



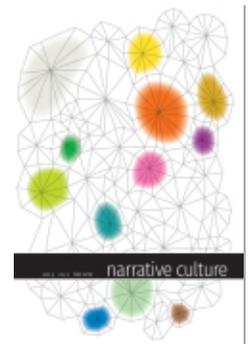
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Making Sense of *Karāmāt* : Narratives about the Prediction
of Sufferings in the Chinese Jahriyyah Sufi Order

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Making Sense of *Karāmāt*

Narratives about the Prediction of Sufferings in the Chinese Jahriyyah Sufi Order

Narratives of prophecy in oral or written media form an important aspect of the cultural experience of many groups. For example, for Choctaw Indians, prophecies in stories passed down from the ancestors are marked cultural discourses that differ essentially from other genres of the tribe's oral traditions (Mould). Some Japanese seek the help of blind female mediums to receive predictions from their deceased loved ones so as to channel their desperation and gain confidence in the future (Ivy 180–85). In the nineteenth-century Javanese historical manuscript *Babad Jaka Tingki*, the exiled writer's prophecy is a political presage that foresees a future in which the traditional Javanese authority is challenged by forces from the margins (Florida). For Latter-Day Saints, prophecy can be part of the fulfillment of their "emic belief system," the "Prophecy of the elders" (Rolph 65). The prophecies of some apostles can be evaluations of other systems of perceiving the world, such as "science" and "traditional religions" (Jules-Rosette). This essay engages with narratives of prophecy and situates the analysis of these narratives in the context of the Chinese spiritual Islamic teaching of a Naqshbandi Sufi order.

It is a widely observed tradition in Naqshbandi Sufi orders to compile hagiographies of their leaders to document their miraculous acts and speeches, which

are known as *karāmāt*.¹ The Chinese Sufi order Jahriyyah also has a hagiographical work, titled *Re shi ha er*. The book was composed roughly between 1780 and 1820 in the wake of the order's armed conflicts with adherents of other Islamic teachings in China and the suppression of the Jahriyyah by the Qing imperial state.² Although originating from oral narratives in Chinese, the book's text is written in Arabic for the first half and Persian for the second. The original manuscript in Arabic and Persian is reserved for Jahriyyah elites. To ordinary adherents or outsiders, it is only available in a published Chinese translation.

This article studies *karāmāt* narratives selected from *Re shi ha er*. All the narratives I chose to analyze deal with the prediction of the order's leader about persecution by the imperial state. What is interesting in these narratives is that none warned the order's followers of the forthcoming repression (since fate is immutable). My study aims to understand these prophecies that were ironically not used to change the future and that have been preserved in two languages not local to China. I approach this goal from two directions. First, I perceive the narratives as an alternative perspective toward the order's fate of persecution; second, I look at the narratives as meaningful objects that simultaneously resist and invite being read. I argue that they represent the order's resistance against suppression or self-protection in difficult times. I situate my analysis to the narratives' spatio-temporal specificities and avoid imposing a sweeping generalization of how the *karāmāt* prophecies or the book itself should be perceived. Prior to my analysis, I briefly introduce the Jahriyyah order, its historical persecution, and the text from which I selected my data.

Introduction: The Order, the Text, and the *Karāmāt*

It is believed that Jahriyyah teaching was transmitted from Yemen to China by the order's first leader or, as the followers would address him, their *murshid*,³ Ma Mingxin in 1744 during the reign of Manchu (Qing) Emperor Qianlong. In China, the order was named "the new teaching (*xin jiao*)," because it entered the country at a relatively recent date.⁴ Consequently, it invited objection, opposition, and even violence because it attracted many followers, including converts from other Sufi orders, thus disrupting the delicate balance between preexisting religious teachings. In addition, as a "new" teaching, it did not have a position on the imperial state's map of religions (Lipman 86–91, 165; Ma 271–72).

