

INTEGRATION OF CONFUCIAN AND ISLAMIC WISDOM IN MADRASA EDUCATION: CASE STUDY OF MA LIANYUAN

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Abstract: *Hans Küng, a leading scholar in comparative religion and inter-civilizational dialogue, posited that "there can be no world peace without religious peace, and the path to religious peace lies in mutual understanding and dialogue". As globalization intensifies and discussions of civilizational clashes escalate, the dialogue between major religious ideologies becomes critical. Within this dialogue, the educational philosophies of religious texts are crucial for the internal transmission of doctrines and external engagement. This paper compares the educational philosophies of the Confucian classic The Analects and the Islamic classic The Quran, incorporating the educational thoughts of Ma Lianyuan, a renowned Hui Confucian educator. It shows that Ma Lianyuan's Islamic madrasa education in Yunnan was significantly influenced by the Confucian Analects. By exploring the convergence of these two educational philosophies in Hui Confucian madrasa education, the study delves into the "spirit of religious commonality" embodied in both systems. Additionally, the research addresses potential negative aspects of this influence, illustrating how integrating Confucian and Islamic educational philosophies can result in both beneficial and problematic cultural assimilation and adaptation. This analysis offers insights into the complex interplay between these rich traditions, emphasizing the importance of comparative religious education in promoting mutual understanding and dialogue.*

Keywords: *Confucian Influence, Islamic Education, Cultural Synthesis, Adaptation Challenges, Ma Lianyuan's Philosophy*

Introduction

The historical interaction between Islamic and Confucian traditions in China represents one of the most significant examples of religious and cultural synthesis in world history. This intersection becomes particularly evident in the realm of education, where traditional Islamic madrasas evolved to incorporate Confucian philosophical elements while maintaining their essential Islamic character. The late Qing dynasty (1644-1911) marked a pivotal period in this synthesis, as Muslim scholars and educators sought to harmonize Islamic teachings with Chinese cultural and intellectual traditions.

Within this historical context, Ma Lianyuan (1842-1903) emerged as a transformative figure in Chinese Islamic education. As a prominent educator in Yunnan province, he developed an innovative educational framework that deliberately integrated Confucian wisdom with Islamic teachings. His establishment of the Yanjing Madrasa represented a conscious attempt to bridge these two great traditions, creating an educational model that would prove influential throughout China's Muslim communities.

This study examines Ma Lianyuan's educational philosophy and practices, focusing on how he negotiated the complex relationship between Islamic religious education and Confucian ethical teachings. The research addresses several key questions:

1. How did Ma Lianyuan's educational system integrate Confucian philosophical concepts with traditional Islamic teachings?
2. What specific pedagogical methods did he employ to harmonize these distinct intellectual traditions?
3. How did his educational innovations influence the broader development of Islamic education in China?

Literature Review

Historical Context of Islamic Education in China

The integration of Islamic doctrine (العقيدة الإسلامية) with Confucian thought reached its zenith during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties with the development of Chinese Islamic madrasa (مدرسة) education and the subsequent large-scale translation activities. The Confucianization of Islamic teachings began as soon as Islam was introduced into China. This period of synthesis, often referred to as the Renaissance of Chinese Hui history, saw a profound blending of Islamic teachings with Confucian ethical norms and philosophical concepts.

According to Mou (2023), by the 14th century, the incorporation of Confucian elements into Islamic teachings became increasingly evident. During the Jiajing period of the Ming dynasty, Hu Dengzhou, a scholar from Shaanxi, advocated for a formal madrasa education system to replace the traditional oral transmission of Islamic teachings. This development led to a wave of translations by scholars such as Wang Daiyu, Ma Zhu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Xinde, who were deeply influenced by Confucian ethical thought while remaining devoutly adherent to Islamic doctrines. They posited that:

"Regardless of the religion, it should be measured against Confucian standards; if it aligns closely, it is correct; if it diverges significantly, it is erroneous. This is an unchanging truth."

This perspective underscores the central role of Confucian thought in evaluating and interpreting religious teachings, including those of Islam, within the Chinese context (Israeli, 2002).

According to Wang (1987), during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Wang Daiyu, who was revered for his knowledge of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Islam, remarked on the harmony between Eastern and Western teachings, comparing Confucius and the Prophet Muhammad (النبي محمد). This statement also supported by Weil (2023), he proposed that loyalty to Allah (الله), the ruler, and one's parents were the three fundamental duties of life. Thus, the term "Hui Confucian" emerged, referring to Chinese Muslim scholars who engaged in translating and interpreting Islamic texts through a Confucian lens during the late Ming and early Qing periods (Ma, 2009). From the late Ming and early Qing periods, the madrasa education system underwent significant changes, with large-scale translation activities infusing Islamic religious theory with distinctive Chinese characteristics (Frankel, 2024). This transformation was deeply rooted in the extensive absorption and adaptation of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist concepts by the Chinese Islamic community, affecting their theological aspects (الجوانب اللاهوتية), customs (معمارات), and even architecture (معمارات).

