

Voicing the Politicization of Veil on Reputed International Journal Articles The Case of Uyghur and Hui

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ABSTRACT

In China, Muslim veil has been seen as the most controversial object. Since the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, the government has been focusing on the act of 'de-veiling' by executing firmly the law of veil ban towards the Uyghur, one of the two Muslim majority in China, while quite moderately towards the Hui. Using stratified purposeful sampling, the data were taken from Q1 Scopus-indexed journal articles. Deploying Hallidayean Transitivity system Appraisal Theory developed by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White, this discourse study examines the authorial voices on the veil politicization towards the Uyghurs and the Huis. The preliminary finding demonstrates that the material and relational processes dominate the language of academicians in framing the Chinese government's different attitude towards the Uyghurs and the Huis alongside negative judgment in monoglossic utterance to depict the Sinocentric tradition in China. The Hui is considered to be Sinicized, or acculturated to the Chinese, and thus able to carry out the practice of veil; while, the Uyghur, on the opposite, face discrimination in the practice of veil.

Keywords: Authorial voice, the politicization of Veil towards Uyghur and Hui, Transitivity System, appraisal theory, Q1 Scopus-indexed journal articles

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic veil has long been considered as the most controversial object in China, with seemingly endless discussions and intense debates over its significance for Muslims themselves and others who encounter it. For almost seven decades since 1949, when the People's Republic of China (hereafter, the PRC) was first established, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter, the CCP) have taken various measures in order to prevent Muslim women from wearing the religious clothing, despite its flourish within the country. The two Muslim ethnic majority groups in China, the Hui and the Uyghur, both adopted the practice of veil. Yet, the responsetoward both ethnic groups' veil practice are proved to be distinct. The Hui, the biggest Muslim population in China who supposedly due to its acculturation with Chinese is considered as "Sino-Muslim" or the Chinese Muslim, has carried out the practice of veiling even before the PRC was established. Similar to the Hui, the second largest Muslim population in China, the Uyghur, also began to veil prior to the establishment of the PRC.

However, subsequent to the PRC establishment, the government responded differently towards the Hui and the Uyghur, demonstrating strong disapproval of the Uyghur's veil rather than the Hui. Although the issue regarding the practices of veil has been widely discussed in numerous studies, for example Saba Mahmood's *The Politics of Piety* and Fatima Mernissi's *Beyond the Veil* discuss the veil within the field of feminism; Ashraf Zahedi's *Contested Meaning of the Veil and Political Ideologies of Iranian Regimes* and Muhaemin Latif's *Wearing Veil in Indonesia Public Schools: Religious awareness or Political Contest* provide perspectives from the socio-political sphere; and Ik Ran Eum's *Korea's response to Islam and Islamophobia: Focusing on veiled Muslim women's experiences* examines the practice of veiling in Korea through cultural aspect, there is not much study over the issue of veil practices in China. Journal articles discussing veil practices in China may be used to analyze the attitude of Chinese government towards the practice of veil embraced by Muslim population in China through the use of language in the articles. The language usage is to be analyzed with Systemic

Functional Linguistic (SFL) proposed by Michael Halliday [6] in order to find the function of language used in a text. This study aims to evaluate the language of authorial voice of the two chosen journal articles discussing the matter of veil in China, with one examines the Uyghur's and another the Hui's. The articles will be analyzed by deploying Halliday's [6] theory of Transitivity and the Appraisal framework postulated by Martin and White [7]. In order to decipher the function of language in the articles first will be analyzed using Halliday's Transitivity, categorizing the clauses or sentences in the article by their process. Next, the clauses or sentences will be analyzed by employing Martin and White [7]'s framework of Appraisal. While the veil practice carried out by the Hui Muslim women is closely linked to the aspect of political economy in the northwest China and regarded as a symbol of labor, the Uyghur's veil practice suggested the otherwise. The veil among Uyghur most of the time is considered as the manifestation of the radicalized Uyghur, and thus the CCP took actions to control the practice of veil performed by the Uyghur in Xinjiang.

1.1. Related Work

1.1.1. The Veil

The practice of veiling dated back to 1790 BC in the East, when aristocratic and married women were required to wear veil by the ruler of Babylon from 1796 – 1750 BC, Hammurabi. This was done as a means to differentiate the aristocratic and married women from prostitute, who were prohibited from wearing veil. Moreover, during the time of 'Islam Digital Galaxy', a term proposed by Fatema Mersinni which indicates the "information-connected Muslim community" debate, there was a surge of both veiled and non-veiled sexually aggressive Muslim women. The occurrence, thus, bespoke the relevance of veil as an instrument to curb sexual desire [1].

