



# PRAISING THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD IN CHINESE

We would like to introduce a new translation of Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang's Ode to the Prophet (a.s.m.) by Haiyun Ma and Brendan Newlon. The Ming dynasty (1368-1644) is popularly thought of by Chinese Muslims as a golden age of Islam in China. Haiyun & Brendan's article discusses the historical background of this ode (*na't*) which is published in a book. (see Sarah R. Bin Tyeer and Claire Gallien, eds. *Islam and New Directions in World Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022)).

“During this period, Muslims grew as a community, not only because existing families thrived, but also because they attracted greater numbers of converts to the religion. These social changes gradually led to the emergence of a class of Chinese Muslim literati and a new literary genre of translated and original Islamic texts in the Chinese language. The overall success and well-being experienced by Muslims in China during the Ming was due in no small part to the Muslim-friendly actions and policies initiated by the dynasty's founder, the Hongwu Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368-1398). Throughout his life, Zhu surrounded himself with Muslims, both in his personal affairs and in connection with official matters of state:

His original war band, made up of men like Hu Dahai and Chang Yuchu, is described as heavily Muslim. Remarkably, so too is his very family; according to Chinese Muslim tradition Zhu Yuanzhang's first wife, Empress Ma (Ma Hou), was a Muslim; he also had an adoptive Muslim son, Mu Ying; brother; and father-in-law, Guo Zixing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, “The Marranto Emperor: The Mysterious Bond between Zhu Yuanzhang and the Chinese Muslims,” in *Long Live the Emperor!: Uses of the Ming Founder across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, by Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), 276. In a footnote, Benite adds: “On Mu Ying see ‘Mu Ying,’ *DMB*, 1079-83, in which Frederick Mote specifically rejects the claim that Mu was a Muslim; On Empress Ma see ‘Empress Ma,’ *DMB*, 1023-26, in which Chou T'ao-chi does not refer to the Empress as Muslim.”

We are grateful to Dr. Brendan Newlon for giving us permission to reproduce his new translation of this very significant Ode to the Prophet which is a wide sprasd tradition throughout Muslim world to write such odes called “na’t” in original Islamic literature. Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang’s Ode is not only important in relation to the history of Islam at that period ,n China but it also gives glimpses of information about the intellectual life of Muslims in China.

We are also glad that Dr. Newlon sent his maps of that period showing approximate areas governed by various Muslim administrations in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations. Also the other maps depicting approximate areas governed by the Ming dynasty and by various Muslim administrations in the 14th century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations (ranging from Muslim majority to estimated 1/400).

Written by the Founding Emperor of the Ming Dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368 – 1398)

Translated by Brendan Newlon\*

**One Hundred Words of Praise**      **百字讚**

*The universe began with the heavenly tablet  
recording his name. The religion-delivering great  
sage, born in the western regions.*

乾坤初始，天籍注名。  
傳教大聖，降生西域。

*Conferring and receiving heavenly scripture in  
thirty parts, universally transforming all created  
beings. Master of the trillion rulers, leader of the ten  
thousand sages.*

授受天經，三十部冊，  
普化眾生。億兆君師，  
萬聖領袖。

*Assisted by destiny, protector of the community. In  
each of the five prayers, he silently supplicates for  
their total well-being. His intention is that Allah  
should remember the needy. Deliver them from  
tribulations to safety, Knower of the unseen.*

協助天運，保庇國民。  
五時祈祐，默祝太平。  
存心真主，加志窮民。  
拯救患難，洞徹幽冥。

*Exalted above every soul and spirit, free from any  
blameworthy deeds. A mercy to all of the worlds,  
whose path is preeminent for all time.*

超拔靈魂，脫離罪業。  
仁覆天下，道冠古今。

*Renounce spiritual ignorance; return to The One –  
that is the religion called Islam.*

降邪歸一，教名清真。

*Muhammad is the most noble sage.*

穆罕默德，至貴聖人。

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### Muslim Community Maps of 14<sup>th</sup> Century Asia

Brendan Newlon

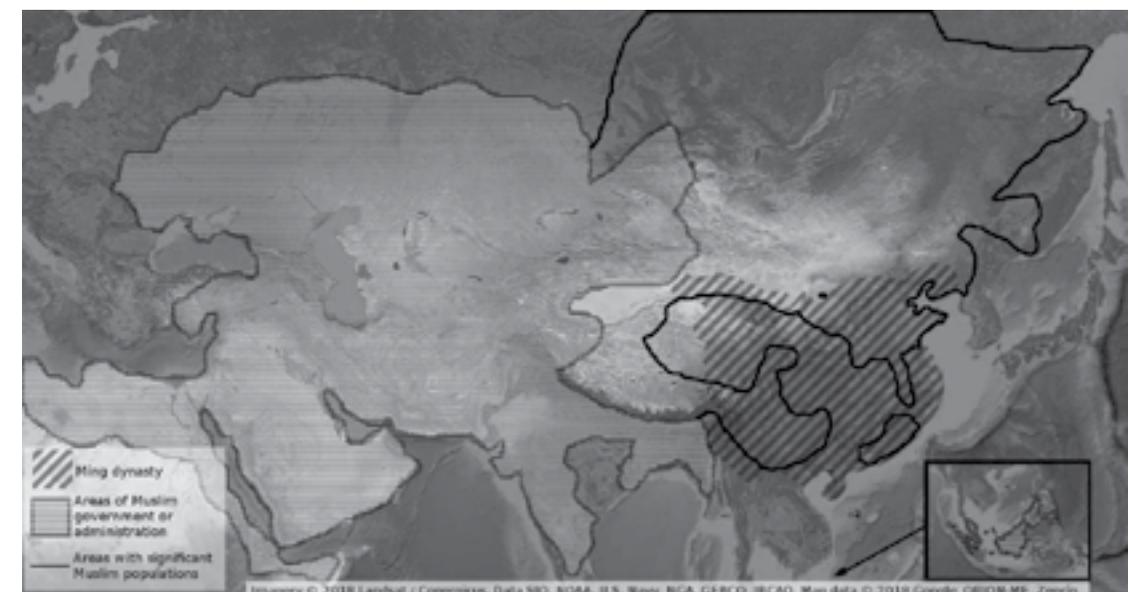
The following maps show approximate areas governed by various Muslim administrations in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations (ranging from Muslim majority to estimated 1/400).



Map 1: Approximate areas governed by various Muslim administrations in the 14th century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations (ranging from Muslim majority to estimated 1/400) © 2018 Brendan Newlon.



Map 2: Approximate areas governed by the Ming dynasty and by various Muslim administrations in the 14th century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations (ranging from Muslim majority to estimated 1/400) © 2018 Brendan Newlon.



Map 3: Approximate areas governed by the Ming dynasty and by various Muslim administrations in the 14th century and areas in Asia with historically significant Muslim populations (ranging from Muslim majority to estimated 1/400) [grayscale] © 2018 Brendan Newlon.