Muslim in Contemporary Taiwan; Its Problems and Challenges

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Abstract— Islam as religion and culture in Taiwan has been treated as an alien religion. Its presence is not associated with China and Taiwan, as well as their culture. Historically, Islam has long relations with this country however there are some factors that made their significance lesser nowadays. Moreover, the number of study and literature about Islam and Muslim in contemporary Taiwan that written in English are still limited.

The purpose of this study is to know current development of Muslim as part of Taiwan’s society, specifically the problems and challenges for them. The importance is to help Muslim in Taiwan (both foreign and Chinese Muslim) to understand their challenges and adapt with the environment. And also for Taiwan society (in general) to face and understand more diversified people and culture, especially with the increasing number of foreign Muslim from Islamic or Muslim-majority country to Taiwan.

Qualitative approach on data collection was undertaken, using literature review followed by observation and interview with scholars, prominent Muslim figure and foreign Muslims in Taipei and Zhongli. From the research, it finds that the problems and challenges come from two sides; internal and external factor from the Islam and Muslim in Taiwan itself. To make more comprehensive understanding about this topic, the study also make comparison with Chinese Muslim (Huízú) in Mainland China and also minority Muslim in Japan.

Keywords: Challenges, Muslim, Problems, Taiwan

I. INTRODUCTION

China and its culture is not traditionally associated with Islam and Muslim. In fact, according to Michael Dillon (2009), Islam had a significant presence in China since the earliest days of the religion, along with trade activities through Silk Road. Its presence also take important part in China’s long history, and gives influential culture that has often times changed the course of Chinese history. However, its influence is too vital to be overlooked in discussion of current Chinese culture (Cho, 2009), and this condition similar to Islam in Taiwan.

The very first wave of Muslim migration to this Island was before Qing Dynasty (1683). Then, the second wave was when a big number of Chinese Muslim soldier and some of prominent Muslims, together with KMT’s government, flew to Taiwan in 1949. Those military generals have significant roles during Chiang Kai Shek early leadership in Taiwan, and had several influences which strengthen Islam and Muslim presence in Taiwan’s domestic and international affairs (especially with Islamic World & Middle East). However, nowadays the presence of Islam in Taiwan is as not as strong as before. What are the reasons and factors that made this situation? What are the problems and challenges of Muslim for Islam development in Taiwan?

The purpose of this study is to know current development of Islam and Muslim in Taiwan, specifically what are the problems and challenges for them. The importance is to help Muslim in Taiwan to adapt with their environment, and also for Taiwan society (in general) to face and understand more diversified people and culture, with the increasing number of foreign Muslim from Islamic or Muslim-majority country to Taiwan.

To understand the context of this case, in the first part of this paper will explains about brief history of Islam and Muslim in mainland China and Taiwan. From the history we could see that the development of Islamic in Taiwan had strong relationship with mainland China. Then, the explanation continues to Muslim demography in Taiwan.

And to analyze the case, the writer will use the migration theory, elaborated by Phillip Connor (2010) in his dissertation, more generally by identifying that immigrant adaptation occurs through the three distinct areas of disruption, assimilation, and facilitation. He said that immigrant religious adaptation can consist of three distinct movements: 1) the change in religious practice from origin to host country, 2) the subsequent adjustments made to religious practice in the host country, and 3) the integration into the host society through religious practice (2010, p.2).
II. BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM & MUSLIM IN TAIWAN

The development of Islam in Taiwan before 1945, according to Fan and Ma, is divided into three phases: (1) Before Qing Dynasty (1683); (2) During Qing Dynasty (1683-1895); and (3) During the Japanese Occupation in Taiwan (1895-1945). While from the version of Haj Dawood C.M. Ting (1988), he divided it into two stages; the first stage dates back to the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

According to Ming history, the earliest Muslims in Taiwan were coming along with Zheng He (鄭和), a great navigator in Ming dynasty. The situation of Zheng He's journey to the West Ocean was recorded in Hǎishàng sīchóu zhī lù (海上海傳之錄), which also recorded the document of countries and local areas where Zheng He has been. Before Qing Dynasty government set Taiwan Prefecture in 1684, the local affairs of Taiwan were under the management of Fujian Province in China (Fan and Ma, 2012).

During the Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasty, many Muslim merchants from Central and West Asia travelled to Fujian, which located in eastern coast of China, by the Maritime Silk Route to establish trade contact with China. Richard C. Foltz (1999: 97) mentioned some factors that become major factor accounting for the Islamization of the Silk Road are the Muslim domination of commercial activity. He described that a businessman could feel that becoming a Muslim would facilitate contacts and cooperation with other Muslim businessmen both at home and abroad. It would also benefit from favorable conditions extended by Muslim officials and from the Islamic laws governing commerce. Another factor is assimilation through marriage. Whatever the reasons for one's converting to Islam, Islamization occurs most profoundly among the succeeding generation, since the convert's children in principle will be raised within the father's new community, not his original one.

