

The Influence of Bábí Teachings on Ling Ming Tang and Nineteenth-century China

by Jianping Wang

The terms “Báb” and “Bábí” (in Chinese, “Bábu”) can be found in the Sufi teachings of Ma Lingming, the founder of the Ling Ming Tang (Chinese: “Sufi hospice of soul enlightening”) Sufi order of Lanzhou. This fact first came to my attention in 1996 when I was reading Ma Tong’s book *Traces of the Original Sources of Islamic Sects and Tariqas in China*. I found it very interesting: a Sufi Order in China may have had historical connections with the Bábí movement or the Bahá’í Faith in the interaction between Iranian Islam and the *tariqas* in China. However I had not further pursued this historical research until the International Conference of Religion, Ethics and Culture jointly held by Institute of World Religions, CASS and Pacific Rim Institute for Development and Education (PRIDE) in Oct. 1998. In that conference I met Dr. Moojan Momen, a specialist in the fields of Shí‘a Islam and Bahá’í studies from England. We talked about the possibility of such a connection, and about the conception of the Báb in the Sufism of the Ling Ming Tang school. Dr. Momen suggested the need for further study of the cross-religious impact in Northwest China, a region which had been penetrated by different spiritual thoughts since its functioned on Silk Road in history and was a contact zone among Persian religions, Indian religions, Arabic Islam, and Chinese religions.

Inspired by this idea I surveyed the available materials on Ling Ming Tang, and corresponded with Dr. Momen from time by time through E-mail. He encouraged me to begin the worthwhile historical investigation in Lanzhou. I was able to undertake some fieldwork in Lanzhou and its surroundings during Jan. 23 to Feb. 4, 2001.¹ The following is my report of this field visit and a study of Ling Ming Tang’s relationship to the teachings of the Báb as recorded and discussed by available Chinese sources.

Ling Ming Tang’s Relationship with the Bábí Movement

The word “Báb” appears in Ma Lingming’s will, which states that “*awla*’ [Arabic: the friends of Alláh, or the high ranked Sufi saints] are the divinely nominated persons at the doorway of the Báb.” Akhund Ma Xiangzhen, one of the disciples of Ma Lingming, said in his article “Praising the Grandiose Path of *awla*’” that “*awla*’, *awla*’, the true *awla*’, the authentic *silsila* [Arabic: “series,” mystical teachings of Muhammad passed down through a Sufi order’s succession of *shaykhs*] comes from Baghdad. There is the divinely nominated man on the threshold of Báb, Islam will not be passed to the other than *awla*.’”² He said more in a poem entitled “Phrase of Three Characters on *awla*’”: “*awla*’ path, way of returning to Alláh; the door of Báb, just be here; there is Heaven Lord, there is the Law; One divides into three, three merges into One.”³ There are two different explanations for the numerals “One” and “three” in the poem. The first is that the “One” means Islam and “three” refers to *Khafiyya*, *Qadriyya*, and a special secret “*dhikr*” (Arabic: “remembrance” chanting, esp. of the divine names of Alláh and the Prophet Muhammad); or refers to *Qadriyya*, *Khafiyya* and Ling Ming Tang. The second explanation is that the “One” refers to “Alláh” and the “three” refers to the Prophet, the saints, and the ordinary believers.⁴

The word “Báb” is also found in the oral sources in the will of Ma Lingming that is circulated and kept in memories among the clerics and followers of Ling Ming Tang today. On several occasions during my investigations, it was said to me that: “*awla*’ is the dragon⁵ for those who answer at the threshold of the Báb to the inquiring people.”⁶ I first heard this phrase containing the word “Báb” from Wang Yuguang, the older brother of the current spiritual chief (*Shaykh*) and the Third Successor of Ling Ming Tang, Wang Shoutian. Wang Yuguang, then eighty-three years of age, cited this word at the same time he related to me: “I began studying Sufism at the Ling Ming Tang *qubba* [Arabic: “tomb, shrine”] when I was a young boy. I had safeguarded the tomb of Ma Lingming for twenty years. Under the guidance of Shan Ziju, the *Shaykh* and the Second Successor of Ling Ming Tang, I had also studied the Sufi textbooks.”⁷ In a personal meeting with *Shaykh* Wang Shoutian himself, he recited the same phrase to me.⁸ Later on I found the word “Báb” used in a phrase similar to the one I heard from Wang brothers in a hand-copied text on Ma Lingming’s will preserved by Ma Ruqi, the

grandfather of Ma Hengyuan, a young Madrasah student with whom I became acquaintance during my field-work at Ling Ming Tang.⁹

There are two controversial arguments over the question of the relation between Ling Ming Tang and the term “Báb” in the available written and oral sources. Akhund Ma Zhanhai, the Shaykh of Xidaoyuan (the Western Courtyard of Ling Ming Tang), a group which split from Ling Ming Tang in the 1930s, thinks there is no such connection with Babism. In an interview with me he claimed that “Ma Tong [the author aforementioned] relates the word “Báb” in the will of Ma Lingming to the Bábí movement and Bábí insurrection in Iran of the 1840s. This is not true with regard to the historical facts. Our Ling Ming Tang belongs to the Sunni sect, a true and righteous Islam. The Bábí sect was a group of the Shí‘a, and the Bábí sect betrayed Islam, so it became the heresy or evil religion. Professor Ma Tong arbitrarily put these two different groups [Ling Ming Tang and the Bábí movement] together and inter-related them, but such an action does not fit to the reality and is entirely groundless. It would be a shame to further discuss any such links between Ling Ming Tang and the Bábí sect.”¹⁰

Ma Zhanhai’s rejection of an historical linkage seems to derive from his attitude and background: as an orthodox Sunni, he assumes that Ling Ming Tang must have had no historical connection with the Shí‘a-influenced Bábís. However, such a personal value judgement does not automatically refute the evidence for the possibility of a linkage.

My argument advocating an historical link is supported by several elders of Ling Ming Tang, as well as the sources recorded by that Sufi order itself in its past history. Wang Shoutian himself, the current leader of Ling Ming Tang, confirmed in an interview with me that Ling Ming Tang’s teaching was inspired by the thought of the Bábí.

Papa [Persian and Eastern Turkish: “grandfather”; Turkish: “father”]¹¹ Jing Duzi [Jidaz?] of the Qadriyya instructed Ma Lingming, who was twenty-five years old then [1877], in the Sufism and passed to him the true silsila [i.e., the authentic mystical teachings passed down from the Prophet Muhammad]. This took place in Yuzhong County where Ma Lingming lived for a short time while escaping the turmoil of war. After Ma Lingming received the teaching from Papa, he left for Lanzhou that very evening. This transmission of Sufi knowledge did not only pass the doctrines of the four Sufi orders [i.e. the Khafiyya and Jahriyya orders of Naqshbandiyya, plus Qadriyya and Kubruwiyya] to Ma Lingming, but also passed the teachings of the Báb on to him.¹²

The “Papa Jing Duzi” mentioned by Wang Shoutian refers to a Sufi Shaykh from Kashghar Qubba or Khanaqah (Persian: Sufi hostel used for praying, ceremonial services, education, dormitory, charity, and pilgrimage spot)—more precisely, from Apak Qubba near Kashghar. This information is confirmed by a hand-copied source circulated among the believers of Ling Ming Tang, although with variation over the age of Ma Lingming when Papa Jing Duzi taught him:

Ma Lingming kept his cultivation in Sufi doctrine till the time of his fortieth year [1893, the 18th year of Guangxu Reign], then a Shaykh with his honoring title Wafiya al-Dín, named Jing Duzi from Kashghar Qubba the holy land, sent the ijazat [Arabic: “license,” the proof of the silsila, the transmission of the authentic Sufi doctrine] to the Founder of Ling Ming Tang. From that day, Ma Lingming began to disseminate this Sufi creed in public, and inherited the true Light of the Prophet Muhammad teaching, and became the first Shaykh in the silsila [i.e., authorized Shaykh] of Ling Ming Tang.¹³

Ma Lingming was probably introduced to Sufism when twenty-five years old and received the ijazat, i.e. permission for transmitting the knowledge, at age forty. He either had one instructor named Papa Jing Duzi who taught him at two separate times, or he had two different Sufi Shaykhs who taught him on two different occasions. It cannot be ruled out that, between his twenty-fifth and fortieth years, Ma Lingming had contact with different spiritual sources transformed by different teachers of mysticism, including that of the Bábí and Bahá’í Faith.

