

KOREA AND THE MING TRIBUTE SYSTEM IN KHATAYI'S *BOOK OF CHINA*

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The *Book of China* (*Khataynameh*), a description of China written in 1516, in Persian, for the Ottoman court by a Central Asian merchant, includes a brief section on Korea in the chapter on the twelve provinces of China, which describes habitual interaction between Muslim and Korean merchants. The brevity of this notice and the mis-categorization of Korea as a province of the Ming state might appear to indicate that the author was largely uninformed about Korea and its political relationship to China. However, the didactic and political nature of the text, which presented a utopian image of China as a model to be emulated by a nascent Ottoman Empire, as well as the author's more general familiarity with East Asian cultural and political circumstances, suggest that his subsuming of the Chosŏn state into the Ming empire was more an ideologically-motivated choice than a manifestation of negligence or ignorance. The image of economic and military power conveyed through the Ming tribute system formed the basis of a political ideal of universal empire; conveying this ideal was the principal goal of the text. The author's fealty to an idealized formulation of imperial authority echoes the Chosŏn elite's own strategy for balancing political independence with material support and cooperation from the Ming, by adhering closely to a Sinocentric Neo-Confucian ideology. The *Book of China* thus attests to, and constitutes part of, a global process of political communication that connected the Ottoman Empire with Central Asia, China, and Korea.

Key words: Silk Road, tribute system, Ottoman Empire, Ming, Chosŏn

The recognition that the Chinese “tribute system” had not made such effective demands on neighboring states to acquiesce to a Sino-centric world order in the

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centuries before the Ming period¹ has facilitated more nuanced treatment of China's foreign relations in other periods of Chinese history; but this finding also has important implications for the Ming period itself. Muslim travelers encountered the Ming state with the benefit of a historical memory of China potentially reaching back hundreds of years. Muslim historical memory can thus be said to have witnessed the rise of the Ming state, and the institution of this tribute system, which theatricalized the political relationships between China and its neighbors, and allowed for encounters between envoys from the Islamic world and Northeast Asia. For Central Asian Muslims' perceptions of the Ming state, the most important source is the *Book of China* (*Khataynameh*), the most substantial description of China produced in any west Afro-Eurasian language before the late sixteenth century.² The *Book of China* was written for the Ottoman court, first in 1516 with the preface and possibly other sections updated sometime after 1520. The author was a Central Asian merchant named Ali Akbar Khatayi who traveled to China around 1506 and likely benefited from the high position of Muslim eunuchs in the Ming court as well as communities of Muslims in China and Central Asia to produce a strikingly insightful account of the Chinese state and society.³ Written originally in Persian, the text was translated twice into Ottoman Turkish. The more common translation was completed before 1587, represented by manuscripts in the Süleymaniyye Library collections, Esad Efendi 1852 and 1853 (henceforth, EE1852 and EE1853 respectively), however another,

¹ John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-Hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), 173. Also see Morris Rossabied., *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 4-17.

² Ali Akbar Khita'i, *Khitay'nameh*, ed. Iraj Afshar Tehran: Asian Cultural Documentation Center for UNESCO, 1993. This critical edition of the Persian text will henceforth be cited by providing the page numbers in parentheses. For concise studies of the text, see Kaveh Louis Hemmat, "Children of Cain in the Land of Error: A Central Asian Merchant's Treatise on Government and Society in Ming China," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (January 1, 2010): 434-48; Paul Kahle, "Eine Islamische Quelle über China um 1500 (Das Khitayname des Ali Ekber)," in *Reprint of Texts and Studies on the Historical Geography and Topography of East Asia*, vol. 126 of *Islamic Geography*, ed. Fuat Sezgin, et al. (Frankfurt: IGAIW, 1993). Critical translations in French, Turkish, and Chinese are also available in Aly Mazahéri. *La Route de la soie* (The Silk Road) (Paris: S.P.A.G. (Papyrus), 1983; Lin Yih-Min. *Ali Ekber'in Hitayname: adli eserinin çin kaynaklari ile mukayese ve tenkidî*. Tai-Pei: [s.n.], 1967. Lin's translation also provides invaluable commentary based on comparison with Chinese sources; Ali Akbar Khita'i. *Zhongguo jixing*. [*The Book on China*], trans. Zhang Zhishan Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu, Xinzhi sanlian shudian chubanfaxing, 1988. I have preferred the vowelless Khatayi, orthographically identical to Khita'i, because this is used in Persian and Ottoman dictionaries.

³ Kahle, "Eine Islamische Quelle über China um 1500 (Das Khitayname des Ali Ekber)," 384.

independent translation was completed sometime before 1754, attested in Aya Sofya 3188 (henceforth AS 3188). The translator's preface in the more common translation, along with some colophons, provide evidence for the text's reception, suggesting it was relevant to a political struggle between positions that have been described as absolutist and constitutionalist.⁴ There are clear reasons why the text was read this way: Khatayi had portrayed China as a kind of constitutional monarchy—an example of how an empire could be centralized and highly bureaucratic, but not tyrannical, thus validating early-sixteenth-century Ottoman ambitions to form a centralized imperial state.⁵ The principal instrument through which China's security and prosperity were guaranteed, he claimed, was "their adherence to their *qanun*, to the extent that the emperor of China cannot transgress the *qanun* by a hair's breadth" (35). *Qanun* can be translated roughly as "law and system." In an Iranian and Ottoman political context, it refers most often to administrative and feudal law, and less commonly to the customs or institutions of organizations such as guilds.⁶ Khatayi's portrayal of China was essentially utopian, presenting the Chinese state as a model to be selectively emulated—proof that centralized, bureaucratic states could prosper and endure.⁷

In Khatayi's account of the Ming tribute system, he reports that he and his fellow-travelers were received splendidly alongside other peoples of Central, Southeast and South Asia, by an emperor he claims has become a Muslim—a phenomenon to which he attributes apocalyptic significance.⁸ Khatayi does not mention East Asian states that participated in the tribute system—Vietnam, Korea, or Japan—but instead describes Korea, along with the island of Java, as a province of China. Khatayi had encountered Koreans and indicates that he and other Muslim merchants did business with Korean merchants somewhat regularly. (118–9)

One explanation for this misclassification is that it reflects the limits of his

⁴ Baki Tezcan, "Law in China or Conquest in the Americas: Competing Constructions of Political Space in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," *Journal of World History* 24, no. 1 (2013): 107–34.

⁵ Hemmat, "Children of Cain," 440–43.

⁶ Y. Linant de Bellefonds, Cl Cahen, and Halil İnalçık, "Kānūn", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al. 2012; Cornell H. Fleischer. *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Āli (1541–1600)*. Princeton Studies on the Near East. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986, especially 290–92.

⁷ Cf. Ibn Khaldun's claim that dynasties had a natural lifespan and typically lasted only 120 years before succumbing to various forms of corruption that were the inevitable result of sedentary life. China appeared to Khatayi as an ancient civilization like that of Persia or Rome—relevant because Mehmed II had legally become the new Roman emperor, and made Constantinople his new capital—that had somehow not succumbed to whatever disasters brought those empires to an end.

⁸ Hemmat, "Children of Cain," 446–48.

knowledge of political geography—that the text reflects views of Muslims in Shanxi and other regions nearer to Central Asia. However, Mongol rule in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries brought a large number of Muslims into Korea, many of whom were merchants.⁹ Muslims settled in towns or neighborhoods, and were granted recognition and freedom to dress and worship according to their own custom until 1427, when an edict was issued that banned Islamic religious rites and distinctive dress.¹⁰ The justification given for this was that distinctive Islamic dress caused embarrassment and discouraged marriage between Muslims and native Koreans. It is not clear what became of Muslim communities in Korea—whether there was, for example, an exodus of Muslims from Korea, as there would be from Spain after 1492. Lee suggests that Muslims underwent gradual cultural assimilation.¹¹ Muslims in China must in any case have retained some memory of Korea in Khatayi’s time—his account of Korea seems to confirm this.