Maritime Silk Road

In this period as well, many Muslim from Arab or Persia also followed the Maritime Silk Road for business or missionary purposes. In the past, Fujian and Quanzhou where crossed the Taiwan Strait and faced Taiwan, were the important starting point of “Maritime Silk Road”.

The term “Maritime Silk Route” (海上丝绸之路/Hǎishàng sīchóu zhī lù) is to describe the route that being used by Muslim migrants, who mostly were Arabs and Persians that first came to China, by the sea. Since the 7th century (Tang Dynasty), Muslims constituted a majority in China’s foreign immigration. Chinese scholars generally identified these foreign Muslims as ‘the maritime Muslims’ (海路穆斯林/Hàilù mùsīlín). Most of these Muslims were traders (Fan, 2001a: 309). Soon, the cross-strait open the ship transportation and since then there are more and more people came for different purposes, such as fishing and business.

The maritime Muslim traders then settled down and lived here, formed a "special foreign culture”, married local Chinese, built mosque and tombs for Muslim as well, and then eventually formed a new ethnic group ‘Hui’. 5

1 From the journal written by Fan and Ma (2012) it mentioned that the Islamic Studies in Taiwan before 1945 were insufficient. But then after 1945 the Restoration Day of Taiwan, it becomes much more sufficient.

2 The Hui Chinese have diverse origins, and many of whom are direct descendants of Silk Road travelers. Some in the southeast coast (Guangdong, Fujian) and in major trade centers elsewhere in China are of mixed local and foreign descent. Their ancestors include Central Asian, Arabs, and Persian who married Han Chinese. Several medieval dynasties, particularly the Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty, and Mongol Yuan Dynasty encouraged immigration from predominantly Muslim Persia and Central Asia, with both dynasties welcoming traders from these regions and appointing Central Asian officials.

3 Fan Ke (2001a: 310) mentioned that there were three famous port cities of China’s maritime history that was Guangzhou, Yangzhou and Quanzhou. Although Guangzhou and Yangzhou were established earlier, however Quanzhou has the longest history in China ancient ports. Quanzhou, located in coastal city in Southeastern Fujian Province. Quanzhou was an extremely important port city for trade especially with Southeast Asia, started in Tang (618 – 906), Song (960 – 1279) and Yuan (1279 – 1368) Dynasties. Its importance as an international trading port can be seen in the discussion of world trade in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its archaeological heritage sheds light on life in the Fujian region of Southern China (Pearson, Li and Li, 2002: 23).

4 In The Book of Routes and Provinces, Ibn Khuraddhbih, eighth century Persian officer, mentioned that there were some port cities mostly on the coast of south China that marked the end of the Maritime Silk Route. From south to north these cities were Al-Wakin is Loukin, in Vietnam; Khanfu is Guangfu (today’s Guangzhou); and Janfu and Kantu refer to Quanzhou and Yangzhou cities. According to historical records and archaeological discoveries, there were foreign communities present in these cities (Fan, 2001a: 310).

5 According to Michael Dillon (1999), the Hui are ethnically similar to Han Chinese; the group has retained some Persian and Central Asian features, but their ethnicity and culture having been shaped profoundly by their position along the Silk Road trading route. While according to the official definition, the Hui are a people who have descended from foreign Muslims who married Chinese and other Chinese ethnic minorities, and were believed to form a minzu during the Ming period after several generations of interethic
which carried out the mission of spreading the Islamic teachings. Foreign migrants formed their own neighborhood communities (fanfang or foreign street), as named by local Chinese in these cities.

Establishment of Taiwan Prefecture by Qing Dynasty
The establishment of Taiwan Prefecture by Qing Dynasty is an important historical event in history, which is also a significant icon of China's sovereignty on Taiwan. In Qing Dynasty, there were at least 10 Islamic officers had activities in Taiwan. The Islamic officers in Qing Dynasty were under the management of the Central Government of Qing Dynasty. The time they stayed in Taiwan were decided by the Central government, and therefore they only contributed little to the development of Islamic affairs in Taiwan.

The development of local Islamic in Taiwan also could be traced back to those Islamic located in Taiwan. Before 1945, most Islamic located in Taiwan were the Guō (郭) and Dīng (丁) two families, which had strong relationship with Bǎi Qí Guō (百崎郭) in Quanzhou (泉州), and Chén Dài Dīng (陈埭丁). These “first generation” of Muslim migration to Taiwan mostly live in Taishi Township – Yunlin County (Ding family), Lukang Township – Changhua County6 (Guo family). However, due to some factors, their identity as Muslim was faded6.

relations in economic and cultural exchange (Fan, 2001a: 326).

6 They were; Dīng Lián (丁莲), Mǎ Dà Yòng (馬大勇), Hóng Yù Chēn (洪毓琛), Jiǎn Bìng Nán (薀炳南), Yáng Qí Zhēn (楊岐珍), Xū Shi Hēng (許世亨), Xu Wén Mó (許文謨), Zhēng Guó Qīng (鄭國卿), Mǎ Jì Shèng (馬濟勝), and Mǎ Guāng Zhào (馬光照), from Fan and Ma (2012).

