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## “Comment”

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The three papers presented in Session 1 focus on unique and relatively neglected cases of Islamic communities in China. There are several common themes in the papers: Islam, minority, ethnic identity, gender, education, and “voices”; and the papers demonstrate how these issues are closely linked.

Comments on Professor Wang's paper: This paper, a comparative analysis of sermon poems composed by Uyghur and Hui mosque preachers, shows these poems provide rich information concerning how China's Muslim minorities absorbed Islam, and, in turn, how their traditions influenced Islam. Uyghur poems



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examined in the paper are composed of a sermon text with 100 metrical verses (“One Hundred Songs”) edited by a preacher serving at the Central Mosque of Yarbash Village, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The Hui poems analyzed contain four calligraphies comprising a series of religious poems written by a Hui preacher of the Sufi order “Linmingtang,” in the Hui Autonomous Region, strongly influenced by the Islamic-Confucian scholarly tradition of the 17th to 18th centuries. While the Uyghur sermon poems include criticisms of moral depravity and socio-political problems such as corruption, the Hui calligraphies are for meditation by Linmingtang members and

remain purely religious.

Questions: Why do the sermon poems address different issues? Can we explain the difference by ethnicity or by the fact that the Hui poems were composed by a preacher of a Sufi order? Are there any Hui sermon poems composed by an “ordinary” preacher not affiliated with a Sufi order who serves at a mosque for the entire local community? It would also be interesting to know why the composition style and rhythm patterns are similar for both Uyghur and Hui poems, despite significant linguistic differences between the groups.

Comments on Dr. Jaschok’s paper: This paper seeks to “problematize the coming-to-voice of Chinese believing women within the interlinking frameworks of aural ethnography and cross cultural feminist theory” through a case study of the Wangjia Hutong Women’s Mosque (WJHT) in central China. The paper provides a rich theoretical framework, and its theoretical part is comprehensive and insightful. However, I would like to know more about rich oral tradition of *jingge*, or Islamic chants. If I understand correctly, *jingge* is one of the most important “sounds” heard in Hui women’s mosques.

Questions: According to Dr. Jaschok, *jingge* did not return even after the 1970s, when partial relaxation of Chinese religious policies permitted a cautious revival of religious worship, but “These last years, collective chanting of *jingge* worship can be heard again in selected mosques.” If so, how did the revival of *jingge* occur and how has *jingge* itself changed from the early 1950s, that is, before persecution during the late 1950s? I am also interested in religious song competitions organized by religious authorities. Is *jingge* demonstrated by such competitions different from *jingge* heard in mosques? If the sound of the female voice is considered *xixi* (shame) in the Hui community, what are the opinions of Hui women, their relatives, and male religious leaders as to participation in officially sanctioned competitions?

Comments on Professor Matsumoto’s paper: This paper examines the evolution of Hui women’s religious schools and the role of the school in the Hui community. I would like to highlight three important arguments in the paper. The first is women’s economic and cultural empowerment through religious education. By acquiring literacy in two languages (Chinese and Arabic), Islamic knowledge, and career opportunities, graduates of *nixie* succeeded in improving their positions within the family and society. Second, Hui women’s “new” Islamic view on gender is of particular interest because it appears to combine (from the Western perspective) contradictory principles—“masculine” gender equality and a conservative view of sex differences that suits the religious and cultural “traditions” of Hui people. Finally, *nixie* can be understood as a minority’s strategy for survival and a means to resist assimilation. Female education is seen as crucial to foster a “wise mother and good wife” responsible for raising future generations. Islamic education is also considered effective for avoiding intermarriage with Han Chinese.

Questions: I learned from one of Professor Matsumoto’s works that the Hui community is quite diverse in terms of religiosity and even includes non-believers who are Muslim only by passport. Considering the religious and cultural diversity among the Hui community, and the difference in economic circumstances, to what extent is the “new” Islamic view on gender shared by more “modern” and economically prosperous Hui women? Are there any less religious Hui women willing to study Arabic, perhaps for practical reasons? Is Islamic education primarily for those who are economically disadvantaged and whose mothers and grandmothers are semi-illiterate or illiterate?