The *Khataynameh* contains a very brief notice on Korea in chapter 9, “on the twelve [*siz*] provinces of China”, among which is “Kowli” (from the Chinese *Gaoli*—the G and K are not distinguished in classical Persian), or “Kowliyestan.” This inclusion of Korea as a Chinese province, along with Java and Khotan, has been interpreted as an indication of reliance on out-dated sources.¹² Unlike the rest of the text, his descriptions of the provinces give much attention to commercial matters. Another very brief passage, in chapter 2, “on their various religions”, may also reflect developments in Korea, which is, however, not mentioned by name. The passage is lexically ambiguous. One of two possible readings is an assertion that the *qanun* of China is greatly desired throughout East Asia. (48) Given Khatayi’s interest in China’s “*qanun*” which in at least some instances seems to have referred to the Ming Code and other ordinances, it is worth considering whether he was aware that neighboring East Asian states participated in a shared legal culture based on Chinese models.¹³ The Chosŏn state had adopted the Ming Code as its own law at the founding of the dynasty, and issued new codes or edict collections based on Ming precedents four times

⁹ Hee-Soo Lee, *The Advent of Islam in Korea: A Historical Account* (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1997), 101–110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 112–13.

¹² Lin, *Ali Ekber’in Hitayname*, 7, 19–22. The Chinese translation of the *Book of China* offers no commentary on this passage. See Ali Akeba’er, *Zhongguo jixing*, 98–100.

¹³ William Shaw. “Traditional Korean Law and Its Relation to China.” In *Essays on China’s Legal Tradition*, edited by Jerome Alan Cohen, R. Randle Edwards, and Fu-mei Chang Chen, 302–26. Studies in East Asian Law. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980, 302–4.

since 1470. Both his categorization of Korea as a Chinese province and his ambiguous statement about the *qanun* are consistent with his having some awareness of these developments. These facts together raise the question of whether Khatayi's recognition of the wide appeal of Ming law in East Asia influenced his decision to depict the Ming state in utopian fashion for the Ottoman court.

In 1516, the Ottomans were still a moderate-sized, if promising regional power. Selim I had defeated his chief rival, Shah Isma'il at Chalderan in 1514, and was about to begin his Egyptian campaign that would end with the complete conquest of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517, making the Ottomans the new Mediterranean superpower by mid-century. Istanbul in 1516 was heady with apocalyptic and millenarian expectations, making it an especially propitious setting for a relatively ordinary individual like Khatayi to give voice to ideas that would ordinarily remain a hidden transcript of political aspiration and critique.¹⁴ In this environment, his knowledge of China seems to have gained him enough access to court circles for him to address concerns of the Ottoman political environment with greater perspicacity than might be expected from a semi-elite figure who had resided in Istanbul for at most six years.¹⁵ The *Khataynameh* not only attests to the unusual circumstances of the sixteenth century, but is of value as evidence for how the Ming tribute system and the Chinese state and its neighbors more generally had been perceived by the hundreds of "self-styled kings from Samarqand, Turfan, and Mecca" who visited the court year after year.¹⁶ The text was thus the product

¹⁴ On apocalyptic expectations in the sixteenth century, see Cornell H. Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps* (Suleyman the lawgiver and his time), ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La documentation française, 1992), 159–77; Cornell H. Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, eds. Massumeh Farhad, Serpil Bağcı, and Maria V. Mavroudi (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 232–43.

¹⁵ The Ottoman court accepted, and perhaps solicited, texts like the *Book of China* from travelers or visitors to Istanbul, e.g. the *Risâle-i Tatar-i Leh*. Michael Polczyński, "Seljuks on the Baltic: Polish-Lithuanian Muslim Pilgrims in the Court of Ottoman Sultan Süleyman I," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015): 6–8. Khatayi's references to the Book of Daniel in his account of the emperor's conversion as an eschatological event suggest he was aware of the preoccupations of the Ottoman court. Hemmat, "Children of Cain", 440. Cf. Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps* (*Suleyman the Lawgiver and His Time*), ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La documentation française, 1992), 170.

¹⁶ This phrase is an official's hyperbolic description of a large embassy that reached the court in 1536; however the general situation it depicts had held since Turfan's conquest of Hami in 1513, and even earlier; Ralph Kauz notes that merchants had effectively taken over the ostensibly *diplomatic* tribute missions since the late fifteenth century. See Morris Rossabi, "Ming China's

not only of its author, but of a whole network of informants and interlocutors.

It can thus be said that diplomatic relations between East Asian states affected Ottoman political discourse through a global process of political communication. It was not simply the size of the Ming imperial palace that shaped Khatayi and his informants' perception of its power and universality, but its sway over neighboring states, dramatized through the tribute system. Given the reception of the text, it can be said this perception of Ming sovereignty influenced the evolution of Ottoman political institutions. The consolidation of regional states in the early modern period has been theorized as both a set of parallel processes, and a set of connected processes, attested by related discourses of universal empire.¹⁷ The present study advances the hypothesis that it can also be described as a single global political process in which participants perceived the ongoing expansion, articulation, and replication of political structures.

The following is a translation of the section on Korea in the principal Persian manuscripts, followed by the different versions in the two Ottoman Turkish translations:

“The Ninth Division of the twelve divisions of the realm of China is called *Kowli*.¹⁸ This *Kowliyestan* is a realm that is built-up and wealthy to the utmost extent, such that the least of their merchants is worth ten times a hundred thousand *seyrs* of silver, each of their *seyrs* being worth ten *derams* [29g]¹⁹ of silver. It sometimes happens that one or two Koreans (*Kowliyestani*) buy all of the goods of our people. From the treasury of the emperor of China, soldiers of China are paid so many thousands of pieces of un-dyed taffeta—paid from the treasury—and the same is given to so many thousands of Mongols (*Qalmaq*), and the same to so many thousands of Indians (*Hendiyan*), and the company of Muslims, who number fewer than all the other groups, and are received with greater honor and given more and more generous gifts, and likewise the Tibetans, and the Uyghurs, the

Relations with Hami and Central Asia, 1404–1513: A Re-Examination of Traditional Chinese Foreign Policy,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970, 288; Ralph Kauz. *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden: China, Iran und Zentralasien im Spätmittelalter*. (Iran-Turan), Bd. 7; Variation: Iran-Turan; Bd. 7 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005), 186–87, 248–250.

¹⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1997): 735–62; Victor Lieberman, “Transcending East-West Dichotomies: State and Culture Formation in Six Ostensibly Disparate Areas,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 463–546.

¹⁸ In Legatum Warnerianum Or. 854 71b, a Persian manuscript, *Kowli* and *Kowliyestan* have diacritical marks indicating the pronunciation of vowels.

¹⁹ This figure is from Mazahéri, *La Route de la soie*, 228.

Owjods [perhaps a rendering of Oyirad],²⁰ Jurchens, and others.”

The more common Ottoman Turkish translation (represented by EE1852) omits all use of the Persianized toponym *Kowliyestan*. Otherwise, up to this point, the Persian MSS, and both Ottoman Turkish translations are essentially in agreement. Here is how each of them continues the passage, to the end of the section:

The Persian MSS:

“And to so many thousand people they give so many thousand [pieces of] un-dyed taffeta and armfuls of colorful satins, and for each person, three garments of gold cloth that they clothe them with, one on top of the other, and various kinds of other fabrics are also given. And that whole collection, the Koreans (*Kowliyestanian*) buy, and the price of that collection of goods they pay in gold and silver. They make all of that un-dyed taffeta into resist-dyed fabrics (*qelaghi*), for this is the style of eastern India and the Indians of the east all wear *qelaghi*. The goods that are obtained from *Kowliyestan* are all gold and fine linen.”²¹

AS3188:

“[the sentence continues] ...they give so many thousands of taffetas, all bought by one or two Koreans. They make them into colorful resist-dyed fabrics (*qelaghi*). The people from the eastern parts of India all wear *qelaghi*, and it is the custom of that region [alternatively: it is the gate to that region]—so they say, taking the goods and going. In short, it is our understanding that there is no people in the world as rich as the Koreans, and to the aforementioned people to whom the textiles are given as gifts and payment, all of it is paid for with pure gold, for in China it is not the practice (*qanun*) to debase gold and silver coins. The goods of the Koreans are gold [i.e. gold cloth?] and linen.”

