



# AL-SHAJARAH

ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization

Published by IIUM Press

2020 Volume 25 Number 1

# AL-SHAJARAH

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The journal is published twice a year, June-July and November-December. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, *Al-Shajarah*, F4 Building, Research and Publication Unit, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), No. 24, Persiaran Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Taman Duta, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All enquiries on publications may also be e-mailed to [alshajarah@iium.edu.my](mailto:alshajarah@iium.edu.my). For subscriptions, please address all queries to the postal or email address above.

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**Koya, P. K., *Islam in China: History, Spread and Culture, A Pictorial Book*, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust. 2019. 193 pp. including an index. ISBN 978-967-0526-57-7.**

*Reviewer:* Min Ke-qin @ Omar Min. Research Fellow. ISTAC (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization)

Many publications are available on the history of Islam in China, especially in English language. So, one wonders what new findings are left to be added to this field. The pictorial book under review does not offer any new information on the subject, but it does serve a purpose. In the words of the book's Editor, Haji Koya Kutty, it is to provide general readers with "a basic idea on the history and spread of Islam in China" (p. viii) through articles gathered from various sources. Illustrated with colourful photographs, the publication would be a good coffee-table book for one to have

The book is divided into three parts. Part one with heading "China and Her Gateway" comprises three articles that are illustrated with 42 photos and 3 maps (Map of China, p. 4; Silk Road, pp. 14-15; and Maritime Silk Routes, p. 29). The first author, Yusuf Liu Bao-jun, in his article "China the Country", briefly outlines the history, geography and people of China giving emphasis to on its great philosophers (see the portraits of Confucius, Lao Zi, Sun Tzi, Han Fei-zi, and Mo Zi, p. 6), four inventions of the compass, printing, paper making and gun power (see pictures, p. 5), and the Great Walls (see photo, p. 7). The next author Joshua J. Mark, in his article "Silk Road" discusses mainly the ancient history of Silk Road (Silk Road Map, pp. 14-15) with special reference to the role played by the ancient Persian royal road alongside the Silk Road and the Romans' special taste for silks from China. Thereafter, Alexander Wain, in his article "Maritime Silk Routes" (with the illustration of "Maritime Silk Routes", p. 29, and "General Chart of the Integrated World", p. 31), portrays the early history of the Silk Routes via the seas. These illustrations are particularly pertinent to the current discussion on the Silk Route, helping readers to better appreciate the significance of the article. The exploration along this route by

Muslim Admiral Zheng He is discussed by Salah Zaimeche in her article “Zheng He-the Muslim Admiral” later at the end of Part two.

Part two, “Islam in China,” comprises eleven articles illustrated with 134 photos, and one map (Muslims in China, pp. 52-53). In the first chapter “Islam in China: History”, an anonymous author claims that Islam was first introduced into China in 616 CE-618 CE by Sa’ad ibn Abi Waqqas and two other companions of the Prophet (p. 36); This claim is yet to be verified in a scholarly fashion. It may be argued that during the period 616 CE – 618 CE, large areas of China were yet to be pacified by the Tang army under the leadership of the ambitious Li Shi-min (r. 627-650). Hence, Saad’s diplomatic mission was unlikely to have reached China during a time of internal chaos in the country.

This sketchy history of Chinese Islam was followed by John Lawton’s article “Islam in China: The People,” which introduces the 10 Muslim ethnic nationalities out of the total of 56 ethnic nationalities in China. Those 10 ethnic nationalities are Hui (p. 59; photo 1, p. 64), Uighur (p. 56; photo 2, p. 64), Kazakh (p. 55; photo 5, p. 64), Uzbek (photo 5, p. 65), Tajik (photo 4, p. 64), Kyrgyz (photo 3, p. 64), Tatar (photo 1, p. 65), Bao’an (photo 4, p. 65), Salar (photo 2, p. 65), and Dongxiang (photo 3, p. 65). Beside the issue of ethnicity that separates Muslims from each other, the Sufi *menhuan* (*tariqah*) presents another factor of segregation among them. The next chapter, “Muslim Groups in China”, by an anonymous author, discusses this issue of segregation that significantly undermines Muslim unity in China. The photos on page 67-71 about the religious rituals around *mazars* vividly depict this feature.

