Discussion on New Educational Thoughts of the Hui Minority in Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to summarize in the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li, the intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou had already had an insightful understanding of the importance of education of Hui minority in a new era.

KEYWORDS

New education, the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li, the Hui minority, Guangzhou.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of Republic of China when social reforms were more intense, newspaper, as an important media for exchanging thoughts and cultures and spreading the social information, has naturally stepped onto the historical stage in China. Pushed by the tide of times, journals of the Hui minority regarded developing education as a motive power for the ethnic rejuvenation. Founded by the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li Press in the Mosque of Hao Pan Street in Guangzhou in October 1928, the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li acted as a publication mainly for cultural promotion. Back then, the editor-in-chief was Imam Ma Ruitu who led prayer in the Mosque of Hao Pan. The journal was committed to “rectifying the deeply-rooted religious and secular errors with attractive and lucid words, and promoting the doctrines by spreading scientific understandings, so as to illuminate all readers with an excellent command of doctrines, to advocate education and convey messages, and to enhance the religious faith of Muslim.” [1] With the total volumes of 74, it could be hailed as the earliest publication in Guangzhou in the era of Republic of China and as the one of the highest-level Muslim publications. [2] The education of Hui minority was an important topic that attracted the greatest attention of the journal, which could be best explained by those political commentaries of intellectuals of the Hui minority about education published in the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li. As clearly stated by Imam Ma Ruitu, “by what
will the religion be thrived, it is the prosperity of education; by what will the religion be impaired, it is the recession of education.” [3] He pointed out that the religious development could be determined by the rise and decline of education and both could supplement each other. However, the focus should be on education. At that time, this kind of understanding could be hailed as commendable. It was also recorded in My Opinion on the Reform of Religious Education by Lin Fengwu, “the strength of a nation is closely related to its education. It is commonly believed that ‘the education is the lifeblood of a nation. It is necessary for us to prioritize education if we attempt to strengthen our nation.’” [4] In his work Education Facilities and Others, Na Zihou further pointed out that “the education is the foundation underlying all the efforts to build a nation and a religion, a pioneer for the social evolution, especially the foundation for the material accumulation. The destiny of a nation, a religion and a society are wholly dependent on whether the education could be populated.” [5] From this, it can be seen that in the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li, the intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou had already had an insightful understanding of the importance of education of Hui minority in a new era. In their opinions, education should be promoted whether they attempted to save the nation from subjugation and make it survive, or to rejuvenate the Islam. Through the literature review in the Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li, it can be concluded that the new-typed educational thoughts of Hui minority involved in the journal can mainly be categorized into five aspects as below.

REFORM OF EDUCATION IN MOSQUE

The education in mosque refers to a mode of education which was unique to the Hui minority and appeared in the late Ming Dynasty. It was in the mosques that Muslims often imparted knowledge to their disciples and was imams who taught disciples the Thirteen Classics of Islam. “In Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, the education in mosque played a crucial role in both enlightening the people of Hui minority, cultivating some professional imams of Islam, and sustaining the Islam. However, it has some shortcomings, for example, narrow scope of knowledge, poor Chinese, course contents deviated from the social reality, strong sense of conservatism, etc. Therefore, it became increasingly challenging for the education in mosques to adapt to the needs of social development.” [6] During the period of Republic of China, intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou fully acknowledged that the system of education in mosque could no longer meet the needs of social development, thus degrading into a roadblock on the way of the Hui minority heading forward. In on the Reform of Muslim Schools, Ma Ruitu also stated his own opinions on the education of Hui minority back then, “In Muslim schools of our nation, it is a quite common practice that we don’t go into proper rules and don’t work to explore appropriate strategies. As of today, there have been still some deeply-rooted outdated routines. However, we’ve had no awareness to improve it, which naturally leads to the frustration of teaching and hence the lack of talents.” [7] As manifested by Imam Xiong Zhenyao, the fundamental reason underlying the decline of Islam should be attributed to the backwardness and seclusion of education of Hui minority. Also, he made it clear in Ways to Revive the Religion, “In conclusion, the failure to revive our religion is all down to the failure to populate the education and promote it in a proper manner, and is down to our seclusion from the outside world and conservation. We are just satisfied by muddling along. If things go on like this, then the whole situation is...
likely to go from bad to worse.”[8] Fully aware of the importance of education of the Hui minority, some far-sighted Muslims in Guangzhou at the same time reckoned education as the premise and foundation upon which they could awake Muslims in China and propagate their doctrines.