Confucianism, while not a religious organization, embodies a deeply religious character and spirit, emphasizing the realization of ideals in the present world and their expression through cultural symbols. The integration of Confucian and Islamic ethical principles was exemplified in the treatises by Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, who harmonized Islamic teachings with the Chinese political and cultural environment. This synthesis significantly impacted Hui society, evident in the adoption of Confucian-inspired institutions and practices within the Islamic educational framework in China (Ma, 1990).

The Development of Madrasa Education in Chinese Islam

Before the Ming Dynasty, mosques in China provided informal religious education. However, starting from the mid-Ming period, a more structured form of religious education known as madrasa education emerged (Xia, 2007). This new system, driven by cultural assimilation, increasingly posed a threat to religious identity (Cao, 2007). Most madrasas were attached to mosques and employed full-time professional instructors. Over time, this system produced numerous renowned teachers and established three main centers of instruction in Shaanxi, Shandong, and Yunnan.

The madrasa curriculum was comprehensive and rigorous, encompassing a wide range of Islamic disciplines. These included Arabic grammar and literature, تفسير (tafsir - Quranic exegesis), حديث (Hadith - sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), بلاغة (balagh - rhetoric), علم الكلام (Ilm al-Kalām - Islamic theology), فقه (fiqh - Islamic jurisprudence), logic, and Islamic philosophy. Although the teaching materials were primarily in Arabic and Persian, the language of instruction was a unique form of Chinese called 'Jingtangyu' (scripture hall language). Madrasa regularly offered religious education at two levels: the Elementary Academy provided basic Arabic and religious knowledge to children, while the High Academy trained religious professionals, known as منلا or حليفان (manla or hailifan), who studied full-time and received free food and lodging. Completing the High Academy typically took about ten years, although there was no fixed duration (Li and Feng, 1985). Since each mosque usually employed only one teacher (أخوند, kaixue ahong), students often had to travel to multiple mosques, sometimes far away, to complete their curriculum. The stability of the madrasa institutions since the Ming Dynasty allowed Chinese Islam to develop its own canon of

philosophy, ethics, and theology (Tan and Ibrahim, 2017). Graduates of this system gradually replaced hereditary religious leaders and assumed leadership roles within the Hui community in China.

Historically, Muslim scholars in China recognized that Confucianism was the dominant position in the land of East. Therefore, to promote Islam in China, they first had to understand Confucianism, meaning they needed to be well-versed in Confucian studies. This realization greatly facilitated the deepening of relations between Confucianism and Islam. The interaction and integration of Confucian and Islamic ideas led to the development of Hui Islamic scholarship, characterized by a distinct Chinese influence due to the incorporation of Confucian traditional culture.

In this context, the concept of "heaven" and "the way" in Confucianism was adapted in Islamic interpretations, although not entirely equivalent to the Allah, especially as these concepts had absorbed Buddhist and Daoist meanings during the later Song and Ming periods. The Confucian "Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues" were also reinterpreted within Hui Islam, albeit sometimes forcefully. Hui Confucian scholars writing in Chinese, known as 'Hanke Tabu,' had a significant impact on the theory and practice of madrasa education. For instance, the core concept of الطهارة والحقيقة (purity and truth) in Islam was often interpreted through a Confucian lens. An example is the couplet written by Zhang Guangjian for the East Gate Mosque in Xining, Qinghai: "Pure mind, clear essence; righteous principles, universal truths." This verse highlights how Chinese Islam, which values purity and truth, was influenced by Confucian thought, whether consciously or not. Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism, which incorporated elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, significantly influenced Chinese Islamic thought. The Neo-Confucian notion of self-cultivation and the discernment of heavenly principles from human desires, for example, found resonance in Chinese Islamic teachings.

Introduction to Ma Lianyuan

Ma Lianyuan, a prominent scholar from the late Qing dynasty, played a crucial role in blending Confucian and Islamic teachings within Chinese madrasas. Born in Yunnan in 1842, he pursued educational reforms by developing curricula that incorporated both Confucian classics and Islamic texts, creating a unique synthesis of Chinese-Islamic intellectual traditions. Ma also authored influential textbooks that highlighted similarities between Confucian and Islamic moral principles, further enriching this cross-cultural dialogue. His notable works include "The Guide to the Convergence of Paths" and "Reflections on the Harmony of Confucius and Muhammad," which explored the integration of Confucian concepts like benevolence with Islamic doctrines such as the oneness of God (Ma et al., 2021). Additionally, Ma founded the Yanjing Madrasa, setting a precedent for how educational institutions could embody the principles of Confucian-Islamic integration in their teaching methods and curricula.

