheikh travelled to Afghanistan. Twelve years later, in 1812 [17th years of Jiaqing reign (r. 1796-1821)], at the age of 40, Ma and the blind man travelled to Yarkant again for meeting Prophet's offspring, this time succeeded, met the sheikh, who, on hearing their aspiration, accepted them as adepts (*murid*), and taught them the teaching of *Khufiyya* order for one year. The sheikh saw Ma's performance outstripped his friend, thereby granted him the status of *murshid*, who had permission to disseminate his teaching of *Khufiyya* order. In addition, the sheikh granted Ma a certificate (a transmission chain of the *Khufiyya* order at Yarkant in the Arabic language) for preaching his order, thus, Ma started his *Khufiyya* teaching in Beizhuang, his hometown, and thereby named it Beizhuang

order.

Famen order, the founder Fa Zhen (d. 1957) *ahong*, was a native of Hezhou, was an imam in several mosques around Hezhou, during this tenure he learned the teachings of *Khufiyya* order. The feature of this order is self-cultivation by meditation and chanting *dhikr*, void of preaching to others.

Hongmen order, the founder Hong Shou-lin (d. 1937), one of the four adepts to Ma Dong (d. 1898), the sheikh of *Khufiyya* order who betrothed his leadership to Hong Shou-lin, thus, the latter started his teaching of *Khufiyya* order and became the founder of his order.

Of the above-mentioned *Khufiyya* orders, Huasi is named after its mosque's name, "hua" in Chinese denotes 'flowering decoration', while Bijichang, Lintao, and Beizhuang all are named after orders' location, and Hongmen, Famen, Qingyuntang (also Liumen) and Dingmen are named after its founder's name. [9]

3.4. *Jehriyya* Order

Jehriyya is also an Arabic word denoting "manifestation" or "showing", extended to imply charting *dhikr* loudly, opposite of silently. Just like the *Khufiyya* order, it is also following the *hanafi* School of Islamic jurisprudence. The adherents to this order claim that they follow the practices of *Naqshibandiyya* order.

Jahriyya order was founded by Ma Ming-xin 马明心 (1719-1781) in 1760. The founder was a very intelligent man, who began his studies of Islam at 6 of his age in Xiguan mosque of Linxia, Gansu, under his uncle's guardianship. His own father passed away before he was born. In 1728, at about 9, his uncle decided to perform *hajj*, brought him along. Partially sponsored by local Muslims, they made their way to Mecca on their feet. There were two ways for Chinese Muslim to perform their *hajj*. One was the sea route, which began from Guangzhou, whereat a traveler takes a ship; the other was desert land route going through Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq then Mecca, which normally in those days took the traveler a year more. Two men took the latter route. The hardship and suffering they experienced was unimaginable. Anyhow they managed arriving Yemen in the next year. But an unfortunate sandstorm set them apart. One source tells that his uncle died there, left the 10 years boy behind alone. Very fortunately, the boy met an old Arab man, who pitied him and took him home. Knowing Ma's pious intension, the old man sponsored him and sent him to the sheikh of the *Shadhliyya* Sufi order. The sheikh's name was Muhammad ibn Zain, who found the boy very intelligent and hardworking, hence liked him very much, and taught all his knowledge of Islam and the Sufi order to him. The sheikh also supported him perform *hajj*. The boy felt lucky and appreciated the precious chance for study and stayed therein on till he grown to an adult handsome man, thereby his sheikh ordered him to go back to China for disseminating his Sufi teachings therein. Upon his departure, the sheikh presented