However, the name of Papa Jing Duzi has been also confused with another name of “Great Fragrant Papa” (*Da xiang papa*) in several recordings of Ling Ming Tang’s history. While speaking on the connection of Ling Ming Tang with Babism, Shaykh Wang Shoutian also told me about Fragrant Papa’s mission to Ma Lingming: “Salim, the Arabian Sufi, taught Ma Lingming Sufism at Sanjiaji Town of Guanghe County, and the soul of

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Great Founder of the [Khafiyya Naqshbandiyya] Sufi Order with fragrance echoed in the mind of Ma Lingming, the Founder of Ling Ming Tang.”¹⁴ “Salim” here is definitely confused with Habíb Alláh, whom the other sources identify as “Fragrant Papa.” For example, according to “Brief Notes of the Great Fragrant Master” recorded by one of Ma Lingming’s disciples:

His Arabic Sufi name was Habíb Alláh who came from Daihailai [Tehran?] wenyi [?]. He traveled to Yemen and Baghdad for his religious studies in order to disseminate the authentic Islam and help people in the world. He had studied Sufism in the záwiya [Arabic: “Sufi hospice”] of Shaykh Ray and had served Shaykh Halil, the respected scholar, for eighteen years. One night he had a dream in which, while training in the military horseback-riding range, he shot two arrows in an easterly direction. He hit and felled two targets: a dragon and a phoenix. He related his dream to the Shaykh, who congratulated him and said: “Please go to China at once and instruct the great saints there in the Sufi doctrine.” He obeyed the Shaykh’s order and embarked on the journey. He arrived in Lanzhou in the 9th Month of the Chinese Lunar Calendar, 1877. The teacher [Habíb Alláh] met the disciple [Ma Lingming], enabling this Sufi tariqa [Arabic: “Sufi order”] to spread to China. The Great Master had such a pleasant, fragrant smell that he was referred to by all as “Fragrant Papa.” The Master suffered from armed robbery and war-fighting when he traveled to Suzhou on his way back to Arabia, and became a martyr who dedicated his life to Islam. The date of Fragrant Papa’s passing is the 1st day of the 1st Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar, in the 4th Year of Guangxu Reign [1878].¹⁵

A source recorded much earlier describes Fragrant Papa’s meeting with Ma Lingming with a vivid narration:

When he was twenty-five years old [on the 9th Day of the 9th Month of Chinese Lunar Calendar, the 3rd Year of Guangxu Reign, 1877] Ma Lingming met Habíb Alláh who, known as Great Fragrant Papa, had come to Lanzhou of Gansu for teaching Sufism. Habíb Alláh declared that he was born in Dehailai [Tehran?] wenyi of India [Iran], and traveled to Baghdad where he studied at a Sufi hospice headed by Shaykh Riwal al-Dín who taught disciples the Qadriyya Sufi knowledge. In the meeting of Lanzhou, Habíb Alláh talked with Ma Lingming so intimately, and the two were in agreement on so many issues, that the former instructed the latter in the doctrine of the Qadriyya under the cypresses at the Qubba of the Fourth Great Grandpa Hai. After three months of the first teaching, Habíb Alláh passed true religious light of the Prophet [Muhammad] to Ma Lingming, and relinquished his post as a chief of the tariqa in favor of him. At the same time he also informed him the preconditions of disseminating Sufi knowledge, and finally gave him the proofs of Sufi teaching and missionary beside the well in the backyard of Xiuheyan Mosque.¹⁶ Soon after that, Habíb Alláh departed for his home country, but on the journey he was killed by armed robberies in Suzhou [Jiuquan today] on the 1st Day of the 1st Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar, the 4th Year of Guangxu Reign [1878].¹⁷

Both documents indicate that Habíb Alláh (Fragrant Papa) came to Lanzhou of China in 1877 when Ma Lingming was twenty-five, and disseminated the Sufism originated from Yemen, Baghdad and probably Iran. If the latter two recordings are reliable, then Habíb Alláh studied Islamic mysticism in Baghdad and perhaps in Iran around the 1850s, the same time the Bábí movement was cruelly suppressed by the Iranian rulers and Bahá’ulláh along with the surviving Bábí community was exiled to Baghdad. After suffering numerous massacres, the Bábí movement went underground and continued to spread the Báb’s (and soon Bahá’u’lláh’s) teachings. In my opinion, Habíb Alláh might have made contact with the disciples of Bahá’ullah or with other Bábís in Baghdad, Iran, or Central Asia and received some mystical Islamic ideas from the teaching of Báb.

If we combine all three sources into an ordered event we find they are very similar: a “Papa” with various names arrived in Lanzhou from Arabia and Iran or India via Central Asia and the Kashghar region in Xinjiang in a mission of teaching Sufi mystic Islam mingled with Bábí teachings. That mission initiated Ma Lingming who was then twenty-five and who, fifteen years later at age forty, founded a new Sufi group. These sources also report that this Papa was killed in an armed robbery on his way back to Arabia (more likely Iran) after he had initiated Ma Lingming. So there are two possibilities which I believe can be deduced from the above materials. First, Papa Jing Duzi (Wafiya al-Dín) and Papa Habíb Alláh could be the same person, since both share the title “papa” with Fragrant Papa, or Great Fragrant Papa. The confusion in names would be due to the length in time in which the oral narration and manuscripts of the followers of Ling Ming Tang have confused the names in their historical memorials. Second, Papa Jing Duzi and Fragrant Papa Salim or Habíb Alláh may be

two different Sufi or Bábí teachers who transmitted their mystical knowledge in different times. While both possibilities have historical merit, I think the former is more likely.

So what is the most likely real name of “Papa,” and where was he from? These details are not as important, because all available sources agree on the facts that a Papa (or Papas) with “fragrant smell” from Iran (or Arabia or India) who studied in Baghdad and Yemen came to Lanzhou. He (or they) passed Sufi creeds, including the Báb’s teachings, to Ma Lingming, the founder of Ling Ming Tang, sometime between 1877 and 1893, probably closer to 1877.