The background of the narratives I chose to analyze refers to the Jahriyyah uprisings during the later years of Qianlong's reign (1735–96). In 1781, Su Sishisan, a Jahriyyah follower from a Muslim Salar ethnic group, killed two officials who intended to intervene in sectarian conflicts between the Jahriyyah and another Sufi order in China, the Khufiyyah.⁵ This action, although motivated by sectarian loyalty, was inevitably taken by the emperor as a sign of rebellion. Consequently, the Jahriyyah was smashed and its leader Ma Mingxin was executed. In 1784, Jahriyyah followers decided to take revenge by launching another uprising, but they were once again suppressed. During and after these uprisings, Jahriyyah followers were persecuted and massacred, and women and children were killed or enslaved (Lipman 103–12; Ma 283–88, 296–98). The devastating effect was so severe that the order was not resurrected until the late 1810s, during the time of its fourth *murshid*, Ma Yide.

The *Re shi ha er* manuscript was completed roughly during the period of repression. Its author is a member of the Jahriyyah religious elite, 'Abdu al-Qādir, known by his Chinese title as Gunali Ye, "The Lord inside of the Pass."⁶ Although a native Chinese, 'Abdu al-Qādir wrote the manuscript in Arabic and Persian. Although it is common for Muslims in China to learn some Arabic to be able to read the Quran, only members of the religious elite have the means to master both Arabic and Persian. The book mainly contains narratives about miracles performed by the first two Jahriyyah *murshids*, Ma Mingxin and Mu Xianzhang, plus their experiences and speeches.

Scholars have long noticed that although Chinese Muslim intellectuals have the tradition of composing apologia for Islam (Israeli, "Ethnicity" 61), they are not necessarily willing to share their knowledge with the general public (Israeli, "The Cross" 205). Jahriyyah followers in particular "are very secretive about their beliefs" and "the content of the texts is only conveyed to adherents" (Bakhtyar 91). *Re shi ha er* also bears such secretiveness, especially in the wake of persecution. It was kept secret by the order until 1993 when the Hui (Muslim Chinese) writer Zhang Chengzhi decided to sponsor its translation into Chinese as part of his journey to rediscover his Muslim roots.⁷ Zhang also wrote the translation's foreword and afterword. The book's original version is still not available to people other than the Jahriyyah elite.⁸

The book's title *Re shi ha er* is a Chinese transliteration of its Arabic name, *Rashḥah*.⁹ The term *Rashḥah* is derived from the root *r-sh-h*. It originally means sweating or perspiration, but in this form it would mean "a dew, or fall of dew from the sky" (Lane 1088; emphasis in original). The name links the book to a broader

Sufi tradition, namely, the hagiographies of Naqshbandi *khwajas*. The first book of this genre is 'Ali b. Ḥusayn Safi's *Rashaḥāt 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, or *Tricklings from the Fountain of Life*, depicting the life of *khwajas* in Central Asia (Beveridge; about the connection between the Jahriyyah *Rashḥah* and *Rashaḥāt 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, see Sobieroj 136). It is thus quite possible that the title *Rashḥah* pays tribute to a larger tradition in general and to *Tricklings from the Fountain of Life* in particular. It is also possible that part of the hagiographer's purpose in composing the book arose from his desire to document the order's sufferings in a hard time. His original intention is not known to us, nor does it matter to my interpretation of the book and its stories.

The Chinese translation is a thin book of 103 pages (not counting the foreword and afterword), containing 163 records mainly related to the first two *murshids*. Some of these records are long stories, such as the ones about the sectarian conflict (26–28) and Ma Mingxin's experiences (11–14, 39–41). Some of them are extremely short, such as the one on page 29, which has only one sentence: "One day, Maola Weigaye Tunla said, "The along¹⁰ is our good along." Each piece is introduced by the expression "[it is] said" (*xiang chuan* in Chinese), which reminds us that the work claims authority as a compilation of narratives collected from oral tradition.

In the following, I discuss some of the *karāmāt* the work contains. All texts have been translated from Chinese. I use Chinese romanization in the citations and explain their origins in notes. In my analysis I cite transliterations of the original Arabic or Persian terms.