him the books related to his order, "*the History of Shadhliyya Sufi Order*", "*Maulid*", "*al-Qur 'ān*", "*Madā 'iḥ*" and "*Mukhammes*", in addition to a bunch of *tasbeḥ*, a piece of prayer mat, a walking stick, a bowl and a sword, together with 100 small sand stones, 10 bigger sand stones for the purpose of counting numbers of chanting *dhikr*. The sheikh ordered him to chant the *dhikr* loudly and named it *Jehriyya* Sufi order. In 1744, the young man set on his way on foot northward to Iraq, then turned eastward to Bukhara, Afghanistan, entered Hash and Yarkant of Xinjiang, then to Xunhua of Qinghai, his native place. He spent 16 years for this trip and lastly returned home with full knowledge of *Jehriyya* order. The young man was ambitious in disseminating the new order, meanwhile he promulgated a reform program to the practices already common among Muslims in the region. This reform program includes: (1) Shortening *Jum 'a* prayers from sixteen *raka 'at* to ten. (2) Encouraging *ahongs* (imams) to distribute the alms they received from others to help poor Muslims, instead of keeping it for themselves alone. (3) In choosing a successor, he preferred a good and pious man to his own son. (4) Advocating not to spend so much in constructing gorgeous mosques. (5) Simplifying works for attaining *ḥaqīqa* stage. (6) In chanting *dhikr* and charting *mawlid*, they do it in congregation and loud voices, combining solemnity with the passion of delight, sorrow, anger, and anxiety. His teaching and reform program won a strong support from a fraction of Xunhua Muslim community, including two *ahongs*, He Maluhu *ahong* and Su Sishisan *ahong*. Some followers of Huasi order changed to *Jehriyyah* order. This trend agitated the leader of Huasi order, Ma Guo-bao, the elder son of Ma Lai-chi. A fierce dispute which later turned to open conflict erupted between the adherents of Huasi and *Jehriyya* order. [9] This conflict will be treated in separate articles.

This order, since the time of the foundation, was deeply involved in internal disputes which later escalated to open rebellion of Qing government, which resulted in brutal massacre of Muslims by Qing's well-trained army.

Among Sufi orders, *Jehriyya* order was the youngest, began in the mid-eighteenth century, by then other orders already got strong stand amongst Chinese Muslim; thus, *Jehriyyas* claimed that they carried forward the true teaching, insinuating that other orders are not true, hence deviated from the true teaching. They kneel and shake their heads when doing *dhikr*, thus they were called by Huasi adherents "head shaking religion." They pray to God, follow prophetic tradition, advocate *sharī 'a* should take priority to *ṭarīqa*; *sharī 'a* as foundation for *ṭarīqa* should be established on the solid foundation of *sharī 'a* observance. *Ṭarīqa* cultivation is only limited to elected few while *sharī 'a* should be observed by all adherents.

Unlike other orders, whose organization is very loose, *Jehriyya* order is a highly centralized order, the leaders of offshoots also pledge their allegiance to their *murshid*, the general leader. From the outset of preaching in 1745 to the

end of Qing, the leadership transmitted eight generations; they are by sequence, Ma Ming-xin (d. 1782), Mu Xian-zhang (d. 1812), Ma Da-tian (d. 1817), Ma Yi-de (d. 1849), Ma Hua-long (d. 1872), Ma Jin-cheng (d. 1889), Ma Yuan-zhang (d. 1920), and Ma Zhen-wu (d. 1961). Among them, only Ma Yi-de died a natural death, others all died as martyrs (*shahid*).

This order later evolved five offshoots: *Banqiao*, *Nanchuan*, *Shagou*, *Beishan*, *Xindianzi*, all of them are named after their locations of the respective offshoots. Those offshoots initially were domes erected for various *murshids*, later constructed around the dome mosques, *daotang* (administrative building), and even religious school. Thus, Xuanhuagang dome (also Beishan dome) is erected for Ma Hua-long, Ma Yuan-zhang, Ma Jin-cheng, and more, later evolved to *daotang*; Nantaizi dome is erected for Mu Xian-zhang; Chuanchang dome erected for Ma Da-tian; Hong Yue-fu dome for Ma Yi-de; Shagou dome for Ma Yuan-zhang, evolved to *menhuan*; Banqiao and Nanchuan domes both erected for Ma Jin-xi, evolved to *menhuan*. *Xindianzi daotang* (also Chongdetang) was erected by Ma Yuan-zhang, later evolved to one of activity center for *Jehriyya*, including cultivation of new generation *ahongs* for the *Jehriyya* order. [9]