EE1853 (representing the more common Ottoman Turkish translation):

“[the sentence continues] ...and so many thousands’ goods are taken to *Kowliyestan*. Merchants from there having traded [for the goods] in gold and silver, merchants from the eastern part of India then come to buy those goods.”

Lin Yih-min expressed doubt whether Kowli could be identified with Korea, because Korea was not a Chinese province during the Ming period.²² He also concluded that Khatayi had relied on Yuan-era information based on certain obsolete toponyms, his inclusion of Java and Korea as Chinese provinces, and the

²⁰ Mazahéri identifies the Owjod as Oyirads from the Ordos region. *Ibid.*, 228.

²¹ Lee confirms that these were among Korea’s exports. See *The Advent of Islam in Korea*, 87.

²² Lin, *Ali Ekber’in Hitayname*, 137.

claim that paper money was used in China (it had not been since the early Ming period; whereas the Yuan state attempted to use it almost exclusively). Khatayi completely omits the name “Beijing” for the capital, preferring instead “Khanbalegh”, and claims the Chinese call the city “Daydu”—both were Yuan-era usages. His use of the term “Kowli” (orthographically identical to “Gowli”),²³ as opposed to the more up-to-date dynastic name of Chosŏn, is also taken by Lin as evidence for reliance on older sources.²⁴

However, the toponym “Gaoli” was in use long after the Koryo state was replaced by the Chosŏn—attested in the *Lao Qida*, a textbook of spoken Chinese that was published in Korea beginning in 1423 and elsewhere.²⁵ Khatayi glosses “Kowli” as “Kowliyestan”—adding the Persian toponymic suffix, “-estan” and then proceeds to use this Persianized name in the rest of the passage. The gloss using a Persianized toponym, which he does not do for any of the other Chinese cities or provinces he lists, implies that the region was familiar to him and other merchants. That an ethnonym for the people from that region, “*Kowliyestanian*”, is generated from the toponym confirms its familiarity and furthermore implies that the people of Korea were identified as a distinct group. These terms and the implied geographical cognizance were a legacy of the Muslim presence in Korea discussed above.²⁶ The term “Kowliyestan” must have still been in use in Persian or Turkic languages (which borrowed freely from each other) in China and perhaps also Central Asia in the mid-Ming period. The omission of this toponym in the more common Ottoman Turkish translation suggests it was unfamiliar to Ottoman readers. The other translation (AS3188) tends to more exactly match the Persian text. In the section on Korea, while the translator did not hesitate to elaborate on the contents, the goal seems to have been mainly to add explanatory detail, drawing on information (the author’s or others’ knowledge) not in the text. The freer translation represented by EE1852 is thus the most likely to reflect the influence of the Ottoman linguistic environment.

The respective use and omission of “Kowliyestan” together with Korean readers’ confusion over the name “Qida” reveal the itineraries of geographical and political information. Korean scholars of the early fifteenth century, near the

²³ As noted above, the initial K/G is marked with a *fatha*, making this probably a very close phonetic rendering of the Chinese Gaoli.

²⁴ Liu [sic] Yih-Min, “A Comparative and Critical Study of Ali Akbar’s *Khitay-Nama* with Reference to Chinese Sources,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 27 (1983): 58–78.

²⁵ Discussing its date of composition, Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer cites Tatsuo Ota’s observations that the toponym “Gaoli” remained in use long after the beginning of the Chosŏn period. Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer, ed. *Grammatical Analysis of the Lao Ch’i-Ta: With an English Translation of the Chinese Text* (Canberra: Australian National University Faculty of Asian Studies, 1983), 3–5.

²⁶ Lee, *The Advent of Islam in Korea*, 87, 100–101.

time the *Lao Qida* was published, admitted to being confused by the name of the text—probably because the pronunciations had changed.²⁷ *Qida* was probably pronounced *kitay*—the Central Asian name for China that originated with the Khitan Liao dynasty—in Chinese during the Ming period.²⁸ This is the same name by which Khatayi named his book (*Khataynameh*) and by which he identified himself; he uses both this name and *Chin* for China, completely interchangeably, to refer to the whole of “Chinese” territory (including Java and Korea, as noted above). Khatayi implies that Central Asian and presumably also Chinese Muslims regularly encountered Korean merchants in Beijing. The AS3188 translation adds language indicating that the Muslim and Korean merchants spoke with each other directly—that the Koreans told the Muslims about the styles of dress in “the eastern parts of India.” Finally, Khatayi reports at the beginning of the passage that Kowliyestan is “built-up” (*ma’ mur*), implying he spoke about the place itself with people who had traveled there—who may or may not have been the Korean merchants themselves. The Ming capital was an emporium for information as well as for trade goods, and merchants who traveled there could and did learn about each other’s homelands.²⁹ Of course, this information did not always reach the literati, especially in the far west.

Still, there are signs that Ottoman writers benefited from a longer cultural memory of events in places as distant as East Asia. The above-mentioned gloss on the question of Koreans buying un-dyed taffeta is not the only case of significant information being added by the translators. In the section on gifts brought from “India”, which are “elephants” in the original, the translation represented by EE1852 has “elephants and giraffes”.³⁰ The Ming court received a number of giraffes during the fifteenth century—five by 1439—from Malindi on the east coast of Africa and from sultans of Bengal, who likely received them as gifts from Somali rulers.³¹ It was not only the navy under the command of Zheng He that brought embassies back to China. Ming regulations report that embassies from Bengal continued arriving through the sixteenth century, long after large-scale Chinese naval activity ended. Elephants—including white elephants and trained “dancing” elephants—were generally sent not from Bengal but from

²⁷ Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer, ed. *Grammatical Analysis of the Lao Ch'i-Ta*, 8.

²⁸ This point is attributed to Paul Pelliot. Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer, ed. *Grammatical Analysis of the Lao Ch'i-Ta*, 8.

²⁹ Contra Wills: “Chang’an in the Tang period had been a marvelous place to meet and learn about all the peoples of Asia; Ming Peking was not.” *Embassies and Illusions*, 21.

³⁰ EE1852 116b.

³¹ Sally K. Church, “The Giraffe of Bengal: A Medieval Encounter in Ming China.” *The Medieval History Journal* 7, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 1–37.

kingdoms in Southeast Asia, including Champa, Annam, and Cambodia, as well as from officials the court considered to be in charge of native populations.³² The Ottoman translator thus likely had some knowledge of the history of relations between China and South Asia—perhaps as a result of Ottoman naval activity in the Indian Ocean under Selim I.³³ Khatayī, on the other hand, seems to have conflated Southeast Asia with South Asia—not entirely unlike European conceptions of “the Indies”.

With this compression, we can begin to see how Khatayī’s understanding of political geography was shaped by distance and also politics—it will be shown below that this compression of space and political boundaries can be understood as a careful manipulation of the Chinese doctrine of *tianxia* that allows him to position Muslims as the most honored foreigners in the Ming court. His depiction of the eastern regions of the Indian Ocean, the Inner Sea, and those regions’ trade with China and Korea reflect the particular way that space was perceived and constructed by commercial networks.³⁴ Mazahéri argues that the terms “Indians” (*bendiyan*) and “East India” (*sharq-e bend*) referred to Buddhists of Southeast Asia, and to Japan, respectively. He asserts that the term *bendi(yan)* was distinct from *bendu*, and was used for the non-Muslim, especially Buddhist people of Southeast and East Asia, and thus in this case refers to Japanese.³⁵ While he does not provide any specific textual references in support of claim, the *Safineh-ye Solaymani* (“Vessel of Solomon”), the account of a Safavid embassy to the king of Siam, Phra Narai, that embarked in 1685, categorizes Japan as part of “Below the Winds”, a term referring to maritime Southeast Asia, which was reached by the monsoon winds. Were Japan known to Muslim merchants in Khatayī’s time, it would have been considered part of “Below the Winds”, however this is a navigation-related toponym, and not tantamount to identifying the place with India.³⁶ Mazahéri’s identification of this term with Japan is unwarranted.

