

# Islamic Practical Worship in China: Study Case on International Students' Worship Experience at Northeast Normal University

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**Abstract-** Changing of living place will change experience, including for religious practice especially in communism country which religious practice is not as free as non-communism countries. Therefore, this study investigated muslim international students in Northeast Normal University on experiencing Islamic worship practice and what meaning they attribute to their experience of Islamic worship practice. Qualitative study was conducted with study case method to answer these questions. Seven international students from different countries were interviewed and researcher joined their isha prayer to observe them. The data was analysed using grounded theory methodology, which was using three level of coding. Students have difficulties and challenge to perform their worship such as changing of time, less facilities, loneliness, food, direction. They should suffer with these problems in order to solve it and keep practicing their worship by asking to the expert, following worship apps, following local leader, self-answer, confirm and compromise. This experience gave them better impacts for their self-quality and religiosity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

China is one of the most popular countries for economic, study, or business purposes of international migration. People's Republic of China is a multicultural nation which consists admitted religions. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right of the Chinese people, and guaranteed by the government. Furthermore, in many societies religious diversity has been increasing due to migration, new religious movements, and new ways of being religious or spiritual in contemporary society (Casanova, 2007; Foley and Hoge, 2007; Smith, 2002; Davie, Ammerman, Huq, Leustean, Masoud, Moon, Olupona, Sinha, Smilde, Woodhead, Yang, & Zurlo, 2018). In China currently, the Communist authorities acknowledge five major institutional religions – Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Even though the ruling Communist Party enforces atheism as part of the orthodox ideology for the party members and indoctrinates it to all people through the school system and mass media, many religions are reviving and developing in contemporary China, evidenced by the increasing number of temples, churches and mosques, and the number of followers (Yang, 2012). 21 million Chinese Muslims are dominated by ethnic minorities centered in the northwestern provinces, except

Hui people who can be found throughout China (Islamic Association of China 2012).

All religious activities must be registered and approved by the government. Once registered, all religious activities must be managed by officials who have been approved by the government, carried out at a location approved by the government, and held on meeting times approved by the government. Any activity that fails to meet these requirements are not protected by law.

China has five officially approved religious organizations which are the [Buddhist Association of China](#), [Chinese Taoist Association](#), [Islamic Association of China](#), [Three-Self Patriotic Movement](#) and [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#). The government has protection namely "normal religious activity". This means in practice as activities should take place within government-sanctioned religious organizations and registered places of worship. China adopts policies on freedom of religious belief, manages religious affairs in accordance with the law, adheres to the principle of independence and self-management, actively guides religions to adapt to the socialist society, and unites religious believers and non-believers to the greatest extent. The Chinese government supports all religions in upholding the principle of independence and self-management, allowing religious groups, clerical personnel and believers to manage religious affairs themselves in accordance with the Constitution and law. According to Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No State organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion." Article 36 also stipulates that "No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State," and that "Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign control."

Whereas Christianity and Islam are viewed by most of Chinese people as foreign religions and in many ways "anti-China" or at least "un-Chinese," while Buddhism is viewed as a traditional Chinese religion. Buddhism is clearly not native to China, as it originated in India and did not enter China until the 1st century A.D.s (Davies & Grant, 2008). Mosques are under the government's authority and mosque leaders known as *imam-hatybs* are appointed by the state. Islamic literature is strictly

controlled and Muslim children are especially targeted for government controls.

## II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### Islamic worship

The main purpose of Allah created human and jinn according to *Adz-Dzaariyaat*, 56-58 is to pray to Allah (God). *Ibadah* is an Arabic word which means service or servitude. In Islam, *ibadah* is usually translated as "worship", and *ibadat*—the plural form of *ibadah*—refers to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of Muslim religious rituals. In English term, Islamic *ibadah* is usually translated as "worship" and means obedience, surrender, and devotion to God. Islamic jurisprudence concerns on the rules governing worship in Islam or the religious worship obligation that apply to all Muslims when they are in the age (mature) and have a healthy body and mind. This is distinguished from other subjects of jurisprudence in Islam which are commonly known as *muamalat* (interpersonal transactions).

