



JIN TIANZHU'S QINGZHEN SHIYI:
AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COMPARATIVE
STUDY BETWEEN
ISLAM AND CONFUCIANISM AND OTHER
RELIGIONS IN CHINA

BY

MA ZHANMING

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at introducing to English readers *Qingzhen Shiyi*, a book written by a Chinese Muslims scholar, Jin Tianzhu, during the time of Qing Dynasty (1616-1909), specifically in 1737. According to our present knowledge, this was the first book ever written by a Chinese Muslim scholar entirely composed in the Chinese language, for the purpose of defending the rights of Muslims. The author clarifies the objectives and significance of the rules of *Shari'ah* which were practiced by Chinese Muslims in their daily life and compares them with other religions in China. Our study of the book consists of six chapters namely, introduction, historical background, Jin Tianzhu and his book, translation of the edited texts, commentaries and comments on the main body of the texts and conclusion followed by an appendix. The method adopted in this study is library research, editing the text, and translation. This is the first study of the book in English language, through which, one will find that Muslims in China were practicing *Shari'ah* and keeping their own identities which caused doubts and suspicions of the society and put them in a very difficult condition; Mr. Jin, as a scholar, tried to remove those doubts and clarify those suspicions by showing the similarities between Islam and Confucianism, presenting the advantages of Islam over other main religions in some aspects, and criticizing some them, in a period of history when there is no free-speech and democracy in the modern sense. He or she also will be aware through this study that Religious or Civilizational Dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims started in China as early as 18th century.

ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تعريف قراء الإنجليزية بتشينغ جين شي بي، كتاب تمّ على يد عالم مسلم صيني اسمه جين تيان تشو، خلال عهد أسرة تشينغ الملكية (١٦١٦-١٩٠٩)، وفي عام ١٧٣٧ الميلادي بالتحديد. وهذا أول كتاب كتبه عالم مسلم صيني باللغة الصينية من أجل الدفاع عن حقوق المسلمين في الصين فيما نعلم. حاول المؤلف في هذا السفر بيان حكم ومقاصد أحكام الشريعة التي كان المسلمون في الصين يطبقونها في حياتهم اليومية، ومقارنتها بالأديان الأخرى في الصين. يتكون بحثنا لهذا الكتاب من ستة أبواب: الباب التمهيدي، الخلفية التاريخية، حياة جين تيان تشو وكتابه، ترجمة النصوص المحققة بالإنجليزية، شرح أهم الأفكار الواردة في النص الرئيس ونقد بعضها، وخاتمة البحث التي تليها ملاحق. المناهج التي استعملت في هذا البحث هي البحث المكتبي، تحقيق النصوص، وترجمتها. وهذا أول بحث لهذا الكتاب باللغة الإنجليزية يعرف الواحد من خلاله أن المسلمين في الصين كانوا يطبقون أحكام الشريعة ويحافظون على هويتهم المسلمة، مما أثار في المجتمع الصيني آنذاك شبهات وشكوكا جعلتهم في ظروف صعبة جدًا، فجاء جين تيان تشو ليؤدي دوره كعالم، وحاول إزالة تلك الشبهات والشكوك بطريق عرض أوجه الشبه بين الإسلام والكونفوشية تارة، وبيان فضل الإسلام على غيره من الأديان تارة أخرى، ونقد بعضها ثالثة، وكان ذلك في زمن من التاريخ لم يكن فيه حرية الكلام والديمقراطية بمعناها الحديث. ويكون القارئ من خلال البحث أيضا على وعي أن الحوار الديني أو الحضاري بين المسلمين وغيرهم قد بدأ في الصين في فترة مبكرة من القرن الثامن عشر.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis of Ma Zhanming (Yusoff) has been approved by the following:

Osman Bakar
Supervisor

Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak Al-Aidrus
Internal Examiner

Md. Salleh Yaapar
External Examiner

Nasr Eldin Ibrahim Ahmed Hussein
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Ma Zhanming

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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**JIN TIANZHU'S *QINGZHEN SHIYI*:
AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN
ISLAM AND CONFUCIANISM AND OTHER RELIGIONS IN CHINA**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Islam arrived peacefully in China during the early part of its history. A thousand years later, Muslims were still maintaining their own faith and identity, and practicing their religion in this vast country. Hence, they differed from the majority in many social aspects, and the majority Chinese society was doubtful toward, and suspicion of, Muslims, which put the latter in a difficult situation. During the Qing dynasty, the situation worsened when some officials used the practices of Muslims as an excuse to report to the emperor asking him to permit them to destroy mosques and force Muslims to give up their faith and practice.