³² E.g. in the *Ming Shilu*. Geoff Wade, trans. *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/hong-wu/year-5-month-2-day-8_
http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-4-month-8-day-14_
<http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/jia-jing/year-44-month-1-day-21>, accessed January 16, 2018.

³³ On Ottoman naval activity in the Indian Ocean, see Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39-40, 47-49, 57-69.

³⁴ The term *tianxia* means “[all] under heaven.” For a concise presentation of this doctrine see Q. Edward Wang, “History, Space, and Ethnicity: The Chinese Worldview,” *Journal of World History* 10, no. 2 (1999): 289–91. For Khatayī’s exposition of the doctrine, see below.

³⁵ Mazahéri, *La Route de la soie*, 228.

³⁶ Muḥammad Rabīʿ ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *The Ship of Sulaimān*. Persian Heritage Series, Vol.11. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 188–89.

To define the term “*qelaghi*”, Mazahéri refers to a fifteenth-century comical poem on styles of clothing by Nezam-e Qari, and interprets the term as referring to Japanese kimonos,³⁷ Nezam-e Qari’s use of the term, however, suggests only that a *qelaghi* is a type of printed cloth, perhaps with a very fine, delightful design, such as chintz or calico—hence the Koreans’ interest in un-dyed taffeta. Resist-dyed and other forms of printed cloth had long been used throughout East Asia. Strictly speaking, given that Koreans sold to Japanese customers, the *qelaghis* in question could include kimonos, however specific identification of this term with kimonos and thus the “Indians of the East” with Japan is unwarranted. Japan was not wholly unknown in Islamicate geography: the grid-based map produced by a fifteenth-century Central Asian geographer, Hafez-e Abru (d. 1430), included Japan (Yaban) as an island northeast of China,³⁸ however this awareness evidently did not translate into a widespread understanding that Korea and especially Japan were major centers of population and political power beyond Ming frontiers. Korean maritime trade reached regions from Japan to the Straits of Malacca, and its system for maritime contacts incorporated Japanese and Ryukyuan “elites forbidden direct participation in the Ming tribute system.”³⁹ Chinese merchandise was thus conducted from Korea to Japan, but surely also to Southeast Asia, about which Khatayi was better-informed.

Khatayi’s description of Java (the tenth province of China) reflects the substantial Muslim population and commercial presence there. The text of his description is as follows:

Java is a port, and they come and go from Mecca and from all the ports of India to Java. All the ports of China have relations with Java. To its west and south [*sic*] is India. The products that come from there are all the products of India, such as sugar and *garmeh daru* [spices considered “warm” in Galenic medicine, such as pepper and cinnamon], Indian textiles, rubies, and other things. All those products reach Beijing (*Khanbalegh*). (119)

Given that Java and Korea are both categorized as provinces of China, his understanding of Chinese territory seems to have included the Inner Sea as a whole.

Khatayi’s description of Yunnan further demonstrates how his cognizance of

³⁷ Mazahéri, *La Route de la soie*, 229; Mawlana Nizam al-Din Mahmud Qari-yi Yazdi, *Divan-i Albisab*, Qustantiniyyah [Istanbul]: Abu al-Diya, 1303 [1885-6], 14, 169.

³⁸ Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 183.

³⁹ Kenneth R. Robinson, “Centering the King of Chosŏn: Aspects of Korean Maritime Diplomacy, 1392–1592.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2000): 110–11, 121.

East Asian political geography depended on networks of Muslim merchants. Yunnan had been administered by a Muslim governor from Transoxiana following its conquest by the Mongols, and had a substantial Muslim population.⁴⁰ Furthermore, there is some evidence that Muslims from Yunnan played an important role in the rise of Muslim kingdoms in maritime Southeast Asia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which attests to the connectedness of the two regions.⁴¹ Khatayi claims that Yunnan features fortifications similar to the Great Wall,⁴² and is bordered on two sides by water, and on one side by land—a peninsula. The long wall fortifications he reports may refer to any substantial fortifications in Yunnan. Ghiyas al-Din Naqqash's report of Shahrukh's embassy included a detailed description of Chinese fortifications near Suzhou;⁴³ Khatayi assimilated knowledge of these and other fortifications in Central Asia to the Chinese concept of the Great Wall or long walls, as he reports having walked for ten days alongside the “wall and moat” that surrounds China—the phrase “walls and moats” seems to have been used in Chinese official discourse for fortifications more generally.⁴⁴ (40, 168) Yunnan province is landlocked. His account of its geography suggests that he confused the province with some large part of peninsular Southeast Asia, perhaps by misreading a map. Since the trade routes of Yunnan connected China with Burma and Thailand, it served as a major node for Muslim merchant networks reaching Southeast Asia. Seeing through the eyes of mercantile networks, Khatayi assimilated neighboring regions of Ming territory, and possibly other regions of Southeast Asia into Yunnan. Khatayi depicted China as a strictly-governed realm with a clearly-demarcated border—the Great Wall, which he describes as the “wall and moat that surrounds China,” within which he never encountered uninhabited or uncultivated territory.⁽⁴⁰⁾ However, the space of East Asia within which he and his informants traveled consisted of a collection of nodes such as Yunnan, Beijing, and Korea, which each collected people, goods, and information from more or less distant

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Misty Armijo-Hussein. “Sayyid 'Ajall Shams Al-Din: A Muslim from Central Asia, Serving the Mongols in China, and Bringing ‘Civilization’ to Yunnan.” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1997.

⁴¹ Hermanus Johannes de Graaf. *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries: The Malay Annals of Sēmarang and Cērbon*. Edited by M. C. Ricklefs. [S.l.]: Th.G. Th. Pigeaud, 1984.

⁴² It is possible that Khatayi traveled near the part of the wall built in the late fifteenth century. On the history of the wall, see Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 100–105.

⁴³ Ghiyāth al-Dīn Naqqāsh, “Report to Mirza Baysunghur on the Timurid Legation to the Ming Court at Peking.” In *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art*, translated by W. M. Thackston. (Cambridge, Mass: The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1989), 284.

⁴⁴ Rossabi, “Ming China's Relations with Hami and Central Asia, 1404–1513,” 211.

regions—hence, the Ryukyu Islands and Japan seem to be conflated with “the eastern part of India”.

Khatayi’s understanding of East Asian geopolitics, as encountered through the tribute system also projects Ming authority outward onto the regions he was less familiar with. This projection also reflects the hegemony of the Ming whose recognition was an avowed policy of the Chosŏn state, described by the Confucian term *sadae* (“serving the great”).⁴⁵ While the principal motives for *sadae* can be considered pragmatic, a coerced response to Chinese dominance, the sixteenth-century scholar Yi Hwang considered the basic similarity of China and Korea to be the basis for the policy.⁴⁶ It was in fact around the mid-sixteenth century that the tribute system reached the peak of its hegemony within Asia.⁴⁷ The tribute system thus informed Khatayi’s construction of an idealized image of universal empire. His account of the ceremony in chapter 6, on the palace (there is a separate description of the ceremony in chapter 15) is as follows:

“After the emperor is seated upon his dragon throne, in all that splendor, they let in the people who were held back behind the gates, including the civil officials and military officers and the emissaries who have come from [different] directions. All of them proceed to their places with all possible speed, entering in groups. The place and station for each group is specified, and the people who have come from this side of the world, meaning from the lands of Islam, are given precedence over all the others, and stand two or three paces closer to the emperor of China, and they respect Muslims over all others. After the Muslims stand the Tibetans, and after the Tibetans stand the Mongols [*Qalmaq*], and after the Mongols stand the Uyghurs, and after the Uyghurs stand the group of Owjod and Jurchens, and after the Owjod and Jurchens stand group upon group of various and sundry Indians. Each group has come from a country and each group wears a different kind of clothing and speaks a different language, and they speak in seventy-two languages in China, and nothing compares to how limitless and plentiful those languages are; we know many tongues with different pronunciations not one of which is like those of Anatolia. And, on the right side of the emperor of China stand the military [officers] and men of

⁴⁵ On the pragmatic logic of this policy, see Kirk W. Larsen, “Comforting Fictions: The Tribute System, the Westphalian Order, and Sino-Korean Relations,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (May 2013): 233–57. In this article, Larsen argues the Chosŏn state embraced *sadae* because of their lack of power relative to the Ming state. Also see Ji-Young Lee, “Diplomatic Ritual as a Power Resource: The Politics of Asymmetry in Early Modern Chinese-Korean Relations,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 309–36.