Every good deed of muslim is considered worship. However, this worship has different level commanding of performing it. *Fard* is an Islamic term which denotes a religious duty commanded by Allah (God). *Fard* can also mean 'the ruling means the thing which is so obligatory that one is not relieved of the obligation until he fulfills it, it is called *fard*. If this thing is a part of worship, the worship will be void without it, leaving it out is a major sin'. The *Fiqh* distinguishes two sorts of duties, that are individual duty or *fard al-'ayn* relates to tasks that must be performed by every muslim, such as daily prayer (*salat*), and the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (*hajj*); and sufficiency duty or *fard al-kifāya* is a duty which is imposed on the whole community of believers (*ummah*), such as caring of *janaza* (corpse). The individual is not required to perform it as long as a sufficient number of community members fulfill it.

In Islam worship or *ibadat* include the pillar of Islam; declaration of faith (*shahadat*), ritual prayer (*salat*), observed five times every day at appointed times, with prescribed preparations (ritual cleansing), prescribed movements (standing, bending, prostrating, sitting) and prescribed verses, phrases; alms (*zakat*), customarily 2.5% of a Muslim's total savings and wealth above a minimum amount known as *nisab*, which is based on income and the value of all of one's possessions; fasting (*sawm*), the abstention from eating and drinking during daylight hours, especially during the Islamic holy month of *Ramadan*, and pilgrimage to Mecca. The annual Islamic pilgrimage to the holiest city of the Muslims, and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey, and can support their family during their absence.

### Immigrant Religious Activities

Immigrants living out of their country birth, considering the outsider status and lack of accommodation of Islam in Western Europe, Muslim immigrants may feel more alienated to stay there (Just, Sandovici, Listhaug, 2014). In addition to the ideal of brotherhood among Muslims, Islam also seems to able to bridge cultural distance with a set of underlying values. In spite of the linguistic, ethnic, political, and social differences throughout the Islamic world, there are series of dietary requirements, prayer

routines, and other factors that work to bind Muslims from different cultural backgrounds.

Islam emphasizes on unity in all facets of life. It is not surprising that, despite coming from various cultural backgrounds, Muslims around the world share not only the same basic Islamic beliefs (in the Oneness of God, the Qur'anic revelation, and so on), but also similar habits, such as dietary laws and greeting formulae. In spite of the vast differences in culture between the various Islamic countries, there exists an underlying bond that unites Muslims wherever they may be.

According to Hu (2016), in light of the oppression of various religions during the Mao's Era and the ensuing softening of religious policies by allowing for certain religious freedom since the 1980s, mainland China serves as a good case to test this theory. The Mao generation, arguably, grew up in completely anti-religion social-political order, where the violent suppression of religious activities since the 1950s and the eradication of all kinds of religions from the entire society during the Cultural Revolution significantly reduced people's opportunities to learn about and practice religion (Goossaert and Pamler, 2011; Nedostup, 2010). In addition, the official ideology of atheism that instituted after 1949 attached considerable political sensitivity and risk to religious adherence to ordinary citizens. In this regard, the Mao's generation faced dramatic constraints upon their religious life that was imposed by the state. In contrast to the Mao's generation, the youth cohorts raised in the Reform Era have more, although still limited, freedom to get access to various religions relative to their parents, since, as we discussed earlier, the state control over the religious market in the Reform Era has been loosened. Moreover, in the Globalization and Information Era, more recent cohorts, in relation to their parental generations, are more adept at using multimedia or internet to get familiarized with different religions, both foreign and native ones. These new historical conditions intersect with the development process of the Reform-Era adolescents, implying that the younger cohorts, on average.

Religious involvement is important for the old since it serves for them as an important source of life meaning and helps senior persons cope with the hardship in the later life (Atchley, 2009). Indeed, for many migrants, religion plays a fundamental role in terms of identity references (Warner, 2000) language, traditions, and ways of practicing the faith may differ greatly according to the country of origin. Hence, there is often a high degree of social encapsulation among different Muslim sub-groups (Peach, 2006). Even if mosques constitute the principal symbol of the Muslim presence (Immerzeel & Tubergen, 2013). According to social influence theory, individuals are affected by the religiousness of people in their social network: parents, relatives, spouse, neighbors, teachers, co-workers, and so on (Sherkat, 1998; Sherkat and Wilson, 1995). In more religious contexts and networks, individuals are more likely to become and remain religious themselves, due to socialization, reinforcement of norms and values, monitoring and social sanctioning. Also, in more religious networks, people might be involved in religious activities to please significant others (e.g., parents, spouse) who value participation in such religious activities (Sherkat, 1998; Sherkat and Wilson, 1995). Likewise, in Dutch society which is more opened, immigrants found to be more and more exposed to the secular norms and practices, gradually taking over some of these norms and practices themselves as well (Chioldelli, F. (2015).