4. Islamic Movements

4.1. Ikhwani

Ikhwani or *Yiheiwani* in some source, is a *Hanafi*, non-Sufi school of the Sunni tradition. It is also referred to as “new sect” or “latest sect”. Of this movement it was already discussed to some extent in the previous paper “On the Relationship Between the *Ikhwān* Sect in China and the *Wahhābi* Movement in the Arabian Peninsula.” It spread mainly in Qinghai, Ningxia and Gansu, and further spread to Beijing, Shanghai, Henan, Shandong and Hebei. In the end of the 19th century, the Dongxiang *imam* Ma Wan-fu (1849–1934) from the village of Guoyuan in Hezhou (now the Dongxiang Autonomous County, in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu), has studied in Mecca and was inspired by the *Wahhabi* movement, upon his return to Gansu, started the reform movement together with the so-called ten leading *ahongs*. They reject Sufism, claim that the rites and ceremonies which are not in line with the Qur’ānīc teaching and the prophetic tradition should be abolished. This pronouncement was virtually against grave and *murshid* worship, which were very common practices amongst some Sufi orders., which surely would agitate those *murshids* and their adherents, thereby led to tension within Muslim communities, which later escalated to armed fighting.

4.2. Salafiyya (Wahhabism)

Salafiyya was intensely opposed by Hui Muslims of al-

most all sects and Sufi orders since its inception in China. The opposition incurred to itself is so much as that even the *Ikhwani* movement, which was initially inspired by the *Wahhabism*, reacted with intense hostility to Ma De-bao and Ma Zheng-qing, who attempted to introduce *Wahhabism/Salafism* as the main form of Islam to the Muslim communities in China. The *Wahhabists* were and still are branded by other Chinese Muslims especially *Ikhwani* imams as traitors, and their teachings as heresy.

The founder of *Salafiyya* in China was Ma De-bao (1867-1977), from Baizhuang (Bai’s village), of Guanghe County of Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture, initially a famous *Ikhwan ahong*. In 1936, he with other four Muslim gentries, Ma Lin (d. 1945), then the deposed chairman of Qinghai, Ma Younusi (Yunus Ma), an Islamic scholar, and Bai Jie-ru and Mao Fu-ting, both rich businessmen in Linxia, performed *hajj*. Upon returning they bought some books promoting *salafiyya* ideas. When Ma Lin learned on returning ship that those books could stir up disputes even conflict among Muslims, advised throwing the books into the sea, Bai Jie-ru and Mao Fu-ting did it, while Ma De-bao and Ma Younusi hid, and brought with them to their native home, Linxia. Taking advantage of their status as imams in their respective mosques, they read the books and taught the ideas to their students and disseminated it through the sermons of Friday prayers. It was at its outset not welcomed by both students and audience, adversely received intense criticism from other *Ikhwani* imams, who denounced the *salafiyya* teaching as heresy, opposing the straight path. Although faced with difficulties, with passage of time, Ma De-bao won over supporters, attracting to him some audiences. However, intense pressure from warlords, like Ma Bu-fang (d. 1975), then the real chairman of Qinghai, Ma Bu-qing (d. 1977), then general-cum-statesman, among others, caused Ma De-bao temporarily stop his preaching. In 1949, when the communist party ascended to political stage of China, freedom in religious activity was temporarily assured. Ma De-bao revived his preaching activities. In June 1950, the second year of “New China”, Ma De-bao and Yunus Ma conferred a meeting, invited seventeen most famed *Ikhwani* imams to Xinwangsi (New Wang’s Mosque), the headquarter of *Salafiyya*, in which they put forward eight theological questions to *Ikhwani* imams, questing their concrete answers to them. (1) God exists or not in this universe. (2) What does it mean by *Mutashabiha* (Qur’ānīc verses that are ambiguous, allegorical and unclear in meaning)? And why do they become *Mutashabiha*? (3) How many types of *Mutashabah* are there? (4) What are differences between *tafsir* (exegesis) and *taiwil* (allegorical exegesis)? (5) What are the criteria that define the different *madhhabs* (Islamic legal schools)? (6) In Islamic jurisprudence, *madhab* belongs to which category? *fardh*, *mubah*, or *mustahab*? (7) In case of contradiction between Qur’ān, hadith and exegesis arise, which shall be followed firstly? (8) Should we follow the deviated path mentioned in the hadith? Aftermath, dispute between *Salafiyya*