1. "Our *maola xiehe* [*mawlā* sheikh] *Weigaye Tunla*¹¹ visited eighty some families of *Duo si da ni*,¹² and people wondered: 'Why did the Old Man honor us [by his visits]? We are not counted as religious families.' Later people found out: these families would become martyrs' families [in the empire's oppression of the order's uprising]." ('Abdu al-Qādir 24–25)

In this narrative, the author documents the *mawlā*'s prediction of the aforementioned oppression and his visits honoring the order's followers who would later die. We notice, however, that the *mawlā* did not warn his followers of the approaching disaster.

To return to my initial question: Because the prediction did not fulfill the "function" of warning the Jahriyyah followers about their suffering and dying, and because it was documented only after the event had taken place, what is its meaning? Even its documentation deserves an inquiry. As few Chinese people,

even Chinese Muslims, could read both Arabic and Persian, what is the potential audience of this work?

First, I argue that the *karāmāt* narratives allow an alternative understanding of the oppression and persecution as a heavenly test predicted by the *murshid*. Second, I argue that the book itself is a meaningful object that represent symbolic resistance against the powers believed to have suppressed the Jahriyyah. One can therefore understand the meaning of the book as a piece of material culture, even without referring to texts in it. My analysis is divided into two parts. First I analyze prophetic *karāmāt* as salvation narratives, and then I look at the book's manuscript as a symbolic object.

***Karāmāt* as Salvation Narratives**

I read the prophetic *karāmāt*, including the one introduced at the beginning of this article, as salvation narratives. By “salvation” I mean that these narratives do not save the order's followers from harm but offer redemptive consolation after the harm has taken place. Before proceeding with my analysis, I quote a few more narratives from the book. There are two criteria guiding my choice of narratives to analyze. First, the selected narratives are all related to the sufferings and death of Jahriyyah followers, mainly caused by the suppression of the uprisings; second, these stories contain miraculous prophecies. Five more examples illustrate this.

2. “After that, a disturbance stormed Hezhou City. . . . A long time passed. One day during the time of evening prayer, a person called on me [Ahong Qi] saying: ‘The Maola wants you to visit.’ So I went. The Maola lifted my clothes and touched my back up and down. The Maola then said: ‘Go back.’ I left, confused. The next day, . . . the official was bribed by them [of another Sufi order] . . . they sentenced me to forty birchings.”³ (‘Abdu al-Qādir 26–7)

3. “One day our Maola was sitting with some of our ahongs, among whom there was Salar ahong Su [i.e., Su Sishisan, the one who initiated the uprising and was killed. His family members were all massacred, too.]. Suddenly, Weigaye Tunla furrowed his brow, turned back and said: ‘Oh, a rebellious malicious wind will fill the mundane world. It will massacre the people who love God.’ Ahong Su

hastened to approach the Maola. He wanted to ask the reason [for Maola's claim]. The Maola's face turned red, he said, 'You should pray to God, pray to the Merciful God.'" (38–39)

4. "It is said that mosque member¹⁴ Bai was a follower of our Great Maola Weigaye Tunla. The Maola liked him a lot. Young Ahong Aibu Baiker Wumi said to the Maola: 'Why do you like Bai so much? I find . . . that he is greedy.' The Maola said: 'You are right, he is greedy, but his greediness is different.' When . . . the disaster [of the 1781 persecution] happened, he [Bai] was put in jail. . . . Mosque member Bai said: 'What do I have other than this opportunity? . . . The chance [of sacrifice] has come and I cannot let it go. . . . Otherwise, how can I step into the line of the lucky martyrs?'" (38)

5. "Weigaye Tunla said: 'Two blind men are the Order's clothes. M[i] Shangde is our Order's remedy.'"¹⁵ (25)

6. The Mawlā Ma Mingxin foresaw the approaching disaster so he wanted to select his successor. He selected Mu Xianzhang to be the second *murshid*, but people did not know his intention. When Ma Mingxin met Mu Xianzhang, the former said: "This person, now he does not know who he himself is, people do not know who he is either. But God willing, after two or three years [in 1781], he will know who he himself is, and people will know who he is." (78)

These narratives, together with the first one quoted earlier, are all about predictions of the future in which the *murshid* prophesied the torture or death of the Jahriyyah followers caused by other religious or political powers (i.e. the antagonistic Sufi order and the empire).¹⁶ While the *mawlā* predicted his followers' fate of being birched, dying in fights or in jail, he nonetheless did not try to save them from their sad destiny.