“In consideration of Muslims public’s shortage of religious knowledge, landslide of religious faith and forsaking of traditional culture, intellectuals advocated that efforts should be made to enhance education on both Islam culture and Han Culture, raise the intellectual level of Muslims and revive the religion.”[9] Hence, according to their advocacy, in addition to the traditional religious courses, some courses of common knowledge should be proportionately presented to the disciples as well. In this way, it was hoped that the traditional mode of education in mosque could be improved and the conservatively outdated pattern be removed.

**IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MECHANISM AND PATTERN**

In *Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li*, intellectuals of the Hui minority in Guangzhou had some heated discussions on the problems involved in the development of new-typed education of Hui minority from many aspects, such as establishing an educational organization of the Hui minority, reforming the educational system, designing a curriculum standard, boosting the physical education, etc.

In *A Letter About Promoting the Reform of Muslim Schools in Guangzhou from Zhou Dexian*, Sun Bingfu written, “However, in our Muslim schools, the equipment is poorly prepared, the management is invalid, the school system is inconsistent, and students are arrogant and domineering. The reasons behind all of these can be attributed partly to the improper pattern of family education and partly to the negative act of schools. All of the phenomena will exert direct or indirect influences upon the future and reputation of our religion to a great extent. In my humble opinion, in our Muslim schools, it is necessary to adopt a new school system and present an all-around scope of courses. Besides, textbooks and equipment for teaching should be fully prepared.”[10]

In *Some New Thoughts on the Reform of Muslim Schools in Guangzhou*, Ma Xingliang put forward some suggestions in four aspects for coping with the current situation of Muslim education in Guangzhou of the Republic of China, “1) To promote education. It should be the urgent affair before everything right now for our religion. The only way is to employ some best teacher’s wealthy in knowledge and those with much experience in education. Only those who are well qualified can be employed as teachers in Muslim schools. In this way, students can get a chance to be enlightened by mentors who are skilled at teaching. Just like grass, by being exposed to the sun, the rain and the dew, all students will grow into something. 2) To gather all forces in the cause of education. It will be strong if united while vulnerable if disunited. It is a good idea to establish a school as an exemplified model for other schools in regions. To bring together all forces so as to form a unified power that is even stronger. In this way, it is expected that all the Muslim disciples in Guangzhou could take the school as a hub where knowledge is imparted, academic thoughts are inspired, and kinship is tied. In the school, they can have some face-to-face communications, which is in line with the principle that friendship shall help us behave ourselves. 3) To apply to the Education Bureau for registration. The courses are supposed to be the same as those of other schools in Guangzhou. 4) To offer Arabic courses during the spare time...If
things go on like this, then it can be expected that our religion can enjoy a bright future and the education will thrive with each passing day. Let us encourage each other and work on this altogether.” [11]

In My Opinions on the Reform of Religious Education, Lin Fengwu stated clearly that “the reasons for under-developed education lie in: improper ways of teaching, outdated school systems and conservative mindsets.” According to Lin, the educational system should be divided into two categories: “1) Four-year compulsory education in accordance with the traditional regulations, which is a duty for all the Muslim boys and girls (like primary school). 2) Set up special schools for specialized education, divided into Junior Grade and Senior Grade, and the period is six years. It is a higher education for those who have already finished their compulsory education”. [12]

As far as Ma Ruitu was concerned, in a bid “to rejuvenate the religion”, it was essential to adapt to “the circumstantial requirements and begin with the education as a fundamental way.” “Efforts should be made to design the guidelines for education on the basis of updated educational methods in line with the real situations.” He proposed three educational programs: “First, all lessons should be taught in Arabic. Second, only those teachers with knowledge and experience should be employed. Third, a system of school regulations should be designed, and primary methods of teaching should be well developed. Only in this way can the students be developed morally, intellectually and physically. Now the essentials of the three-dimensional education are displayed as below: 1) The moral education serves as the foundation for perfecting all the work. 2) The intellectual education refers to all knowledge that is beneficial to us. 3) The physical education intends to strengthen our body in order to empower ourselves to embrace more knowledge. The three aspects of education are mutually complementary, every of which is indispensable!” [13]

