

Cultivating Charismatic Power

Tiffany Cone

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Islamic Leadership Practice in China

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PREFACE

At the age of 12, I lived in Indonesia for one year. Being immersed in a culture outside of my own instilled in me a deep curiosity about how human beings imbued the world with meaning and understood their place within it. Years later, I came to realise just how deep an impression this experience left on me. In particular, I was struck by the interplay of Buddhist and Islamic practice in daily life. During my undergraduate degree in anthropology, I first visited China and over the subsequent years became involved in a number of film projects there. After completing a study of Sufism at the end of my first degree, I directed a film project titled *Living Chinese Philosophy*. This film explored the central tenets of Confucianism and Daoism in the context of daily life in China. These collective experiences inspired me to undertake a deeper study of Sufism in China from the perspective of philosophical anthropology. Specifically, I was interested in the processes that fostered the emergence and flourishing of esoteric Islam in China. To borrow here from the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, at heart I was interested in the assemblage and re-assemblage of the world—that is, in the ‘complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities and territories’ that ceaselessly create and re-create the world anew (Parr 2010, p. 18).

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Finally, to my parents. Thank you to my father Malcolm—the conversations I shared with you as a youngster planted the seeds of my deep interest in anthropology, religion, and philosophy. I will forever be grateful to you for sharing your knowledge with me, for exposing me to the magic of travel, and for teaching me the importance of an examined life. To my mother Marian—your creativity, humanity, and intuitive sense of the world continue to inspire me. I hope traces of these qualities find some expression in this work. I dedicate this book to you both. Thank you for everything.

NOTES ON THE TEXT AND USE OF IMAGES

Throughout the text, Chinese terms are italicised in the standard pinyin form. Proper nouns (place names or personal names) are not italicised (e.g. Guo Gongbei). The glossary provides definitions, the pinyin, and the character equivalents for key Chinese terms used many times in the book. When analysing particular Chinese characters, quoting an important Chinese phrase, or referencing important dates according to the Chinese lunar calendar, the characters have been left in the main body of the text. Similarly, Arabic terms are also romanised and italicised throughout (except for proper nouns). Important terms, phrases, and names are written in the glossary with all diacritics. If the term, phrase, or name is not in the glossary, diacritics are also used in the main text when the terms are first mentioned but not consistently thereafter. This is in order to both simplify the text and sustain consistency of style with cited sources. I have

chosen to use the ‘Qur’an’ transliteration, but have retained ‘Koran’ if used within a published citation. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Likewise, all images used throughout the book are my own. Maps were created by the CartoGIS unit at the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, and are used with permission. Some primary ethnographic data in Chaps. 6 and 7 was previously published in a book chapter in *Religion and Mobility in a Globalising Asia: New Ethnographic Explorations* by Routledge, UK. It is used with permission in this book (Lau and Cao 2014).

ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

This book is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides background information on Islam and Sufism in China, summarises the key concerns of the study, and lays out the theoretical and methodological foundations. Chapter 2 introduces the exemplary model of charisma in the context of Guo Gongbei through considering stories and narratives about the saints. Chapter 3 discusses the daily bodily disciplines within the Sufi site that lead to the generation of individual charismatic power. Chapter 4 moves on to explore the emulation of this particular set of charismatic practices amongst students and members of the Qadiriyya community. Chapter 5 considers social proximity and distance in relation to the generation of charisma. Chapter 6 considers the role of mobility (and in turn, education) in the generation of religious authenticity and authority and how this strengthens the charismatic reputation. Chapter 7 explores the various voices in the contentious debates surrounding this charismatic practice. It does so with reference to a set of metacultural categories—that of ‘orthodoxy’, ‘integrity’, ‘unity’, and ‘stability’. The final chapter, Chap. 8, offers some conclusions and reflections.

Chittagong, Bangladesh

Tiffany Cone

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MAP



Location map of Linxia, Gansu, China