Ma Lianyuan's approach to education effectively combined Islamic teachings with Chinese philosophical traditions. His efforts helped Islam adapt culturally within China and introduced Islamic perspectives into Chinese intellectual discourse (Wang, 2022). Ma's integration of Confucian and Islamic wisdom in madrasa education supported the coexistence of both value systems, fostering social stability and cultural exchange. However, this integration also posed challenges in keeping Islamic teachings pure amid strong Confucian influences. This case study of Ma Lianyuan provides insight into the intricate process of cultural and educational synthesis during his era, highlighting a pivotal moment in the development of Confucian-Islamic

education within Chinese madrasas. His substantial contributions give a comprehensive overview of this integration, emphasizing his influence on Chinese Islamic education and his role in determining its long-term impacts (Ma, 2020). This analysis of Ma Lianyuan's educational philosophy focuses on the interaction between Confucian wisdom and Islamic teachings in Chinese madrasa education. Understanding this interaction sheds light on the broader mechanisms of cultural adaptation and intellectual exchange that have defined Chinese Islam, offering perspectives on how this synthesis influences modern cross-cultural education and dialogue.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology combining historical research and textual analysis to examine the integration of Confucian and Islamic wisdom in Ma Lianyuan's madrasa education system. The research draws from primary sources including Ma Lianyuan's original texts (Fisuli, Muhsimuti, Ilmude, Sulefu, and Nahawu), historical records from the Yanjing Madrasa, and educational materials from the late Qing dynasty period. Secondary sources comprise academic literature on Chinese Islamic education, historical analyses of Hui Muslim communities, and contemporary scholarly works on comparative religious education. The analytical framework incorporates three main approaches: historical analysis of the late Qing dynasty context, textual analysis of Ma Lianyuan's written works and curriculum materials, and comparative religious analysis examining the integration of Islamic and Confucian principles. While the study acknowledges limitations such as restricted access to primary sources and challenges in translating historical texts, it maintains academic rigor through careful document analysis, proper attribution, and balanced presentation of different perspectives.

The Influence of Confucian Educational Thought on Ma Lianyuan's Educational Philosophy

The similarities between Islamic doctrines and Confucian thought provided a stable foundation for their integration. A Hui proverb states, "Monks speak of Buddha in the western sky, Daoists speak of Penglai in the eastern sea, only Confucius' teachings bring daily spring breezes." This illustrates the positive attitude of Islam towards Confucian thought and their shared philosophical basis. In this context, Islamic scriptures were translated into Chinese and annotated with Confucian texts, emphasizing their common philosophical roots and unified principles. This convergence significantly influenced the development and establishment of madrasa education.

Establishment of Chinese Madrasa Education

The foundation of madrasa education was significantly influenced by traditional Chinese private education systems, challenging Charlene Tan's assertion that Confucianism lacked systematic educational mechanisms (Tan and Ibrahim, 2017). Throughout history, private schools and Confucian academies have played a pivotal role in Chinese education. Additionally, madrasa education perpetuated the tradition of home-based education prevalent among Hui Muslims. The promotion of classical Chinese education by Han officials, intended to encourage cultural assimilation, often reinforced this trend. Historical campaigns such as the Tang dynasty's "barbarian schools" or *فانشوي*, were specifically established to inculcate Confucian education among Muslim "barbarians" (Shen, 2011). These schools were not just educational institutions but also tools of cultural integration, using education to bridge diverse cultures.

Architectural changes in madrasa education also reflect the integration of Confucian elements. During the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty, significant transformations occurred in the structures of religious schools. For example, the Qingjing Mosque in Quanzhou converted its north-side residence into a "Heart Purification Pavilion." Similarly, Beijing's Sanlihe Mosque featured a "Regulation Cleansing Room," while the Niu Street Mosque included a "One Principle Hall" and a "Purification Room," designed for both physical and spiritual cleansing. These architectural adaptations highlight the Confucian emphasis on moral and spiritual cultivation, seamlessly integrated into Islamic educational institutions.

