

## Sounding Islam in China: Introduction

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This special issue of *Performing Islam* arises out of an inter-disciplinary research project 'Sounding Islam in China', and it follows the international conference 'Islamic Soundscapes of China' held at SOAS, University of London in January 2013.<sup>1</sup> The project addresses the urgent need for ethnographically grounded, historically informed research on Islam in China, with a focus on the local production of meaning. It aims to cut through the polarized nature of the contemporary political debates and provide clearer insights into the nature and ideology of religious practice amongst Muslims in China. Such research is key to enhancing our understanding of how transnational trends in Islam are currently being locally reproduced, negotiated and reconfigured, and to understand these contemporary processes in the light of the historical transmission of ideologies and practices.

The authors in this special issue draw on the diverse methodologies of historical, textual analysis, and sensory ethnography to map the Islamic soundscapes of China. Their investigations of the soundscape provide new insights into the nature of religious practice, meaning and power, and illustrate the ways in which they are sonically negotiated both within society and in relation to the state. Papas and Lipman investigate historical texts written by Islamic scholars, one based in 16<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Turkestan (today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), the other based in 18<sup>th</sup> century China. The historical contributions consider the effects of sound, attitudes toward sound, and judgments made about sound, through consideration of government documents and Islamic texts, even though we cannot know what the sounds themselves might have been. Both of these papers discuss the discourses surrounding the sounded practices of their period in ways that cast considerable light on the Islamic soundscapes of the present day. In the case of the contemporary studies, our authors draw on personal experiences and sometimes their own practice of Islamic sounds in China. Maria Jaschok and Ha Guangtian draw on fieldwork-based ethnographic study to consider contemporary individual and collective experiences of 'live' ritual practice in, respectively, women's mosques in Henan and amongst Jahriyya Sufis in Ningxia. Rachel Harris draws on fieldwork in rural Xinjiang and engagement in virtual networks to discuss the mediated transmission of religious sounds and ideologies amongst Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

### **Sound and body**

According to Michael Jackson, a focus on the intimate relationship that exists between aural space, sounds and people's experience – a 'complex amalgam' of culture, perception, and biography – serves to prepare 'the ground for detailed descriptions of how people immediately experience space and time, and the world in which they live' (Jackson 1996:12). As the articles in this collection demonstrate, the privileging of sound as the site of enquiry also indicates an emphasis on the insights afforded by embodied, sensorial knowledge. We

draw on the ideas of de Certeau, who argued that everyday communication implies a 'fundamental link between sound, meaning, and body ... Social exchange demands a correlation of gestures and bodies, a presence of voices and accents, marks of breathing and passions, an entire hierarchy of complementary information necessary for interpreting a message' (de Certeau et al 1998:252). In these articles we see repeatedly how anxieties and conflicts over sound and Islam are linked to the ways that sounded religious expression is embedded in bodily practices. Equally, spiritual power is absorbed and internalized through all the senses. As Ha Guangtian argues, in order to properly understand the ways in which loud *dhikr* and *niantou* silent prayers produce Jahriyya Sufi subjects, we must also understand the magical healing properties of ritual food distributed by the mosque when it is powdered, mixed with water, and consumed.

### **Soundscapes and spiritual geographies**

It should be immediately clear that these articles cover an extremely wide range in terms of both history and geography, but collectively they consider a series of tightly defined questions and themes: transnational flows of Islamic ideologies and practice; notions of inside and outside (in terms of physical geographies and national borders, of religious orders, sound and architecture, and gendered divisions of sacred space); sound and silence as strategic tools for survival; appropriate and inappropriate (or orthodox and heterodox) sounds; Islamic sounds and state power. As Jonathan Lipman has argued, Muslims in China reverse the normative Chinese geographies of inside and outside (*nei/wai* 内外). Those living or working in China's northwest borderlands are accustomed to the mainstream notion that they reside 'outside', 'beyond the pass', while China proper is situated 'within the mouth' (*kouli* 口里) of the Gansu corridor, 'inside' the Great Wall. Chinese Muslims, contrarily, both historically and today, regard the Middle East as their heartland, the source of correct practice and authentic religious sound, thus situating themselves on a different periphery.