⁴⁶ Yun, “Rethinking the Tribute System,” 216.

⁴⁷ See Wills, *Embassies and Illusions*, 170–175.

learning, and on his left side stand the officials of the men of the pen, and behind the imperial throne stand the palace functionaries. Among them are eunuchs, and women dressed like the eunuchs. No one would dare to raise his head before the emperor of China, and look upon the emperor of China or the others. In front of the emperor are officials who have come from the provinces of China in pursuit of ranks and positions, and groups of Eastern Christians (*papas*) and Eastern Christian officials (*omara*) [*sic*—the men so described were likely Tibetan lamas⁴⁸] and envoys who have come from the edges and corners of the earth all stand row upon row facing the emperor, and those aforementioned doors and gateways of the utmost delicateness, befitting dominion over the world, visible before the face of the emperor. Inside those gates stand row upon row of soldiers and elephants, and within the aforementioned seven gates all of this pomp and circumstance can be seen. In that part of the imperial court of the emperor of China are so many thousand Bactrian crows with red feet and yellow beaks, and ducks, and varieties of strange and wondrous birds, which assemble every morning above the palace on the tiles of green porcelain, sitting in the place of the court, without noise or delay—the like of which, were you to try, you would without doubt fail to find outside the palace. This is no doubt the effect of a talisman, and one reason the emperor can claim to be Solomonic is the appearance of those birds in court every morning.”

As the text is not simply a first-hand account, but draws on the social memory of Central Asian and Chinese Muslims reflecting decades of interaction, the absence of Koreans and Japanese from this account of the reception ceremonies is likely not a coincidence—that is, it is not simply explained by their being absent from a particular ceremony Khatayi witnessed. The Chosŏn state in particular sent many missions to the Ming court (several per year), and as discussed above, Khatayi reported habitual business dealings between Muslim and Korean merchants, and Korean envoys communicated with Muslims. The other groups he identifies with precise toponyms or ethnonyms are all from Central Asia; his use of the vague name “Indians” for visitors from what he understood to be multiple South and Southeast Asian kingdoms suggests he did not recognize their respective

⁴⁸ Mazahéri suggests this interpretation; the Zhengde emperor did in fact bring many Buddhist monks to the capital. See David M. Robinson, “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols,” in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)*, ed. David M. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass.: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008), 365–412; David M. Robinson, Idem. *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 87 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 376–80.

toponyms—and yet he communicates familiarity with Korea as a geographical concept.

Khatayi's emphasis on the claim that Muslims were honored above other visitors offers what can be considered the core reason for Khatayi's geopolitical compression of Korea and (perhaps) Japan into China. The Chinese doctrine of *tianxia* dictated that if Korean envoys were received in the ceremonies Khatayi witnessed—which in any case involved not only reception of foreign envoys, but also the granting of ranks and titles, or perhaps *jinsbi* degrees, to Ming subjects—the Koreans would have been given a place of clearly higher status than Muslim envoys.⁴⁹ The Zhengde emperor, as part of his larger effort to revive the Mongol legacy of universal empire, re-instituted the demand for “human tribute” (eunuchs and slaves) from Korea; he evidently did not neglect diplomatic contact with Korea.⁵⁰ Khatayi also implies that Tibetan lamas, misidentified as Eastern Christians, also occupied a place closer to the throne than the Muslim envoys—but the Tibetan envoys are listed separately, further away than the Muslims. Then, by classifying Korea as a province *within* China, he could position Muslims as the most respected of all outsiders.

Khatayi's two chapters on envoys to China reinforce this compressed political geography. Chapter 15, which describes reception of Central Asian Muslims, features the most detailed description, and as noted above, frames the whole edifice of the Ming tribute system in explicitly apocalyptic terms.⁵¹ Chapter 16 discusses envoys from groups mentioned in the above excerpt from chapter 6: Tibetans, Mongols, and “Indians”. The section on the Mongols is brief, as Mongols are discussed at length elsewhere in the text. The section on “Indians” is even briefer, noting only that the missions bring elephants and that he was unable to determine the gender of the elephants' drivers. The section on Tibet, the most substantial of the three, includes a legend about their descent from a giant dog who offered to help the emperor in exchange for being allowed to marry his daughter.⁵² Lin observes that a number of Chinese texts contain similar stories.⁵² Mazahéri connects this story to ancient Iranian ethnology and cosmology, suggesting that dogs and wolves represent, respectively, the good and evil aspects of creation in Zoroastrian dualist cosmology, and thus associates the story

⁴⁹ Lee, *The Advent of Islam in Korea*, 111.

⁵⁰ On the Zhengde reign see Robinson, “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols,” 403–405; on “human tribute” see Peter I. Yun, “Rethinking the Tribute System: Korean States and Northeast Asian Interstate Relations, 600–1600.” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1998, 200–201.

⁵¹ I.e. his citation of the Surat al-Nasr at the end. For further discussion of Khatayi's eschatology, see Hemmat, “Children of Cain,” 444–448.

⁵² Lin, *Ali Ekber'in Hitayname*, 161. The Chinese translation offers no comment on this story.

with a wider phenomenon of Central Eurasian myths of wolf ancestry.⁵³ Tibetans are not discussed elsewhere throughout the text as the Oyirad Mongols are, however one other mention is noteworthy: Khatayi reports that “one of the idiots from our group” got into a fight and killed one of the Tibetans, which landed his whole company in jail.(100) The inclusion of the story about canine ancestry, along with his story of Confucius,⁵⁴ (140–41) and a number of passages where his language closely matches that of Chinese official discourse, suggest that he had considerable knowledge of Chinese world-views and culture, and was well equipped to translate them into a Persianate mytho-political idiom.⁵⁵

Khatayi’s portrayal of East Asian political geography should also be understood in terms of his own political vision and terminology. The description of birds at the end of the passage quoted above connects the Chinese palace to Solomon as a symbol of universal empire—this general characterization of China is maintained throughout the book.⁵⁶ To subsume Korea and perhaps also Japan into China is consistent with his larger goal of portraying the Ming state as a universal empire and a kind of utopia. Since Korea had been conquered by the Mongols, acknowledging its political independence from the Ming would undermine his larger message. It is also significant that the number of provinces is twelve—a formulaic number, implying completeness or comprehensiveness. China’s age, according to Khatayi—6000 (or 6500, in one manuscript) years: “they say it reached this [state of] perfection in twelve thousand [or thirteen thousand] of their years, because they count both day and night” (that is, they count each day as two days, each year as two years), putting the empire at the start of, or in the middle of its seventh millennium.(168) His characterization of China’s linguistic diversity—seventy-two is also a formulaic number, signifying abundance—indicates that the domain ruled by the Ming is vast. I would suggest that by using formulaic numbers Khatayi implicitly relinquished some of his claim to numerical precision. He was not offering a precise figure that invites comparison to official Chinese documents. It may be that Khatayi only knew about ten actual provinces, and added Korea and Java to make twelve; or that he knew of others and omitted them, the better to communicate the concept of a universal empire. His point, in either case, is this “state of perfection.”