### III. PROBLEM OF STATEMENT

People in China are mainly Muslim by birth since some Chinese report having converted to the religion. Regardless, Islam holds a prominent place in the faith lives of the Chinese people. It is the third largest world religion in the country after Buddhism and Christianity, with about 20 to 30 million devout believers. In China Islam is largely restricted to a geographical area of China, the northwestern province of Xinjiang, and to ethnic minority groups. Thus, most of Chinese people do not necessarily view Islam as a foreign religion, but as being a religion for ethnic minorities. They settled in the Western regions of China: Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and especially Xinjiang. Considerable Muslim populations can also be found in Henan, Hebei, Shaanxi, and Shandong (Gilreath, 2008).

The concept and purpose of worship in Islam is incomparable with any other religion in existence. It combines the worldly with the spiritual, the individual with the society, and the internal soul with the external body. Worship has a unique role in Islam, and through worship, a person is considered a true Muslim who accords his entire life to the Divine Will.

The importance of worship may be seen in the fact that it has been prescribed by God in all religions prior to Islam. Worship may be classified into two types:

- 1) Specific Beliefs, feelings and visible acts of devotion paid in homage to God which He has commanded.
- 2) All other acts of goodness generally encouraged in the life of a Muslim.

Humans are commanded to believe in certain ultimate truths, discussed in the articles of faith. This is the most important aspect of worship. Belief is the basis for what a person feels and does – actions and feelings are a reflection of belief.

God has commanded that Muslims fulfill certain commands throughout the course of their lives, exemplified in the five pillars of Islam. These have been determined daily, such as the prayer, and annually, such as the compulsory charity and the fast of Ramadan, or as little as once in a person's life, such as the Hajj. There are many other acts of worship prescribed in Islam other than the five pillars, some of which are obligatory and others of which are voluntary, their performance left to a Muslim's discretion.

Again, when a person spends his day performing specific acts of worship, they are constantly reminded of the purpose of life and their final end, and this in turn helps them to accord their lives to the Will of God, doing what He is pleased with and avoiding what is not He liked.

Although it may seem to some that worshiping and obeying God is similar to imprisonment and slavery, the worship of God and slavery to Him actually liberate humans from all kind of conquests. A person breaks freedom from the chains of society, peers, and family, and liberates him to please His One True Lord. This is true freedom which results in security and satisfaction. Servitude to God is the ultimate source of freedom.

In praying, there are *sarat* (requirement) and *rukun* (pillar) that should be applied in order to reach particular level. *Sarat* is thing that should be fulfilled before doing an activity. If the *sarat* is not completed thus the activity is not *sah* (acceptable). *Rukun* is a thing that should be done in performing an activity. It means that *rukun* is a main thing, if it is not done, the activity is not *sah*. *Batal* (invalidated) is incompleting the *sarat* and *rukun*, or in correct *sarat* and *rukun*. If an activity does not, complete this *rukun*, the deed will be invalidated.

International students who were coming with cross-cultural background will face new environment with different condition and situation from their own environment that they were living before. Thus, it brought new experience for them to practice their worship in China during their study. In this study, researcher aimed to investigate how is muslim international students experience their worship in their daily life, and what meaning they attribute to their experience of Islamic practical worship.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research design which uses a case study approach combined with grounded theory. A case study means that this study is based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group, or event to explore causation. To accomplish the goal, researcher selected seven (7) muslim international students of Northeast Normal university (NENU) as participants of the study. Researcher used convenient purposeful sampling to collect the data from them. They are muslim students who are practicing prayer in congregation for *Isha* time. Among participants are graduated students, 3 master students and 4 Ph.D students who are coming from different countries which have different muslim environment and culture, age, level of education, length stay in China, and foreign experience. Three of them are female and four are male, range age of them is from 27 to 35 years old. The participants come from countries which have muslim majority, such as Siria, Egypt, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and Nigeria and muslim minority such as Thailand. Three participants already have foreign experience before coming China to muslim countries and non-muslim countries such as Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, France, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Laos. Participants' life in China is from one to five years.