In all of these articles we listen in on the debates, both contemporary and historical, that revolve around these questions. We also observe the patterns of historical change and transformation as emerging groups lay claim to the power of the voice through promoting particular ways of sounding, while other groups seek to attack their rivals by asserting the social and spiritual dangers of inappropriate sounds. Why and how might sound assume a central role in questions of religious ideology and struggles over temporal power? In contemporary approaches, the notion of a soundscape brings the focus on sound, body and meaning into the wider sphere of the social and the environment:

[A Soundscape is]... a publicly circulating entity that is a produced effect of social practices, politics, and ideologies while also being implicated in the shaping of those practices, politics, and ideologies ... Like "landscape," as well, the term contains the contradictory forces of the natural and the cultural, the fortuitous and the composed, the improvised and the deliberately produced. Similarly, as landscape is constituted by cultural histories, ideologies, and practices of seeing, soundscape implicates listening as a cultural practice. (Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa & Porcello 2010: 330)

A growing body of literature in anthropology and ethnomusicology brings this approach into the sphere of research on Islam. Charles Hirschkind's work on the contemporary Islamic reformist movement in Cairo (2006) traces ways of reconfiguring urban space acoustically through the use of Islamic media forms, such as listening to cassette recordings of sermons in taxis, terming this architectonics of public vocalization, the 'pious soundscape'. Deborah Kapchan theorizes festivals of sacred music as sites where audiences 'attend to the sacred

through sound', creating 'new transnational imaginaries that mediate religious sentiment' (2008:481). Anne Rasmussen provides an evocative illustration of this notion in her portrait of the 'sonic wallpaper' of Islamic sounds during Ramadan in Jakarta, including Qur'anic recitation broadcast from cassette players in shops or car radios, houses, schools, or mosques; *khatam* and *dhikr* ceremonies which involve repetitive chanting of short phrases and supplications, and Muslim pop in contexts from government ceremonies to shopping malls. Rasmussen hears noise as power, and performance as resistance. She argues that the Indonesian Islamic soundscape is a force that runs 'against the grain', and is part and parcel of an alternate modernity, one that cannot be wholly arbitrated by the state (Rasmussen 2010).

Other scholars have focused on the *adhan* (call to prayer) which 'defines the spatial parameters of the community, and serves in the production of a broader—global—Muslim identity, both localizing and globalizing' (Eisenberg 2009: 98). In Mombasa, as in many other societies where Islam is the dominant religion, calls to prayer, often conveyed via loudspeaker, punctuate social time and structure, and they are received by pious Muslims through a set of ingrained comportments such as the automatic adjusting of headscarves, or hushed conversations. In 'multi-cultural' societies such as Singapore, the call to prayer is banished from the public soundscape due to concerns over noise pollution and instead is carried to the pious via dedicated radio stations (Lee 1999). In contemporary China the situation of the *adhan* is mixed. In Linxia in northwest China, a historical centre of Chinese Islam popularly known as China's 'Little Mecca', a rich tapestry of *adhan* fills the streets of the old town five times a day, emanating from a plethora of mosques linked to different religious groups, each one following a slightly different timetable.<sup>2</sup> In rural Xinjiang, the *adhan* is rarely heard on the streets; instead pious Uyghur villagers download an app to set alerts on their smartphones.

Andrew Eisenberg argues that the sacralizing function of the pious soundscape plays a powerful role in determining the boundaries and characteristics of public space, and sets the stage for spatial politics and the production of insidership and outsidership (Eisenberg 2009:121). In China, both today and historically, Islamic sounds and cultures of listening must contend with a host of other sounds and attitudes to sound. We can observe ongoing processes of negotiation between local authorities, religious bodies, and individual citizens to find ways of accommodating these competing claims on the soundscape. In the town squares (*guangchang* 广场) of China's cities, the evening soundscape is a noisy carnival as urbanites come out to enjoy forms of leisure characterized by 'heat and noise' (*renao* 热闹): groups of middle-aged women enjoy American line dancing or *yang'ge* (秧歌) dancing to loud pop soundtracks which compete with tinny music from children's fairground rides. The heat and noise of the public squares mark not only the increasing numbers of Han Chinese migrants but also their increasing confidence to claim and dominate public space in regions of China previously dominated by an Islamic ethos. Muslims – especially the older generation – may be alienated by this exuberant noise. In the Islamic Soundscapes in China conference, Xiao Mei and Wei Yukun discussed a formal complaint tendered by the Muslims who officiate at the shrine of a Sufi saint, against the noise of a neighbouring newly constructed public square. Yet when we visited a year later, we found young *talib* (religious students) merrily roller-skating to the pumping strains of techno during their leisure time after Friday prayers.<sup>3</sup>