Confucianism was the mainstream of Chinese culture, and decided whether other religions or cultures were permitted to exist in China. Muslim scholars in the time of Ming and Qing were very much aware of this, and therefore, they tried to demonstrate the similarities between Islam and Confucianism using Confucian terms to express Islamic concepts so that people could understand them easily. Later generations called this way of writing “Yi Ru Quan Yi” (以儒诠伊), meaning, “to annotate Islam using Confucian terms” and such works by Muslim scholars, “Han Ki Ta Bu” (汉克塔布) meaning, “Islamic books written in Chinese language”. According to some sources, there are hundreds of such works,¹ one of which is Jin Tianzhu’s *Qingzhen Shiyi*, the subject of this study.

When I presented my initial dissertation proposal, Professor Dr. Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak Al-Aidruss, Deputy Dean of ISTAC at that time, suggested that I

¹ A collection of those works was put together by some scholars and printed in 2008; it contains 235 books.

choose a manuscript in Chinese. Therefore, I contacted Mr. Hai Zhengzhong, an Associate Professor at Ningxia University and a close friend. In response to my request, he sent me two book-manuscripts: Zhang Shizhong's *Guizhen Zongyi* (归真总义), which is in the field of theology and Jin Tianzhu's *Qingzhen Shiyi*. He sent me the edition first published in the 2nd year of Quangxu (1876) and then republished in 1987 from a photocopy of the original by the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences. After an initial period of study, I felt that I needed to see other editions of the book. By that time, I had learned about the existence of two other editions in Dalian Library, China. When I told my supervisor, Professor Osman Bakar, about my idea, he encouraged me to go there for that purpose, which I did. Therefore, this study has been carried out based on the edition published in the 2nd year of Guangxu (1876), not based on the two in Dalian library, one of which was published in the 33rd year of Qianlong (1769) and another published in the 2nd year of Guangxu (1876).

Regarding the printing of the book, the word “Chong Ke” (重刻) appears on the cover page and means “recut”. Furthermore, related resources showed us that wood cuts were mostly used to print books in the time of the Qing dynasty, and the movable type was the most popular one, especially for printing religious books.² Based on that, it could be concluded that the book, except for its title page, was not hand-copied, but was wood cut first, copying the former edition in movable-type and then printed. (Stone cuts appeared much later.)

About the physical characteristics of the book, the said edition consists of 140 pages; each page is 250 mm long and 155 mm wide; the page frame is 180 mm long and 135 mm wide. On each page there are 9 lines, each of which contains 20

² See Wei Yinru, *History of Printing Ancient Books in China*. (Beijing: Printing Industry Publishing House, 1984.), 225.

characters. The number of characters on each page is 180; therefore, the total number is: $140 \times 180 = 15200$ characters. However, due to the empty spaces, we can conclude that the actual number of characters in this book-manuscript is around 15000 characters.

Concerning the contents, there are 6 prefaces, written by Hu Huiyuan (胡汇源), the author, Shi Kezong (石可宗), the publisher, Ma Tingfu (马廷辅) and Chen Dashao (陈大韶). This does not include Hu Huiyuan's poem, which comes after his preface, and a letter by the author to the senior minister that was incorrectly placed as part of Ma Tingfu's preface. This is followed by the main body of the text. The first page of the text gives the following information: the year in which the book was recut (on the top of the page), the title of the book (at the top right side of it), the names of the reviewers, Chen Dashao, Hu Huiyuan and Ma Tingfu and their places of origin, the author's name and his place of origin, and those of two proofreaders, Ke Yuandu (科元度) and He Yuanjiao (和圆峽). In addition, the term Nan (男) appears on the page before these two names.³