From the seven participants, six of them were coming from muslim majority countries, Indonesia, Siria, Egypt, and Uzbekistan which the muslim population around 80% above until 98%. Only one participant was coming from minority muslim country, Thailand with total muslim population about 5%. However, in home town that participants live in is not totally muslim majority or 100% muslim population. Zain, participant from Indonesia was living together with Christians in his hometown. Zain, Hasan, and Tamimah had experience visiting non-muslim countries, but all of them ever visited muslim countries as well.

Name	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Nationality	Staying in China	Foreign experience	Visited Country
Anwar	Male	31	Ph.D	Indonesia	5 years	Yes	Malaysia
Zain	Male	27	Master	Indonesia	2 years	Yes	Australia, Singapore, Malaysia
Janah	Female	32	Master	Nigeria	1 year	No	
Aishah	Female	27	Master	Siria	3 years	No	
Adin	Male	33	Ph.D	Uzbekistan	4 years	No	
Hasan	Male	30	Ph.D	Egypt	2 years	Yes	Saudi Arabia, France
Tamimah	Female	33	Ph.D	Thailand	5 years	Yes	Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos

They were collected through semi structured interview of approximately 25 to 45 minutes in length at international student dormitory of Northeast Normal University and sharing experience about Islam in their own country that was always done after prayer through non-formal speech in length 5-7 minutes.

The interview was conducted in two languages, Indonesian and English language. Indonesian language was used because interviewee was Indonesian, and the participant, Anwar was student who majored in Chinese language instruction. Then, researcher translated it into English. For other participants are in English. The material of interview was about Islamic life experience in participants' country, other country and in China on their problem of practicing fardhu worship and how to solve the problem, their view to see and feel the experience of performing worship in China. However, researcher mostly highlighted on their experience of performing *fardh* worship.

Through interview researcher recorded to transcribe, however, one participant namely Hasan did not allow interviewee to record it, thus, interviewee only noted the conversation between them. This interview was used as a primer data. To measure trustworthiness of finding, researcher did member checking strategy by providing participants an opportunity to read transcript and preliminary analysis.

For the second instrument data collection, researcher only joined the agenda (non-formal participant observation) by joining one of participants' agenda that is *isha'* (evening) prayer every night.

The data were analysed using grounded theory methodology, which was using three level of coding. *First*, open coding which involves breaking down the data and beginning the process of categorization; *second*, axial coding takes initial categories and makes further comparisons that describe relationships between categories; *three*, selective coding saturation coding is examined,

<sup>1</sup> talaqqi is learning Islamic teaching through meeting immediately face to face between teacher and student.

which means that further analysis produces new information or need for additional categories. All the data are captured and described by key categories, and a core category emerges that tells the central story of all participants as a group.

## V. FINDINGS

### Worship Experience in Mainland

The participants who came from middle eastern countries mostly conducted their religious activities in the mosque. Although there are many religious groups however, they are living together, and mosque proposes several types of agendas and activities that can be involved by muslims around the mosque. Thus, mosque is not only place for prayer, it is used as a place to organize other activities. Muslims there learn Islam from the mosque by *talaqqi*<sup>1</sup> with teacher, they discuss together about their problem of religious or social life and solve the problem according to Islamic perspective. In addition, muslims have sheikh's<sup>2</sup> contact to discuss with if they have problem in anytime. Thus, they can contact them and discuss through messaging or coming to his house anytime. It makes them do not have serious problem with their daily life related to practical worship.

Thee mosque also organizes Islamic activities including *fardhu* worship and *non-fardhu* worship, such as prayer five times, *sunnah* prayer, paying *zakat* (tax), distributing *sadaqah*. Thus, people can do Islamic activities there as well as do Islamic worship together. It can be said that mosque is the Islamic centre for middle-east life.

Other participants from Indonesia, they do not have religious environment. Anwar, although he lives together with muslim people, the personal Islamic practice in his area is not as strong as middle east area due to the living area which is located in

<sup>2</sup> sheikh is like a muslim teacher and leader which usually lead shalat, share Islamic knowledge

mountainous area. Mountainous area in Indonesia is well-known as not religious area. However, More than 90% of citizen there are muslim. In addition, common Islamic practices such as prayer in congregation, paying zakat are offered at mosque, and also still have other traditional Islamic practice such as other muslim in Indonesia are doing. They recite *wirid* (*du'a*/ prayer) after finishing *salat*, reciting *qunut* (additional prayer) in *subuh* (dawn) prayer, reciting *tahlil* (prayer) for people who have passed away, and reciting *manaqib* (biography) for special purpose. People in that place can perform and practice very well, however, comparing to other regions of Indonesia, their religious activities are not as strong as other places. Islamic activities are just offered there. Willingness and desire to perform are based on self-consciousness. In other part, Zain who lives together with Christians can find access to perform worship easily. The actual condition is almost similar with Anwar's environment. But the difference is he lives together with people with other religion. They live in harmony and respect each other. Interestingly, some mosque and church are located in the same area, and somehow they are face to face or neighbouring. Both mosque and church use speaker in some situation, but they can put in appropriate time which does not interfere with each other. Thus, respecting is not only letting the others to perform their duties, but also giving comfort to the others to do their duties as long as does not offend each other.