⁵³ Mazahéri, *La Route de la soie*, 260–61.

⁵⁴ Hemmat, “Children of Cain,” 443.

⁵⁵ I.e. his account of a petition that compared Muslims to “wild grass” or weeds, which resembles Chinese rhetoric, as well as, possibly, his account of the Tumu crisis. Hemmat, “Children of Cain,” 444.

⁵⁶ On the mytho-political uses of Solomon in fifteenth-century Iran, see Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, “Mytho-Political Remakings of Ferdowsi’s Jamshid in the Lyric Poetry of Injuid and Mozaffarid Shiraz,” *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 463–87.

This sense of the universality of Ming rule is also used to come to terms with Chinese ethnocentrism. For Khatayi, an important aspect of the ideology of the Ming state is a willful ignorance of outsiders, and a solipsistic geographical imaginary. Khatayi reports that in the prisons, they have twelve offices for each of the provinces of China, and do not recognize any region outside; he and his companions (who were briefly incarcerated pending trial over the fight with the Tibetan) were classified as residents of Shanxi, which is in fact the province they would have entered through from Central Asia. (99–100) Khatayi characterizes the prisons as bureaucratic institutions in their own right: data such as the province of origin, and age of inmates is collected upon admission. “Those who do not know their own age, they examine their teeth, as is done for the rest of the animals, and judge a person’s age by a person’s teeth.”(99) Although there were, of course, texts by Chinese travelers to Central Asia, Ming records do confirm this perception in some ways—one of the reasons offices dedicated to foreign relations employed eunuchs was that they were more willing to interact with foreigners.⁵⁷

Let us then return to the other passage, on the law (*qanun*) of China, which may reflect an awareness of the basic political features of the Chosŏn state. In chapter 2, “on their various religions” Khatayi discusses the religio-philosophical basis of the Chinese *qanun* and the education of Chinese scholar-officials, whom he describes as following the creed of the emperors, who are officially Buddhists of a philosophical persuasion, and who must be scholars (*‘alem*) in their own religion and in the science of record-keeping (*‘elm-e siyaq*).⁽⁴⁷⁾ He gives especially great attention to the (generally tolerant, accepting) treatment of Muslims and the formerly secret (and now open) affection of the emperor for Islam. This chapter more clearly than any of the others reflects a view shaped by the concerns of Muslim Chinese, who were likely among Khatayi’s most important contacts in China. Thus, he reports conflicts between the emperor and officials who accuse Muslims of evading taxes (the anecdote refers to anti-smuggling efforts by the Ming official, Yang Yiqing), and claim that Islam is not allowed in the *qanun*—which must in this instance refer to the Ming Code and Ming law more generally.⁵⁸ The emperor responds that the *qanun* has no jurisdiction over private beliefs, only over outward conduct. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ Khatayi goes on to explain that the Zhengde emperor has in fact embraced Islam, first in private and then openly. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Chapter 15, on the reception of Muslim “ambassadors” repeats a version of this anecdote, again emphasizing that the emperor overcomes the officials’ objections by means of the *qanun*, which has jurisdiction only over outward conduct. ^(47–48)

After discussing evidence the emperor has become a Muslim, Khatayi makes a

⁵⁷ Rossabi, “Ming China’s Relations with Hami and Central Asia, 1404–1513,” 239.

⁵⁸ Hemmat, “Children of Cain,” 444.

lexically ambiguous statement that can be read in two ways, depending on where (given the absence of punctuation marks in classical Persian and Ottoman texts) one infers the sentence break:⁵⁹ “The Chinese, and for that matter all the unbelievers of the East are completely inclined to Islam. And that *qanun* by which China is administered, they say this is the path and creed of the Buddha.” Or: “The Chinese and all the unbelievers of the East are completely inclined to Islam and to that *qanun* by which China is administered. They say this is the way and creed of the Buddha.” Immediately following this sentence is an anecdote about the Buddha, which concludes by observing that his teachings have been lost, and believers have descended into idolatry.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The preposition *beh* translated here as “to” is placed before both “Islam” and “that *qanun*”, positioning the two phrases as parallel structures. The difference in meaning between the two readings is thus whether “the Chinese and... all the unbelievers of the East are completely inclined to... that *qanun* by which China is administered.” Both Ottoman Turkish translations prefer the first reading (as does Mazahéri, perhaps based on the Ottoman translation), while Afshar preferred the second reading.

Readers’ interpretations of the phrase were likely influenced by their own assumptions. The claim that Ming law was based on Buddhism would have sounded wholly mistaken to people in East Asia, although the same word and character, *fa* (法), was used for both law, in a general sense, and the Dharma. Khatayi’s conflation of these two senses of *fa* would have been encouraged by the familiar (Islamicate) notion that laws were revealed by prophets—among which Khatayi numbered the Sakyamuni Buddha. However, Khatayi explicitly identifies the legislator, or *moqannen*, with Confucius; further complicating matters, the esteem in which he held the Chinese *qanun* may have provoked objections from readers—a point which will be addressed below.

It is thus likely that Khatayi sought and failed to *subtly* communicate the second reading to his readers, who were less familiar than him with East Asian political realities. To those more familiar, it is obvious enough that the *qanun*, which must refer to the Ming Code, but perhaps also Chinese law and philosophy more generally, was appreciated throughout East Asia, and furthermore recognized as specifically Chinese.⁶⁰ The Chosŏn state had not only adopted the Ming Code as the basis of its criminal law, at the inception of the dynasty, but continued to update its codified law by issuing new codes or edict collections based on more

⁵⁹ In classical Persian, “and” (*va*) can be either a conjunction or mark a sentence break.

⁶⁰ Yun, “Rethinking the Tribute System,” 17, 56, 168; William Shaw, “Traditional Korean Law and its Relation to China,” in *Essays on China’s Legal Tradition*, eds. Cohen, Jerome Alan, R. Randle Edwards, and Fu-mei Chang Chen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 303–305.

recent Ming legal writings in 1470, 1474, 1485, and 1492.⁶¹ Chosŏn law was in significant measure an extension of Ming law. The Chosŏn literati's embrace of Neo-Confucianism would also have supported such a conclusion. Ming laws appealed to Chosŏn elites specifically because of their intelligibility, clarity, and specificity.⁶² Such a view is consistent with the spirit of the law that emerges in Khatayi's legend about Confucius.⁶³ Japan and Vietnam also participated in this common Confucian legal culture, so the second reading of the passage, if that was intended, could have been informed by more general remarks he and his informants heard, or vague awareness of the larger East Asian context. Then, the Ottoman translator, unaware of the East Asian context, did not perceive this remark about the prestige of the *qanun* in East Asia.

Another possibility is that the first reading was preferred because of a problematic religio-political implication in the second. One barrier to the codification of dynastic or feudal *qanuns* in the Islamic world was the perception of its usurping the place of the Shari'ah.⁶⁴ Given its ostensible importance, it is curious that Khatayi does not cite any text of the *qanun* verbatim, and names only a few specific provisions, which must thus be considered of great importance. One, mentioned above, is that the law guarantees freedom of conscience; another in chapter 6 on the palace, where he describes legal measures according to which emperors can be deposed for failing to perform their duties.⁽⁹³⁾ Similarly, he reports that the emperor is forced to adhere to an official schedule, in chapter 14, "On Their Academies" (*khattatkhanehha*), where he also notes that academies teaching the science of record-keeping (*'elm-e siyaq*) are built in every province, at government expense; it is here where officials who administer the empire learn the "science of *qanun*".⁽¹⁴²⁾ A different provision he describes in chapter 6 is that the emperor must not speak with "officials outside the palace, or people outside the palace," and only communicates with officials outside the palace in writing, with a special gateway reserved for documents to be sent and received.⁽⁹²⁾ He refers throughout the text to the general strictness of the law, and how assiduously the Chinese—especially government officials—adhere to it, for fear of punishment, even to the extent that parents would turn in their children and vice versa.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ While the latter remark was at least officially contrary to Ming legal practice, the more general image of strictness, and of the emperor's virtual imprisonment by palace ceremonial and complete reliance on bureaucracy, was

⁶¹ Pong-dŏk Chŏn, William Shaw, and Tae-gwŏn Ch'oe, *Traditional Korean Legal Attitudes* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Berkeley, 1980), 30.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶³ See Hemmat, "Children of Cain," 444.