In Quanzhou's Tonghuai Gate Street Mosque, two horizontal plaques prominently display Confucian influences: "Unity in Diversity" and "Three Reverences and Four Cautions." The former, "Unity in Diversity", aligns with both Confucian and Islamic principles of underlying unity despite surface differences (Li and Feng, 1985). The latter, "Three Reverences and Four Cautions", derived from Confucian teachings, advises reverence for Heaven's mandate, great leaders, and the wisdom of sages, while advocating caution in actions, speech, sight, and hearing. Displayed at the mosque entrance, these maxims symbolize the acceptance and adaptation of Confucian thought within the Hui Muslim community. Beyond physical structures, Confucian educational philosophy has also shaped the curriculum and teaching methods in madrasas, creating a unique educational framework that upholds both religious and ethical principles.

Madrasa Education Philosophy

The philosophical convergence between Confucianism and Islam within the madrasa education system in China is a profound illustration of cultural synthesis. Key educational principles such as "Heavenly Principles and Five Practices" and "Human Principles and Five Affairs", which include right mind, self-cultivation, love for others, patriotism, and world salvation, were integrated into the madrasa curriculum. This blending emphasized moral and ethical development, paralleling Confucian ideals of self-improvement and societal harmony. The influence of Hui Confucian scholars' "Hanke Tabu" (a term used for Chinese Islamic texts), significantly impacted both theory and practice of madrasa education. These scholars fostered a unified educational philosophy that combined Islamic teachings with Confucian ethical norms (Ding 2011). Additionally, Ma Lianyuan's deep respect for Confucianism, notably seen in his opposition to Christianity in his works like "Reasoning and Evidence," underscores the significant adaptation of Confucian principles within Islamic education.

Despite the significant influence and adaptation of Confucian thought, there were notable challenges and divergences. For instance, the core Islamic concept of "qingzhen" (purity and truth) was often viewed through a Confucian lens, as seen in Zhang Guangjian's couplet at the East Gate Mosque in Xining, which reflects an unconscious adoption of Confucian ideas among Hui Muslims. However, Confucian concepts like "Heaven" and "the way" were not fully compatible with Islamic views of the Creator, especially as these Confucian ideas absorbed Buddhist and Daoist influences during the Song and Ming dynasties (Wu, 2019). This led to somewhat forced interpretations of the "Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues" within an Islamic context.

The adaptation of Confucian concepts in madrasa education sometimes led to divergences in understanding. For example, the core Islamic term "qingzhen" (purity and truth) was often interpreted through a Confucian lens. Zhang Guangjian's couplet for the East Gate Mosque in Xining illustrates this integration, showing an unconscious acceptance of Confucian ideas

among Hui Muslims. However, the Confucian concepts of "Heaven" and "the way" cannot be completely equated with the Creator in Islam as the interpretations during the later Song and Ming dynasties incorporated Buddhist and Daoist meanings (Wu, 2019). This resulted in a somewhat forced interpretation of the "Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues" within an Islamic context.

Furthermore, while Confucian teachings, as reflected in the Analects, emphasize moral construction in this life and lack the transcendental focus found in Islam, this fundamental difference posed challenges in maintaining the distinctiveness of Islamic teachings while incorporating Confucian principles. The Neo-Confucian notion of self-cultivation and the discernment of heavenly principles from human desires resonated with Islamic teachings but required careful balancing to preserve the integrity of Islamic doctrine.

Madrasa Teaching Goal

Madrasa education in China reflects a unique blend of Islamic and Confucian principles, demonstrating both convergence and divergence in their approaches. This synthesis is exemplified by the adaptation of Confucius' concept from the Analects, "my way is one and continuous," to emphasize Islamic monotheism. This clever integration serves to harmonize Confucian thought with Islamic teachings, promoting the idea of a singular divine truth while rejecting the "Three Vehicles" theory.

While Confucianism in the pre-Qin period focused on political protest and societal transformation, operating independently from existing regimes, Islamic teachings advocate for justice and the establishment of a moral society. However, the Confucian notion of "learning to attain officialdom" can be seen as narrowing the scope of personal development, focusing on practical success rather than spiritual elevation (Wen, 2009).

The integration of Confucian and Islamic ethical principles is evident in works like "Heavenly Principles in Brief," which equates the Confucian "Five Cardinal Relationships" (wulun) with Islamic ethical principles and juxtaposes them with the "Five Pillars of Islam" (خمسة أركان الإسلام, Khamsat Arkan al-Islam). Scholars such as Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi have significantly influenced Hui society by integrating Islamic teachings with the Chinese political and cultural milieu. Their work notably influenced the "menhuan" system, a unique organizational structure among Hui communities that blends Islamic practices with traditional Chinese bureaucratic and familial networks (Glasserman, 2021).