Other muslim countries, Nigeria and Uzbekistan, the government gives the freedom for the citizenship to perform their worship as well. Nobody will not care and judge about individual practice. Place for doing worship is easy to find. However, in Uzbekistan performing worship is more stringent with government regulations. People only can pray in the special place provided for prayer such as *musalla*, mosque, and home. According to the government's rule, public places are not permitted to perform religious activities. Also for holding big Islamic meeting, people should get permission from the government, and the procedure is complicated which attaching very clear purpose and description of agenda. On the other hand, the government regulates muslim's need very well, such as opportunity to pilgrimage, measurement for paying zakat and so on. Thus, Uzbek muslims have the same way in performing the branch of worship (*furu'*). It is in contrary with Nigeria where many religious groups are there. People can choose to which religious group they want to perform their way of worship. Different individual can perform the same worship in different ways.

Country with small muslim population, which Tamimah comes from, Thailand is not easy to get public facilities for performing worship. However, she lived in the area of muslim majority that makes her familiar with Islam and can perform worship easily and well. Facilities which is similar to muslim majority countries are provided there such mosque, place for studying Islamic teaching as well as muslim countries environment. However, contrasting condition will be found out of this area, which most of people are non-muslim, thus, halal food, mosque are difficult to find. Even in public places, only very few number of public provides comfort for muslim.

### **Worship Experience in Foreign Countries**

The participants who had foreign experience before coming to China, traveled to Islamic religious country which is Saudi

Arabia, muslim majority countries which are Malaysia and Indonesia, and non-muslim countries which are Australia, French, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. In Islamic religious country, participant found that everywhere worship activities can be found. People are organized to perform their worship. Like on time prayer, people will stop their activities and come to the mosque to pray. Although it is particular difference from other Islamic religious country, however it clearly illustrates that this kind of country concerns and cares about Islamic practice. The mosque is the place of life, which means mosque has big role in human's life. Life for preparing to be alive in the world as well as in here after which becomes more concern.

Countries with muslim majority provide easiness for muslim in public area such as mall, station, restaurant, hospital and school that are equipped with convenient facilities for muslim to take the ablution, pray, and study Islamic teaching. These places are completed with musalla, separated place for taking ablution, prayer clothes for women. By looking at people's agenda in these countries, they will have free time from the activities on prayer time. No one postpone worship performance because of business work or study. However, it does not mean that individual religious activity is organized like in Saudi Arabia. People are free to perform their worship, but to honor them, in time prayer, people will stop their activities even for very short time.

In this area, *madrasah* (Islamic school) is easy to find. Children can learn Islam in this school after they finish formal classes in primary school or high school. Children take a rest for a while for going home, then continue to study at *madrasah* around 2 to 5 o'clock. They do this activity every day except on Friday, because Friday is a holy day for muslim people.

In non-muslim country muslim facilities are difficult to find, however the government of these countries never banned them to perform worship. Some of conveniences associated with Islamic culture will be found in the area which there is muslim staying there. Muslim usually try to build the mosque and make a muslim restaurant in order to help muslim who are travelling and passing that area. When there are no muslims in one area, there are almost no muslim facilities.

### **Worship Experience in China**

Living in a country where religion is not practiced by indigenous people will have different experience than in the society which has religious practice, more over if the particular religious is also practiced in that new place. China provides new experience for muslim foreigners who consider the practice of religious ritual.

### **Worship Problem**

Regarding religious activities in communist country that all religious activities are organized by the government and under government's control is gives different experience. Moreover, for new comers such as foreigners that will stay for long time.

#### **1. Timing**

Prayer time is being the biggest problem for muslim international students. Prayer time changes significantly almost every day due to the extreme season in Changchun. Thus, muslim there cannot arrange their prayer time in advance well. In a different season, time to pray dawn prayer is very different. On winter, the time can be at 6 am, but on summer will change

significantly until 01.30 am. Therefore, for somehow, participants will be late to perform the prayer on time because of this situation.