and *Ikhwani* became so acute that they criticized each other openly in their respective mosque. [9] The dispute between them will be treated further in a separate article.

4.3. Xidaotang

Xidaotang was founded in 1901 by Ma Qi-xi (1857–1914), a Chinese Muslim from Lintan County of Gansu province. It is a purely a Chinese Muslim founded school of thought based on the special understanding of the founder Ma Qi-xi. His teaching of Islamic faith is relatively adopted to Chinese traditional culture.

The founder of *Xidaotang* Ma Qi-xi (1857–1914), was a Chinese Muslim *xiucai* (bachelor), a follower of *Beizhuang* order by origin. He had his fundamental studies in local mosques. At 11, transferred to a Chinese private school owned by Fan Shen-wu (d.?), wherein he studied Chinese classics: Four Books and Five Classics. As an intelligent boy, he passed all exam papers, and obtained the status of *xiucai*, which was an admirable title by many of his contemporaries. He then devoted himself to study the Islamic classics written in Chinese, so called *Han Kitabs*, written by famous Muslim scholars like Wang Dai-yu (d. 1657), Liu Zhi (1660-1739), Ma Zhu (d. after 1710), Ma De-xin (d. 1874), and more. In 1891, at about 34 of his age, he started teaching others at his house, of the Chinese classic and especially Liu Zhi's works. His teaching was attractive to many people, attended regularly by over hundreds of both Muslims and non-Muslims. His fame gradually spread out, even to outside of the county. Seeing the situation was getting out of control, the leader of *Beizhuang* order challenged him, and labelled him as heretic, and his teaching as heresy. Both appealed to provincial authorities separately, who tended to reconcile between the two. However, Taozhou county authority planned to arrest the leaders of both sides. Ma Qi-xi got the news and fled with his three followers to Xinjiang province, thence they wanted to perform *hajj*, but one of them died on the way, buried there. The remaining three cancelled the plan for the *hajj* and returned to Taozhou in secret. He resumed his teaching in secret, and formally named his sect as *Xidaotang*, pledged that "Liu Zhi planted the seed, Ma Ming-xin made it blossomed, and I would get fruit of it." [9] He tried to reform the old practices of the other sects, especially afore-mentioned *Beizhuang* order. As to the fundamentals of Islam, he emphasized performing the five pillars of Islam at the expense of other religious obligations, stressing personal moral ethics, rejecting collection of alms from lay Muslims. In education, he advocated girls and boys have equal chances in education, emphasized education in Chinese more than in Islamic works. He did not put stress on Islamic education to small kids. In economy, he emphasized agriculture and business, called his followers to live a collective life, that is to live together in the organization, *Xidaotang*. His reform proved to be very feasible in the context of the social situations of that time. *Xidaotang* attracted many poor Muslims of both the local

and adjacent Muslim areas, but incurred envies of his opponents, *Beizhuang* order. *Khufiyya* leaders called the *Xidaotang* adherent infidels. [9, 13]