### **Silence, Sound and Voice**

The primary site of investigation in all these articles is the human voice. In his *Treatise on Audition* (*Risāla-yi samā'iyya*), the 16<sup>th</sup> century Naqshbandi master, Ahmad Kāsānī Dahbīdī,

writes that when Sufis became tired in body and mind, their Sufi masters encouraged them to listen to sweet voices, harmonious lyrics and exciting poetry since these things can inflame mystical desire and remove lassitude. That is, they can produce the hidden qualities that put mystical love in motion. Thanks to this, the soul is opened to listening and remembers the pleasure of primordial words. The fire of mystical love being lighted, the bird of the soul can fly. In an instant, the disciple mounts several steps in spiritual progress which, without *samā'*, could not be crossed in several years (see Papas in this volume). Alexandre Papas' discussion of this rich 16<sup>th</sup> century text, reminds us that the act of listening is crucial to any discussion of sound. The singing (or reciting) voice possesses great potency because it forges powerful experiences of religion. In Islamic traditions, the voice is generally regarded as morally neutral; what matters is the intent of the listener. What is the effect of a particular sound on the pious ear? What are the ethical intentions involved in the act of listening?

Listening is a cultural practice. Hirschkind draws on Foucault's notion of 'technologies of the self' to highlight the ethical and therapeutic virtues of the ear in Islamic thought, arguing that 'audition is essential to the cultivation of the sensitive heart that allows one to hear and embody in practice the ethical sensibilities undergirding moral action' (Hirschkind 2006: 9). Central to ethical and therapeutic practices in Islam is the act of listening to recitation of the Qur'an. Arguably, for the many Muslims in China who can neither speak nor read Arabic, the experience of the Qur'an is primarily through its sound, not as text. But this does not mean that these sounds are meaningless. As Rachel Harris argues in her study of rural Uyghur women's Qur'anic recitation in this volume, they are imbued with affective power that produces culturally embedded meanings with the ability to act within social life.

Ha Guangtian argues that a particular mechanism of mysticism characterizes Jahriyya Sufism: a dialectic of revelation and secrecy, noise and silence, represented by the loud vocalizing of collective *dhikr* and the silent repetition of individual secret prayers (*niantou* 念头) revealed to disciples by their spiritual guide. Though the Jahriyya is often defined by its followers as marked by loud *dhikr*, silence – in the context of individual self-cultivation – is also a crucial component of its training, as can be seen in the significance attributed to the *niantou* silent prayers which must be constantly recited by pious disciples. For them, faith and religious practice are things that cannot be debated in rational ways. Ha Guangtian's Jahriyya associates assume positions that resist discourse-based analysis, and emphasize the centrality of ritual practice. 'Knowing and practising are one and the same thing', says one Jahriyya student. 'You don't really know until you can actually do it. If you cannot do it, then your knowledge is imperfect.'

In his article on the Sufi soundscape of Ahmad Kāsānī, Alexandre Papas describes how methods of silent and loud recitation are conceived as ways to forge communities of Sufi devotees. Drawing on earlier Sufi texts from the Middle East, Kāsānī argues that through such a spiritual union with God, the sounds of spiritual worship drown out worldly preoccupation and aberrations that come with too close involvement with ungodly things. The devotions of the Sufi disciples include the performance of great physical movement, the whirling of bodies that engenders body-heat and a symbolic fire that consumes the devotee in the act of love. As Adam Chau points out in his study of northern Chinese temple fairs (2008), the classic Chinese notion of *renao* (or *honghuo* 红火 in its regional variation): collective body heat and shared experiences of intense sound-making create collective identity and a sense of inside and outside which engender socio-political boundaries.

Although not explicitly addressed, the dialectic of inside/outside has a gendered aspect which extends the gender segregation intrinsic to Confucian sexual morality into the sphere of religion. The gendered nature of aspects of ritual enactment is caught in Maria Jaschok's chapter where she shows how expressions of devotion in female-led Sunni Islamic traditions are shaped by traditions dominated by ideals of purity and peace. Feminine paradigmatic conduct of guarded purity and reserved discretion were both a Confucian and Islamic concept, mutually reinforcing a conception of womanhood based on principles of sexual complementarity. Jaschok argues, however, that segregation does not imply inertia of female domains. The emergence of women's voices in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries would not have been possible without a long-standing tradition of women's sounded religious practice: the *jingge* (经歌) Islamic chants.