In addition, not only for prayer, but for other big Islamic festivals, such as *Ramadan* and *Eid fitr*, there is no clear information from the local muslim leaders. People need to be proactive to find this information. However, with the length of China's territory, no explanation about which territory that can follow one decision and which one which should follow other decisions. Therefore, when *ahong* (leader) in particular place see the date of first *Ramadan* or *Eid*, but other place does not see it, people are confused by this situation. Because no firm explanation on which part of Chinese area that can follow it, and which cannot. It does not something that describe diversity, but people's ignorance. Not all of muslim foreigners coming to China are religious with adequate Islamic knowledge.

In other side, all of the agendas do not consider prayer time. The student needs to be aware for their needs. For many occasions, students have agenda in prayer time. If this agenda is important which means related to their academic activity, they will perform their prayer late. They choose to combine 2 prayers time in one with *jama'* or *qada'* way. However, this condition happens to *Jum'ah* prayer as well. Whereas, performing *jum'ah* prayer in masjid is must (mandatory) for every man. But, masjid is not available inside the campus. It is far out of the campus. So, men students should suffer with this serious problem.

## 2. Facilities

Although every public place provides toilet for people, but it does not give convenience for people to have toilet there. The toilet provides less water, not closed and not separated between male and female. When woman opens her veil for taking ablution in the same toilet with male, her *aurat* (body) can be seen by male. People just can do ablution in sink. Inside toilet, no water is available, and the condition of toilet is dirty. In addition, most of female toilet in China is using half door. Female muslim does not feel convenient with this condition.

It can be continued with facilities to do worship. Less public worship places is being major complaint of muslim students. Although they can practice their worship anywhere, however, not all places are clean. Because muslim is minority in the campus or in Changchun, thus, performing worship in public place attracts people's attention. Moreover, in public places, such as airport that there is security, he will tightly supervise everyone who is doing alien activities. As well as common people, will see strangely muslim's deed which gives inconvenient feeling for him/her. For women, this condition gives them bad feeling. They always try to find corner place that is empty from people passing around. Or the second choice for muslim with this, many of them, even if female or male is coming back to the dormitory to perform it. As a result, they are late to pray on the time. Or they do two or three prayers together in one time. This often happens when students have class or important meeting with teacher, supervisor, or joining the conference.

## 3. Food

Every single part of muslim's life is regulated by Allah. They have to obey His rule in order to perform their daily worship well in order to be accepted by Him. Including the way for eating, Allah commands muslim to select the halal and good food. Halal means that the food is not containing materials from pork, dog, blood, something making drunk, and carcass; processing the food in good

way; and getting the food from right way. Northern part of China is less muslim population. Therefore, to find halal food restaurant is rather difficult. Muslim students prefer to cook than to buy food from restaurant. For strict muslims, if they need to buy food outside, they will make sure that the restaurant is halal restaurant. For not strict muslim, they will just ensure that the food does not contain pork. However, again, if they join in some agendas that provide them food, they will choose plant foods. This kind of challenge makes people to be more aware with their responsibility.

## 4. Direction

All international students live in the same place, international students' dormitory which is located far from mosque. To get the direction of Ka'bah, all muslims use the muslim worship application. It is used inside the campus and outside the campus (wherever they are). However, sometime, the direction is inaccurate. People may use the same direction application, but the result is different. They may face different directions even in the same place. If they meet each other in the same place they can compromise which one is regarded as a direction, but if they do not know each other they can perform this worship in different direction. And if they know that they have different direction, they will discuss to correct the mistake.

## 5. Discrimination

Muslim is a minority in China, thus muslim is seen as different from other common people. Apparently, they wear different clothes, have their own culture and performance. Moreover, for international students who have already very strong appearance by considering the Islamic teaching which they have already had before coming to China. Male students who do not have Islamic symbols in their appearance have no discrimination experience. However, all of female participants wear veil, and they have this experience. The experience is getting angry from locals, rude reminder to put off the veil, or not getting public services. Once, Tamimah stopped taxi more than one hour and got rejected from all taxis. Then she asked her friend to stop for her. It did not take time for her friend to stop the taxi. Her friend advised her not to wear black *gamis* (gown) when going out to avoid negative thinking of people. For somehow, people see muslim with rude view. Most of these experiences are happening out of the campus. Only very few case happened in the campus. And the level of this discrimination is not as strong as outside. For other international students who are not muslim, they respect muslim, and never treat muslim in bad way.