However, other materials which attempt to trace the event of Fragrant Papa’s meeting Ma Lingming have shown a wide range diversity in dates and names. For example, one says:

Reviewing the silsila of the Founder, Ma Lingming’s Sufi teaching lineage starts in the period of the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasties [i.e. in the Seventeenth Century]. Hamíd al-Dín, born in Hamadán in South Xinjiang [sic], the Grand Fragrant Founder or the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad in the twenty-fifth generations, accepted the Sufi doctrines of the Naqshbandíyya and Qadriyya orders in Yemen and Baghdad. He revealed the secrets of Alláh on Truth to Ancestral Grandfather Hai, Great Grandfather Mi, Great Grandfather Ma, Young Akhund Shi, Grandfather Mu, and Belly Bai. Seven generations’ disciples had spread the Light. They had the task of safeguarding the seal and waiting for the wali [a reference to Ma Ling Ming] to receive the seal.¹⁸

The author of this source mistakenly located Hamadán in South Xinjiang; it is actually in Iran. He also confused the event of Fragrant Papa’s meeting Ma Lingming with the time that Khoja Apak, the leader of the White Mountainous Group in East Turkestan, came to Northwest China to teach Khafíyya Sufism among the Hui Sufis during his life in exile following a failed power struggle with the Black Mountainous Group.¹⁹

Ma Wanrui, a ninety-three-year-old disciple of the second Ling Ming Tang shaykh, also believes that Hamíd al-Dín, who lived in the Seventeenth Century, transmitted the *silsila* to Ling Ming Tang, which was founded in the turning of the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries:

The Sufi doctrine passed by the First Founder of Ling Ming Tang is a true teaching of the true religion. It was instructed by the Shaykhs in Yemen and Baghdad [in the period of the Song Dynasty, 960-1279] to Hamíd al-Dín, the tariqa’s Ancestry Fragrant Founder [in the period of the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644], and was inherited by Habíb Alláh [in the period of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, 1736-1795].²⁰

He adds that “[Ling Ming Tang]’s name is *ismu dhat* [Arabic: “name attribute”], its *silsila* is that Fragrant Shaykh Azíz Hamíd al-Dín Amír from Yemen and Baghdad transmitted his personal teachings [secrets] to Haníf al-Dín Alláh [Ma Lingming, founder of Ling Ming Tang].”²¹

The obvious problem here is, how can a person who lived in the Seventeenth Century have met a person who lived in the Nineteenth Century? Or how can a Sufi who lived in the period of the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries have taught Sufism to someone who lived in the period of the Fourteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries? Ma Wanrui as a Sufi has no doubts about this, for he thinks that Alláh can create miracles and can help two remote generations to communicate through the Holy Spirit. In the Sufi tradition Khidr, the hidden prophet in Islam, can convey communication between the dead and the living, between people across a span of several generations, between the Prophet Muhammad and His followers, and between two remote regions. In my field notes, I find the content of the *silsila* of Ling Ming Tang which includes this declaration:

After the Prophet Muhammad was born, the transmission of the True Path was restored to the sealed stage for ten thousand prophets. The true secret was passed to the four Caliphs and then passed to the saints among the offspring of succeeding generations of the Prophet Muhammad. The descendants of the Prophet in the twenty-fifth generations from the Naqshbandíyya and the Qadriyya passed it to Hamíd al-Dín, the Great Fragrant Founder of Hamadani Qubba in Kashghar. He passed down the silsila to the disciples for the eleven generations that inherited the secret and the seal. The personal transmission will last to the end of time, and the True Light of Qutbu Osh will guide the True Path forever.²²

On the basis of the *silsila* of Ling Ming Tang and the other sources of Sufi mysticism transmitted to Ma Ling Ming in Lanzhou, we can summarize the scattered information and clues concerning Fragrant Papa to reach the following likely conclusions:

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Real name: Either Jing Duzi or Wafiya al-Dín; or Salim or Habíb Alláh or Hamíd al-Dín; or Azíz Hamíd al-Dín Amír.

Date: either the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries or the Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries.

Itinerary of his travels: Arabia, Yemen, Baghdad to “Daihailan wenyi” (which, though identified as being in India, is more likely Tehran) to Hamadan to Kashghar to Lanzhou (where he met Ma Lingming).

Knowledge transmission: Qadriyya to mystical Sufism to Qadriyya and Naqshbandíyya [Khafiyya] including Bábí teachings.

I notice in my fieldwork at Ling Ming Tang that the date of Fragrant Papa’s murder in Suzhou on his way back to his homeland Arabia (actually, Iran) has been memorialized by the believers. This annual memorial service is always held on the 1st Day of the 1st Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar. Such a memorial service strongly indicates that Fragrant Papa was an actual historical figure. According to the death date commemorated by the followers of Ma Lingming, I believe that *Lanzhou Lingming gongbei jiao shi* (History of Lingming Qubba *tariqa* in Lanzhou), a manuscript circulated among the followers of Ling Ming Tang in the early part of the Twentieth Century, and Ma Xiangzhen’s work *Qingzhen zhexue qiyu lu* (Notes of the Wonderful Words in Islamic Philosophy), are both more credible and perhaps much closer to the fact. According to the *silsila* of Ling Ming Tang, Fragrant Papa Hamíd al-Dín, after leaving his home of Hamadan, had studied for a time in Baghdad and Yemen before departing for Lanzhou where in 1877 he initiated Ma Lingming with Sufi ideas and Bábí teachings. Such a description has great similarity to the figure of Habíb Alláh or Papa Jing Duzi, who taught Ma Lingming the Sufi knowledge and Bábí teaching. Therefore, Habíb Alláh or Papa Jing Duzi was actually Persian, not an Arab or a Turk from Kashghar. The sources recorded Habíb Alláh or Salim as being Arab because he had studied in Baghdad and Yemen for eighteen years and he had command of the Arabic language. People thought him coming from Kashghar Qubba because he traveled from Iran via Kashghar in South Xinjiang (East Turkestan) and perhaps lived at the Khoja Apak Qubba for some time. That is the reason why the followers of Ling Ming Tang confused him with Khoja Apak, Shaykh of the White Mountains group, who lived in the period of the Seventeenth to the Eighteenth Centuries. Therefore, they mistakenly confused the names, the span of time, the different generations, and the different locations. The divergence in name, date and location concerning Great Fragrant Papa’s teaching to Ma Lingming from various sources is also certainly due to such a long time procession of the oral and written historic composition in which many believers of Ling Ming Tang in different generations have participated. Errors and confusion could certainly have occurred.

Now we turn to the question of the possible relation—or more exactly, the linkage—between Fragrant Papa or Papa Jing Duzi and the Báb’s teachings which swept through Iran in the mid-Nineteenth Century. My explanation of their connection is based on following logical conceptions: First, the region of Iran was always one of the main sources for transmission of Islam to China. The Silk Road that linked the Persian Chinese Empires in trade and cultural contacts was the main channel through which Islam entered China, and Muslim merchants, soldiers, and priests came from Iran to China. In this way, the Persian and Central Asian Muslims played a prominent role in forming the Muslim community in China. Even the Silk Road stopped functioning as the main Eurasian trade route after the Indian Ocean became the dominant route for marine navigation in the Fifteenth Century. Its passage remains as the arch-line for the Muslim hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and for transmission of Sufi mystical teaching between China and the Islamic world. This is evidenced by the many Persian living habits and Persian vocabulary which have become deeply rooted in the cultural life of Muslim communities in China in the historic process of the Persian Islam’s penetration into China.

Second, the regions of Iran and Central Asia were not only home to many of Sufi orders which later took root in China, but were themselves crucial to the dissemination of Sufi teachings. The main Sufi orders, including the Naqshbandíyya, Qadriyya, Kubrawiyya, and Chistiyya, have all traced their original sources and their founders to Persia or Persianized Central Asia.²³

Third, China was the region historically to which the Shí’a and other religious minorities in Iran would flee for safety when they faced religious persecution and suppression. This happened in the time of the Umayyads cracking down on the Shí’a movement, in the time of the Abbasids persecuting the Khawalijis, and in the time of the Safavids suppressing Sufism. So it is most likely that, after the Iranian authorities executed the Báb and

suppressed His movement across the whole of Iran, some Bábís may have fled to China to escape persecution from the Qajar rulers and even for their very survival. Bábí refugees, or those of their childrens’ generation, may have taken the names of Fragrant Papa (implicating spice trade activity) or Hamíd al-Dín or Papa Jing Duzi etc. They stepped on the ancient Silk Road through Central Asia via Kashghar to Lanzhou, a place on this famous route but with a concentrated Muslim population, for living or religious teaching since they had a good command of Arabic and native Persian knowledge. Such linguistic skill in Arabic and Persian was always deemed by Chinese Muslims as a good virtue for a cleric’s qualification or nomination in community.