Papas and Jaschok both link sounded performance with external political environments. In Xinjiang, suggests Papas, under the contemporary intrusive political regimentation of religious life, the 'silent' path to devotion may evolve into the dominant (because strategic) form of *dhikr*. Such adaptation to environments shaped also the history of silence and sound in the case of Hui Muslim women's mosques. Political and gender segregation fashioned strategies of adaptation through which sound was possible only off-stage. Opportunities for voice arose with a more accommodating government treatment of religion and women's instrumentalization of China's official gender rhetoric which holds that women 'carry half of the sky.'

#### **Appropriate and Inappropriate Sounds**

According to Ahmad Kāsānī, each Sufi accomplishes the spiritual way through his own particular kind of knowledge. This might be vocal or silent recitation, contemplation or ecstasy, listening to fine sounds or discussion (*suhbat*). Thus, this Naqshbandī master clearly manifests his tolerance toward the various paths the disciples may follow according to their individual capacities, personalities and spiritual progression. Sadly, the spiritual descendants of Kāsānī did not always cleave to this model of tolerance. The history of the Sufi practices in this part of Central Asia and in Northwest China is often portrayed as a conflict between two factions within the Naqshbandiyya: the Jahriyya, which defended loud recitation (*dhikr-i jahri*) and the Khufiyya, which defended silent recitation (*dhikr-i khufi*). In Eastern Turkestan at least, this rivalry did not significantly affect practices of *dhikr* and *samā'* which flourished, subject to very little restriction at least up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The early modern and modern periods were marked by an increasing Sufi presence in mosques and lodges, which conducted weekly *dhikr* in the form of loud public rituals involving large crowds, as well as discrete, silent circles of gnostics.

But further east, as Jonathan Lipman discusses in this volume, this conflict over sounded religious practice in Northwest China became so turbulent that it caused lawsuits, bloodshed, and over a century of sectarian violence. Lipman presents two legal cases of 18<sup>th</sup> century China concerning clashes over sound, one from the southwest province of Yunnan concerning a group of itinerant Qalandariyya Sufis, and the other concerning the rivalry between the Khufiyya and Jahriyya in northwestern Gansu. These cases reveal Qing legal concerns with Islamic noise, and especially the notion that music and dancing were symptomatic of heterodox (*xie 邪*) belief. Lipman surveys a series of legal judgments that branded some Muslims as benign, and others as criminal, in part because of the sounds they produced.

In Yunnan, local Muslim leaders found their congregations diminished by the arrival of Qalandars from India, so they called upon the local magistrate, representative of Qing

imperial power, to censure the Qalandars. They complained that the Qalandars were encouraging the mixing of men and women, dancing, drinking alcohol, and ecstatic trance states, and they described the sounds of the Qalandars' rituals as 'the sounds of obscenity' (*yinhui zhisheng* 淫秽之声). The Muslim Confucian scholar Ma Zhu recorded his disapproval of these practices thus:

The foreign way arrived and circulated, the people came in a constant stream, men and women indiscriminately mixed. By day they plucked the strings and beat the drum, drinking their fill among the forests and streams. At night they transmitted the Way [*Dao* 道] among the bright lanterns, causing their breath to descend into their lower abdomens. Old women and young girls, cloistered elites and village maids, stayed all night in the mosque to study the Way. (*Qingzhen Zhinan*, see Lipman in this volume)

Lipman argues that the local Muslim leaders were able to harness the Qing administration in their struggle against the Qalandar by invoking the deeply held Confucian principle of the separation of the sexes; thus the 'sounds of obscenity', transmitted from outside China's borders, were represented as bodily transgressions of local codes of morality, and censured.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century in northwest China two antagonistic groups of Naqshbandi Sufis contended over whether they should recite the *dhikr* silently or chant it aloud. It is widely believed that the two founders of the rival Naqshbandi orders, Ma Laichi and Ma Mingxin, brought these contrasting forms of *dhikr* back to Gansu from their travels in the Middle East. The Khufiyya advocated silent *dhikr* and successfully accused their rivals, the Jahriyya, of 'heterodoxy' in the Qing courts on account of their practice of loud *dhikr* which, they argued, contravened social norms with its recourse to 'head wagging', rocking and dancing. Lipman presents fresh evidence on this conflict in the form of a newly translated text which is central to the Khufiyya. This text, the *Minshār*, which Ma Laichi brought back from Yemen, actually constitutes a detailed litany for the loud *dhikr*, suggesting that the Khufiyya were in fact practising the same vocal form that they used to brand their rivals as heterodox.<sup>4</sup> In both of these cases, the actual sounds mattered less than where and by whom they were made, in specific contexts of social behaviour and struggles over political power.