In the first narrative, he honored eighty families by his visit. He was aware they would later achieve martyrdom but did not tell them the reason for his visit. In narrative 2 he healed Akhond Qi physically and mentally after the torture. In narrative 3 he predicted the massacre (a malicious wind killing people who love God) but did not warn Su Sishisan of his role or fate in the disaster; rather, he told him to pray. In narratives 4 and 5, he spoke for mosque member Bai, praised him as greedy for martyrdom, and praised Mi Shangde as the remedy of the order, so they

were not to be misunderstood after their death. In narrative 6, Ma Mingxin praised Mu Xianzhang as a figure who will be “known” after the disaster, to suggest Mu’s status as his selected heir, so that Mu would not be misplaced after Ma Mingxin’s execution.

Again, in general *murshid* Ma Mingxin did not protect his followers from misfortunes, because Heaven’s will or *tianming*, in the Chinese politico-philosophical view, had decided they should suffer. He only salvaged them from misplacement. He used his miraculous visions to show that the Jahiriyya order deserved the sacrifice of its followers because he is a true saintly person who is able to make prophecies. He also offered a different perspective toward the sufferings and demise of these people, as suggested by another piece of narrative (although not prophetic) documented by ‘Abdu al-Qādir:

Shigang Ye (the Lord of Rock Hill) related: “The Maola said [to me, Shigang Ye], oh, my grandson, remember, [there are some people] among the servants of Allah, when they are alive, they are among the ordinary people; when they are dead, they are still among the ordinary people. [But] in the Afterlife, when they will be resurrected, they will be among the *walīs* [i.e., the friends of God].” (‘Abdu al-Qādir 64)

Here the *mawlā*’s behavior in not saving the followers from disaster is addressed by his words through the ink of ‘Abdu al-Qādir and the mouth of the Lord of Rock Hill. The *mawlā* teaches his followers to view the tortures and death, facing them not with a mundane eye but in expectation of a spiritual hereafter. Of course, no one could guarantee the afterworld in which the order’s sacrificed followers would be honored by being placed among the *walīs*, and the surviving followers may still struggle and suffer in a reality dominated by power(s) against Jahriyyah. Nevertheless, the *karāmāt* created a marvelous outlook by taking a Sufi perspective toward suffering and sacrifice in a hostile reality. In this outlook, the Jahriyyah *murshid* and the hagiographer can negotiate with the rulers by denying the reality and “romancing the real” (Webber xviii) as a divine ordeal.

Of course, the power of romancing the real is not just in the hands of the religious elites. Like the Tunisian *ḥikāyāt* studied by Sabra Webber, the miraculous narratives in *Re shi ha er* are suspect to outsiders but become “history” to community members, in this case the followers of Jahriyyah. In his book *History of the Soul (Xin ling shi)*, Zhang Chengzhi (98), a trained historian, observed that the ending date of

the Battle of Shifeng Bao (Rock Summit Fortress), fought in the second Jahriyyah uprising in 1784, was during ʿīd al-ḥiṭr, the Muslim Festival of Breaking the Fast.