It's important to note that Confucianism itself has evolved significantly over time. Dong Zhongshu's Han Dynasty Confucianism incorporated a stronger theological component compared to its origins. By the Song Dynasty, Neo-Confucian scholars like Zhu Xi further absorbed Buddhist and Daoist religious worldviews, introducing concepts such as self-cultivation and the distinction between heavenly principles and human desires. These developments sometimes contradicted Islamic principles of moderation and balance (Chen, 2021).

Madrasa Teaching and preaching language

The language used in madrasa education, known as "jingtangyu" (Scripture Hall Language), reflects the convergence of Islamic and Confucian influences. This unique linguistic blend incorporates elements from both Arabic and Chinese, facilitating the teaching of Islamic scriptures within a Chinese cultural context. Terms such as "sitting in silence,"

"impermanence," and "purity and truth" demonstrate the integration of Islamic and Confucian concepts. The majority of madrasa language and teaching materials were influenced by Confucian language, serving as a vessel for cultural and intellectual exchange. Xiao'erjing, the use of Arabic script to phonetically transcribe Chinese, is a notable example of this linguistic convergence. It allows Hui students to learn Arabic while retaining their Chinese linguistic heritage (Chen and Wang, 2010).

The establishment of madrasa education by Hu Dengzhou involved selecting Islamic texts and creating Scripture Hall Language, effectively transitioning Arabic teachings into a Chinese framework. This standardization and institutionalization of education helped unify the dispersed Muslim communities across China (Ma and Mu, 2021). Different schools of thought developed due to regional and cultural differences, including the Shaanxi, Shandong, Yunnan, Lanzhou, Hezhou, and Southeast schools. The Southeast school, led by scholars like Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, used Chinese annotations to explain Islamic texts, contributing significantly to the Sinicization of Islam. It is remarkable that scholars of that era could write in three languages—Arabic, Persian, and Chinese. This linguistic proficiency was rare in both China and the broader Islamic world of the 14th century, underscoring the unique convergence of Islamic and Confucian educational traditions.

Madrasa Teaching Content

The curriculum of madrasas in China demonstrates a profound blend of Islamic and Confucian elements, reflecting both convergence and divergence in educational practices. This integration is evident in the incorporation of an adapted version of the Confucian 'Thirteen Classics' into the broader educational framework, effectively bridging the cultural and educational divide between Islamic teachings and Confucian principles. The early stages of this educational approach emphasized a combination of Islamic studies with Confucian national studies, creating a comprehensive learning environment. Early Chinese translations of Islamic texts (النصوص الإسلامية) played a crucial role in complementing the curriculum, further reinforcing the integration of these two rich traditions.

The adaptation of Confucian concepts into Islamic teachings led to some divergence in doctrinal interpretations. For instance, the Confucian idea of "illuminating virtue" (clarifying moral excellence) was used to enrich the Islamic concept of "true gift" (divine blessing). Similarly, the Sufi "Three Vehicles" theory, not originally part of orthodox Islamic doctrine, became significant in Chinese Islamic literature due to the influence of Neo-Confucian concepts such as self-cultivation and moral refinement. Hui scholars like Liu Zhi incorporated Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist ideas into their explanations of Islamic doctrines, as evidenced in works like "Heavenly Principles" and "Heavenly Nature and Principle".

This philosophical integration extended to ethical and social spheres as well. In Liu Zhi's "Heavenly Principles in Brief", Confucian concepts of the Five Cardinal Relationships (relationships between ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and friends) were reinterpreted and presented alongside the Five Pillars of Islam (خمسة أركان الإسلام, Khamsat Arkan al-Islam). Chinese Muslims adapted Islamic religious practices and rituals to align with Confucian values, referring to the Five Pillars of Islam as the "Five Constants" (the principles of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity) and linking each pillar to aspects of body, mind, character, life, and wealth. Liu Zhi proposed that these relationships, when aligned with the Five Pillars, guide one's conduct in a manner that fulfills both Islamic and Confucian ideals, achieving the ultimate goal of "fulfilling one's rites to reach the heavens".

Confucian influence is also evident in the adaptation of Islamic religious practices and rituals to align with Confucian values. Chinese Muslims adhered to the Five Pillars of Islam (خمسة أركان الإسلام), which they also referred to as the "Five Constants". These included the five daily prayers, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and declaration of faith, each linked to aspects of body, mind, character, life, and wealth, respectively. This alignment underscores the integration of Confucian ethical principles with Islamic ritual practices. For example, the three major festivals that are highly regarded by Muslims both domestically and internationally, namely Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Mawlid. Among these, Eid al-Adha, originally known as the 'Festival of Sacrifice', is referred to as the 'Festival of Loyalty and Filial Piety' by Chinese Muslims. This renaming emphasizes Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety, blending them with the Islamic significance of the festival.