The contemporary implications of the history of violent conflict between Muslims in northwest China, and the Jahriyya's position on the wrong side of Qing legal judgements regarding sound and orthodoxy, are evoked in Ha Guangtian's article on the Jahriyya order in today's northwestern Ningxia province. In contrast with the ubiquitous, often amplified, sound of the *adhan* (call to prayer) in many parts of the Muslim world, amongst the Jahriyya the sound of the *adhan* is often confined within the spatial limits of their prayer hall. Visually too, the architecture of Jahriyya mosques is marked by the conspicuous absence of minarets, an absence that was initially the result of compromise and camouflage but has become a cherished 'tradition'.

### **Transnational flows**

There are also clear echoes of Lipman's case study in the contemporary debates over Qur'anic recitation in Xinjiang, where Uyghurs are eagerly accessing and learning Middle Eastern recitation styles via digital media, and where the contemporary Chinese state also seeks to define and control appropriate and inappropriate Islamic sounds. Questions concerning the use of the Internet and other forms of digital media as vehicles for religious and political mobilization have been widely addressed in the literature on Islam in the Middle East and elsewhere. Much of this literature has focused on the political geography of

Islamic forms of knowledge and experience as it is refashioned in the context of new technologies of mediation, and how it is weakening the norms and institutions of traditional religious authority (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004).

In contemporary Xinjiang, communities are increasingly engaging with transnational currents of Islamic ideology, and increasingly under pressure from the state which conflates religiosity with anti-state activity and extremist terrorism. Harris focuses on the ways in which rural Uyghur women experience and reproduce globalized forms of Islamic media, aiming to understand how the most marginalized sectors of society are engaging with the rapidly changing religious ideoscape and soundscape of Xinjiang. What happens when new styles of Qur'anic recitation come to contemporary Xinjiang? What does it mean when a rural Uyghur woman, conducting a Sufi ritual, imitates the recitation style promoted by Wahhabi preachers who are strongly, even violently, opposed to Sufi practices? This case study reveals some of the complexity of the interactions between local systems of meaning and experience and global forms of religious transformation. By listening in on the new religious modalities that are circulating in Uyghur society, and by paying attention to how people listen to them, we can begin to perceive how they help to construct new ways of being Muslim in different parts of China.

### **Sounding Fear and Sounding Piety**

The Sounding Islam in China project converges with trends in the anthropology of Islam which seek new understandings of the relationship between individual experiences of Islam and global forms of religious transformation. David Henig identifies a series of related priorities: to examine the genealogies of particular ideas and practices as they become, under particular historical conditions, 'correct' Islamic orthodoxy and practice; to examine the relationship between 'orthodoxy', power and political authority; to unwrap the micro-politics of marginalized ideas and practices, and to examine the experiences through which divergent actors develop and cultivate their own understandings of what it means to be a Muslim and live a Muslim life (Henig 2012). This school of thought seeks critical insights into the popular politics of marginalized members of society. Instead of privileging rationalism and reasoned debate, the focus shifts to embodiment, affect, and the ways in which persuasion, debate, and difference-making may proceed by other means (Marsden 2007).

In this volume, Harris describes an internet meme circulating in Uyghur society in 2012, a video depicting the taxidermized remains of a snake, attached to the body and head of a monkey, wearing a blonde wig, accompanied by a horror film-style soundtrack of animal cries and pulsing synthesized beats.<sup>5</sup> Around this grotesque and terrifying meme accrued a powerful web of meanings, which centred on fear of God, forms of Islamic piety, and correct ways of being a Muslim woman. Harris argues that we need to pay attention to the affective impact of this kind of media item, and listen attentively to the noisy, messy world of rumours if we are to understand the transnational flows of Islamic media and the changing nature of Islam in contemporary China.