Thereafter, the editor brings the reader to the “Culture and Heritage” peculiar to Chinese Islam. The reader will find photos of diverse delicious Muslim cuisines (pp. 76-78), and martial arts (pp. 80-81). In “Some Selected Prominent Mosques”, an anonymous author takes the reader to some beautiful mosques, both old and new. The highly famed Guangzhou Memorial Mosque (Huaishengsi) (photo on p. 83) is one of oldest mosques in China. Xi’an Great Mosque (photo on p. 84) enjoys no less fame than the Memorial Mosque. A bird-view map of the Xi’an Great Mosque (pp. 86-87) testifies to the grandeur of the Mosque. Beijing Niujie Mosque, also

one of the old mosques, is always filled with Muslims from all parts of the world during Friday prayers and festival celebrations (photo, p. 89). More than twenty other mosques (pp. 92-107) with illustrious photos are also introduced to the reader. The reader's attention is then brought to the peculiar calligraphy of Chinese Muslims in the article "China Meets Arabia: the Calligraphy of the Orient" by Aaliyah Green, who delineates the history of Islamic calligraphy in China, with special reference to the arts (photos, p. 109, 110, 112, 113) of Haji Noor Deen Mi Guang-jiang (photo, p. 111). Another heritage peculiar to Chinese Islam is the establishment of women-only mosques. In their article "China's Unique Women-only Mosque and Women *Imams*" by Anne Miller Darling & Dru C. Gladney, the authors depict a very unique phenomena in Chinese Islam: mosques specially dedicated to Muslim women only, who are led by a female *imam* in their prayers (photos, pp. 115-120). The women-only mosques, six of them in all, could have been "unique strategies to help themselves flourish" in China's unique social-political circumstances (p. 118).

Jacqueline Armijo outlines in her article "Islamic Education", the recent revival of Islamic education, especially in Southwest China (photos, pp. 123- 124, 127-129). In the chapter "Famous Muslims in China", an anonymous author discusses the famous Hui Muslim scholars who have contributed to the establishment of the country and Muslim community. Among them, the author mentions the astronomer Ma Yi-ze (c. 910-1005), the theologian-cum-philosopher Wang Dai-yu (c. 1570-1660), the great synthesizer Liu Zhi (1660-1739), and great *Imam*-cum-scholar Ma De-xin (1794-1874); and Sufi masters like Qi Jing-yi (1656-1719), Ma Lai-chi (1681-1766), Ma Ming-xin (1719-1781), Ma Qi-xi (1857-1914), Ma Hua-long (1810-1871), Hu Song-shan (1880-1955); the translator-cum-scholar Ma Jian (1906-1978), and the historian Bai Shou-yi (1909-2000; photo, p. 145); and army generals like Ma Bu-fang (photo 1, 2, 3; p. 146), Ma Fu-xiang (photo 4, p. 146), Bai Chong-xi (photo 5, p. 147). Alexander Wain introduces readers to the subject of "Han Kitab", a term that emits a little bewilderment, since the article is, in fact, referring to early Islamic books written in Chinese.

Part three, “Chinese Muslims in Nusantara,” comprises three articles, illustrated with 28 photos. Rosey Wang Ma, in her article “Malaysia and China Relations” (pp. 164-177) outlines the historical relations between Malaysia and China in diplomacy and trade, beginning from Zheng He’s voyage down to present, with a special emphasis on the influence and propagation of Islam in the Chinese community. This discussion of the introduction of Islam to the Chinese community in Nusantara is further pursued by Yusuf Liu Bao-jun in his two short but pertinent articles titled “Some Chinese Muslim Influence in Brunei” (pp. 180-183) and “Some Chinese Muslim Influence in Indonesia” (pp. 184-188), which aptly completed the purview of the general situation of Chinese Muslim communities in Nusantara

This book is, however, not without flaws. First, there is a mismatch between some texts and their accompanying illustrations. For example, the photos of “the faces of children from 10 ethnic Muslim minorities” (p. 12) are used to illustrate the text “China the Country”, when they would better illustrate the article “Islam in China: People” (pp. 51-65); the photos of cooking, dry fruits, and animal market (p. 22) would better illustrate the article “Culture and Heritage” (pp. 75-81) instead of the article “Silk Road”; the photo of “woman *imam*” (p. 79), which is used to illustrate the article “Culture and Heritage” (pp. 75-81), would fit better into the text of the article “China’s Unique Women-Only Mosque and Women Imams” (pp. 114-121); the photo of the Ming Emperor Xuande (r. 1426-1436) playing arrow-throwing game with eunuchs (p. 42) illustrate the text “Islam in China-History” (pp. 36-50), appears to have no relation whatsoever with it; the photo of “Art of Haji Noor Deen Mi Guang-jiang” (p. 61) illustrating the text “Islam in China-the People” (pp. 51-65) also bears no direct relation to the text; the photos of *mazars* (the graves of Sufi saints) (p. 66, 69, 71, 72), and the Headquarters of the Islamic Association of China in Beijing (p. 72) are not related to the text “Muslim Groups” (pp. 66-73) that they are supposed to illustrate; the picture of “Nian Rebellion Battle” (p. 138) and the article “Famous Muslims in China” (pp. 130-147) it illustrates do not have any significant connection; the photos of “the *Imam* leading Friday morning prayer” (p. 149), and the “gathering



at the *gongbei*" (p. 150), which are used to illustrate the text of the article "Han Kitab" (pp. 148-151), also do not have direct relation to the text.