7 There were more than 600 residences in Guō family who believed in Islam Lukang, Changhua (彰化). Guo family is descendants of Hui who came with Koxinga, but now no longer observe Islam. They follow traditional Chinese cultures, but still does not offer pork on Fridays nor offering it to their ancestral shrines. They also like to keep their heads covered during rituals.

8 In January 1958, the leader of Chinese Islamic Youth went to Lukang for research. He found that there were more than 300 Islamic families in Lukang, and the elderly people who were more than 60 ages knew they were all Muslim. In addition, few families had the Quran in their house. They still kept the tradition that if any Islamic member died in their family, and they couldn't eat pork for 40 days. From another research, "47 Years Record of Interviewing Lukang", showed the evidence that the ancestor of the Guō family is Islamic. Still there's another report, "the Lost Islamic in Lukang", which kept the reason of Chinese localization of Islamic in Lukang and indicated their ancestors had certain relationship with "Bái Qí Guō " in Fujian. As the Islamic settled down, the Mosque appeared as well.

9 According to the research of "Interview Record of Lukang", in 1725 there was a mosque in Lukang, which had similar architecture structure with the mosque in Quanzhou. The similar architecture included a well for providing worship and showering water. Right now, that building has been turned into a temple to worship Guō Zǐ Yí (郭子儀) in bào ān (保安), Lukang. As a result during the hundreds of year because of the few population, separating residence, and marriage with Han female, the culture of Islamic and their generation had been changed. From: Fan, Jing-Peng and Ma, Shi-Ying. (2012). 1945 年之前台湾回教研究 (Islamic Studies in Taiwan Before 1945), translated by Jerrel Lai. 西北师大学报（社会科学版）(Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Sciences)), Vol. 49 No. 1 (Jan 2012)


11 Based on Pew Research Center about The Future of the Global Muslim Population, 10 countries with the largest number of Muslims in 2010 are Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Iran, Turkey, Algeria, and Morocco. Pew Research Center. (2011). The Future of the

III. DEMOGRAPHY OF MUSLIM IN TAIWAN

It can be clearly said that the number of Muslim communities (both for Chinese and foreign Muslim) in Taiwan is very small. Similar to Muslim in Taiwan's neighbor country; Japan, there is no exact estimation number of Muslim in the country, since Taiwan government doesn't have specific survey about religious affiliation for its population.

In this part, the writer try to provide a demographic analysis of Muslims living in Taiwan with same method as Prof. Sakurai Keiko9 (2008) for describing demography of Muslim in Japan. Especially to estimate the number of foreign Muslim, it will use immigration statistic data and country origin of foreign resident.

Foreign Muslims
To know the number of foreign Muslim in Taiwan, we can assumed from their country of origin, in which from Islamic countries or Muslim-majority countries10. Foreign

relations in economic and cultural exchange (Fan, 2001a: 326).

6 They were; Dīng Lián (丁蓮), Mǎ Dà Yòng (馬大勇), Hóng Yù Chēn (洪毓琛), Jiǎn Bìng Nán (薀炳南), Yáng Qí Zhēn (楊岐珍), Xū Shi Hēng (許世亨), Xu Wén Mó (許文謨), Zhēng Guó Qīng (鄭國卿), Mǎ Jì Shèng (馬濟勝), and Mǎ Guāng Zhào (馬光照), from Fan and Ma (2012).

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Muslims in Taiwan constitute approximately 90% of the entire Muslim population in Taiwan, and composed of 50,672% from total foreign residents in Taiwan. The largest share of this population consists of Indonesian, followed in number by Thai, India, and Burma/Myanmar.

Based on National Immigration Agency statistics per 30 September 2013, Indonesians who living legally in Taiwan numbered 374,118, followed by Thailand (133,154), India (2,854), and Myanmar (2,068). Small number of foreign Muslim coming from Middle East (Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Morocco, and Syria), Africa (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Gambia), South Asia (Bangladesh and Central Asia (Uzbekistan).

Based on this data, although Thailand and Burma are considerable as non-Muslim majority countries, however the number of Chinese Muslim that migrated to Taiwan in the mid-1980s and early 1990s is quite numerous, mainly for economic reasons. As for Malaysia, even this country is consider with large Muslim population, the majority of these residents in Taiwan are of ethnic Chinese decent and are not Muslim.

Especially for foreign Muslim from African countries, it can be relate to the diplomatic relations between Taiwan to these countries. Taiwan invest some projects and give some scholarships for the students from the countries.

The majority of foreign Muslims (such as Chinese Muslim from Burma and Thailand) starting to entered Taiwan in the mid-1980s and early 1990s in search of employment. While for Indonesian workers, many of them came to Taiwan to work as blue-collar worker. Most typically, this Indonesian workers are women in their early twenties with secondary-level educations. Statistics on registered foreigners indicate that Indonesians more often reside in the New Taipei City (28,903), Taipei City (16,728), Taichung City (20,748), Taoyuan County (20,167), and Kaohsiung.

Furthermore, there is also increasing number on foreign Muslim students’ enrollment in Taiwanese colleges and universities since the late 1990s with scholarships provided by the government and also Taiwanese universities.