A discourse of identity has evolved within feminist thought which has refined the concept of multiple subject position with a theorization of contradictory subject positions. Contradictions are considered central to subject identity and to the 'phenomenological experience of identity' whereby a woman might be simultaneously oppressed by certain identities, such as gender and ethnicity, and privileged by other identities, such as religion and class. Instead of 'an organic unfolding of identity' (Friedma 1998), lives lived in political borderlands are marked by tensions between outside and inside, between centre and margin. Harris and Jaschok both trace the subject positions of women in two different

Muslim contexts at the intersections of competing ideological, cultural and political influences. Both case studies focus on the contradictions between core identities which lend specific significances to women's sounds and performances of piety. Harris argues that Uyghur women resignify Egyptian and Saudi Arabian sounded practices to develop their own local traditions within an indigenized understanding of 'modernity'. That is, modernity as non-secular and as non-Western. In this process of vernacularization, the role of *būwi* (ritual specialists) as interpreters and reciters comes to the fore. In the national discourse these rural women are depicted as superstitious and backward because of their perceived gullibility and dependency on influences that run counter to Han Chinese modernity. In the face of this stigmatization, the women assert their allegiance driven by 'fear of God'. The fear of God haunts imaginings of the consequences of impiety and resonates into public assertion of identification with maligned practices. The sounds emanating from their recitation steel the soul and diminish the listeners' fear of the state.

A different history and a different interpretation come from Jaschok's chapter in which she gives her understanding of how to interpret the strategic (off-stage) public silences in which Hui women historically concealed their cultural practices behind walled compounds. Although the treatment of Islamic organizations and collective practices under the PRC has been fluctuating, often volatile, and geographically uneven, there has been an undoubted widening of civil space in Chinese society in recent decades, at least in inner China, which has been exploited by various communities, including women's communities, to proclaim their faith and make known their histories to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Yet any ethnography of Islam in China must proceed within a sensory landscape of great complexity. What is the significance of silence in these chapters? What insights can be drawn concerning conditions of fear and expressions of piety? In an earlier study, Jaschok and Shui (2000) observe that lack of education, both religious and secular, exclusion from (male) mosque-based institutionalized pathways to salvation, entrenched gendered division of re/productive labour, and interiorized (female) self-abnegation, sustain an apparently irreconcilable contradiction between demands to be a 'good Muslim woman' and a 'good Muslim'. This contradiction is internalized by women and encoded into a notion of woman as a 'deficient Muslim'. This notion is legitimated by an overriding patriarchy anchored – as we see in Lipman's contribution – in the dual structure of Confucian sexual morality and Islamic codes of purity. 'Fear of damnation plays on the ignorance of women of their rights and informs the subjectivity of Muslim women in a hue of dread' (2000:243). The demands from Confucian and Islamic moral codes for upholding of 'purity' (*jie* 洁) of women has thus to be understood within this prescriptive framework.

Jaschok maintains that wise and knowledgeable leadership afforded by female *ahong* enabled education in the rudimentary of Islamic knowledge and Muslim daily practice, thus lifting the oppressive veil of fear experienced by women. The institutions of female leadership and female-led mosques facilitated the emergence of voice through oral transmission and innovative pedagogy. Strategic silence served as a veil to conceal the emergence of women's own traditions both in relation to Islamic and to state loci of patriarchy.

**'When the politics are good, the recitation is loud'<sup>6</sup>**

Taken together, the articles in this volume suggest a sensory map of fascinating complexity and of rich divergences in expressions of piety and their affinity, however tenuous at times, with political action. Sounded practices, ways of listening, and ways of embodying spiritual power, play crucial roles in producing Muslim subjects, and in producing Chinese Muslim



citizens. Sometimes these projects achieve accommodation and harmonious co-existence, though they are often inscribed in conditions of tension and conflict. Positionality is crucial, in terms of geography, ethnicity, and gender, to the particular conditions of each community, but all Muslims in China are positioned on the borderlands of both Chinese culture and Islamic culture. As such they are constantly engaged in absorbing, synthesising and recreating new ideologies, styles and practices in the light of local social and political realities and cultural norms. Through attentive listening we can uncover the unique and enriching array of sound cultures produced by this positioning, and begin to understand the creativity and spiritual power that they entail.

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<sup>2</sup> For recordings and further commentary see the project website: <<http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=911>>.

<sup>3</sup> A summary of their paper, with video illustrations, can be found on the project website: <<http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=1033>>.

<sup>4</sup> Certainly in contemporary Linxia, northwest China, the Khufiyya can be heard reciting a form of loud *dhikr*: see the project website <<http://www.soundislamchina.org/?cat=106>> for a video recording and commentary.

<sup>5</sup> A recording can be found on the project website: <<http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=394>>.

<sup>6</sup> A saying current among Uyghur Sufis, courtesy of Rahile Dawut.