The contents of the text fall mainly into the category of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the objectives of rules (*maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*). It covers, for example, *ṭahārah*, prayer, fasting, *zakāt*, food, drink, slaughtering animals, dressing and so on; and the author gives answers to questions raised by people as to why Muslim practices differ from those of others. In addition, the author discusses with a “guest” some points of the Islamic faith, and criticizes other religions, especially Catholicism, Buddhism and

³ It refers to one of the two possible meanings: son, which means the two men are the two sons of the author; or the title of the last rank among the five ranks of nobility in ancient China, which are Gong (公), Hou (侯), Bo (伯), Zi (子) and Nan (男). I prefer the second meaning to the first because their family names are different from the author's which is 'Jin' (金), Chinese people do not change their family names unless in very special cases or dangerous situations.

Taoism. Moreover, he presents his own opinion on *taṣawwuf* and some other matters. In brief, the text contains a variety of topics.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Jin Tianzhu wrote *Qingzhen Shiyi* during the 18th century in ancient Chinese, a difficult language to understand today. In addition, the original text is like running water; its topics are neither separated nor titled, and it has no punctuation like that found in modern writing, all of which makes it more difficult to understand. Moreover, the author used several particular terms that are not included in both modern and ancient Chinese dictionaries. Furthermore, he quoted many words from various Confucian books and other resources without mentioning titles, which makes this study very difficult.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Through this study, I would like to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) To know the reason why the author wrote the book.
- (2) To know the main questions raised by Chinese society in his time and how the author responded them.
- (3) To know some similarities and differences between Islam and Confucianism.
- (4) To know through his answers of those questions, how was his understanding of Islamic faith as well as rules.
- (5) To introduce English readers to an academic achievement of one Chinese Muslim scholar who lived in 18th century China.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will try to answer the following questions:

- (1) Under what circumstances did Jin Tianzhu write *Qingzhen Shiyi*?
- (2) How did the author try to solve the problems?
- (3) How well did the author as well as other Chinese Muslim scholars understand Islam?
- (4) What is the significance of *Qingzhen Shiyi* for Muslim communities in contemporary China as well as Southeast Asia?

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although this study involves the history of Islam in China from its beginning till the time of the author, it focuses on the problems during the Qing dynasty because the problems took place mainly in this period. Although it is pertaining to Islam, which is the religion of more than one race including Hui, Uighur and others, it focuses only on the Hui Muslims in China's heartland because the problems the author tried to solve occurred between the Hui and the Han, which is the majority and the largest race in China.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCES OF THE STUDY

- (1) This is the first English study of the book that gives its readers a better understanding of Islam and other thoughts and beliefs in 18th century China.

Islam as a religion and as a community had existed in China for more than one thousand years. Today, China's Muslim population is estimated at more than twenty million. The period at the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasty is

considered the golden age of Chinese Muslim scholarship during which the greatest Chinese Muslim scholars lived. Today, however, very little is known about their writings. This study is an attempt to present an aspect of Chinese understanding of Islam in an earlier century.

- (2) This study highlights the historic dialogue between Islam and other Chinese religions, namely Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Catholicism. Hence, it will contribute toward better mutual understanding between the Chinese people and Muslims, especially in Southeast Asia.

Generally, the *'ulamā'* in contemporary China do not interact with scholars of other religions. However, this study shows that two hundred years ago Chinese Muslims did engage in dialogue with members of other faiths.

- (3) Finally, this study provides indicators of a strategy for Muslims in contemporary China to deal with the government and with non-Muslims.