IV. CHINESE MUSLIMS

In 1949, there were around 20,000 Chinese Muslims who migrated to Taiwan, together with the KMT. They were “the first generation” of Chinese Muslim foreign to Taiwan after the Japanese Colonial era. While the number of Muslim descendant from Song – Tang period cannot be identified since the cut of Muslim lineage in Taiwan Ding and Guo family. Now, after more than 60 years, the number of them is estimated around 10,000 to 60,000 (only 0.04 – 0.2 % from total population).

As for the Taiwanese converts to Islam, even in low rate, make the increasing number of Muslim in Taiwan. There is no official statistic on the number of Taiwanese Muslims. Generally, these converts can be categorized into two groups; the first group consists of Taiwanese women/men who marry foreign Muslims. This group comprises the majority of Muslim in Taiwan. From this inter-marriage, the children who born regarded as “born Muslims. The second group is Taiwanese who familiar with Islamic culture either through the study of Islam or Arabic or through personal contact with Muslims in the course of traveling, studying, or working abroad (especially in Islamic countries).

Muslim Organizations in Taiwan

Currently, there are two major Chinese Muslim organization in Taiwan. The first, highest and biggest


11 Total number of legal foreign residents in Taiwan per September 30th, 2013 is 508,216 people. ibid
12 The number of Indonesian in Taiwan is equal to 36.8% from total 508,216 foreign nationals in Taiwan (per September 30th, 2013). Statistics of Foreign Residents - by Nationality per 30 September 2013. (2013). National Immigration Agency Website, Republic of China. Retrieved from:
13 After 18 years diplomatic relations with Taiwan, Gambia had just announced that it has cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan on November 15th, 2013. The West African state was one of a few African countries to recognize Taiwan, which China regards as part of its territory. Initially, most African states recognized the Taipei government but their number has steadily declined. With Gambia’s decision means that Swaziland, Sao Tome and Principe and Burkina Faso are the only African countries that remain allies with Taiwan. Taken from: BBC News, Gambia severs diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Published on November 15th, 2013. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24951115, accessed on November 17th, 2013

14 Such as care taker, house-maid, factory worker, and fisherman/ sailor.
15 From the National Immigration Agency statistics, it mentioned that the number of Indonesian women in Taiwan per 30 September 2013 is 300,186, while for male is 73,932. (op.cit)
16 According to CIA World Factbook 2013, the estimation of Taiwan’s population is 23,299,716 (July 2013 est.). It means that the number of Chinese Muslim in Taiwan only 0.04 – 0.2 % from total population.
organization is The Chinese Muslim Association (CMA). CMA, which main office is located in Taipei, has the purposes such as to unite the muslims to work for spreading Islam, promoting religious education and improving the living conditions for muslim brothers, and assisting the Government in religious and national developments.

While the obligations of CMA are to spread Islam, to improve its management, and to promote religious education; to unite muslim brothers and sisters to support the national policies; to take care of the welfare and relief for muslim communities; to promote for muslim brothers and sisters in participating social and political activities; to execute the religious and cultural exchange with muslim organizations in the Islamic world; and to attend other affairs in accordance with the purposes of this Association.

The other organization is The Chinese Muslim Youth League (CMYL), founded at Canton in 1949 just before the central government moved its seat to Taiwan. The main objective of CMYL is to unify enthusiastic Muslim youth by reinforcing Islamic religious and cultural activities, by preaching Islam and its concepts, and by maintaining contact with international Muslim youth organizations to enhance cordial bonds throughout the Islamic world. Besides CMA and CMYL, there are also several Muslim-related organization in Taiwan, both from Chinese Muslim and foreign Muslim (worker and students).

V. RELIGION IN TAIWAN

To have background information about religious life in Taiwan, in this part the author will briefly inform about social and government aspects on religion in Taiwan. Based on the Religious Affairs Section of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), it mentioned that around 35 percent of the population in Taiwan consider themselves Buddhist and 33 percent Taoist. While the majority of religious adherents are either Buddhist or Taoist, and many people also consider themselves both Buddhist and Taoist. Many Taiwanese also practicing traditional Chinese folk religion. These beliefs may include some aspects of shamanism, ancestor worship, belief in ghosts and other spirits, and animism. There are also small percentages of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Sunni Muslim, and Judaism (mainly foreigner).

According to Hajj Dawood, Taiwan still has very strong values of Chinese philosophy and religions, especially on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The philosophy of Lao Tzu on Taoism is quite similar to Sufism in Islam. Islam agrees with his doctrine of the suppression of self and of emnity. In Islam the purpose of the five daily prayers and the month of fasting is to purify oneself and to decrease desires as a means to the practice of self-control. All of these principles of Confucianism go very well with Islam, but they are insufficient because they are related only to material human existence, and Islam goes further and searches the universe. Furthermore, in Confucianism, Taoism and Chinese folk religion, they created temples where images are worshiped. In the contrary to Islam, this religion believes in only one God, without form or likeness.