Second, the text of some chapters is severely fragmented; it could have been better rearranged in accordance with subject matters. For example, the chapter "Maritime Silk Route" (pp. 28-32) to go together with the chapter "Zheng He the Muslim Admiral" (pp. 152-161). Similarly, "Famous Muslims in China" and "Muslim Groups in China" together with "Islam in China—the People"; "Some Selected Prominent Mosques" and "Han Kitab" with "Culture and Heritage". The translation of One Hundred Word Eulogy which is repeated twice (p. 45 and the unnumbered last page) should appear only the one on page 45. The three articles in Part three (Malaysia and China Relations, pp. 164-177; Some Chinese Muslim Influence in Brunei, pp. 180-183; Some Chinese Muslim Influence in Indonesia, pp. 184-188) should have been listed together in the contents page (p. ix).

Despite the shortcomings and criticisms raised above, this pictorial book supports the editor's claim that it "will open the reader's eyes and minds" to the subject of Islam in China (p. v). Readers from the general public, school students and even university undergraduates, who are eager to have basic information about the history of Islam and Muslims in China, will surely welcome this beautifully illustrated book

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AL-SHAJARA  
Vol. 25, No. 1, 2020  
Contents

**ARTICLES**

- ISLAMOPHOBIA IN INDIA: AN EXPLORATION OF ITS ROOTS, RISE AND HISTORY 1  
*Thameem Ushama*
- REPRODUCING THE HUMANITIES: MEVLANA RUMI'S CORPUS 31  
IN RESTRUCTURING THE STUDY OF MAN AND SOCIETY  
*Ahmad Murad Merican*
- PROBING THE THEORY OF SUBJECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN MULLĀ ŞADRĀ'S 59  
EPISTEMOLOGY  
*Abbas Kharabi*
- NEITHER CREATED NOR DESTRUCTIBLE: IBN SĪNĀ ON THE ETERNITY OF 85  
THE UNIVERSE  
*Syamsuddin Arif*
- THE STUDY OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN SEYYED HOSEIN NASRS' 107  
WORKS AND COMPARING IT WITH SOME CURRENT DEFINITIONS  
*Babak Shamshiri, Saeed Rahimian & Hosein Ali Tajali Ardekani*
- MORE THAN TOLERANCE: THE ISLAMIC CALL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS REVERENCE 127  
*Tarik Quadir*

**MANUSCRIPT STUDIES**

- INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON ABDULLAH MUNSHI'S *HIKAYAT BINATANG* 155  
*Baharuddin Ahmad*
- 'TREASURES OF SCIENCES IN THE LOVELY REALM OF SIGHTS': AN INVESTIGATION 163  
INTO ĀMULĪ'S MANUSCRIPT OF *NAFĀ'IS AL-FUNŪN FĪ 'ARĀ'IS AL-'UYŪN*  
*Amir H. Zekrgoo*

**BOOK REVIEW**

- KRISTIAN PETERSEN, *INTERPRETING ISLAM IN CHINA: PILGRIMAGE, SCRIPTURE, &* 191  
*LANGUAGE IN THE HAN KITAB*, NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.  
2018. 285 PP  
Reviewer: *Min Ke-qin @ Omar Min*
- KOYA, P. K., *ISLAM IN CHINA: HISTORY, SPREAD AND CULTURE, A PICTORIAL BOOK,* 196  
KUALA LUMPUR: ISLAMIC BOOK TRUST. 2019. 193 PP  
Reviewer: *Min Ke-qin @ Omar Min.*
- SYED FARID ALATAS & ABDOLREZA ALAMI, EDS., *THE CIVILISATIONAL AND* 201  
*CULTURAL HERITAGE OF IRAN AND THE MALAY WORLD: A CULTURAL DISCOURSE,*  
PETALING JAYA: GERAKBUDAYA ENTERPRISE. 2018, 187 PP  
Reviewer: *Zaid Ahmad*
- MUHAMMED HARON, *CONNECTING SOUTH-SOUTH COMMUNITIES:* 206  
*A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS*, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:  
CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING, LADY STEPHENSON LIBRARY. 2018.  
Reviewer: *Danial Yusof*
- MICHELLE R. KIMBALL, *SHAYKH AHMADOU BAMBA: A PEACEMAKER FOR OUR* 210  
*TIME*, KUALA LUMPUR: THE OTHER PRESS SDN. BHD. 2018.  
Reviewer: *Imtiyaz Yusuf*
- NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS 215

WoS-Indexed under *Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts and Humanities* and Scopus

ISSN 1394-6870



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