## 6. Loneliness

Performing duties alone makes people more independent, however it also affects individual's motivation to do and finish it. As Al-Ghazali's said that *iman* (faith) can increase and decrease at any time. Thus, people should be conscious with their self and recognize their own emotion and faith. People who are living together will get advices from the others. Living alone means that an individual need to control his self by himself.

One married participant, Jannah often felt extremely lonely because she is the only girl from her country. Especially, in precious moment such as Ramadan and Eid fitr the level of loneliness will increase highly. To overcome this situation, she often attends Friday prayer at the mosque to find new muslim friends. Another participant, Aishah, spends most of daily activity in lab for her experiment. However, in the time which she is coming back to the room, she just fills up the time by doing good

activities such as reciting the du'a or al-Qur'an or sleeping. These activities are selected to keep their study and worship duties.

### **Challenge of Performing Worship**

Allah says in Qur'an that Allah does not charge a soul except with that within its capacity. Everything that people do will have any challenge to do. Persistence to keep doing the best thing shows the strength of individual's *iman*. Muslim international students on performing their practical worship face many challenges.

#### **1. Keeping prayer on time**

Due to extreme weather in the local area of Changchun, and over lay of activities time with prayer time, less number of muslim students still keep their time on time. Zain always brings his prayer math to keep his prayer on time and not to leave it in its time. He finds an empty place to pray, even if will there is person will see him, he will keep doing this. It also will be good chance for him if he can share religious experience to other people.

Business for academic work, make some people always stay at night that makes them late to perform dawn prayer. Time to pray cannot be predicted as like constant time that happens almost in the same time every day. It always changes anytime. To keep dawn prayer on time, people need to arrange their schedule well.

#### **2. Surviving with the season**

Extreme weather, especially on winter makes people suffer from this situation in various ways. Obligation to keep doing prayer, five times a day, with spending most of the time in campus, brings different experience. Wearing very thick clothes while taking ablution for woman is not easy to do. In this season, people try hard to keep their wudhu when going outside.

### **Solving the Problem**

People with limited knowledge cannot answer all issues and phenomenon they face. A new life in a new environment supposes people to adapt and deal with new situation. Muslim international students solve their religious problem by several ways, as follows;

#### **1. Ask an expert**

"So ask the people of the message if you do not know" (16: 43). God has clearly told people to ask people who are expert if they do not know about something that is unclear. A participant from middle-east country still keeps contact with his colleges in his country. When he finds the difficulties he will share with his country mates who have same problem and discuss with the expert of Islamic teaching in his country.

He described clearly about the condition what he faced in order to get the answer and solve. The problem solving of what he reached will be applied as a guideline for his worship during in China. Here, he commits not to follow a part of the guideline or some parts only, but in total. Following in some parts will make people ease and play with the rule of worship. Even though, some time he has big contra idea with major muslims around him, he will keep going with what he believes in as long as his decision is based on acceptable source.

#### **2. Using worship app**

Most of new comers who do not have sufficient experience to stay in the similar country suffer more with daily worship guideline. An easy and practical way to overcome this problem is using application that can be handed out by each individual and can be used anytime he/she needs.

People use this application to get guideline for prayer time, *qiblat* direction, and Islamic calendar. However, people will

choose the guideline that they are belonging to what kind of religious *mazhab*. Because it will affect their way to perform. If they do not find any application with their criteria, people will follow the nearest *mazhab* and apply it for their worship guideline.

#### **3. Self-answering**

All of participants had lived in religious environment. Therefore, they have basic Islamic knowledge. According to Islamic teaching, everything which is halal and haram is clear. He commands to avoid and leave something which is unclear. In order not to make life more difficult, Jannah applies this article in her life.

#### **4. Following local imam**

Before coming to China, some students already had advice from muslim scholar from their countries that people should follow local leader if there were any. Because local imam is who knows the condition of Islam in that area. As foreigners with limited knowledge and experience, should respect that imam. Some of them precede local imam's decision and guideline than worship application. In Islam, people's deed is according to their knowledge. Islam pays more attention on how is the way to get this knowledge and where it comes from, hence this knowledge can be accounted alongside Allah. Thus, imam/ leader has high position for muslim people than any other source of knowledge, moreover something that can be accounted like an application. Application is used in exigent condition, where people do not know anything. But if they have some colleges with local imam, they are better to follow local imam. It makes a sense that as long as they are living there, they will join mosque's activities. And mosque activities will be conducted based on imam's knowledge.