As propounded by Na Zihou, the emphasis of school education should be laid upon reforming the current curriculum. Moreover, he stressed that efforts should be made to develop the “physical education”. In Education Facilities and Others, Na written, “some items worthy our attention in terms of the school education can be briefly stated as below: 1) curriculum reform 2) clearly defined class time 3) attention paid to disciplines 4) attention paid to physical education 5) attention paid to shape schools as a community”. [14]

In addition, Yang Chengbing, through his work Necessity of Developing the Education and Physical Education of Hui Minority and Ways, accentuated the importance of physical education as well. He also called for youngsters of the Hui minority to love sports and build their body. As recorded in the article, he said that “Islam is a major religion. Therefore, it is important for Muslim to foster the education and physical education as a way to prevent the religion from being downgraded...The physical education is also an important thing...Once Chinese are mocked by foreigners as the Sick Men of East Asia. In order to get themselves rid of the nickname, Chinese tried hard to strengthen their body and promote the physical education...Youngsters of the Hui minority! We shall promote the physical education and do more physical exercises. We need to make each of us robust and strong. Only by being brave and talented can we have a chance to survive in the world as the Hui minority perpetually!” [15]
PROMOTION OF MASS EDUCATION OF THE HUI MINORITY

A considerable number of articles published in *Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li* paid much attention to the mass education. As for the ways to promote the mass education, a wide range of suggestions were provided in the journal with the attempt to figure out how to cope with the problems of mass education for ordinary Muslims.

As advocated by Shao Lian, both of Han and Muslim schools should be established and men and woman of Muslims should be equally entitled to education. In *How to Prosper the Islam*, he also pointed out that “the matter of education is an urgent affair right now. We can only anchor our hope on some people with the ambition to prosper our religion to promote the education and to establish colleges, middles schools, primary schools, night schools for civilians, and reformatory schools of Han and Muslim. By doing this, we envision that all the men and women of Muslims can get an access to education. As a motto of Islam goes, ‘It is a natural duty for both men and women to be educated. Anyone against it is a sinner who cannot be pardoned.’ Besides, there is another saying, ‘men or women can stop learning only after the end of their life.’ From all of these, we can know that it is a most important duty for Muslims to be educated. So anyone who has the aspiration for education should just try every effort!” [16]

Similarly, Li Bing was a champion of the idea that both of Han and Islam literature should be learned. He also suggested that normal schools should be established as a preparation for inheriting the education of Hui minority. In his work *A Vision upon the Islam Authorities in the Future*, Li stated, “It is essential for us to be fully aware of one thing, which is that education is the treasure for us to save our nation and our religion. Nevertheless, in response to the current trend, attention should be paid to the literature of both Han and Hui, which can drive a numerous number of students to go to school. More primary schools must be set up in all the provinces, apart from which middle schools and normal schools should be instituted as well to empower the students to advance step by step. After efforts of ten years, the effect can be noticeable then.” [17]

In *Necessity of Developing the Education and Physical Education of Hui Minority and Ways*, Yang Chengbing made a suggestion that schools should be instituted in mosques for enabling Muslims to be educated and the importance of setting up night schools were mentioned: “I think that schools should be set up in all the mosques with at least four classrooms prepared in each of the mosque. Moreover, qualified professors should be employed, empowering those impoverished youngsters of the Hui minority with opportunities to acquire knowledge and wisdom. Beyond that, night schools are needed as well...so as to make it easier for them to help those impoverished yet curious student become well-informed and self-independent individuals. Only in this way can we be worthy of the love bestowed upon us by Allah and saints.” [18]

Again, in *My Opinion on Setting up Islam Night Schools*, Ma Ruitu reiterated the importance of setting up Islam night schools: “The Islam night schools should be governed by Imams of the mosques and some ordinary volunteers. The schools are designed mainly for those who know little about doctrines and Chinese, regardless of ages. And some most important yet general doctrines and common knowledge will be selected as the major courses.” [19]

By founding schools for the public, night schools of Han in mosques and associations for promotion, efforts are made to increase the common knowledge of the
mass and their knowledge about the religion. Besides, they were equipped with some professional skills for make a living, which improves the ability of Muslims in Guangzhou to survive and their living standards as well.