While for Buddhism, there was no relation between Buddhism and Islam because the Buddhist belief in passiveness, in idols, and in rebirth is absolutely contrary to Islam. The Chinese Muslim lost connections with other Muslim countries for a long time and were influenced unconsciously by Confucianism and Buddhism in several ways.

In terms of government and rules, the constitution of Taiwan provides the freedom of religion, and the authorities generally respected this right in practice.

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17 This organization firstly founded in Hankou, China in 1938 by General Omar Pei, a prominent Muslim leader and military general. At first, main duty of CMA are to unify Muslims throughout China, particularly for those who live in Northwest and Southwest China, to support the central government of the Republic of China in the fight against the Japanese. The association was also supposed to maintain cordial bonds between China and other Muslim countries, and to obtain the firm support and substantive understanding of the Muslim World for the ROC. With the moving of KMT to Taiwan in 1949, CMA religious activities were delayed for a time due to a shortage of personnel and difficult economic conditions. By 1958, Islamic religious activities once again started coming to life (Hajj Dawood C.M. Ting, 1988).


20 Approximately 70 percent of the indigenous population of 475,000 Aborigines is Christian (ibid).

Authorities at all levels sought to protect this right in full, and did not tolerate its abuse, either by official or private actors. Until now, there were no reports of abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice in Taiwan. Religious organizations are permitted to operate schools, but compulsory religious instruction is not permitted in any public or private elementary, middle, or high school accredited by the Ministry of Education (MOE). While for universities and research institutions may have religious studies departments. Previously, before 2004 MOE did not recognize university-level degrees granted by these types of schools, but in March 2004, the Legislative Yuan revised the Private Schools Act authorized the MOE to establish an accreditation process for university-level religious education institutions supported by religious organizations or private funds.

VI. PROBLEMS & CHALLENGES

Although Islam has quite long history in Taiwan, however some events and factors create stagnancy on the development of Islam and Muslim in Taiwan. After the Japanese colonial period in 1945, the most developed religion in Taiwan is Christianity. The number of Taiwanese converts to Christianity is increasing, especially among indigenous people.

While for Taiwanese Muslim, there are some arguments about its number. Those who mentioned that there are 10,000 Taiwanese Muslim nowadays, argued that the number of Chinese Muslim is decreasing in the last 60 years. The reasons of this decreasing of Muslim are due to limited contact with their Muslim community (both in Mainland China or another Muslims in Taiwan), lack of family religious education and Islamic practices, and also assimilation to Chinese – Taiwan culture and religion (converts to Buddhism, Daoism or Christianity). While for those who said 50,000 argued that Chinese Muslim is still increasing (even though with low growth rate) due to natural growth and inter-marriage. In this part, the problems and challenges that faced by Muslim in Taiwan (both Chinese Muslim and foreign Muslim) will be divided into two parts; internal and external factors.

Internal Factors
1) Lack of Muslim Community (Ummah) and Unity
During the 1950s, contact between Muslims and Han Chinese were limited due to differences in custom. So that the key point for Muslims were largely dependent on each other through the ummah (Islamic community). Nowadays, due to the scattered resident location and the distance to the mosque, most of the Chinese Muslim cannot afford a proper interaction with Islamic community.

2) Lack of family education and practice of Islam
In Taiwan, due to a lack of family religious education and biased education system, “freedom of belief” contributed to the deterioration of religion. Most of the second generation Muslims in Taiwan were unfamiliar with the Muslim community. One of the caused is their marriage to non-Muslims or converters. Therefore, for the third and fourth generation of Muslims is even more difficult to know and understand Islamic concept and practices, even though their grand parents (first generation) were very religious. Ma Chao-Yen argued that although the first generation of Chinese Muslim in Taiwan built excellent facilities, however in terms of sustainability, they are failed to establish religious and cultural infrastructure.

The next generation can received better education and career in Taiwan, however in the context of religion, they were lack of knowledge, belief and Islamic practices. Some of them even denied themselves as Muslim, even though their parents/ grandparents were Muslim.

3) Lack of Religious leaders, Scholars and Islamic School
The lack of Taiwanese religious leaders (imam) and Islam scholars are become one of human resources factor for the development of Islamic education. Furthermore, with the absence of formal Islamic education institution/ school in Taiwan and limited Islamic teacher made the sustainability of Islamic education in Taiwan become worse. No wonder that many of Muslim families’ descendants drifted away from Islam. As one generation followed another, they became almost totally assimilated into Taiwanese society, adopting Taiwanese customs and the Taiwanese religion (China folk religion, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism).

To solve this problem, the Muslim authorization needs to boost Islamic activities and enhance the education of young generation for a greater emphasis on religion. And Muslim community need to take a part for keeping the sustainability of education by providing Islamic teacher and trainings.

In Taipei, Arabic language is being taught formally in National Chengchi University in Taipei since 1957 under the Department of Arabic Language and Culture under the Department of Oriental Languages and Cultures. Due to the growing importance of Arab nations in the aspect of cultures, politics and economics of the world, the ROC government authorized the Department of Arabic Language and Culture to be independent, making it equal to the Department of Oriental Languages and Cultures within the university.