Most veiled Muslim women reveal the fundamental reason behind their veiling is due to the requirement written in the Qur'an. They fear the consequences of not wearing the veil in the afterlife –that is Hell. In the Qur'an, the English term for "veil" refers to interchangeably Arabic word *hijab*, where *hijab* is mentioned in total of seven times (Qur'an 7:46, Qur'an 17:45, Qur'an 19:16-17, Qur'an 33:53, Qur'an 38:32, Qur'an 41:5, and Qur'an 42:51). There, the reasons behind the practice of veil, or *hijab*, are mentioned. First, veils acts as the visual barrier of women from men so as not to be harassed publicly –providing protection and privacy for women, as well as restriction of sexual desire. Second, the veil acts as the safeguard of women's beauty, modesty, and virtue [2].

In addition to that, the practice of veiling is not simply done for religious reasons but also for social and political reasons. Derived from psychoanalytical aspects, the veil's objective to block women from male's gaze regarded as "a system of control." However, the boundary set by veil does not necessarily turn women invisible. Instead, women who embrace veil, in a distinct way, are visible. Concerning the veil in the field of gaze and look, the subject is seen from every sides. Yet, with the inability to see herself, the subject, thus, creates the ideal image of her own which is then manifested in clothes, or in this case, the veil. Ultimately, the veil becomes the embodiment of women as the subject of desire, piety, and morality [3].

1.1.2. The Uyghur and the Hui

According to the China's 6th National Population of Census of 2010, the amount of Muslim population in China is around 23 million, with the two largest Muslim ethnic groups, respectively, are the Hui (45%) and the Uyghur (43%). However, despite the history proved that Muslims have long been living in China, with the first recorded Muslim merchant arrived at the Middle Kingdom during the Tang dynasty, and the unification of regions with Central Asian Muslims inhabitants during the Qing dynasty, the displayed attitude of the ruling government towards both ethnic groups is contradictory. The reasons behind it was the result of a long historical background of both groups with the Chinese government, which includes the Sinocentric view that Middle Kingdom is surrounded by barbarians and the need to control the barbarians using the imperial practices, as well as the remembrance of acts of revolt [4].

1.1.2.1. The Hui

Arriving in China as a Muslim diaspora from the Middle East and Central Asia, the Hui later lost their identities, that is linked to their origin, which primarily were the native language and other cultural attributes. The Hui gradually became acculturated with the Chinese, and subsequently known as the "Sino-Muslims." The acculturation is further supported with the wide spread of Hui Muslims across China and the intermarriage of the Muslims with Chinese women. Due to their acculturation, the Huis are regarded as Chinese before they are as Muslim. In addition, since the mid-1950s, the Hui is categorized as one out of 55 ethnic minority group in China instead of a religious group. However, the Hui is constantly challenged on their loyalty of China's ideology, and thus the result in the allegedly "Hui rebellions" [4].

1.1.2.2. The Uyghur

Despite Muslim being a minority in China, the Uyghur is the Muslim majority in Xinjiang, a region in Northwest China. Yet, apart from being majority in the region, which today is referred to as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereafter, XUAR), the non-Muslims were ones to dominate the Muslims, making the region as “one of only five significant territories in Asia where non-Muslims rule over a Muslim majority,” with the other four are India’s subjugation of Kashmir, Israel’s subjugation of Palestine, and Russia’s subjugation of the North Caucasus and Tatarstan [4].

Since the late eighteenth century, the Uyghur has a long history with the Chinese government, who never treated Uyghurs as equal as the Han, China’s and the world’s largest ethnic group. Instead of granting the autonomy for the region, the government pressured the Uyghurs to do unpaid work and prohibited them from having a political status. The action promptly sparked outrage and roused the 1825 revolt which resulted in the death of 8,000 Chinese soldiers slaughtered by the Uyghurs. Subsequent to the PRC’s formation in 1949, the CCP implement the pacification of Xinjiang. Furthermore, with the Uyghur Muslim being the majority in the region and Western’s involvement in Xinjiang over their interest of Xinjiang itself being the biggest reserve of petroleum in China, the government strengthened its control over the fear of increased the radicalization and separatism of the Uyghur. CCP soon targeted the Uyghurs’ religious aspects and take measures such as shutting down mosques and the incarceration of imams and Muslims who wore religious clothing, such as veil. The CCP even took a step far enough with the plan to annihilate the Uyghurs [5].

The government’s entrenched idea that the Uyghur are the second-class citizens, along with the barbarous history between the Uyghur and the Chinese government led to the understanding that the Hui is perceived to be more compliant rather than the Uyghur.

2. METHODS

Using stratified purposeful sampling, the data were taken from two Q1 journal articles. The first article, written by James Leibold and Timothy Grose, entitled *Islamic Veiling in Xinjiang: The Political and Societal Struggle to Define Uyghur Female Adornment*, exploring the CCP’s persistence in executing the antiveiling policy towards the Uyghur Muslim women in Xinjiang. The second article, *The Silent Hat: Islam, Female Labor, and the Political Economy on the Headscarf Debate*, written by Guangtian Ha, examines the particular meaning of *maozi* as the “new veil”

among the Hui Muslim women, correlated to the aspect of labor as an impact of “transnational political economy”.