Apparently, the author wrote this book to help solve social problems that stemmed from the non-Muslims' misunderstanding and ignorance of Islam. He tried to show that Islam was not foreign to Chinese religious consciousness. With this in mind, he made comparisons between Islam and other Chinese religions, especially Confucianism, the main religion in China of that time. Likewise, Muslims in contemporary China need to understand how best to handle their relationships with the government and non-Muslim groups in China. Therefore, Jin Tianzhu's book is valuable for this purpose.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars mentioned *Qingzhen Shiyi* in their works. Among them are Bai Shouyi in *Annals of Muslim figures*, p. 1066, Jin Jitang in *A Study of the History of Islam in*

China, p. 203, Mi Shoujiang and Youjia in *Outline of the History of Islam in China*, p. 164, Zhang Xiumin in *The History of Printing in China*, p. 623, Gao Wende in the *Dictionary of Prominent Figures of Nationalities*, p. 367, Yang Huaizhong in *Islam and Chinese Culture*, p. 421, Fu Tongxian in *History of Islam in China*, p. 107 and Yu Zhengui in the *Encyclopedia of Islam in China*, p. 448, 449. Nevertheless, they did no more than a general introduction and did not study the book in detail.

On the other hand, Mr. Tang Jinhui contribute greatly to *Qingzhen Shiyi* in the Qing dynasty and Mr. Hai Zhengzhong in the present. They are worthy of consideration as great contributors to this book.

Tang Jinhui (1820-1900) was a Muslim from Shandong province. He passed the imperial examination in 1861 and was appointed vice-director of a bureau in the Ministry of Personnel (吏部员外郎) where he served as an official for thirty years. He was well acquainted with the works of Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi and others and considered them voluminous and inaccessible; however, he placed much importance on Mr. Jin's *Qingzhen Shiyi*. According to Ma Zhonglong's preface to the complement of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, Mr. Tang printed *Qingzhen Shiyi* many times.⁴ Perhaps he found some of Jin Tianzhu's words too caustic, necessitating some changes to the text. He spent more than ten years doing so. He invited Ma Kaike, Ma Anli, Ma Jian, Bai Guang Yuan, Ma Chunli, Jiang Runfen, Ha Xianzhao, Zhao Jiaqi, Gong Chuqiao, Wangyun, Makui, Feng Jing, Mu Xingjun, Xu Wenyong, Wang Tingxiang, Ma Dan, Ma Yuanrui, Ding Yuquan, Mi Xielin, Shi Wentian, Liu Jingzhi and other Muslim scholars to consult relevant references. "Anything they find similar to Confucian doctrine, they should write down and add it to the text of *Qingzhen*

⁴ Tang Jinhui, *Qingzhen Shiyi Buji*, proofread and republished by Hai Zhengzhong, (Hong Kong: Lanyue Publishing House, 2006), 18.

Shiyi, so that people easily understand.”⁵ That is how *A complement to Qingzhen Shiyi*, came about.

Compared with the original, this book is richer in content and smoother in expression. They quoted more evidence from Confucian books, and as a result, it appears to have more grounds of argument. However, its shortcomings are also obvious.

First, they added some new contents and changed structures of sentences, in other words, the complement text did not closely followed the original text and because of that, Mr. Tang was criticized by some scholars.⁶ Second, some very important contents of the original text were not included in the complement; therefore, it no longer reveals anything about the political situation that Chinese Muslims were facing in the time. Third, the complement is not as easy for common people to understand as the original, which contravenes Jin Tianzhu’s purpose. Based on these points, we consider it an entirely new book rather than a variant of *Qingzhen Shiyi* itself.

To publish *Qingzhen Shiyi* in its new form, a valuable study was done in 2002 by Hai Zhengzhong, from The Hui Study Centre of Ningxia University, Ningxia, China. The text covers various topics that should logically be separated from each other and given a title each. However, the original text has no separations between different topics, leave aside giving titles for each topic. The punctuation marks in the text are not as easy to understand as modern ones. Moreover, many of the characters are of complex forms and read from up to down, which people today are not accustomed to. Mr. Hai edited the text, separated its topics, gave a title to each one,

⁵ *Ibd*, p. 10.