The Chinese Muslim Association has also been sending Taiwanese Muslim students overseas to receive formal Islamic education, mostly in Middle East. However, most of them then working as diplomat in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially to Islamic countries, and there is only limited young generation of Taiwanese Muslim who want to be religious leader (imam) or Islamic teacher.

To further improve the effort in preserving the Islamic faith among the Muslims, the association has developed a plan to "educating secular educators" and that
the Bureau of Education of the Taipei City Government has approve the proposal to hold Islamic courses for primary and secondary school teachers during summer vacations. They also provide authentic Islamic information to public school teachers to eliminate the Islamic stereotyping and misunderstanding.

4) Passive on Missionary and Preaching Activity (Da’wa)

The conversion rate of Taiwanese to Islam is relatively low since most of the Taiwanese Muslims in general do not actively preach their religion as do believers of other religions. Overall, missionary activities in Taiwan is conducted only for Muslim itself. Most Muslims do not engage in missionary activities and targeting the broader Taiwanese population. However, some activities to introduce Islam in general has been conducted and held in various occasion, mostly Muslim Culture exhibition or Halal Food Festivals.

External factors

1) Perception of Islam and Muslim in Taiwan

As Michael Penn (2008) said that challenges and problems faced by Muslims are consequences of the differences between Muslim and the society approaches toward religion. Similar to Japan, the mind—set of Taiwanese/Chinese is different with Muslim. In general the Taiwanese do not view the purpose of religious practices in the same way that many Muslims do, and their mindset about religion is different with most monotheism religions.

There is no specific research and statistical evidence about how Taiwanese perceptions of Muslim and Islam. However, from the field interview conducted by writer, it can be found that most of Taiwanese have no direct experience and interaction with Muslims. Most of them only know limited knowledge about Islam and Muslim, in which they get this basic information about it from text book during their study in junior and senior high school. In case of Japan, most of information that the society got, largely shaped by mass media, most of which involve Muslims in the context of wars, terrorism, and acts of violence (Penn, 2008)22.

However, although Muslim who are residing in Taiwan face these challenges, from the interviews and discussion with them, there is little to no active hostility, discrimination or negative behavior from Taiwanese society. But if so, similar to Japan, it is views as natural since Taiwanese merely do not know much about Islam and mean no harm. The problems that they face almost entirely from ignorance and inflexibility in some parts of Taiwanese society (Penn, 2008).

2) Availability of Halal Food in Taiwan

One of the greatest challenges for Muslims in Taiwan is finding halal food. Most of Taiwanese have little consciousness of Muslim dietary practices and mostly argued that halal food is troublesome (麻烦 or Máfan). Even most of them know that Muslims do not eat pork, but they still do not understand why Muslim cannot eat pork and what the meaning of halal is. It can be seen from most of the question that Muslim got from Taiwanese. However, this problem somewhat can be solved since basically many of Taiwanese also have religious dietary custom (for Buddhism who are becoming vegetarian), so that to find vegetarian food in Taiwan is quiet easy.

Recently, there is a good development regarding halal food business. Until now, there are 31 restaurants throughout the country that are now certified as Halal or Muslim friendly restaurants. Most of them are Indian, Pakistan, Thai, Turkish and Egyptian cuisine. In March 25th, 2013 there were sixteen restaurants around Taiwan were given Halal certification 23, which identifies them as trustworthy establishments that serve food in compliance with Islamic dietary law. This certificates was officially given at a ceremony in Taipei as the part of Taiwan’s efforts to attract more Muslim tourists in a bid to expand its tourism24. There are also numerous Halal Yunnan, Burmese and Thai small food shop/restaurants in Zhonghe area, Taipei City and Longgang, Zhongli – Taoyuan City.

Recently, there was The 2013 Taiwan International Halal Expo conducted by THIDA 25 (as co-organizer)

The certificates were issued by the Tourism Bureau, in collaboration with the Taipei-based Chinese Muslim Association, to restaurants in Taipei, New Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, Hualien and Taitung.

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25 Taiwan Halal Integrity Development Association abbreviated as THIDA (台灣清真產業品質保證推廣協會 or Táiwān Qīngzhēn Chǎnyè Pǐzhèng Tuiguǎng Xuéhui) is a certification body that produces Halal certificates in Taiwan. The association, which is based in the Taipei Cultural Mosque in Taipei, was inaugurated on 7 May 2011 in Taipei. The opening ceremony was attended by association managers, economic representatives, business people and around 300 Taiwan Halal Good Association companies and their relevant factions in Taiwan. The objectives of this association is to ensure the Halal-ness to all Muslim consumers anywhere in the world, protect the Halal integrity of local certification bodies from mistakes or mishandling, avoid consequences from such mistakes that
together with TAITRA, which held last June 26-29, 2013. The concern of THIDA is due to the current world Muslim population has been estimated to be 1.5 to 1.6 billions, or 1 out of 4 persons in the world is a Muslim. It is estimated that the Muslim market is worth 800 billion to 1.2 trillion US dollars per year, a very significant new market. This is a very good foundation has been laid down for Taiwan’s Halal Industry to exploit, especially it has emerged as a very important new business opportunity, encourage establishing Islamic financial services and Muslim tourism, and participate in developing business opportunities in the Muslim markets.