Fourth, because Bábí teaching would be regarded as heresy and Shí‘a Islam already received hostility among the Sunni Muslims in China that time, Fragrant Papa (i.e. Jing Duzi or Salim or Habíb Alláh or Hamíd al-Dín) had to pretend to be a Sufi and teach Sufism among the Sufis in China, and meanwhile tried to continue his Bábí doctrine’s dissemination among the Chinese Muslim communities. On the basis of such possibilities, it is conceivable that Babism could have been transmitted from Iran to Ling Ming Tang, one of the Sufi orders in Northwest China along the old Silk Road in the late Nineteenth Century. Anyway, the phenomena that the spiritual seeds from Persia were carried to China through the social, cultural and economic channels have been repeated many times in that region in past and present.

Before we make more explicit the logical link between the Báb’s teachings and the Sufi thought of Ma Lingming, we will introduce briefly the history of the Prophet/Founder of the Bábí Faith and Its arising in Iran in the Nineteenth Century. The founder of the Bábí movement, Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad “the Báb” (1820-1851), was born into a merchant family in Shiraz, Iran. He briefly attended lectures of a famous scholar, Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí, head of the Shaykhí school in Karbala, Iraq. The Shaykhís advocated the creed that the Mahdí, the Twelfth Imám, the Salvation Lord of Islam, would soon come to the world. They thought that after one thousand years of disappearance, “occultation,” the Mahdí would return to this world when it was full of laments and unhappiness, and he would right the world’s inequalities.

In 1844 Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad declared himself the Báb and the One Whose coming Sayyid Kázim Raṣhtí had promised. He revealed a book entitled *Bayán* (Arabic and Persian: “exposition” or “meditation”). The mission of the Báb was to prepare the people of the world for the coming of the Mahdí, “He Whom God will make manifest.” In 1848, following a series of Bábí upheavals in Iran, the Sháh put the Báb in jail in Mákú and later Chihríq, and executed Him in 1851. The Bábí movement was severely suppressed by the Sháh and the ruling classes in Iran. Afterward, many Bábís escaped to the marginal areas around the country. No doubt some Bábí believers escaped to Central Asia and India where they survived under the shelter of the Bahá’í Faith later on. It is very possible that some Bábís came to China and hid as Sufis living among the Muslims in China to avoid the persecution in Iran.

Another reason has strongly convinced me that a linkage between Ma Lingming or Sufi order in China with the Bábí teaching from Iran is very possible if we refer to the following historical fact. Dr. Momen E-mailed the following to me: “I have been doing some research regarding a Bahá’í teacher who traveled very extensively in Asia. His name was Jamál Effendi. He traveled to Ladakh and then on towards Yaqand [Shache of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region today]. This route probably took him southeast at first skirting the Karakorum Range and entering Tibet. As a consequence of frost-bite which affected his feet, he was forced to remain in Yaqand for six months, probably the winter of 1888-9 or 1889-90. I wonder whether Ma Lingming may have met him there, heard about the Bahá’í teachings and then taken this back to Gansu Province.”²⁴ As a matter of fact, Ma Lingming had never traveled to Xinjiang. However, his disciples had traveled extensively in Xinjiang (for this point we will discuss below).

So following such a clue provided by Dr. Momen it is certainly possible that the Báb’s teaching arrived in Xinjiang, China’s East Turkestan in late Nineteenth Century through different routes. Bábí or Bahá’í teachers identified as Papa Jing Duzi (Wafiya al-Dín), Habíb Alláh, Hamíd al-Dín, and Salim and possibly disciples of Jamál Effendi in Xinjiang, disseminated Bábí and Sufi teachings to Ma Lingming in Lanzhou. Alternatively, Ma Lingming’s disciples may have gone Xinjiang and met Jamál Effendi or his believers, and thereby been exposed to Bábí thought. So anyway, these events begin a new chapter in Sufi orders’ history in China. If Jamál Effendi really taught his Bahá’í Faith to some Uighurs in South Xinjiang, it also likely that Habíb Alláh or Salim, or Hamíd al-Dín, one of the disciples of Jamál Effendi, revealed a mystical idea (Báb teaching) to Ma Lingming in Lanzhou when he was forty years old (1893). Perhaps, Ma Lingming received Báb teaching sev-

eral times in his life. Just as reflected in the comments by Wang Shoutian: someone from outside China transmitted all Sufi doctrines from various Sufi orders, including Bábí teaching, to Ma Lingming, the founder of Ling Ming Tang.²⁵

Why Ma Lingming accepted the Báb's Teachings

After having read all the materials I had collected and acquired during the investigation in Lanzhou, I found myself asking, why it was only Ma Lingming, and not other Sufis or Sufi groups in Lanzhou or in Gansu, who accepted the Báb's teachings transmitted by Papa(s) from Iran via Xinjiang? Why is it only in Ling Ming Tang's Sufism that the concepts of Báb can be found, and in all other Sufi orders in China we cannot find it? To answer this question we must understand the personality of Ma Lingming, his background, his living time, and the miserable sufferings Ling Ming Tang experienced afterward in the development of his order.

Ma Lingming's real name was Ma Yilong, and Lingming (Chinese: "soul enlightenment"; Ling Ming Tang actually takes after Ma Lingming's given name) was his pen name. His Sufi name was Qutb Hanif al-Dín Alláh (Arabic: "the true axis of God's religion"). He was born in the provincial capital, Lanzhou, in 1853 (the 20th Day of the 11th Month of Chinese Lunar Calendar, the 3rd Year of Xianfeng Reign)²⁶ and died at age of seventy-three in 1925 (the 19th Day of the 3rd Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar, the 14th Year of the Republic). At the age of seven Ma began studying Chinese and Arabic in school, the *madrassa*, and became the class's best pupil. After he grew up he became a very pure Muslim who observed the Quranic teachings and Sunna. At the age of ten he lived through the Hui Muslim rebellion in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces against the Manchu Empire. He was fourteen when, in the 5th Year of Tongzhi Reign (1866), the Military Commander of Lanzhou led a mutiny during which people suffered a serious famine. In such an environment Ma accompanied his mother fleeing from home for the safety of their lives. They settled in Ningding (Guanghe County today). His mother died in the following year and "he had to work as a laborer for a rich family during the daytime and recite the Quran and other Sufi texts in the evening. Although life was very hard and the work was tiring, he had never given up prayer."²⁷

Ma Lingming later migrated to Yuzhong County and from there he moved farther to Hezhou (today's Linxia) of Gansu, afterwards sojourning in Xining of Qinghai. He spent time as a beggar and at same time sought knowledge from religious teachers. When thirty-five years old (the 14th Year of Guangxu Reign, or 1888), he was invited to the post of Imám (Chinese *jiaozhang*, or "religious chief") of Yejiqou Mosque in Yuzhong of Gansu, and later to the post of Imám of other mosques in different places in that province. "He emphasized externally the five pillars of Islam sanctioned by the Shari 'a, and made great efforts internally in *tariqa* training and meditation. He was ready to distribute the alms that his believers handed him to the poor as charity and he never kept money for his personal pocket."²⁸