⁶ See for example: Bai Shouyi, *Brief history of Islam in China*, (Yinchuan: Ningxia publishing house, 2000), 109.

added modern punctuation marks, changed the characters into modern ones, and made the direction of the written language start from left to right. Most importantly, he rendered the text from ancient Chinese into modern Chinese, which enables everyone to understand the text. Therefore, Mr. Hai is the first person to introduce *Qingzhen Shiyi* in its new form to contemporary readers.

Nevertheless, the Mr. Hai's edition has several shortcomings, among which are the following:

- (1) Mistakes in separation; see, for example, pages 46, 133 and 153-154.
- (2) Incorrectly rendered sentences; see, for instance, pages 90 and 117.
- (3) Unsuitable titles; see, for example, pages 4 and 32.
- (4) Incomplete text;

Many parts have been deleted; and this might have been done by Mr. Hai because of some special considerations. As a result, people cannot read those parts, which are very interesting.

- (5) Neglected parts.

There are some places he could not understand and therefore ignored.

- (6) Separation of Ma Tingfu's preface into two parts;

Most regrettably, the preface in the edition that Mr. Hai used was wrongly separated into two parts. So, he treated the second as Ma Tingfu's preface to *Qingzhen Shiyi* because it was accompanied by a stamp, and he treated the first as part of the letter to the senior minister. As a result, he brought the second part to the front of the book and the first part to the back, along with the letter.

Beside Tang Jinhui and Hai Zhengzhong, Wan Jingsen made a valuable study of Jin Tianzhu's life and his thoughts as presented in *Qingzhen Shiyi*. However, he made no mention about the background of the author and his work, and he did not

translate the text into modern Chinese let alone English. In addition, Xue Lian, a Librarian of Da Lian Library, wrote an article in which she introduced the two editions that are stored in Dalian library, evaluated them and criticized some scholars for their opinions regarding the first edition.

7. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

To carry out this study, I adopted the following methodologies:

(1) Library research

I conducted library research in Malaysia and China to collect sufficient data and information about the book-manuscript and its author.

(2) Editing the text of the book-manuscript

I edited the text of the book-manuscript by dividing it into various parts according to topics, giving a title to each part, separating it into paragraphs and sentences and punctuating each sentence.

(3) Translation and commentary

This book was written in 1737 in classical Chinese, which is different from today's Mandarin. My main task has been to translate the edited form of the book into English. It is my hope that this translation will provide a new source of knowledge of classical Chinese thought for those who do not have the ability to read classical or modern Chinese.

8. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is distributed into six chapters: Chapter one is the framework, chapter two, historical background; chapter three, the author's life and his work; chapter four, the English translations of the *Qingzhen Shiyi*; chapter five, my commentary and comments on the text; chapter six, the conclusion. In addition, an appendix includes: (1) the English translation of Chen Dashao's comment on the main body of the text, (2) the English translation of the author's letter to the senior minister, (3) the edited original text of the prefaces, the main body, Chen Dashao's comments and the letter, (4) the rendition of the whole text in modern Chinese language and (5) a chronology of the dates for the important events in Chinese Muslim history.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter addresses the historical background of this study. It discusses when and how Muslims came to China, their position in the Yuan era and their situation during the Ming and Qing eras. It examines the contributions of Muslim scholars to improve the situation, the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures and the latter's misunderstanding towards the former, and the highest ruler's attitude towards the Muslim community.

1. WHEN DID MUSLIMS COME TO CHINA?

According to historical reports, contact between China and Arabia started long ago. In 97 C.E., a man, namely Ganying (甘英) was sent to the Western (i.e. Roman) Empire. Although he failed to arrive in Egypt, he returned to China with information on Arabia. After that, the Han Dynasty (25-220 C.E.) sent envoys every year to states in central and western Asia, and thus China and Arabia maintained relations, directly or indirectly. In addition, there were also frequent contacts between China and Persia.⁷ Both the Silk Road by land and the Perfume Road by sea had been in use long before the Tang Dynasty (618-907).⁸

⁷ For more details, see Qiu Shuseng, *History of Hui Race in China*, (Yinchuan: Ningxia publishing house. 1996), vol. 1, 3; Yu Zhengui, *Chinese Past Dynasties and Islam*, (Ningxia publishing house, 1996), 13.