Educational innovations played a significant role in shaping the unique character of Chinese Islamic education. Ma Lianyuan, a pivotal figure in this educational movement, advocated for bilingual education in Yunnan, promoting the dual use of Arabic and Chinese in teaching. He compiled simplified selections of essential Islamic texts, making them more accessible to students. For example, he revised the text Weigaye (a comprehensive Islamic legal text) into Tausiha (a simplified version of Islamic teachings), removing complex passages and retaining essential teachings. This approach was well-received by Muslim scholars both in China and abroad. To further meet the needs of students learning Islamic doctrines, Ma Lianyuan authored several influential works, including Fisuli, Muhsimuti, Ilmude, Sulefu, and Nahawu. Some of these texts have become standard textbooks in madrasa education across China, remaining in use to this day.

Today, many علماء (Alims) and منلا (Manlas) continue to study and teach Ma Lianyuan's works, such as the Indian edition of the Arabic commentary Sharah al-Aqaid al-Nasafi. Handwritten copies of this text are widely circulated among Hui communities, underscoring its enduring influence (Li, 2011). Another notable contribution was "The Great Compilation" by Gao Baba, categorizes essential knowledge from major Islamic classics and has significantly impacted Muslim education in Yunnan. This compilation was even presented as a gift to the Minister of Religious Culture and the President of Iran during the country's tenth anniversary celebrations. The teaching content in madrasa education exemplifies a rich convergence of Islamic and Confucian elements, while also highlighting areas of divergence in doctrinal interpretations and ethical principles. This blending of traditions has created a unique educational framework that upholds Islamic religious identity while incorporating Confucian values and practices.

Madrasa Teaching Methods

Madrasa education employs a variety of teaching methods designed to ensure students deeply internalize and accurately understand the teachings. These methods, rooted in both Islamic and Confucian educational philosophies, showcase a blend of convergence and divergence.

A primary method in madrasa education is oral transmission. Teachers recite the texts, and students repeat them until they have memorized the material. This method emphasizes the direct transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, ensuring the preservation of the original texts' accuracy. This approach reflects the Islamic tradition of memorizing the Quran (القرآن) and Hadiths (الحديث), where oral transmission is considered essential for maintaining the integrity of religious knowledge. Another key method is word-by-word instruction. In this approach, each word and phrase of the text is explained in detail, ensuring comprehensive

understanding. This meticulous method helps students grasp the precise meanings and contexts of the texts, fostering a deep and nuanced understanding. The "Genealogy of Islamic Scholarship", attributed to Mr. She Yunshan, outlines ten specific teaching techniques that enhance this method's effectiveness (Yang, 2011).

Repetition is a significant teaching technique in the Quran, designed to reinforce key concepts and capture the listener's attention. There are two types of repetition: direct and indirect. Direct Repetition involves repeating the same verses verbatim. For instance, the verse "فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَان" (Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?) from سورة الرحمن (Surah Ar-Rahman, 55) is repeated 33 times in the same chapter. This method emphasizes the importance of God's blessings and engages the reader or listener through repetition. Indirect repetition presents the same concepts using different words and phrases. This approach caters to different types of learners and prevents monotony. For example, the story of Prophet Adam is narrated multiple times across different surahs (2:34-37, 3:59, 7:11, 7:26, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, and 36:60), each time with a slightly different focus to impart new lessons and align with the surah's theme (Risha, 2013; Baeq, 2022). Indirect repetition enriches the narrative, offering varied perspectives and deeper insights into the same story.

The convergence with Confucian educational methods is evident in the emphasis on detailed, repetitive instruction and the moral and ethical cultivation of students. Confucian education traditionally involves the memorization of classic texts and moral teachings, often through repetitive recitation and detailed explanation. This approach ensures that students internalize both the knowledge and the underlying ethical principles. Despite these convergences, there are also notable divergences in the educational approaches. While Islamic education places a significant emphasis on the memorization of the Quran and Hadiths as divine texts, Confucian education prioritizes the understanding and application of moral and philosophical teachings in daily life (Wang, 2007). The oral transmission in madrasa education aims to preserve religious texts' sanctity, whereas Confucian education focuses more on the practical application of learned principles in governance and personal conduct.