Interestingly, a popular tale passed down orally by Jahriyyah followers and recorded by Zhang Chengzhi gives the same conclusion Zhang worked to prove. The tale says that the followers stopped fighting and accepted their fate of slaughter at the end of the battle because they were inspired by the idea of sacrificing themselves for the ʿīd al-ḥiṭr. They prayed the festival prayers and were killed during the prayer. Zhang bowed before the vernacular vision of history. He commented:

They were waiting for the enemy, they fought to the last minute, they formed the religious intention of flying to Heaven where there is no persecution, in the holy atmosphere of *Er de* [transliteration of ʿīd]. In the third, fourth days of the seventh month [of the lunar calendar], they desired to complete their martyrdom for them. Desperate defense-at that moment became a bizarre waiting [to die]. (Zhang 98)

The popular tale resonates with the *karāmāt* of prophecy in that they all possess the power of romancing the real and merging the boundaries between events that happened in reality and imagination.¹⁷ In them, foreseeable tortures and death were not or should not be prevented. Jahriyyah followers at the Battle of Rock Summit Fortress relinquished the chance of surviving. Their suffering and death were thus endowed with a responsibility to represent a meaning beyond their own lives.

This meaning lies in the way they chose to die, or rather, the way the popular tale depicts their dying. In the tale, the slaughter of Jahriyyah followers was not an elimination of rebels as the imperial government propagated, neither was it “a victory over death” as it was, for instance, for Jewish soldiers who committed collective suicide in the Masada Fortress in 73 CE in their revolt against Roman rule (Bruner and Gorfain 63). That day, the festival of Breaking the Fast “marks the end of the hardships of the period of fasting” (Mittwoch). When it comes with death, it also marks the end of hardships of fighting. What the Jahriyyah followers did in the battle was a willing sacrifice—they did not commit suicide but waited to be killed. Here death is a salvation from hardship instead of something that should be conquered (like in Masada). Jahriyyah followers welcomed the massacre. The tale thus not only confirmed or “realized” the *mawlā*’s *karāmāt* in which he foresaw people’s death, it also romanced the reality. The Jahriyyah followers redefined a piece of history by putting it in the scope of *karāmāt*: the massacre became a contribution to the achievement of martyrdom. The massacre was planned not

by the enemies but by the Jahriyyah followers. They avoided self-caused injury or death—which is forbidden according to the teachings of Islam—by accepting to be killed by enemies with a willing surrender of themselves. They were eager to sacrifice themselves during the day of ʿīd al-fiṭr, so their piety could reach Allah. It is worth reiterating here that the idea of sacrificing oneself for one’s faith and being praised afterward, rather than escaping from suffering or dying, is exactly the message delivered by the *karāmāt* narratives cited earlier.

In this case, historical reliability is actually not a concern. As the *karāmāt* in *Re shi ha er* and the popular tale seem to nod at each other over the space between history and story, literacy and orality, we can probably assume that the Jahriyyah followers had confidence in their own “truth,”¹⁸ in both its mundane and religious meanings. A history is constructed so that the order’s teachings and the interactions between the *walī* and his followers are the only staged activities. Although the parallel “real” world is dominated by other powers, these powers are only contributing factors in the world of imagination. In this context, to answer Tom Mould’s question of “What is the relationship between content, value, and the origins of prophecy and that of historical event?” (212),¹⁹ I argue that the relationship between massacre, martyrdom, and *karāmāt* is like a refraction: the white light (massacre) goes into the pyramidal prism (*karāmāt*) and comes out as a rainbow (martyrdom). Or, as Sahlins might say, they positioned a unique piece of “history” of massacre in their own familiar “structure” (143–56) of *karāmāt*.

In this section I analyzed the *karāmāt* as salvation narratives that transform the sufferings of the Jahriyyah followers into a predicted heavenly test and redeem them from misunderstanding after the harm has occurred. I also quoted a popular tale to map this way of thinking among ordinary Jahriyyah followers. In the next section I offer another way of making sense of *karāmāt*: perceiving the book as a meaning-bearing object.

Semiotics: *Rashḥah* as a Coded Text

As mentioned already, *Re shi ha er* was originally a manuscript in Arabic and Persian that was translated into Chinese in 1993.²⁰ One wonders about the potential audience of this piece of literature because few Chinese people, even Chinese Muslims, could read Arabic and Persian, and we do not know the author’s original intention behind writing it.