At forty-two years of age, when the turmoil of Region of He River and Huang River broke out in 1895, Ma Lingming, carrying his daughters, fled to Lanzhou with his wife, and rented out two rooms for living. At that time he had already received Qadriyya teaching from Salim (more likely Papa Jing Duzi), Khafiyya teaching from Habíb Alláh, and teachings of the Báb. "After he concentrated wholly in spreading the creed of *awla*' path Ma Lingming often begged food as a dervish (Sufi wanderer) to make his living. He would stop to beg as soon as he got minimal food for his family living. If someone gave him clothes and money, he would decline the offer. He sometimes sang songs to himself and danced alone, and would often be seen playing games with children in a lane or on the street. He was so innocent and simple-minded that he always acted like a young boy." "He would not be angry when he was beaten, nor when abuse was shouted at him, and he was carefree about being mocked in public. There was always a smile on his face whenever he met any situations, and he never sought revenge for others' mischief against him. People called him a "madman." But whenever someone was confused or had troubles and came to him for consultation, he would illustrate the meaning by present reality, or tell a story of the past, or cite a current example to let the other person understand for himself or herself what the truth was. At first people might not comprehend what his meaning, but people saw the signs from the facts in Ma's illustration later on." He came to be respected and revered by many people.²⁹

Until his death Ma Lingming had always lived a very spare life and contributed food, clothing, and money—whatever he possessed—to those who were in need and poor. Even during his late years, when Ling Ming Tang had developed into an influential Sufi group in Lanzhou and was receiving ample donations from its believers,

Ma Lingming continued to keep his life as simple as in his early stages of life. Because he and his followers lived such an austere life and often helped the poor and weak, Ling Ming Tang was highly attractive to the many people who lived in a society full of injustice, corruption, exploitation, repression, immorality, war turmoil, and natural disasters. To these people who felt so hopeless in such a miserable life, Ma Lingming's Sufi and Bábí teachings were a shining beacon for their future. This is reminiscent of the history of the Báb and Bahá'ulláh, whose Faiths found fertile ground amongst a populace that could no longer tolerate further repression by the ruling authorities in Iran. The Báb, Bahá'ulláh, and Ma Lingming were all true representatives of the poor people and lower classes in the society. They in different ways protested society's injustices, and challenged the authority of tyrants. That's why Ma Lingming easily incorporated Bábí teachings: the religions of Báb and Ma Lingming alike were often first adopted by peasants and by society's lower- and middle-classes, those who were deprived of the rights of the basic living means.

Ma Lingming disseminated his Sufi teaching mainly among the merchants and traders, and the peddlers who sold food on the streets of the city. They belonged to the lower- and middle-classes, and they followed him in large number. In the rural countryside, Ma Lingming's followers were largely composed of poor peasants.³⁰ This is another similarity between Babism and Ma Lingming's Ling Ming Tang. The Báb came from a merchant family and the social base of His following was largely lower- to middle-class, including a number of merchants, traders, and peddlers. The similar background and the almost same social basis could relate two religious movements closely in two remote regions through some intermediate role: the refugees of Bábí movement and Bahá'í teachers transmitted a mystical creed consisting of an amalgam of Bábí teachings and Sufism, to a Sufi order in Northwest China which faced the similar social crisis Báb had faced decades earlier.

The Bábí movement was suppressed and persecuted by the authorities in Iran. The same fate befell the believers of Ling Ming Tang in its history. As Ma Lingming began teaching Bábí ideas and a new Sufi creed, he and his religion was charged by others as "madmen" spreading heresy, and they wanted the authorities to arrest him and execute him.³¹ The Order was eventually closed and the body of Ma Lingming was moved out of the *qubba* in 1958. Ten years later the authorities demolished the *qubba*, and a state-owned factory occupied its place during the Cultural Revolution of China. Many religious clerics of Ling Ming Tang were put in jail and some of them were persecuted and even killed.³² Wang Shoutian was incarcerated for many years, and in the 1970s was himself sentenced to death, escaping execution only accident.³³ Not until the 1980s was Ling Ming Tang allowed to resume its religious activity in public.

Ling Ming Tang and its Connection to Hami and Kashghar, Xinjiang

As demonstrated above, both Chinese sources and information given me by Dr. Momen testify that Bábí or Bahá'í teachings came from Iran and Central Asia via Kashghar or South Xinjiang and influenced the Sufi creed of Ling Ming Tang in Lanzhou founded by Ma Lingming in the late Nineteenth Century. Papa Jing Duzi, or Habíb Alláh and Hamíd Al-Dín visited the Kashghar Qubba (Qubba of Khoja Apak) and stayed there for a time. The early Bahá'í teacher Jamál Effendi traveled through Pakistan's Kashmir Ladakh to Yarqand in South Xinjiang. Jamál Effendi's Bábí and Bahá'í beliefs, which may have become commingled with Sufi ideas, were transmitted to his Uighur disciples in Yarqand. From there, Bábí teachings filtered to Kashghar, Hami, and other parts of Xinjiang. The geographic location of Xinjiang has thus played a crucial role in the transmission of Bábí teaching between Iran and Lanzhou of China, eventually resulting in the creation of a new Sufi order. Because of this historical connection between Lanzhou of Ling Ming Tang and the Sufi saints' *qubbas* in Xinjiang, Ling Ming Tang kept sending its missionaries and religious envoys to Xinjiang, particularly to Hami and Kashghar, to disseminate its teachings and seek new followers. Ling Ming Tang in Lanzhou regards Kashghar and Hami in Xinjiang as the primary source of its Sufi teaching. Because of this missionary and teaching-studying activity, Ling Ming Tang set up a sub-branch in Hami. It was named Kao Fu Tang, modeled on its founder Kao Fu who was one of the main disciples of Ma Lingming in Lanzhou. From Hami, religious personnel were sent to the southern Xinjiang for the further missionary work.

Following are the abstracts from the materials of Ling Ming Tang's history to show how a branch was formed in Hami, how the contacts with Kashghar were maintained, how the Muslims in Xinjiang converted to Ling Ming Tang's teaching, and how Ling Ming Tang Sufism penetrated to the South Xinjiang where Ling

Ming Tang receiving its spiritual influence.

Kao Fu, one of the disciples of Ma Lingming, under his Master's instruction embarked upon missionary work to disseminate Ma Lingming's Sufism among the Muslims of Hami, in Xinjiang. Many Hui and Uighurs in Xinjiang converted to Ling Ming Tang. Therefore, the Hui and Uighur Muslims in many areas of Xinjiang were the followers of Ling Ming Tang. Even today the Western Courtyard of Ling Ming Tang [i.e., its branch in Hami] has more than 20,000 followers.³⁴

In spring of the 11th Year of the Republic [1922], the founder of Ling Ming Tang ordered his disciple Shan Zijiu³⁵ to Hami in Xinjiang for missionary work.³⁶ Shan Zijiu began his journey from Hami to the Kafi Cave on the 1st Day of the 1st Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar, the 12th Year of the Republic [1923]. He arrived at the cave after a few days of walking, thereby fulfilling this pilgrimage, and chanted the *du'á* [Arabic: "prayer"]. He went on to Kuche where he visited the *qubba* of *Hidaya al-Dín Alláh* [Khoja Apak]. This *qubba* was the holiest place for Sufism in China. There was an old *Shaykh* with the family name Ma who, at the age of 120, was still in quite good health. He congratulated Shan Zijiu with a Sufi gesture as he met him. All believers around prayed in *da'ir* [Arabic: "circle"] by kneeling down, and they chanted the Quranic verses for good wishes. Afterwards, the old *Shaykh* asked to look at a classic Sufi text Shan Zijiu had brought with him. Shan handed him the scroll, and the *Shaykh* unfolded it. Tears came to his eyes as he recited the passages of the text. He closed the scrolls and cried that the holiest doctrine had enlightened China. After the prayer, the believers requested Shan Zijiu to lead the ritual of holding hands in *dhikr* or *salát* [Arabic: "obligatory Muslim prayer"]. The *Shaykh* then issued the traveling certificate to Shan for his return back to Hami.³⁷

Shan Zijiu reported his pilgrimage to the Kafi Cave and his visiting the Kuche *qubba* to the Founder of Ling Ming Tang [Ma Lingming]. The founder was so happy after he heard of these experiences that he gave his instruction [ijaz]: "Now the way of *awla'* ["friends of God," i.e. Sufi saints] is brightened!"