⁸ Most scholars referred to both the Sea road and the Land road as the Silk Road. However, some of the scholars in this field used the term Perfume Road to refer to the Sea Road. I prefer to use this term

Establishment of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) united China and brought an end to a period of internal struggle that had lasted around 300 years. However, a sudden social change pushed the Sui from the stage of history. Its successor, the Tang Dynasty, drew a lesson from the causes that led to the precipitous downfall of the Sui. Therefore, it tried to make peace in society and established policies that promoted its own stability and longevity. Tang Taizong (627-650) decreased taxes and abolished oppressive policies that had been adopted by Sui Yangdi (605-617). As a result, production was quickly returned to normal and productive forces were rapidly enhanced. The improvement of agriculture and the handicraft industry stimulated commerce. Increased wealth in the society and increased consumption led to an expansion of trade that gave rise to urban trading centres. At the same time, the Tang Dynasty opened its doors to foreigners to solicit business, promote the circulation of goods and stimulate markets.⁹

On the social front, the Tang Dynasty adopted a policy that allowed minorities to practice their own customs, social systems and religious beliefs and follow their own modes of production. This policy not only harmonized relations among nationalities in the Chinese heartland, but also stabilized the border areas. Due to the positive economic development, envoys, businessmen and students came from abroad to live in Chang An (today's Xi An) and other cities. They were accorded a courteous reception. By adopting such a policy, the Tang gained a high reputation in the world. As a result, music, dance, arts, medicine and calendars from central South Asia spread in China, and some of its cities became centres of foreign cultures. The traditional culture of China was enriched and further matured. Taoism was flourished, Buddhism

because perfume was the most important trade good that Muslims brought by the sea and welcomed very much by royal families, especially in the time of the Song era. See Li Xinghua, *History of Islam in China*, (China social sciences publishing house, 1998), 63.

⁹ Yu Zhengui, *Chinese Past Dynasties and Islam*, 10-12.

reached its golden age¹ and some foreign religions came to China. Those were the historical conditions and social environment when Islam arrived in China.

A history book written in biographical style, entitled *Jiu Tangshu, Xuanzong Benji* (旧唐书·玄宗本纪),¹ had this to say about the events of the second year of Yonghui (永徽, 651): “In the eighth month, the Arab country first sent its envoy for the purpose of having an audience with our emperor and paying tributes to the dynasty.”¹

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Based on this report, most non-Muslim scholars consider this the year that Muslims started coming to China. On the other hand, most Muslim scholars disagree and believe that Islam came to China earlier than that. Their opinions include: the interregnum between the Sui and Tang dynasties (610-622), the fourth year of Tang Wude, (武德) 622,¹ and the year 628 in the time of Tang Zhenguan (唐贞观)¹.

Although we can not deny the relevance of the mention of the Arab envoy to this issue, official contact between China and Arabia is not proof of the first time a Muslim came to this country. It was well known that Muslims in the early history of China did not come for the express purpose of spreading Islam among the Chinese people. Therefore, what is meant by the first appearance of Islam in China is the time Muslims started to arrive and conduct some activities, including religious practices.

¹ Although some people in the time of Tang repelled Buddhism, the emperors and people supported it; as a result, it developed and expanded greatly. A good example is that many of its books were translated into Chinese at this time.

¹ It is a book on the history of the Tang era that was officially compiled in the time of Houjing (936-947). Xuanzong (玄宗) is the reign title of one of the Tang dynasty emperors whose name is Li Longji (李隆基) and ruled from 712 to 742.

¹ Fu Tongxian, *History of Islam in China*, (Yinchuan: Ningxia Publishing House, 2000), 14.

¹ It is the title of Gaozu (高祖) emperor's reign whose name is Li Yuan (李渊), the founder of the dynasty (610-627).

¹ It is the title of Tai Zong (太宗) emperor's reign whose name is Li Shimin (李世民), son of Gaozu and the second emperor of Tang dynasty who was on throne between 627 to 650.