It is easy to assume that ‘Abdu al-Qādir wrote in those two languages possibly because he was “addressing a knowledgeable audience” (Reynolds 116), that is, those who understand these languages and have enough knowledge about the Jahriyyah order. In other words, the manuscript’s textual meaning opens itself only to qualified readers, mainly the order’s religious elite.

However, the potential audience is not restricted to the religious elites. Two other groups of people can be considered as able or even invited to “read” the manuscript: imperial governors and ordinary Jahriyyah followers. Although the *karāmāt* are illegible to them in terms of language (few could understand both Arabic and Persian), not to mention that the manuscript was not accessible to them, they can still perceive symbolic meanings in the text.

I argue that the manuscript as a “thing”²¹ could assume its role of expressing resistance or self-protection even without reference to the textual meaning of its content. Therefore, part of my endeavor to make sense of a text becomes an endeavor to decipher the media by which the text is delivered and the context of its circulation. By doing so, one finds that the semiotic life of the text as a thing does not mean less than the literary meanings the text bears.

About the perception ordinary Jahriyyah followers might have had of the work, Zhang Chengzhi observes that-

You walk all around the wide Northwest [of China], and [other places] even in Shandong, Hebei, Jiangsu or Heilongjiang, illiterate [Muslim] peasants not only know about *Re shi ha er*, they also believe in it and love it. They will stubbornly say that only *Re shi ha er* is true. Although they did not read the whole book themselves, they passed down the saying generation after generation that the book is “ours.” (foreword, in ‘Abdu al-Qādir iv)

Zhang went on to say that the Jahriyyah followers he encountered were not aware of the government’s documents about their ancestors’ uprisings, but they believe *Rashḥah* to be the true history of their order’s past. With *Rashḥah* in hand, they have “the evidence to argue against the government that harmed its people” (ibid.).

Although one cannot assume that Zhang’s words speak for all Jahriyyah followers from the Qing dynasty to the present day, this observation resonates with my experiences in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in summer 2012. Scholars, religious leaders, and ordinary Hui I spoke to, some of them not followers of the

Jahriyyah order, talked about *Rashḥah* and its Chinese translation when I asked for references on Jahriyyah's history. From this observation, two points can be made: first, even Jahriyyah followers who cannot read the text of *Rashḥah* still consider the manuscript book as written for them.²² Second, the symbolic meaning of such writing lies in that it conveys a feeling that “our” history has been documented.

One should notice that *Rashḥah* is not just a hagiography but also serves as an alternative historical document. This sort of narrative is meant to be hidden from censorship by the imperial state. Seen in this light, the fact that *Rashḥah* is written in Arabic and Persian seems equal to an announcement that the author is “refusing to be read” or “refusing to be understood” (foreword and afterword by Zhang in ‘Abdu al-Qādir iii, 107), especially by the governors. However, governors with censoring eyes can also be the manuscript’s potential readers.

Strictly speaking, without the help from Muslim religious elites (of any sect or Sufi order), odds were low for the Qing governors to actually understand this piece of literature, even if they were able to obtain a copy of it. According to Takahiro Onuma, the Ming dynasty’s official translation institution established to communicate with Muslims in Central Asia, the Muslim Office (*Huihuiquan*), was only responsible for the translation of Persian. And “although it [the office] continued to exist until the early Qing period, we can find little sign of activity” (Onuma 38). The Qing government did not have official Arabic translators (Onuma personal communication). Persian was added to the Qing’s official linguistic map after the Manchu conquest of the Uyghur area, but Arabic was still not included (Brophy 244).

Like the Jahriyyah followers who are illiterate in Arabic and Persian, the imperial state does not have to understand the textual meaning to read the rebellious intention in this “explicit coding” (Radner and Lanser 5). Looking at social changes in the late Qianlong reign, one finds that many popular religious cults launched uprisings against the empire (Qin 46). These cults were all cruelly pacified, and their secret texts sought out and put to the torch (Shen 12–3, 25, 33).²³ In this context, a text from the Jahriyyah order, an Islamic order that was new to the emperor’s religious map and had just experienced two pacifications, had every reason to be read as threatening and burned by the government.