3) Availability of Pray Time and Place in Taiwan

Another problem for Muslim in Taiwan is when they doing their five times pray in daily life, especially for those who are working. For those who are working in formal sector, perhaps their difficulty not as much as the Muslim worker in informal sector (especially care taker, factory worker and sailor). Not only in the matter of proper place to pray, but also the tight schedule of work time. Most of the Taiwanese employer do not know and sometimes ignore this religious needs of Muslim workers.

Because of this problem, most of Chinese Muslims, who tends to keep their religious practices, are change their work place and prefer to work in company which owned by Muslim or open their own business. But for foreign Muslim, this option will be very difficult for them.

Currently, there are six official mosques (masjid) in Taiwan and one newly build Indonesian community mosque in Dayuan, Taoyuan. These six mosques are located in Taipei (two mosques; Taipei Grand Mosque), Zhongli (Longgang Mosque 龍岡清真寺), Taichung (台中清真寺), Tainan (台南清真寺), and Kaohsiung (高雄清真寺). There are also some small prayer rooms in Taiwan’s big cities where there are big Muslim population (mostly foreign worker), as well as in some universities which has quite big number of foreign Muslim students.

Besides mosques, Taiwan also provides several dedicated small-size Muslim prayer rooms in public spaces, such as; in Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taoyuan County (at the transit area of Terminal 1 and Terminal 2), Taipei World Trade Center Nangang Exhibition Hall – Taipei, Window on China Theme Park in Taoyuan County, Leofoo Village Theme Park in Hsinchu County and Shangri-La Leisure Farm in Yilan County.

Mosques are not only places of worship but also on the additional roles for Muslim in Taiwan as places for gathering, studying and exchanging information. Every weekend, in the mosques’ officer held Islamic learning classes for children and adults (including Arabic, and Islamic teaching). The official language for the class is mainly in Chinese, some classes in English (in Taipei Grand Mosque) and in other language (such as Indonesian) for special class held by foreign Muslim community.

Mosque is also used for many purposes, including accommodating offices, kitchens, lounges, and general hall for various activities. Several mosques provide overnight accommodations for weekend visitors. The function of mosques also for congregational prayers, religious gatherings, weddings, funerals, religious study, and social or business gatherings. During the month of Ramadan, many Muslim visit the mosque to do iftar or the breaking of the fast. And on various occasions religious foods are served at mosque kitchens as well.

4) Image on Islamic Attire

Not every Muslim woman in Taiwan (both Chinese and foreign Muslim) wearing hijab/ head scarf due to many reasons. For those who wear hijab often being asked by Taiwanese society. Their question mostly about where the Muslim woman come from, and whether it is hot or not wearing hijab during hot weather, especially in summer season. There is little tendencies to be suspicious or negative behavior. According to Michael Penn (2008), in the case of Japan, Japanese Muslim women may face criticism from family and friends. Most ordinary Japanese associate hijab with the oppression of women and are reluctant to see veiling through any alternative framework.

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26 This mosque named “Masjid At-Taqwa” (大園清真寺), in which initiated by Taiwanese Muslim husband with his Indonesian wife (Mr. Hasan and Mrs. Hasahah). This mosque built with donation mostly from Indonesian workers and students in Taiwan, as well as some donation from Muslim in Taiwan. There is another mosque initiated by Indonesian Muslim community in Donggang, Pingtung, but it is still under construction.

27 Taipei’s Grand Mosque is the first Arabian style mosque built in Taiwan. Ground breaking work was started in 1958, and it was completed in 1960. On the day of its grand opening, the late ROC Vice President Chen Cheng gave the keynote speech and invites the late King of Iran, H.M. Mohammed Palavi; the King of Jordan, H.M. Hussein; the former Prince Regent of Iraqi, H.P.H. Prince Abdul Ilah; the former Premier of Turkey, H.E. Adnan Miendaris; the former President of the Niger Republic, H.E. Hamani Diari; and the King of Saudi Arabia, H.M. Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (Hajj Dawood, 1988).

28 Some of those universities which provided prayer room for Muslim students are National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST) in Taipei, National Ciao Tung University (NCTU) in Hsinchu, Asia University in Taichung, and National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Tainan.
Japanese women often deeply concerned with issues of fashion and style, and find it incomprehensible that some women would give up contemporary attire.

Comparison between Muslim in Taiwan and China

Wherever in the world, minority always facing challenges and problems. In this part, the author would like to differences between challenges of Muslim in China and in Taiwan, especially for those Muslim who are ethnically Chinese (Hui).

Poceski (2009) said that Muslim in China often found (and still find) themselves in between two worlds, having to balance dual loyalties: to Islam and to China. In view of the basic demand of Islam, Muslim should live under Islamic rule which caused many problems surrounding the existence and survival of Muslim minorities under non-Islamic rule. Like any other Muslim minority living under non-Islamic rule, Chinese Muslims have faced acute problems of identity (Israeli, 2002).