Madrasa Recruitment Policy

Chinese madrasa education prioritizes moral integrity over intellectual prowess in its recruitment policy. This principle is encapsulated in the saying "It is better to accept the honest but simple-minded than the cunning but intelligent". This proverb emphasizes the value of sincerity and straightforwardness over cunning and craftiness, suggesting that integrity and honesty are more desirable traits than cleverness accompanied by deceit. This approach mirrors the Confucian value of "Ren" (benevolence), placing a strong emphasis on virtue and moral character. In Confucian philosophy, virtue cultivation is paramount. Confucius advocated that education should develop morally upright individuals who positively contribute to society. This is reflected in the madrasa's recruitment policy, which seeks students demonstrating sincerity and ethical conduct, embodying the Confucian ideal of fostering benevolent and virtuous individuals (Ho, 2018).

Madrasa education sets high standards for its teachers, who are expected to embody key ethical and moral principles. The criteria for madrasa teachers include:

- Right Mind (نية): Maintaining a clear and righteous mindset, akin to the Islamic emphasis on the purity of intention.
- Self-Cultivation (تزكية): Continuously working on personal moral development, echoing the Islamic process of self-purification.

- Love for Others (رحمة): Demonstrating compassion and care for the community, reflecting the Islamic value of mercy.
- Patriotism (وطن): Showing loyalty and dedication to the nation, aligning with the Islamic principle of loyalty to one's country.
- World Salvation (الخلاص العالمي): Striving to contribute positively to society and humanity, similar to the Islamic duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil.
- Knowledge (العلم): Possessing comprehensive knowledge of Islamic teachings, essential for any Islamic scholar or teacher.
- Unbroken Chain of Transmission (السند المتصل): Ensuring the accurate transmission of knowledge, vital in the preservation of Islamic scholarship and teachings.
- Moral Integrity (الاستقامة): Upholding high ethical standards, crucial in both Islamic and Confucian traditions.
- Eloquence (البلاغة): Being able to articulate teachings clearly and effectively, important for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge.
- Steadfastness (الثبات): Remaining committed to the principles and practices of Islam, reflecting the steadfastness promoted in Islamic teachings.

Chinese madrasa recruitment policies showcase the integration of Islamic and Confucian values, emphasizing moral integrity and the cultivation of virtuous individuals. These policies balance religious and national loyalty with ethical conduct, fostering a comprehensive approach to education that upholds both religious doctrines and societal values.

Ma Lianyuan's Madrasa Education: The Influence of Confucianism - Benefits and Drawbacks

Ma Lianyuan's madrasa education deeply intertwined Islamic teaching with Confucian concepts, demonstrating both benefits and drawbacks. This integration incorporated Confucian theories such as Mencius's belief in the innate goodness of human nature, Dong Zhongshu's classifications of human nature and the Five Elements, and Song-Ming Neo-Confucian concepts like "principle" (the underlying order of nature), "vital force" (the animating energy in living beings), "investigation of things" (the study of objects to understand universal principles), and "preserving heavenly principles and eliminating human desires" (upholding moral laws and curbing selfish desires). These were evident in the works of scholars like Liu Zhi and Lan Zixian, who used them to elucidate Islamic teachings on the oneness of God, divine blessings, and the path of righteousness.

The incorporation of Confucian concepts significantly enriched Islamic teachings in China. By absorbing and adapting ideas from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, Chinese Islam evolved to align more closely with local traditions and thought systems. This synthesis helped create a unique version of Islam that was more easily understood and accepted by the local Muslim population, already familiar with Confucian teachings. Living in a predominantly Confucian cultural environment, Chinese Muslims, especially those in the interior, began to integrate these local cultural elements into their religious practices. This blending facilitated the construction of a religious system that resonated with both Islamic and Confucian values, making it more accessible and relatable for the broader population (Ji, 2006).

In significant life events such as marriage and funerals, Chinese Muslims adapted Quranic prescriptions to better align with local customs. For instance, while Islamic marriage

ceremonies were conducted according to religious guidelines, they also incorporated elements common in Han Chinese traditions, emphasizing " أمر الله، سلطة الوالدين، وكلمات الوسيط " (Allah's decree, parental authority, and the matchmaker's words). Similarly, funeral practices were adapted to include Confucian filial piety rituals, such as elaborate ceremonies during burial and commemorative rites on the seventh, fortieth, hundredth days, and annually thereafter. According to People's Government of Heilongjiang Province (2015), these adaptations allowed for a harmonious blend of Islamic and Confucian values, highlighting the importance of filial piety while still maintaining core Islamic principles.

One of the primary challenges stemmed from the pervasive influence of Neo-Confucianism, which became the dominant ideology endorsed by successive feudal rulers from the Song and Ming dynasties onward. This ideological dominance created an environment where any foreign culture, including Islam, had to adapt to Confucian norms to survive and thrive. Prominent educators like Ma Lianyuan responded to this pressure by integrating Quranic principles with Confucian educational philosophies, using Confucian concepts and language to explain and celebrate Islamic teachings.