#### **5. Confirm and Compromise**

One kind of problem that international students solve the problem with this way is when they are facing two important choices. Such as male students who have class on Friday prayer time, they will weigh how important is this class. Some cases they will ask for leave in some meetings but not all, or they still join, change the prayer with *duhur* (midday) prayer. They consider that it is *rukhsah* (remission) from Allah. They leave this prayer not because of their intention not to join but their other duties.

### **Values of Worship Experience**

Every experience has values that can be taken. This value can be reflected to everyone for their life although for different cases. It can be taken from the main meaning of value, and applied in the life.

#### **1. Respect different *mazhab* and practice**

Different ways to practice in *furu'* (branch) because of different *mazhab* more opens people's view to see the different thing. As long as the difference is not on *tauwheed* (divinity) or faith will be acceptable. Indeed, somehow people can experience to perform worship in other ways. They respect to see the difference and practice the difference. Even though each individual does not have the same *mazhab*, and their way to practice for somehow is different, but they are opened to worship together. Even if, they belong to someone's follower who belongs to other *mazhab*. It is experienced them. All of them are interested in this point. If someone finds very unfamiliar thing, he/ she will not hesitate to question about this practice, hence by this experience they can learn and share each other.

#### **2. Seeing real practice not only material**

Most people in general, they only understand well one kind of *mazhab* that they belong to. Although they learned and heard something about other *mazhab*, but in real life they never see and practice. Because the area where they live will apply the same *mazhab* as well. Thus, what they know only theory, not practice. Their tolerance is not really applied in their life. However, in this environment people can see with their eyes about different practice. Their learning is through experience.

### 3. Valuing local muslim's struggle

Foreigner students who have already experience of performing worship well and easily in their homeland still find many challenges and difficulties to perform in China. However, they find some of Chinese muslims that means they have more challenges and difficulties than international students, but they still struggle to add more their knowledge and good deed. To have perfect worship life is not totally easy but the power of faith that could calm the mind and heart are still tried to gain by them. It gives moral value for international muslim here to help them as much as they can, and add their knowledge in order to share with them about Islamic teaching that full of peace.

### 4. Strengthening the faith

Although no one cares about individual's deed and action, but every muslim still keeps their duties without commanding. Indeed, by seeing the real life of Islam in China, that many muslims still have low knowledge about Islam, it brings around attention to help them by sharing and strengthening their faith. It implies immediately for those who is doing this. He/ she will feel better if their deed represents his/her saying. Hence, they start to do good deed together. The more people do not care about them, the more opportunity they can do to help each other.

## VI. DISCUSSION

This study aims to interpret international students' experience on practicing Islamic worship in China and what it means they attribute to their experience of Islamic practical worship. From the interviews with seven international muslim students it was found that all participants gain new experience to practice their worship in China, even though they have many difficulties and challenges, however it strengthens their belief to the God and their care for Islam. This finding is not in line with previous study conducted by Tubergen, (2013) that migration brings change on religious performance following the environment's condition. However, this change is different. In China this change tends to be more positive and religious with its freedom, in contrary his finding showed that migration negative change, which means that religious level of people decreases due to the freedom of each individual. Majority of study related to this topic investigated to Christian (Hu, 2016) and common immigrant (Just, Sandovici, Listhaug, 2014), not in specific sample. Thus this finding told the experience of specific group.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The finding of this study suggested that every individual has similar experience with their practical worship. Cultural and religious background brings particular different experience. It makes them wiser and respect for new thing, and gain much

knowledge that can be obtained from different experience. Their religiosity increases in other part of religious angle, such as hikma (wisdom), *muamala* (relationship with people). However, this result only collected through the interview as a premier data and non-formal participant observation in one kind of agenda to get more the data. Thus, gaining more information through formal observation to validate the concordance between or among different instrument will enrich the findings.

The participants of this study were representative of eastern culture who had almost similar characteristics of social and religious interactions. For future research, researcher recommends to compare the experience of religious practice from eastern and western representatives. Also the number of participants is small, and representative of participants with Islamic minority community is not balance with the others who have Islamic majority community. Thus, reflection of the study can be explored more deeply.

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