In the first ten days of the 5th Month in Chinese Lunar Calendar [1923], the founder of Ling Ming Tang ordered Shan Zijiu to go to Hami again to collect alms for construction of the *qubba* [in Lanzhou].³⁸

In the 14th Year of the Republic [1925], the Founder of Ling Ming Tang passed away. After the commemoration of the 40th Day of the deceased [Founder], Shan went to Hami with Ma Yuming to announce the news of the Founder's passing to the believers there. Shan performed the commemoration of the One Hundredth Day of the Founder's decease with the believers in Hami.³⁹

Even in the 1950s and in the 1960s, during a time when religious activities were not fully eradicated but were severely restricted by the authorities in China, Ling Ming Tang still sent its missionaries to Xinjiang, particularly southern Xinjiang to disseminate its Sufi doctrine clandestinely among the Uighur and Hui Muslims.⁴⁰ Also Professor Du Shaoyuan from the Xinjiang School of the Communist Party heard, during his historical investigation in the South Xinjiang in the early 1950s, that there was a Bábí group among the various Sufi orders in the Turkic-speaking Muslim communities.⁴¹

Ling Ming Tang Today

As mentioned, Wang Shoutian is the Third Successor of Ma Lingming and the current leader of Ling Ming Tang. He began his speech celebrating the opening ceremonies of the rebuilt wooden framework of the Eight Diagram Palace of Ling Ming Tang *Qubba* with these words:

What is Ling Ming Tang? Ling Ming Tang is a banner-pole set up on the earth by Alláh's true religion Islam; It is the axis of heaven and earth, the resting place of the Noble Prophet and the focus of pilgrimage for many *dustani* [Persian: "friends with faith"].⁴²

Such a remark certainly incites criticism from the traditional Sunni Muslim communities, especially the *Ikhwani*⁴³ communities in Northwest China, which regard Sufis like Ling Ming Tang as heretics.⁴⁴ Still, Ling Ming Tang has managed to develop dramatically, even in the antagonistic environment of the last twenty years.

After the Cultural Revolutions, as religion gradually resumed activities under a new policy taken by a more pragmatic Communist Party, the Lanzhou Municipal Government agreed to return the site of the demolished *qubba* to Ling Ming Tang in the early 1980s. However, by that time the site housed a small factory. This pro-

posal was turned down by Wang Shoutian who thought such a plan would be too costly for the factory and the many workers who would lose their jobs in its re-location. He also recognized that the old site of Ling Ming Tang *qubba* was too small and would not meet the demands of the expanding community for long. Instead of seeking to regain the old property, he suggested that the government allocate a bare hill on Wuxing Ping (Pentagon Apron) in the suburb of Lanzhou for the new Ling Ming Tang *qubba*. The local authorities promptly approved his proposal, so without seeking compensation from the factory Wang Shoutian led his believers in 1984 to settle down on a bare hill where there was no water, no grass, no electricity, and not even a road. Wuxing Ping was a place well known by local people as “stones rolling when wind blows,” a slope without life.⁴⁵ Life was harsh at first for the followers of Ling Ming Tang who took up residence there. Wang Shoutian recalled those days as being “so cold in the winter, and hot with so many mosquito in the summer as we lived in two shabby sheds. Every day we sent people going down the hill to fetch water for our basic consumption.”⁴⁶

Soon they began to work over and to make green this bare hill. They planted various trees including fruit trees; they built a road to the top of hill; they dug a deep well with the assistance of a government agency; and they built a water pool for drinking and irrigating trees and gardens. They spent 10,000 Yuan, their entire savings at the time, to buy five cows and six sheep from Xinjiang for breeding in 1986. Fifteen years has passed since then, and when I visited Ling Ming Tang recently I saw their herd had nearly reached to 100 cows and 600 sheep. The cows produce 500 kilograms of fresh milk per day. The net income of selling milk to the inhabitants in Lanzhou is about 1,500 Yuan every day, and with that money Ling Ming Tang has bought several trucks and vehicles for transportation.⁴⁷

In 1985, Ling Ming Tang started the construction work for its new *qubba* complex, using funds entirely collected from the donation of its believers. After sixteen years' endeavors, Ling Ming Tang has completed construction of a grand complex of buildings which includes a mosque with a size of 2,500 square meters by 30 meters in height that can hold one thousand people performing prayer; the Eight Diagram Palace in which the remains of Ma Lingming and Shan Ziju are buried; the Front Hall where the believers hold memorial services for Fragrant Papa, the Founder, and his successors; the Madrasa Building in which religious students study Sufi knowledge; the monastery residence; the wing buildings; student dormitories; the Five Arch Rostrum; Dining Hall and gardens, and more. The entire *qubba* is 40,000 square meters in size and contains about 16,000 square meters of architectural area. Standing on the top of Pentagon Apron, it looks like a large, tall, and grand stronghold rising up from the surrounding landscape, where it is looked up to by all. Once the encompassing brick walls had been built, the *qubba* became the largest *qubba* and mosque complex in Lanzhou.⁴⁸ The believers of Ling Ming Tang, led by Wang Shoutian, have invested 20,000,000 Yuan to make green fourteen hectares of bare land on the hill, planted 300,000 trees, and built three Chinese rose gardens. Its beauty has attracted more than 10,000 tourists from both China and abroad for the last few years and become one of the gems of Lanzhou's tourist industry.⁴⁹

At present Ling Ming Tang claims approximately 300,000 followers in China.⁵⁰ The believers with their families live in Gansu, Xinjiang, Ningxia, Qinghai, Henan, and other regions.⁵¹ The headquarters of Ling Ming Tang is located in Lanzhou, but it has several branch hospices in Guyuan, Ningxia and in Hami, Xinjiang. The followers of Ling Ming Tang in the Minhe County of the Qinghai Province founded a branch hall in the 1990s, but it was banned because its establishment did not receive the permission (*ijaz*) from Shaykh Wang Shoutian.⁵² Currently, Wang Shoutian has recruited twenty-six *mawlláh* (Persian and Turkish: “Madrasa students”) and several teachers to engage in Islamic Sufism education. Religious students and pious followers, including a group of young people who come from different parts of the country, are living at the Ling Ming Tang *qubba*. They study and work as volunteers for the Order on Pentagon Apron. The once-bare hill has become a large, beautiful garden. There is a remarkable similarity between Ling Ming Tang and the Bahá'í Faith, for Bahá'í believers around the world have come together to fund the construction of the “Arc,” a complex of beautiful buildings and gardens in Haifa, Israel, which also functions as the Bahá'í World Center. My pilgrimage to the Arc in 1998 left the same indelible impressions on me as my visits to the Ling Ming Tang *qubba*.