5. The Similarities and Differences Between Those Orders

Having discussed various Sufi orders, their origins and early-stage development, it is instructive to discuss some shared values and differences between them. Blooding conflict notwithstanding, they all uphold the Noble Qur'ān as the highest guide and major sources of Islam and all Sufi orders. They all arduously and piously practice the five pillars of Islam, e.g. (1) The confession (*shahadah*) of "There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah"; (2) to establish five-time prayers (*salat*); (3) to pay tax (*zakat*); (4) to observe fasting (*sawm*) in Ramadan, and (5) to perform the pilgrimage (*hajj*) if economically capable. They all believe in the six articles of Islamic beliefs: Allah, His messengers, angels, scriptures, predestination, and life in hereafter. They all follow the same *madhhab* *Hahafi*, accept other Muslims as fellow Muslims, and above all they all claim that they are following the correct teaching of Islam. They all have their leaders, and respect their leaders, no matter whatever name they call their leaders. In addition, they all live respectively in an environment wherein Muslims are only tiny minority groups compared to the vast majority of Chinese population, an environment under Qing's reign, which was, for the first time in entire Chinese history, antagonist to the whole Muslim population living in China. Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was established mainly by Manchu ethnic, a minority ethnic from the northeast region of China. To consolidate their rule over the vast majority of Chinese, the Manchu emperors played political tactics wisely. On the one hand they won support from some Chinese gentries, on the other they planted hatred between Chinese community and Muslim community, who have been living in peace and side by side for more than eight centuries in the country. They knew clearly that if the two groups were united as before in history, Manchu could have never succeeded in ruling the whole China. Thus, Manchu initially planted hatred between Muslims and Chinese and set it as a basic policy of the Qing Dynasty. As Chu Wen-Djang put it Manchu's policy was "to keep a delicate balance of power between the various peoples so that Manchu could rule them all." [14] Raphael Israeli termed it as "a cultural confrontation", which envisioned that a mass confrontation between guest minority Chinese Muslims and the host majority Chinese is inevitable. [15]

Abundant similarities notwithstanding, wide differences between them set them apart. Muslims, especially their leaders, adored differences as more important than the similarities, they treated particulars as absolute, at the expense of principle. The same kind of logic has prevailed in contemporary Muslim world. Some indulge into trivial matters

while neglecting Islamic principles. We always hear voices blaming others but seldom praise others. This madness could lead to destruction of whole Islamic civilization, just as very minor conflicts amongst Chinese Muslims led to irreparable destruction of their hardly established communities, which had taken them centuries to build.

Moreover, the differences between them were so trivial that it could damage nothing to their belief or religion if they had neglected it. But the reality was opposite. The trivial differences led to physical conflict, later escalating to larger scale fighting, causing hundreds of casualties. Still worse was that the hostile government stepped in and interfered in internal affairs of Muslim communities.

Those sects, Sufi orders and movements existed and still existing and active in contemporary China. Some of them, like *Jehriyya*, *Ikhwan*, *Salafiyya* and *Xidaotang* still have very strong hold in some places throughout the country, and some others like *Kubrawiyya*, *Khufiyya* and their sub-sects, and *Qadiriyya* and its sub-sects, are largely declined compared to the power they have exercised in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Muslim scholar Ma Tong recorded in the year 2000 that the 6,781,500 Hui in China were predominately members of Sufi groups. According to him, 58.2% were *Gedimu*, 21% *Ihwani*, 10.9% *Jahriyya*, 7.2% *Khuffiyya*, 1.4% *Qadiriyya*, and 0.7% *Kubrawiyya*. [16]

6. Some Aspects of Current Situation of Chinese Islam amid Sufi Orders and Sectarianism

In April 1994, my friend and I set on journey to the eastern provinces of China, visited Muslim communities in some selected places. A mosque in Taiyuan city of Shanxi province left me a deep impression. The mosque is big, contains five hundred worshipers, with traditional structure, magnificent Arabic decoration on its walls and pillars. When we entered the mosque for our *maghrib* prayers, we found only a few old men were waiting for *azan* (the call of prayers). Upon introducing ourselves, one old man responded that “young Huis from the northwest (of China) are coming to mosque, whilst our youngsters here never come.” I quite understand his remark. The young Huis are not Islamically educated; they are communist rather than Muslims, due to systematically enforced education by the central government.