Both articles were analyzed by employing M. A. K. Halliday’s [6] theory of Transitivity and the framework of Appraisal introduced by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White [7]. The analysis of transitivity includes the examination of three elements and six categories of process of clauses and sentences presented in both articles. The three elements examined were the Participants, Processes, and circumstantial elements, with the six Processes include material process, relational process, mental process, verbal process, behavioral process, and existential process [6].

The analysis of Appraisal includes the examination of the authorial voice using three Appraisal domain of the clauses and sentences, with the three domains consist of Attitude (analysis of human behavior and value of things), Engagement (additional perspectives), and Graduation (degrees of intensity). Attitude is categorized into Affect (emotional reactions), Judgment (analysis of human behavior), and Appreciation (analysis of value of things). Engagement is also specified into two sub-category, Monogloss, which provides no room for other perspectives, and Heterogloss, which provide other perspectives to be included. The last domain, Graduation, is also divided into Focus and Force. Focus included the degrees of intensity which are non-scalable, while Force deals with intensification and quantification [7].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the Transitivity analysis of the two chosen journal articles, the findings consisted of all six processes were present with the mostly emerged processes were material process, as well as relational attributive and relational identifying processes in both articles.

In the article *Islamic Veiling in Xinjiang: The Political and Societal Struggle to Define Uyghur Female Adornment*, which hereafter will be referred as Article 1, by James Leibold and Timothy Grose, the material process mostly explained the occurrence surrounding the veil practice which is embraced by the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The occurrences explained frequently describe the actions taken by the CCP in order to implement the policy of antiveiling and the responses of the Uyghurs regarding the matter. By presenting material process, the authors suggest the veil has become the sole reason behind every action the government has taken [8].

Meanwhile, the second article written by Guangtian Ha entitled *The Silent Hat: Islam, Female Labor, and the Political Economy on the Headscarf Debate*, which

hereafter will be referred as Article 2, offers different explanation concerning the Hui Muslim women and the veiling practice they embrace in northwest China [9]. With constant appearance of the material process, the author suggests the historical context of the veil among the Hui Muslim women, how it developed into what they refer as the “new veil,” as a result of the aspect of “political economy”. Below are some of the clauses and sentences of both articles that are categorized as material process:

Table 1. Article 1 transitivity analysis (material process)

| Material Process | | |
|------------------|---|----------|
| Conjunction | Clauses/Sentences | Ellipsis |
| | New styles of veiling have entered China from abroad, | |
| While | the party-state strives to control [...] standardize Uyghur dress, | |
| | For over a century, Muslim and non-Muslim communities have been debating the significance of the “veil,” | |
| | are destabilizing the region | they |
| that | Uyghur culture, especially clothing, was targeted as a manifestation of the “four olds.” | |
| | As a result [...]’de-veiling’ has emerged as one of the most important tasks in managing religious activities in Xinjiang. | |
| | Over the last four years, the Women’s Federation and other parts of the XUAR government have staged fashion shows, exhibitions, performances, and other propaganda exercises, | |

Table 2. Article 2 transitivity analysis (material process)

| Material Process | | |
|------------------|---|----------|
| Conjunction | Clauses/Sentences | Ellipsis |
| | The trip produced something remarkable and profound. | |
| | [...] she was being “captured” by a camera operated by a male gaze. | |
| | The variety of Hui Muslim women’s “headgear” far surpassed what Zwemer and Pickens observed on their journey. | |
| | Grueling agricultural labor not only exhausts their ill-nourished bodies, but sweat and the fine yellowish gray dirt from the Loess Plateau (Huangtu Gaoyuan) also soil their headscarves and hats in a matter of minutes. | |
| | The history of colonialism, racism, and gendered orientalism that continues to structure the perception and regulation of the <i>hijab</i> in France gives the French headscarf a controversy a different face than that given to the debate in contemporary Algeria. | |
| | Many of the rural Hui Muslim women discussed in this article were born into Sufi families in Ningxia and Gansu, two provinces in northwest China with a large Muslim population. | |
| | it also spreads rapidly among college students who are eager to reform the Islam in which they were brought up. | |

Along with the material process, both relational processes were the second mostly used in the article. In Article 1, the relational processes portrayed the reasons behind veil practice in Xinjiang and the veiled Muslim women’s interpretation of the veil itself. Meanwhile, in Article 2, the relational processes tend to illustrate the quality of the veil and its significance to the Hui Muslim women. Below are some of the clauses and sentences of both articles that are categorized as material process:

Table 3. Article 1 transitivity analysis (relational process)

| Relational Process | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|-------------|
| Conjunction | Clauses/Sentences | Ellipsis | Type |
| | The Islamic veil is arguably the most politicized piece of fabric in the world, | | Identifying |
| | The over 10 million Muslim women in China have their own histories and cultures of veiling | | Attributive |
| and | [...] often marked membership within a particular community, | veils | Identifying |
| | The effects of the Cultural Revolution on veiling appear to have been long lasting. | | Attributive |
| that | veiling is neither a personal fashion statement nor a traditional ethnic custom in Xinjiang but rather a pernicious practice that reflects a complex and dangerous political situation. | | |
| | Women represent the love and beauty of the world | | Identifying |
| | Wrapping oneself up is not only unpretty, | | Attributive |

Table 4. Article 2 transitivity analysis (relational process)

| Relational Process | | | |
|--------------------|--|----------|-------------|
| Conjunction | Clauses/Sentences | Ellipsis | Type |
| | The hijab is, after all, just a scrap of cloth [...] | | Attributive |
| | For these Muslim women, the material character of the veil [...] is so significant. | | Attributive |
| | [...] in a different context it could also mean support for gender hierarchy and segregation. | | Identifying |
| | For them, Islam has never been “private,” [...] | | Attributive |
| that | the veil could become a sign for some, [...] | | Attributive |
| If | the new hijab possesses the impressive power to circulate across national borders and to elicit interest and discourses across a broad range of political parties and academic interpreters, [...] | | Identifying |
| | the white <i>maozi</i> functioned as a hinge that connected rural Hui women to their urban working sisters by way of imagination, [...] | | Identifying |

Departing from the Transitivity analysis, this examination of the authorial voice of both articles was done by employing the framework of Appraisal. The findings revealed that in Article 1, the tone used was mostly negative attitude in monoglossic utterances. The tone placed the writers to portray the veiling practice in Xinjiang as a distressing phenomenon which led the CCP to control the flourishing trend. Below are some examples of clauses/sentences:

Table 5. Article 1 appraisal analysis

| Appraisal | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Clauses/Sentences</i> | <i>Affect</i> | <i>Judgment</i> | <i>Appreciation</i> |
| The Islamic veil is arguably the most politicized piece of fabric in the world, [...] | | | √ (Heteroglossic Intensified Negative Valuation) |
| [...] the community itself responds, sometimes defiantly, [...] | √ (Monoglossic Intensified Negative Insecurity) | | |
| My hijab is fashionable and matches my clothes. | | √ (Monoglossic Positive Normality) | |
| [...] but these women smelled bad. | | √ (Heteroglossic Negative Propriety) | |
| [...] until Yaquob Beg violently seized political power from the Qing in 1867. | | √ (Monoglossic Negative Propriety) | |
| Travelers who arrived in the region from more conservative Muslim communities were surprised to find unveiled women freely mingling with men in the bazaars and engaging in commerce. | √ (Monoglossic Insecurity) | | |

While Article 2 also include some monoglossic negative attitude utterances, the negative quality presented was not nearly as much as Article 1. In the Article 2, the writer tends to focus more on the history of the veil practice among the Hui Muslim women and the symbolism of labor manifested in the veil by not providing assessment as much as in Article 1. Below are some examples of clauses/sentences:

Table 6. Article 2 appraisal analysis

| Appraisal | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Clauses/Sentences</i> | <i>Affect</i> | <i>Judgment</i> | <i>Appreciation</i> |
| [...] that it could become a sign (certainly a heavily disputed and politically loaded one) [...] | | | √ (Monoglossic Intensified Negative Valuation) |
| Such differences are crucial [...] | | | √ (Monoglossic Positive Impact) |
| Their ancestors – both male and female – had fought courageously [...] | | √ (Monoglossic Positive Capacity) | |
| [...] to the point where her husband was said to be “too weak” to assume the role of the household | | √ (Monoglossic Negative Capacity) | |

4. CONCLUSION

Despite being inhabitants in China for centuries, the two majority Muslim ethnic groups, the Uyghur and the Hui, has experienced highly different treatments from one another, which executed by the government in China, namely the Chinese Communist Party. While the Hui is regarded as one of China’s ethnic group due to the acculturation that earned the Hui the title “Sino-Muslim,” the Uyghur is considered as the opposite. After a long history of the Chinese government violence and discrimination towards the Uyghur, the CCP still has not considered the Uyghur as an equal to the ruling ethnic group, the Han. One of the manifestation of the different attitude towards the two Muslim ethnic groups is the government’s response to the practice of veil embraced by both groups. From the analysis conducted on two reputed journal articles, with one discussing the Uyghur and another the Hui, the distinction of the attitude towards both groups offers a sharp contrast.

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