While this approach facilitated the acceptance and understanding of Islam within Chinese society, it also led to potential cultural tensions within the Muslim community. The syncretic approach, which blended Islamic and Confucian ideas, was not universally accepted. Some members of the community embraced this integration, viewing it as a necessary adaptation to the Chinese context. Others, however, saw it as a departure from pure Islamic teachings, leading to debates over the authenticity of this approach and potentially causing divisions within the community.

The heavy influence of Confucianism on Islamic education also raised significant questions about the balance between religious and cultural identity. While it helped Chinese Muslims navigate their dual identities as both Muslims and Chinese citizens, it may have also contributed to a gradual erosion of distinct Islamic practices and beliefs over time. The integration of Confucian rituals and customs into Islamic ceremonies, while culturally significant, sometimes conflicted with strict interpretations of Islamic law. This blending of traditions, while beneficial in fostering acceptance and understanding, posed challenges in maintaining the purity and integrity of Islamic teachings.

Moreover, the emphasis on Confucian classics and Chinese language in Madrasa education, while beneficial for social integration, had the unintended consequence of potentially reducing focus on Arabic language skills and direct engagement with original Islamic texts. This shift in educational focus could limit Chinese Muslims' ability to engage with the broader Islamic world and access Islamic scholarship in its original language, potentially isolating them from the global Muslim community and limiting their understanding of orthodox Islamic teachings. The adaptation of Islamic education to the Confucian context also led to the incorporation of concepts from other Chinese philosophical traditions, such as Buddhism and Daoism, which had been absorbed into Neo-Confucianism. This further complicated the preservation of pure Islamic doctrine, as these foreign concepts were sometimes used to explain Islamic principles, potentially altering their original meanings or interpretations.

Conclusion

The integration of Islamic doctrine with Confucian thought in Chinese madrasa education stands as a testament to the profound adaptability of human belief systems and the transformative power of cultural exchange. This unique synthesis, born from centuries of interaction between two great philosophical traditions, invites contemplation on the very nature of cultural identity, religious practice, and educational philosophy in an increasingly interconnected world.

This remarkable historical process prompts several profound questions: What does the Chinese Islamic experience teach about the malleability of religious and cultural boundaries? In an era of globalization, where cultures clash and merge at an unprecedented rate, the story of Islamic-Confucian integration offers a compelling case study in cultural resilience and adaptation. It challenges preconceived notions of cultural purity and religious orthodoxy, suggesting that strength and longevity may lie not in rigid adherence to tradition, but in the capacity for thoughtful evolution.

Moreover, this synthesis raises fundamental questions about the nature of education itself. In a world grappling with issues of cultural literacy and interfaith understanding, the Chinese madrasa model offers valuable lessons. The blending of Islamic and Confucian educational philosophies demonstrates that learning need not be a zero-sum game between competing worldviews. Instead, it can be a synergistic process, where diverse traditions enrich and illuminate one another, fostering a more holistic understanding of the human experience.

The challenges faced by Chinese Muslims in balancing religious fidelity with cultural adaptation mirror the struggles of countless communities worldwide. The question arises: How can minority groups maintain their distinct identities while fully participating in broader society? The Chinese Islamic experience suggests that the answer may lie not in isolation or assimilation, but in creative integration that honours both heritage and contemporary context. Looking to the future, the significance of this historical synthesis extends far beyond the borders of China or the realm of Islamic studies. It serves as a powerful reminder of humanity's capacity for intellectual and spiritual bridge-building. This cultural convergence also prompts a reconsideration of the very concept of innovation in religious and philosophical thought. Is true originality found in isolation, or does it emerge from the fertile ground of cross-cultural dialogue? The rich tradition of Chinese Islamic scholarship suggests that some of the most profound insights arise not from doctrinal purity, but from the creative tension between different systems of thought.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic doctrine with Confucian thought in Chinese madrasa education is not merely a historical curiosity, but a living example of the potential for human wisdom to transcend cultural and religious boundaries. As humanity faces the complex challenges of the 21st century, the lessons of this historical synthesis become ever more relevant. They serve as a reminder that strength lies not in the rigidity of beliefs, but in the capacity to engage with, learn from, and adapt to the diverse perspectives that shape the global community.

Moving forward, the spirit of this remarkable synthesis, a spirit of curiosity, adaptability, and profound respect for the diverse ways in which humanity seeks to understand the world, can serve as a guiding light. The greatest lessons of history lie not in the preservation of the past, but in its power to illuminate new paths toward a more harmonious and enlightened future.

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