FAMILY EDUCATION AND CHILDREN EDUCATION

During the period of Republic of China, the people of Hui minority were generally living a poor life. Children of school age had no access to education; as a result, they could only learn some simple things about religious life from their parents. However, intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou were aware that formative education of family was the most important part for children. At that time, this could be considered as fairly advanced thoughts of education.

In How to be a Nurturer by Ma Ruitu, he began with stressing a fact that “it is simply a natural duty for parents to educate their offspring.” Also, he encouraged all the educators to “teach children in accordance with their aptitude”, and “change the guidelines for education in line with environment, places and times.” [20]

Ying Kun, in his work An Overview of the Medieval Arabic Culture and Modern Western Education, elaborated on Herbart School of Education, a school springing up in the mid-18th century. According the school of thoughts, it is believed that “we must develop children intellectually for a start so as to enable them to tell the good from the evil, cultivating their temperament and helping them form a habit of doing good things and doing away with immoral things.” As pointed out by Ying Kun, the above-mentioned thoughts were “quite similar to Chinese traditional concepts of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust.” Besides, he gave an introduction of the ways of educating children in accordance with the Herbart School from three aspects: “1) Management: (a.) Arrange practice tests for students in a frequent manner (b.) Treat children with a mix of mercy and stringency. (c.) Discipline children as a warning for their misconducts. 2) Teaching: Teachers are not supposed to teach as a broadcaster. Rather, teachers are expected to figure out how to awake the passion of children for learning the knowledge to be received. In this way, they can be improved both in temperament and morality. 3) Training: Develop children morally not only through the class teaching but also by delivering the knowledge of morality to children with tactful words after class, which can serve as supplements.”[21]

In his work My Opinion on the Reform of Family Education and Ways, Dong Feng made it quite clear, “In my humble opinion, the essence of education should be fundamentally the family education because anyone must be exposed to family education. Therefore, for infants who are innocent and fairly simple-minded, all the behaviors of parents could leave some imprints upon them. Anything that parents have done could serve as examples for children to follow without being noticed, which might be deeply embedded in their minds. From this, it can be seen the family education is quite important. For all the parents, it is a duty to be responsible for the family education. And it is important to ensure that the family education benefits children both in mind and body. Then, through what way should children be developed physically? 1) Games; 2) Work; 3) Gymnastics... Then through what way should children be developed mentally? 1) Islam doctrines; 2) Knowledge; 3) Emotions; 4) Will.” [22]

As recorded in Education Facilities and Others, Na Zihou pointed out, “The family education is the foundation for safeguarding the social stability. Work is
undoubtedly the sole priority of life. If parents are good at education, then the offspring will naturally become right-minded persons who can free themselves from being knocked out and thus establish in a society. On the contrary, if parents are not so good at education, then it can be fairly concluded that the offspring will become villains who cannot survive in a society. Worse still, they might be detrimental to the nation, religion and society.” [23] As far as he was concerned, the family education was closely related to the growth of offspring, progress of a society, development of a nation and prosperity of a religion.

FEMALE EDUCATION

Just like women of Han in old times, women of Hui minority were disadvantaged and had no access to regular female education. In Guangzhou, along the development of new-typed education of Hui minority, female education of Hui minority began to play a crucial part in it. In *Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li*, a large number of articles about female education could be found as well.

Back then, Imam Chen Huanwen recognized that women of Hui minority in Guangzhou were generally under-educated and had a poor awareness of religion. In *Editor’ s Words*, Chen once said, “We editors have a strong sense that female Muslims are quite poorly educated. From what we’ve investigated recently, it seems that it has been deviated from what Islam has been promoting. If we let this kind of depraved practice carry the day, then it can be irreversible, which are concerning me a lot. In such a context, the following issue will be a Female Special Edition. We hope that it can awake women from their pipe dreams. [24]

The Cynical Teenager depicted a picture of the society “in a wave of Western culture and civilization”. The young men of Hui minority, especially women, were “imitating the Western styles of dressing”, “making up heavily and dress gaudily” and “unlettered mostly”. In his work *On the Dim Future of Female Muslims in Guangzhou*, he noted, “It turned out that among the female Muslims in Guangzhou, few had once received primary education, not alone the middle education...Furthermore, it is women who are tasked with nurturing the offspring. The properties of mothers can determine how the offspring are shaped in the future, is it?” [25] As he put it, if a person doesn’t pay enough attention to female education, then he “is a violator of the Islam doctrines as a disciple and a sinner as an individual.”