While resembling the Bahá'í Faith, Ling Ming Tang's Sufism has also absorbed other spiritual elements from other religions such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Ling Ming Tang maintained good relations with the clerics of Buddhism and Taoism during the times of Ma Ling Ming and Shan Ziju. When Shan Ziju

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passed away, Taoist monks came to Ling Ming Tang for mourning.⁵³ Even today, Wang Shoutian often makes friends with the Taoists in Lanzhou and holds dialogue with them in religious doctrine. All *shaykhs* of Ling Ming Tang over three generations keep their life in celibacy in the Order. This is different from other Muslim communities, and is one of the main reasons traditional Sunni groups accuse Ling Ming Tang of heresy.

Although Ling Ming Tang's headquarters in Lanzhou functions primarily as a Sufi hospice, it also maintains a wide-ranging connection with society. Ling Ming Tang has frequently contributed funds to help the high schools in the poor mountainous areas where mainly the minority ethnic groups reside. It has also often donated money, clothing, food and other materials to areas struck by natural disasters such as earthquake, flood, and drought.⁵⁴ Like the Bahá'í Faith, Ling Ming Tang tries its best to maintain an approach that is not anti-government in its political line. *Shaykh* Wang Shoutian is very skillful in keeping on good terms with the authorities at all levels. He holds several official positions, such as Deputy Chairman of Islamic Association of Gansu Province, the Standing Member of the Political Consultation Committee of Lanzhou Municipality, and Deputy Chairman of Islamic Association of Lanzhou. Several celebrated leaders, including the provincial governor, the provincial general secretary of the Communist Party, and even a daughter of the late Chairman Mao Zedong came to visit Ling Ming Tang. Their words of dedication are carved in calligraphy on wooden tablets and hung on the gates and the rostrum of the Order. By this way Ling Ming Tang maintains a solid social base and expands its influence in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-spiritual society. Perhaps the Bábí teachings mixed in with its Sufism have contributed to Ling Ming Tang's success and to its great revival in post-Mao and post-Deng China. Like the Bahá'í Faith, Ling Ming Tang strives to build a beautiful garden on the earth for its followers and for the whole of mankind.

Conclusion and Summary

It is very likely that the teachings of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh impacted upon the Sufi doctrine of Ling Ming Tang in Lanzhou, China in the period of the end of the Nineteenth to the early Twentieth Centuries. Such a hypothesis is based on the aforementioned fact that in Ma Lingming's teaching of Sufism he promulgated the concept of the Báb, the Mahdí who instructed Ma Lingming to lead his followers on the righteous path toward God. The concept of "Báb" has not been found among other Sufi orders in China which, along with the traditional Sunni Hui majority, accused the idea of the Báb as embraced by Ling Ming Tang as "the astray" and "[heretical] Shí'a." The second reason to support the hypothesis of the linkage between the Bábí movement and Ling Ming Tang is that, according to both written and oral recordings from Ling Ming Tang a Sufi by name of Grand Fragrant Papa Jing Duzi (Jidaz?), or Habíb Alláh, or Hamíd al-Dín, or Salim, or maybe several Sufis with these names came to Lanzhou from Iran by way of Baghdad, India and Kashghar to initiate Ma Lingming in Sufi and Bábí teachings.

The sources from Ling Ming Tang are also compatible with Bahá'í reports that an Iranian Bahá'í named Jamál Effendi had traveled extensively in India and Central Asia, coming as far as Yaqand in South Xinjiang in the latter Nineteenth Century, disguised as a Sufi dervish but disseminating Bahá'í teachings.⁵⁵ From this point of view it is possible that one of Jamál Effendi's disciples in South Xinjiang traveled to Lanzhou to proclaim the advent of and the teachings of the Báb to Ma Lingming, who subsequently launched a new Sufi order in Northwest China.

The argument of the possible linkage of the Bábí movement in Iran with Ling Ming Tang in China has been strongly supported by the historical phenomenon that China, particularly Northwest China, was often a niche for those who fled religious persecution in Iran. So it is not surprising that persecuted Bábís (and later, Bahá'ís) would flee to China, seeking refuge from slaughter. Finally, the paper discusses the similarities between the Bábí movement in Iran and Ling Ming Tang in China to strengthen the argument that both mystical movements have had at least some interaction. These similarities include that both religious organizations have almost the same social basis and social background, both advocate tolerance of other religious traditions and an attitude of inclusiveness toward them, both make great efforts to build a beautiful garden on the earth, and both came to advocate a neutral but friendly attitude toward the civil government. Finally, the paper put the interaction between the Bábí movement and Ling Ming Tang into the broader context of the encounters and contacts between Persian and Chinese religions which history records. It shows that no culture or civilization can develop in isolation, and that interaction between two different religious traditions or among the several spiritual

cultures creates the opportunities for dialogue and compromise necessary for human beings to bridge the differences which will inevitably arise in our globalized future. Only by following this guideline are any spiritual groups such as Bahá’í and Ling Ming Tang able to flourish and achieve their goals.

Notes

- 1) I am grateful to the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund for its very kind support to make this fieldwork possible and support my traveling expenses to London for the 35th Session of the Irfán Colloquium. Also I am deeply indebted to Dr. Moojan Momen for his carefulness in reading this paper and giving comments and suggestion to correct the errors in the text.
- 2) Concerning Baghdad Mr. Wang Yuguang, the older brother of Wang Shoutian who is the current leader of Ling Ming Tang, confirmed to me that “Our teaching came from Baghdad, for this we have the evidence to testify the true fact.” See the recording of my interview with him, on Jan. 25, 2001.
- 3) Ma Xiangzhen: *Qingzhen zhexue qiyu lu* (Notes of Wonderful Words in Islamic Philosophy), a manuscript hand-copied by Yan Qifeng, p. 82 and p. 195. These citations are included in Ma Tong’s book *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan* (Traces of the Original Sources of Islamic Sects and Tariqas in China), Yinchuan: Ningxia People’s Press, 1995, second edition, p. 132.
- 4) Ma Tong: *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan*, p. 130.
- 5) Dragon, Chinese *long*, here symbolizes the founder of Ling Ming Tang and his successors because all of them have the Chinese character *long* in their style names in the *silsila* of the Ling Ming Tang Sufi Order.
- 6) In Professor Ma Tong’s book it was recorded as “*awla*” is the *faridat* [Arabic: “imperative, obligation”] at the gateway of Báb.” See *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan*, p. 132.
- 7) Interviews with Mr. Wang Yuguang on Jan. 25, and Jan. 26, 2001.
- 8) Personal interview with Shaykh Wang Shoutian on Jan. 27, 2001.
- 9) *Lingming shangren zhuanlue* (Brief Biography of Saint Lingming), hand-copied by Ma Ruqi, p. 2.
- 10) Akhund Ma Zhanhai, the chief of the Western Courtyard of Ling Ming Tang in the third generation, personal interview, evening of Jan. 28, 2001.
- 11) In Persian and Turkish it also has the meaning of the representative of the hidden Imám Mahdí of Shí’a Islam, see the article “Báb” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 2, 1st edition, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- 12) Personal interview with Wang Shoutian, then age eighty-one, on Jan. 25, 2001.
- 13) Ma Xinglu narrated and copied by Ma Ustadh and revised by Han Shou (a Ling Ming Tang follower): *Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang dao tang jianli* (Brief Notes of Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang Qubba), May of 1994, p. 2.
- 14) Personal interview with Wang Shoutian on Jan. 25, 2001.
- 15) Ma Xiangzhen (probably a disciple of Ma Ling Ming): *Qingzhen zhexue qiyu lu* (Notes of the Wonderful Words in Islamic Philosophy), hand-copied by Yan Qifeng. P. 100.
- 16) This mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Lanzhou, remains open to this day.
- 17) *Lanzhou Lingming gongbei jiao shi* (History of Lingming Qubba *tariqa* in Lanzhou), a manuscript cited from Ma Tong: *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan* (Traces of the Original Sources of Islamic Sects and Tariqas in China), *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.
- 18) *Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang dao tang jianli* (Brief Notes of Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang Qubba), narrated by Ma Xinglu, hand-copied by Ma Ustadh and revised by Han Shou in May of 1994, p. 2.
- 19) For this event of Khoja Apak please refer to the book by Ma Tong: *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan* (Traces of the Original Sources of Islamic Sects and Tariqas in China), *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.
- 20) Ma Wanrui narrates: “The Lineage of the True Mainstream,” *Ling Ming Tang shiji* (Historical Notes of Ling Ming Tang), recorded by Ma Jieli, hand-copied in March of 1990, pp. 5-6. Akhund Ma Zhanhai holds the date of Qianlong Reign a mistake. According to his view, it should be in the late Nineteenth Century.
- 21) Ma Wanrui narrates: “The Lineage of the True Mainstream,” *Ling Ming Tang shiji*, *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 22) Extract from the inscription carved on the left brick wall of Rostrum of Three Flowers, Ling Ming Tang *Qubba*, copied by me on Jan. 25, 2001.
- 23) For this argument, please refer to Jianping Wang’s paper “Historical Connection between Persian Sufis and *Tariqas* in China,” presented to the International Conference of Mawlláh Sadra Philosophical Thinking (Tehran, May 1999).
- 24) Moojan Momen, personal E-mail dated Aug. 27, 2000.
- 25) Refer to my personal interview with Wang Shoutian on Jan. 25, 2001.
- 26) Another source gives the birth year as 1852, the 2nd Year of the Xianfeng Reign. See Ma Wanrui narrates: “Biography of Founder of Ling Ming Tang,” *Ling Ming Tang shiji*, *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 27) *Lanzhou Lingming gongbei jiao shi* (History of Lingming Qubba *tariqa* in Lanzhou), a manuscript cited from Ma Tong:

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- Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan* (Traces of the Original Sources of Islamic Sects and *Tariqas* in China), *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
- 28) *Lanzhou Lingming gongbei jiao shi*, *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 29) *Ibid.*
- 30) Ma Tong: *Zhongguo Yisilan jiaopai menhuan suyuan*, *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- 31) *Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang daotang jianli* (Brief Notes of Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang *Qubba*), *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 32) Ma Wanrui narrates: "The Will of Shan Zijiu, the Chief Successor of Ling Ming Tang," *Ling Ming Tang shiji*, *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 33) Personal interview with Wang Shoutian, Jan. 25, 2001.
- 34) Akhund Ma Zhanhai, the chief of the Western Courtyard of Ling Ming Tang in the third generation, personal interview, evening of Jan. 28, 2001.
- 35) Shan Zijiu (-1956), his pen name Yulong, became the Chief Successor of Ling Ming Tang in the second generation after the death of Ma Ling Ming in 1925.
- 36) Ma Renpu: *Yulong shangren luezhuan* (A Short Biography of Yulong, the disciple of the Founder), manuscript, hand-copied, pp. 5-6
- 37) Ma Renpu: *Yulong shangren luezhuan*, *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- 38) Ma Renpu: *Yulong shangren luezhuan*, *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9
- 39) Ma Renpu: *Yulong shangren luezhuan*, *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
- 40) My personal interview with Akhund Ma, a close disciple of Wang Shoutian, the Third Successor of Ling Ming Tang, on Jan. 27, 2001. Akhund Ma comes from Qinghai Province and lives in Lanzhou now.
- 41) See Du Shaoyuan's manuscript, "A Brief Introduction of Islamic Sects in Kashghar, Yarkand and Hotan Regions," paper submitted to the First Conference of Islamic Studies in China, Beijing, September of 1986, p. 49.
- 42) Cited from *Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang daotang jianli* (Brief Notes of Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang *Qubba*), narrated by Ma Xinglu, *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 43) *ikhwan* [Arabic: "brotherhood"], a movement influenced by Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia at the end of the Nineteenth Century by Chinese Hui Muslims who returned from hajj. It remains powerful in the Muslim communities in Northwest and Southwest China today.
- 44) I noticed this kind of hostility from the neighboring communities in Lanzhou when I was doing my fieldwork. Han Shou, a member of Ling Ming Tang, told me that his ex-wife and son who belonged to *Ikhwani* group had even beaten him because they thought Ling Ming Tang a heretic organization and, therefore, a betrayal of Islam. Even Ma Zhanhai, the chief of the branch which split off from Ling Ming Tang, was accused of straying from the righteous path. (personal interviews with Han Shou on Jan. 25, 2001 and with Ma Zhanhai on Jan. 28, 2001)
- 45) Li Hao liang: "Man Sows Seed on Sleeping Ox Hill," *Lanzhou Evening Newspaper*, Oct. 26, 1999, p. 2.
- 46) My interview with Wang Shoutian, on Jan. 26, 2001, p. 2.
- 47) Lu Kaidong and Wang Zhenxiang: "Dare Changing Bare Hill into Green Garden," *Qilihe Newspaper*, Jan. 12, 2000, p. 4.
- 48) Ma Qiang: "An Investigative Study of Mosques and *Qubbas* in Lanzhou," *Hui zu yanjiu* (Journal of Hui Studies), no. 4, 2000, p. 46.
- 49) Li Hao liang: "Man Sows Seed on Sleeping Ox Hill," *Lanzhou Evening Newspaper*, Oct. 26, 1999, p. 2.
- 50) My interview with Wang Shoutian, on Jan. 26, 2001, p. 2.
- 51) People from other Sufi orders in Lanzhou say that the figure of Ling Ming Tang's population is exaggerated. However, another piece of information recorded by Ling Ming Tang says that its followers number one million. See *Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang daotang jianli* (Brief Notes of Lanzhou Ling Ming Tang *Qubba*), narrated by Ma Xinglu, *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 52) Wang Shengli, a local cadre working at Bureau of Ethnic Minority and Religion of Qilihe District, Lanzhou, supplied this information. He was a close nephew of Wang Shoutian, the Third Successor of Ling Ming Tang (personal interview, Jan. 25, 2001). Even in Beijing I met a follower of Ling Ming Tang who owns an Islamic restaurant.
- 53) Interview with Zhang Qiang who comes from Minhe County in Qinghai, Jan. 27, 2001.
- 54) Ma Wanrui narrates: "The Lineage of the True Mainstream," *Ling Ming Tang shiji* (Historical Notes of Ling Ming Tang), *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 55) Liang Guoning: "Hui Elder Care of Education for Ethnic Minorities," *Lanzhou Evening Newspaper*, Jun. 21st, 1999, p. 16; Lu Xiangxin and Liang Guoning: "Ling Ming Tang on Pentagon Apron," *Lanzhou T.V. Program Newsletter*, etc.
- 56) Moojan Momen: "An Account of the Activities and an Analysis of the Role of Jamál Effendi in the Propagation of the Bahá'í Faith throughout Asia," later published as "Jamál Effendi and the early spread of the Bahá'í Faith in South Asia."

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