As Lin Yi, an associate professor of sociology at Xiamen University, said in his book *Cultural Exclusion in China*, based on extensive original research, “underlying economic inequality are educational inequality and cultural exclusion.” [17] A standardized and unified public education is strongly enforced through public education on all minorities residing in China. The textbooks and references are exclusively produced by the ministry of the centralized government. No single elements of religious materials are permitted to be

included in those texts. Besides, the kids of minorities who reach schooling age are not legally allowed to be enrolled at any religious institutions, though there might be some choices for them to be educated in religious institutions. Muslims as one of the minorities, comprising only 1.2 percent of the total population, who are living in this environment, their future as practical Muslims, is very dull and pessimistic rather than bright and optimistic. We can reasonably conclude to that end. Huo Da, a Chinese Muslim novelist, also foretold her reader through the life story of the figure Jade, that her future is a totally sinicization, a complete merge into Chinese population, [18] just like a gold ring buried in the sea of massive desert sand.

This absorbent general environment compounding with the internal social problems of Muslims communities, such as high illiteracy, poor living condition, internal quarrel, fighting, killing, among others, all kind of malign social diseases, makes general situation of Chinese Muslims look dull.

China's Muslims are clearly a minority group, who are supposed to stay united to face challenges posed by majority Chinese, yet the reality is that Muslims only can best be tools used by other stronger power to kill each other, even at times break to wars. What Chinese Muslims can do is only to keep tradition, which is expressed through their special dietary custom, which is respected and even lawfully protected by the government. Maris Boyd has observed this phenomenon perfectly. “A community of urban Chinese Muslims uses consumption to position its members more favorably within the Chinese government's official paradigm for development.” [19] The dietary problem faced by Chinese Muslims is much similar a situation faced by Muslims in Canada, [20] in terms of that minority Muslim community is facing overwhelming majority non-Muslim.

During the years of “Open Door Policy” from 1980 to 2012, the overall trend looks encouraging. Dozens of government owned public universities offered the Islamic studies, established Islamic institutions or Islamic centers for an understanding Islam and Muslim nations. Muslim graduates from overseas are employed to fill those vacancies, to carry out research on Islam and Muslims, a trend which never have taken place before. Another new trend is on the plane of economy. The Chinese companies involving international business in Muslim World are also employing Muslim workers and translators, for a simple reason, that Muslims can facilitate a smoother business transfer than other non-Muslims. [21]

7. Concluding Remarks

The sects, Sufi orders and Islamic movements presented in this paper are the main foundations of Chinese Muslim communities, to which all Chinese Muslims adhere to. *Qedim* sect till this day adheres strongly to traditional Islam tinted to some extent with Chinese culture, while the Sufi orders like *Qadiriyya*, *Kubrawiyya*, *Khufiyya*, *Jehriyya*, and

their sub-orders, all had direct or indirect transmissive relations with their namesake orders from outside of China, especially the Middle East countries and Central Asia. Of three Islamic movements, *Ikhwan* movement, although inspired by the *Wahhabi* movement of Arabia Peninsula, to a large degree was a local Islamic movement, initiated by Chinese reformist imams like Ma Wan-fu and his like-minded, based on their understanding of some selected books, aimed to purifying Islam from un-Islamic practices, especially Chinese cultures adopted intentionally or unintentionally by *Qedim* and all Sufi orders. Closely related to *Ikhwan* is *Salafiyya* movement, also a reformist movement, but the latter is severely antagonized by the former. Judging by their same stand on purification of Islam from un-Islamic practices, they are supposed to be friendly partners, however, they are antagonist to each other since *Salafiyya*'s commence day to this very day. Xidaotang movement is purely Chinese Muslim's religious invention, which upholds a view of that Islam can be learned and understood from *Han Kitab*, the books written by Chinese Muslim scholars, especially Liu Zhi (d. 1739). The founder of Xidaotang, Ma Qi-xi (d. 1914) made this point very clear: "Jielian (Liu Zhi's other name) plants seeds, I will make it blossom," [12] evincing his firm commitment to his reformist movement, and at the same time, foreshadowing a storm of sectarianist disputes and conflicts with other sects and Sufi orders.