⁶⁴ "Ḳānūn" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*.

true for the Chosŏn state even more than for the Ming. Therefore, whether “*qanun*”—which Khatayi uses in several different senses—meant codified law, or the political-administrative system as a whole, it is quite likely that he was told directly, or inferred that the Koreans he interacted with lived under a similar law and system.

Another reason to prefer the second reading of the sentence is that the *qanun* was already a central theme of the chapter, and played an important part in the conversion of the emperor, through which conversion of all the unbelievers of the East was to come about, as noted above. The discussion of Buddhism immediately following the passage in question portrays it as a corrupted religion, with Buddhists in the present time worshipping the sun and golden calves—formulaic symbols representing idolatry. (50) Since the *qanun* had a “legislator”, Confucius, it makes more sense that Khatayi would here be emphasizing its broad appeal and status as a living legal-political tradition, rather than its connection to a prophet whose teachings have been corrupted.

There is thus reason to believe that the original Persian was intentionally ambiguous: the parallelism between the *qanun* and Islam came too close to asserting that they are essentially comparable, even equal. This reading would have been objectionable to some Ottoman readers, but attractive to others, resonating with millenarian beliefs of certain Islamic intellectual circles that were increasingly prominent in the long sixteenth century, achieving their fullest expression in the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar I.⁶⁵ Detailed discussion of these ideas is beyond the scope of the present discussion—in short, it was thought that the approaching Islamic lunar millennium and a major astrological conjunction that were to occur in the late sixteenth century would bring an era of rule by a universal saint-king, whose authority transcended credal divisions.⁶⁶ The unparalleled cosmopolitanism and tolerance of Akbar I’s court was informed by the millenarian concept of “universal harmony” (*solh-e koll*), meaning harmony and mutual tolerance of different religious and credal communities, which had roots in fifteenth-century Iran.⁶⁷ To Khatayi, the Chinese *qanun* actually achieved

⁶⁵ A. Azfar Moin. *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 138–46; Fleischer, “Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences,” 233–36; Fleischer, “Mahdi and Millennium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation. Vol. 3: Philosophy*, 2000, 42–54.

⁶⁶ On the development of these expectations within the larger evolution of Islamic political ideology after the Mongol conquests, see Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki. “Early Modern Islamic Empire: New Forms of Religiopolitical Legitimacy.” In *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, eds. Armando Salvatore, Roberto Tottoli, and Babak Rahimi (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018); Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah,” 169–70.

⁶⁷ Moin. *The Millennial Sovereign*, 141–49; Abbas Amanat. “Persian Nuqtawis and the Shaping of the

something close to universal harmony by replacing the saint-king with a bureaucracy that constrained the arbitrary individual will of the monarch.

While one grammatically ambiguous line may seem insufficient to convey such a consequential point, it is in fact characteristic of Khatayi to assert very strong, possibly heterodox claims through a single ambiguous or omitted line. Citations of Persian verse convey some of the most important claims in the text, imbuing aspects of Khatayi's description or narrative of China with meaning in Irano-Islamic cosmological terms.⁶⁸ The strongest implications of these claims are conveyed in individual lines or couplets. The omission of some such lines in the AS3188 translation suggest that the meaning was not lost on readers.⁶⁹

Chapter 2, as a whole, places very strong emphasis on tolerance, both through these anecdotes and through a verse interlude near the end of the chapter, which concludes by explaining that mass-conversion to Islam is imminent because the Chinese lack religious enmity, and do not criticize others for practicing different religions, but rather, encourage them. (50) This latter passage is left completely untranslated in the more common Ottoman Turkish translation. In the AS3188 translation, it is augmented with several lines of additional discussion, explaining the great significance of the non-believers of East Asia all becoming Muslims, and how this might take place.⁷⁰ These additional glosses are consistent with the omission from the same translation of ultra-humanistic lines mentioned above. The translator of AS3188 seems to have been more conventionally pious than either Khatayi or the translator of the more common version, whereas the other translator was more concerned with statecraft, as attested in the translator's preface. This concluding passage of the chapter was a site of contention in some sense—it seems unlikely that the translator simply neglected to translate it out of laziness or disinterest. Perhaps it was objectionable to some readers—Ottoman literati generally knew Persian, but regardless, leaving this passage untranslated

Doctrine of 'Universal Conciliation' (Sulh-i Kull) in Mughal India." In *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 367–91.

⁶⁸ Of particular note here is his discussion of the Tumu Crisis. See Hemmat, "Children of Cain", 443–4; idem, "Citations of 'Attār and the *Kanz al-Haqāyeq* in 'Alī Akbar Khatayi's *Book of China*," forthcoming in *Iranian Studies*.

⁶⁹ The more common EE1852 translation leaves all of the Persian poetry untranslated. In the AS 3188 translation, however, lines that express strongly humanist views are omitted from a long verse citation in the preface. Hemmat, "Citations of 'Attār and the *Kanz al-Haqāyeq*".

⁷⁰ An Ottoman document confirms that around 1510, rumors were circulating in Samarqand and Bokhara that the Zhengde emperor had become a Muslim. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, "Les événements d'Asie Centrale en 1510 d'après un document ottoman" (Events in Central Asia in 1510, according to an Ottoman Document), *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 12 (1971): 189–207.

might have blunted its impact for readers more familiar with Ottoman Turkish than with Persian. Perhaps it was either a quote from another text, or a near-quote—highly conventional language that readers would recognize, thus left untranslated just like the Persian poetry.

The specific attention to religious tolerance in this context not only concerned the amazing rumor that the emperor of China had become a Muslim, but impinged on the reader's attitude to China as well. While representations of China in Islamicate culture had always emphasized its prosperity and just governance, to present China in a utopian fashion, and not as a heterotopia but as immanent and connected to the lands of Islam—explicitly translating its characteristics into Islamo-Iranian mytho-political terms—was to make a stronger and riskier claim. The preface specifically warns the reader with a conventional phrase, “reporting unbelief is not unbelief.” (29) The news of the Zhengde emperor's conversion—enabled, no less, by the *qanun*—propelled a more sympathetic and extensive consideration of the Chinese state and political system than would otherwise have been *expressed*. That is to say, what was different about the moment of the 1510's was not only Khatayi's and his interlocutors' perception of the major, durable features of the Chinese state, of which their memory reached back fifty years or more, but the prospects for expressing those views.

Why, then, was Khatayi so invested in a utopian depiction of China? There are several reasons why Muslims like Khatayi might have viewed the mid-Ming state positively—especially during the Zhengde reign: the state remained powerful, and as a result of its weaker position in Central Asia, allowed Muslims somewhat easier access to commercial opportunities; the economy was booming after a mid-fifteenth-century slump.⁷¹ At the same time, Muslim Chinese had suffered from a nativist backlash during the Yuan-Ming transition. There is also the matter of his audience: the Ming example validated Ottoman ambitions. However, for Khatayi in particular, I would suggest another motive: that he had a kind of professional investment as a cross-cultural broker who could negotiate the Ming tribute system and bureaucracy.