Chong Yi, in his work *Outlook on Female Education of the Past and at Present*, stated that “It is a rare practice that the attention was paid to female education. Muslims are silent adherents of the religious disciplines. Those females who are under the age of nine years old have already been secluded in their boudoirs from the outside world. The reason behind it lies in the family education. Therefore, the future for female Muslims is getting even dimmer with each day passing.” [26]

In the *Tablet Inscriptions about Rebuilding a Muslim Girls’ School*, Ma Zihou recorded, “The Muslim gentlemen have already joined hands with other disciples to institute a Muslim girls’ school. By doing this, we hope that girls can be equipped with some skills for survival and common knowledge of religious life. When they grow up, all of them are expected to devote themselves to Islam and the society. As the nurturers of all citizens, women are expected to be responsible for the family education and for the growth of offspring. In this sense, it is important and urgent to initiate the religious education for female Muslims. [27]
As recorded in *Reasons behind the Setting up of Muslim Continuation Schools in the South Mosque of Xuanhua County*, “along with the roaring wave of Western culture and civilization, the gospels are being preached all over the place. As far as I can see, some Muslims have converted to Catholics and held a belief in some heretical disciplines. Some of them even got married with pagans or let their daughters marry people of the Han. They are attending banquets together with pagans and even willing to follow their religious disciplines. If we let things go on like this, then I’m afraid that Islam, instead of being defeated by other religions, will be bound to collapse on its own...Moreover, considering the fact that women are the fundamental part of family education, it is especially urgent to set up girls’ schools right now. Recently, as instructed by the council, lecture associations for girls will be set up first in hope of developing the female education at a stable pace. It can be expected that we Muslims can enjoy a promising future in the long run.” [28]

In the article *On the Female Muslims* which was published in the 21st issue of Female Edition, Ma Ruitu stated that “the concept that ‘lack of talent in a woman is a virtue’ cannot actually be considered as the female education in its real sense.” He argued that “men and women are equal” and “both of male and female Muslims are born with a duty to acquire knowledge and they have equal rights to pursue education.” [29]

As fully recognized by the intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou, all women were tasked with great responsibilities and duties, no matter what roles they are performing, wives, mothers or civilians. It’s all the same. It is necessary to ensure that women are entitled to accept proper modern education. It is a request that they should be allowed to learn about the growing trend of their nation and the society. They are expected to have a basic understanding of social and scientific knowledge. Moreover, they are supposed to develop themselves by being decent and virtuous in terms of thoughts and actions.

“The foundation of changes lies in the cultivating talents, prospering talents and setting up schools.” [30] In the era of the Republic of China, influenced by the democratic and scientific spirits of May 4th Movement and driven by the New Culture Movement, the intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou were taking positive actions to break out of the shackles imposed upon them by the education in mosques, develop general education and to acquire scientific and cultural knowledge. On the platform provided by *Journal of Tian Fang Xue Li*, they were appealing to other Muslims that the destiny of a nation and a religion would be determined by the educational system and the literacy level of the public. “As instructed by the Prophet Muhammad, ‘Muslims are born with a duty to acquire knowledge.’ For only by acquiring knowledge are Muslims able to know about the essence of Islam doctrines and follow the instructions of Allah. In other words, it is only with knowledge that Muslims can devote themselves to the religion and establish themselves in a society.” [31]

In the era of the Republic of China, the new-typed education of the Hui minority propelled by intellectuals of the Hui minority in Guangzhou was actually the result of the religious education reform in a new historical context. Also, it can manifest the Muslims’ efforts to keep in line with the social development. Through the hard work of intellectuals of Hui minority in Guangzhou to promote the new-typed Muslim schools and their substantial measures, the education of Hui minority in Guangzhou which had been scattered, separated before gradually became well-organized and
systematic. Taking the place of outdated education in mosques, the new-typed education of Hui minority acted as a fresh pattern of education featured with ethnic characteristics and characters of the times, propelling the community of Muslims in Guangzhou to advance in an all-round manner during the period of the Republic of China.

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