Abbreviations

Biography	Brief Biography of Pioneer Saint of Dagongbei
Brief History	China Islamic Sects and Sufi Institutions
The Sufi Orders	The Sufi Orders in Islam

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix: Glossary (Names of Orders and Founders)

ahong 阿訇
Amen menhuan 阿门门宦
Beizhuang 北庄
Bijiachang menhuan 毕家场门宦
Chujiaren 出家人
Dagongbei menhuan 大拱北门宦
Dagongbei Xianxian Shilue 大拱北先贤事略
daotang 道堂
Dataiye gongbei 大太爷拱北
Dawantou 大湾头

Dingmen 丁门
Ding Xiang 丁香
Famen 法门
Fa Zhen 法真
Fushoutang 福寿堂
Gaozhaojia menhuan 高赵家门宦
Guizhen Zongyi 归真总义
Hong Shou-lin 洪寿林
Humen 胡门
Huasi 花寺门宦
Hongmen 洪门
Houzihe menhuan 后子河门宦
Jehriyya 折合忍耶
Jiangyuru pai 蒋玉如派
Jiucaping menhuan 韭菜坪门宦
Kelimo Jie 克里默解
Khufiyya 虎菲耶
Kuburenye 库布忍耶
Lingmingtang 灵明堂
Lintao menhuan 临洮门宦
Liu Bo-yang 刘伯阳
Liu Zhi 刘智
Ma Bao-zhen 马葆真
Ma De-bao 马得宝
Ma Fu-hai 马伏海
Ma Hua-long 马化龙
Ma Lai-chi 马来迟
Ma Ming-xin 马明心
Ma Qi-xi 马启西
Ma Ru-heng 马如恒
Ma Shou-zhen 马守贞
Ma Teng-yi 马腾翼
Ma Tong 马通
Ma Wan-fu 马万福
Ma Yu-huan 马玉焕
Ma Zhu 马注
Ma Zong-sheng 马宗生
Men 门
Menhuan 门宦
Mingdetang 明德堂
Mingyuetang 明月堂
Mufiti menhuan 穆夫提门宦
Qadiriyya 噶德林耶
Qedim 格底目
Qi Jing-yi 祁静一
Qingyuntang 庆云堂
Qingzhen Zhinan 清真指南
Qimen menhuan 七门门宦
Salajiao 撒拉教

Tai Baba 太巴巴
 Taizi gongbei 台子拱北
 Tonggui menhuan 通贵门宦
 Wenquantang 文泉堂
 Xiangyuantang 香源堂
 Xianmeizhen 鲜美珍
 Xianmen 鲜门
 Xidaotang 西道堂
 Yihewani 伊赫瓦尼
 Yatou menhuan 崖头门宦
 Yunna Ma 云南马
 Zhang Yu-huang 张玉皇
 Zhang Zhong 张中