'Ali Akbar's use of Khatayi as a toponymic *nisba* (a *nisba* functions as a surname but is not permanently identified with a particular family) may be understood as a *nom d'occasion* signifying his expertise on the subject—a “China hand”, with expertise relevant to commerce. The *nisba* may also signify ethnic or geographical origin—perhaps some of his ancestors were Muslims who lived in China—but the significance of that geographical origin would have been commercial and

⁷¹ On the slump see William S. Atwell, “Time, Money, and the Weather: Ming China and the ‘Great Depression’ of the Mid-Fifteenth Century,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 1 (2002): 83–113.

professional, advertising his human and social capital (his knowledge and network of contacts). The *Lao Qida* (the title has been translated as “Old China Hand”) and *khatayi* are thus cognate terms, reflecting what was likely a widespread Central Asian phenomenon of certain merchants developing a specific body of expertise for trade in China.⁷² Both authors are *khatayis*, in the sense of individuals who have mastered certain bureaucratic and other institutional knowledge. This professional commercial knowledge is not without its own political dimension, but rather is imbricated with the merchants’ relationship to the Chinese state and thus its ideology. While the interactions depicted in the *Lao Qida* entirely concern trade between private individuals, the hand of the state is visible in the exchange of silver, which could be marked as “official,” implying its purity was guaranteed by the government,⁷³ and in the types of contracts used for trading horses.⁷⁴ The *Khataynameh* is of course far more directly concerned with the Ming state; the tribute system was integral to Central Asian Muslim merchants’ commercial interests.

The East was a career on the early modern Silk Road no less than in the British Raj of Benjamin Disraeli’s time.⁷⁵ The difference was that while Disraeli articulated a position of superiority within the Enlightenment cosmopolis,⁷⁶ the *khatayi* had negotiated a position within a Chinese cosmopolis that rendered outsiders like him bureaucratically and socially invisible—a theme Khatayi addressed cogently in his chapters on religions and prisons. Muslim Chinese in the coming decades of the sixteenth century would continue this labor by articulating the principles of Islam in a Confucian philosophical idiom.⁷⁷ Khatayi forcefully expresses the perception that he has encountered a Chinese cosmopolis: a world unto itself, containing enough wealth, territory, imperial splendor, and linguistic diversity (the “seventy-two languages”), to warrant Ming claims to universal sovereignty—the Chinese concept of *tianxia* having a counterpart in Islamic

⁷² Ruth I. Meserve, “Chinese Hippology and Hippiatry: Government Bureaucracy and Inner Asian Influence,” *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 148, no. 2 (1998): 301.

⁷³ Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer, ed., *Grammatical Analysis of the Lao Ch’i-Ta*, 417.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 312–14; Meserve, “Chinese Hippology and Hippiatry,” 301.

⁷⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5.

⁷⁶ The concept of an Enlightenment cosmopolis is developed in Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 30–44.

⁷⁷ On Chinese Muslims and memories of the Ming period, see Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, “The Marrano Emperor: The Mysterious and Intimate Bond between Zhu Yuanzhang and His Muslims,” in *Long Live the Emperor!: Uses of the Ming Founder across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), 275–308. On later Islamic scholarship in Chinese see Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005.

concepts of messianic, universal empire discussed above. In chapter 2, after describing the splendor of the imperial entourage, he describes the doctrine of *tianxia*:

...for his dominion and power are Shaddad-like.⁷⁸ The reason they say this is that [only] one who ruled over the whole surface of the Earth could display such splendor, and it is the conviction of the emperor of China and his people that the whole surface of the earth is under his command, and the people of China hold the conviction that apart from their own countries [*mamalek*], there is no civilization (*shahr*) in the world, and in China, they do not know the name of those countries. This is because it is not the custom (*rasm*) for them to leave China and see the [other] countries of the world and know of the existence of civilization there. They likewise hold the conviction that apart from their own country, the whole world is desert, and under the command of the emperor. Because most of the visitors, and the enemies of China come from the desert, they thus consider the whole world to be of desert, and desert nomads. (48)

The subtext of this passage is that the people of China are not ignorant of civilization in the rest of the world because they are unfortunate, but because they are self-sufficient. They are isolated (from the lands of Islam) but also powerful enough that they cannot be forced to recognize others; the emperor's conversion is achieved *through*, not in spite of the *qanun*. The term *qanun*, which seems to have no Chinese equivalent that would encompass the whole range of meanings to which Khatayi applies it, is thus an abstraction of the Chinese cosmopolis—a “design” (*naqsh*) or formula through which the state and society are generated. As an abstraction, the *qanun* is detached from, and no longer strictly within the cosmopolis, which is thus fatally compromised. Writing with a disenchanted perspective, Khatayi, who claimed that the Chinese are descendants of Cain (a highly unusual claim, which contradicts the supposed universality of the Deluge), felt no need to reconcile Islamic sacred history with a comparable Chinese sacred history. (168–70)

Rather than an error in need of explanation, Khatayi's classification of Korea as a Chinese province is overdetermined. For Khatayi and his informants, Korea's embrace of Neo-Confucianism and its performance of a subordinate position through the ceremonial of the tribute system, and the Ming state's recognition of Korea as a civilized state according to the doctrine of *tianxia*, place it soundly within the Chinese cosmopolis as Khatayi perceived it. Korea may well have been,

⁷⁸ Shaddad is a magnificent tyrant mentioned in the Qur'an, and here signifying universal empire and the violence inherent in it.

to Khatayi, *both* a province of China and a state that adopted the Ming Code; the Korean merchants themselves may have identified with the cultural and political institutions of the Ming state more than with their own monarch.⁷⁹ The completeness of the empire, with its seventy-two languages and twelve provinces, validates Khatayi's and perhaps the larger population of Chinese Muslims' participation in it on unequal terms.

There is a tension between interpretations of the tribute system as creating political reality through sustained use of ritual—which connected Korea to China, and would help secure Chinese aid during the Imjin War—and as being perceived in largely independent ways by the different parties—as the Mongols who participated in them saw them as reciprocal exchanges rather than simply recognition of the Ming emperor's supremacy. The tribute system cannot be said to create a political reality if the different parties are able simply to reshape it through their respective perceptions. This tension is resolved in the idealized vision of the political order expressed through the concept of a Chinese *qanun*, and Chinese imperialism more generally, which erects an edifice of political ideals intelligible to all parties. The Ming court, Chinese officialdom, or Muslim intellectuals in political capitals such as Cairo or Herat, or cultural capitals such as Isfahan or Shiraz, may have imagined a world centered on themselves, in which cultural and political ideas were embodied in the physical sites of the cities themselves, or in mythic ruins such as Persepolis. More peripheral states such as Korea, and the Ottomans before the mid-sixteenth century, while displaced from the traditional centers of cultural hegemony, could nonetheless imagine themselves as more faithfully and effectively actualizing the political-cultural ideals of their respective world-systems. This twin phenomenon of displacement and replication is captured in Khatayi's concept of a *qanun* of China as a universalizable abstraction of a culturally, regionally specific political tradition.⁸⁰ Khatayi, as a “China-hand” and a political writer,⁸¹ can thus be understood as invested in a kind of imitative replication of the *qanun*, which could be extended into a rationalization of the Ottoman polity.

In an expansive study of global intellectual history, Sebastian Conrad traces the outlines of the Enlightenment as a global phenomenon playing out over the long nineteenth century, which entailed selective imitation of new, mostly European technologies and institutions, including the widespread adoption of single

⁷⁹ An analogous argument has been made about the significance of *sadae* for the *yangban*—that it raised their status relative to the king. Yun, “Rethinking the Tribute System,” 218.

⁸⁰ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 290–92.

⁸¹ For a discussion of Khatayi as political writer, see Hemmat, “Citations of ‘Attār and the *Kanz al-Haqāyeq*.”

document constitutions especially after the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. Insofar as the Chosŏn state's adoption of Chinese law was part of what informed Khatayi's perceptions of China as a quasi-utopian model for the Ottomans, a form of this process of imitation was already underway on a global scale in the early sixteenth century. The *Khataynameh* presented readers with an idealized picture of a centralized state—a model meant to be emulated. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, Ming China did, in fact present the Ottomans—both in Khatayi's account and in actuality—with a hazy image of their own future, as the Ottoman polity would be transformed into a centralized bureaucratic empire over the course of the century. The role of the larger East Asian context in the development of this image of China, then, speaks to the scope and also the nature of the broader, hemisphere-wide political process through which more centralized regional states formed and became consolidated during the early modern period.

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