Muslim in mainland China was defined as ethnic minority by the PRC government. According to Jean A. Berlie (2004), at first Muslims in China were a “religious group” more than an ethnic group during the Chinese Republic (1911 – 1949), but then they becoming “minority” in the 1950s by People's Republic of China (PRC). Currently, there are 55 ethnic minorities in China, and 10 of them are identified as Muslim. The Chinese Han who is Muslim called as “Hui” and their identity card indicates Huizú 回族 (Chinese Muslim) 29. Current PRC policy excludes the Uyghur and the other 8 Muslim minorities from the Hui. PRC adapted Stalin’s four nationality-criteria for China’s minority, such as; language, cultural life (psychological culture), economic life, and common territory. That is why Stevan Harrell calls the Hui (Chinese Muslim) as the strangest minority in China, because they are distinguished based on religion, not ethnicity (Berlie, 2002). So that, rather than called an ethnic group, Berlie said that it is more as a cultural minority.

Sun Yat Sen established the Republic of China, who asserted that the country equally belonged to the Han, the Hui (Muslim), and Tibetan people. However, the prosperity of Muslim culture in China did not last long as the Communist government took control and founded the People’s Republic of China in 1949. In the earliest communist, many Muslims supported call for equality, autonomy, freedom of religion and recognized nationality status, and were active in the early establishment of the People's Republic of China. However, many became disfranchised by growing critiques of religious practice during several periods in the PRC beginning in 1957.

After total suppression, religious practices in China were re-authorized in December 1978 and churches, mosques, and temples began to reopen. Bureau of Religious Affairs has remained rather neutral since the 1980s. The government recognizes only five religions; theoretically there is no other religion that is officially accepted aside from Taoism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Then those religions well defined by Document 19 of March 1982 and the new constitution. The government began to liberalize its policies toward Muslims and the practice of Islam (Kim Cho, 2009). Since Deng Xiao ping's post-reforms, Muslims have sought to take advantage of liberalized economic and religious policies. There are now more mosques open in China than there were prior to 1949, and Muslims travel freely on the Hajj to Mecca, as well as engaging in cross-border trade with co-religionists in Central Asia, the Middle East and increasingly South-East Asia.

Because of different ethnic and religious policy in Taiwan, most Taiwanese Muslim identify themselves as Huimin (Hui people), not as Huizú (Hui minority), so that the mind-set of them towards Taiwan society as general is only because difference on religion, not ethnic.

The similarity of the Chinese Muslim in China (Huizú) and in Taiwan are they can integrate into Chinese society and culture. Although facing some social and cultural challenges, they get more advantages compare to other Muslim ethnic minorities in China and foreign Muslim in Taiwan since they are familiar with Mandarin Chinese/ Taiwan/ local language, customs, and cultural heritage and hence find living as Muslims in Taiwan is much easier.

Most Hui are closer to the Han Chinese in terms of demographic proximity and cultural accommodation, adapting many of their Islamic practices to Han ways of life, even many members of the Hui nationality may not practice Islam, which often became the source for many of the criticisms of the Muslim reformers. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage in that they often have greater access to power and resources within Chinese society, but at the same time risk either the loss of their identity or the rejection of other Muslim groups in China as being too assimilated into Chinese society, to the detriment of Islam (Gladney, 2003).

Related to the religious freedom, Taiwan has much freedom for all religious practices. As for China, they do not give autonomy to religions, but freedom of religious belief and “normal religious activity” is guaranteed by the constitution of China. In the 1982 Constitution restores or expands the provisions on individual rights and freedom in the 1954 Constitution (Chiu, 1993). But in practice, these freedoms have been tightly circumscribed according the authorities’ mood (Tyler, 2003).

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29 Most of the Hui are Sunni of Hanafi branch. They live in the city, along the Yellow river in Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Shandong. Along the great canal, blue river, Zhangjiang, road between Beijing and Tianjin. Hui in Yunnan decrease in population, partly due to emigration to Southeast Asia and Taiwan.
VII. CLOSING

Islam is an “alien” religion to most Taiwanese and that is one of the reason why Islam very difficult to make significant development in Taiwan. Many religions in Taiwan (Chinese folk religion, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity) define the social fabric of Taiwanese society. The exclusive demands of Islam’s doctrine of monotheism and practices run against the pragmatic or utilitarian attitude toward religion in Taiwan.

Practicing faith and Islam are difficult for Muslims, especially in terms of going to get proper place to pray or finding halal food. For most of Muslim in Taiwan, they need to do their best ability and struggle to maintain a job, succeed in business, raise a family, and assimilate into Taiwanese society.

Due to the small size of the Muslim community, the probability of Muslim problem to develop in Taiwan over some years ahead will not be increasing. However, it is possible that with the bigger incoming foreign Muslim workers to Taiwan, the problem will take effect. The Muslim community does not integrate into that country’s culture and begins to demand special exemptions and privileges for Muslims to practice their faith.

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