References

- [1] See Min Ke Qin, "Islamic Astronomy and Calendrical Science in China: From Song to Qing Dynasties," in *Al-Shajarah: ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, vol 27, No. 2 (2022), pp. 327-349; p. 332.
<https://doi.org/10.31436/shajarah.v27i2>
- [2] Ma Zhu, "Zuodao Tongxiao" 左道通晓 (The Notified Deviation), in his *Qingzhen Zhinan* 清真指南 (Guide to Islam), p. 458; in Wu Hai-ying et al. (eds.). (2008). *Huizu Diancang Quanshu* 回族典藏全书 (Grant Collection of Hui Classics), vol. 18, Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press.
- [3] Zhang Zhong, *Guizhen Zongyi* 归真总义 (General Meaning of Returning to God), p. 238; in Zhou Xiefan 周燮藩 (ed.), (2005). *Qingzhen Dadian* 清真大典 (Grand Collection of Chinese Islamic Literature), Hefei: Huangshan Bookstore. pp. 237-274.
- [4] Yang Xiao-chun 杨晓春, (2011). *Zaoqi Hanwen Yisilanjiao Dianji Yanjiu* 早期汉文伊斯兰教典籍研究 (Studies on the Classics of Chinese Islam). Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publisher, pp. 139-141.
- [5] Ibn Battuta. (1994). *The Travels of ibn Battuta: AD 1325-1354*, vol. IV, trans. by H. A. R. Gibb and C. E. Beckingham. London: The Hakluyt Society. Pp. 897-898.
- [6] Schimmel, Annemarie, "Some Glimpses of Religious Life in Egypt During the Late Mamluk Period," p. 376; in *Islamic Studies* (Karachi), 4 (1965), pp. 352-392.
- [7] Knysh, Iskandar, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, SUNY Press, 1998. pp. 299-300, n. 22.
- [8] Dillon, Michael (1999), *China's Muslim Hui Community*. Great Britain: Curzon Press. 92.
- [9] Ma Tong (2000b). *Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai yu Menhuan-zhidu* 中国伊斯兰教派与门宦制度史略 (China Islamic Sects and Sufi Institutions). Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press. 88-89; 90-93; 230-233; 228-229; 231; 232-240; 263; 244-265; 161-176; 180-190; 154-159; 210; 273-319; 111-112; 113-117; 107-110; 152-153; 122.
- [10] Feng Jin-yuan, 冯今源. (1996). *Islam in China* (Zhongguo de Yisilanjiao 中国的伊斯兰教). Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press. 68-69.
- [11] Trinmingham, J. Spencer. (1971). *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. London: Oxford University Press. Passim; 31-66.
- [12] Ma Tong (2000a). *The Origin of China Islamic Sects* (Zhongguo Yisilan Jiaopai Menhuan Suyuan 中国伊斯兰教派门宦溯源). Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press. 64-67; 76; 75; 42; 42-45; 115.
- [13] Gladney, Dru C. (1991). *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*. Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press. 56-59.
- [14] Wen-djang, Chu. (1966). *Muslim Rebellion in Northwest China 1862-1878*. Paris: Mouton & Co. 4.
- [15] Israeli, Raphael. (1974). *Chinese versus Muslim: A Study of Cultural Confrontation*. Unpublished Dissertation, (University Microfilm No. 74-27, 175. a XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan). 581-585.
- [16] Anonymous author, "Muslim Groups in China". (n.d.). Retrieved Sept. 20, 2025.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_groups_in_China
- [17] Lin Yi (2008). *Cultural Exclusion in China: State Education, Social Mobility and Cultural Difference*. London and New York: Routledge. 1.
- [18] Huo Da. (1997). *The Jade King: History of a Chinese Muslim Family*. Translated from Chinese by Guan Yue-hua and Zhong Lian-bi. Beijing: Chinese Literature Press. Passim.
- [19] Gillette, Maris Boyd. (2000), *Between Mecca and Beijing: Modernization and Consumption among Urban Chinese Muslims*. California: Stanford University Press. (Book blurb on the front flap).
- [20] Yousif, Ahmad F. (1993). *Muslims in Canada: A Question of Identity*. Ottawa: LEGAS. 61-62.
- [21] Dillon, Michael (ed.), (2009). *Islam in China: Key Papers*, vol. 2. Folkestone: Global Oriental. 581-585.