The imperial rulers were afraid of possible political claims from the cults in general, and from the Jahriyyah in particular because it offered an alternative authority to the imperial state and spoke for a new power that was sensed by the rulers in and after the rebellions (see Henning 487). The state could not afford to

share its subordinates, neither with other political powers nor with other “gods.” The emperor himself is a god, the son of the Heaven, so why would people need other gods? All social activities, including religious practices, should be controlled by the government. All those who were not controlled pose a potential threat. As Mayfair Yang maintained:

The [Qing] imperial state—with its maps, administrative divisions, . . . its licensing of temples and monasteries, . . . its canonization of local gods and deities into a centralized pantheon, and its suppression of local sectarian cults—was able to appropriate and dominate the space of far-flung regions. (Yang 726–27)

One may rightly argue that other Islamic sects such as the Khufiyyah, Ikhwani, and Wahhabi at that time were also opposing the Jahriyyah, so the imperial state was not the only power that *Rashḥah* and its narratives were arguing against. In the book one finds many pieces of narratives elevating *murshid* Ma Mingxin over religious leaders of other sects (see ‘Abdu al-Qādir 18, 21, 29, 36, 66). However, we should also keep in mind that the text was composed in the wake of the pacified Jahriyyah uprisings, and the sufferings documented in it were inflicted or at least dominated by the imperial state. Although some followers of other Islamic sects joined the imperial troops fighting the Jahriyyah, others joined the Jahriyyah against the empire, so the armed conflict was mainly between the Jahriyyah and the imperial state, not among different Islamic sects (Ma 279). In addition, the fact that other Islamic sects were against the Jahriyyah does not invalidate the argument that the Jahriyyah followers read the manuscript as a symbol of resistance or self-protection, and the imperial state could read the manuscript as a symbol of rebellion.

To summarize, in a time when the Jahriyyah order was suppressed, the codedness of literatures such as *Rashḥah* could be a sign of resistance against being governed by being illiterate of the official language, as was the refusal of literacy in the case that James Scott presents (229) about the South Asian Zomian people. The book as a sign “is already meaningful, whether or not a coded element is understood” (Radner and Lanser 8), so it ironically offers an invitation to be “read” in a broader sense of the verb. Similarly, taking a religious studies perspective, Hugh Urban argues, “it is generally more fruitful to turn the focus of our analysis away from the content of secrecy and instead toward the forms and the strategies through which secret information is concealed, revealed, and exchanged” (218). In this case, when people do not understand the textual meaning of *Rashḥah*, the

content of the secrets hidden in these foreign languages is not important, but the very fact that some secrets were kept from certain people is important.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Chinese Jahriyyah Sufi order's *karāmāt* narratives from two perspectives—that of certain narratives' textual meanings and that of the book's symbolic meaning—suggests both spiritual and secular meanings of these narratives.

Under the spatiotemporal contexts of the book's composition and circulation, the meanings of the prophetic narratives are spiritual because they are salvation narratives redeeming the followers from being misunderstood rather than predictions that help people understand their future. At the same time, the book and its narratives can bear a symbolic meaning of resistance or self-protection in the real world, even if the texts are not accessible. The author, 'Abdu al-Qādir, by refusing to incorporate the dominant discursive system and even its linguistic tool (Chinese language), used his manuscript to construct a spiritual perspective that was powerful enough to convert the dominant imperial historicism into a fulfilling element of a fatalist, miraculous, and religiously sacrificing worldview and is still powerful to sustain itself in the mind or feeling of Jahriyyah followers.

Moreover, 'Abdu al-Qādir took a perspective that is intimate to the order's leaders, and the theoretical position of perceiving his narrative as written for a community, that is, a Sufi order, could be diluted by the facts that most of the records present only certain influential figures and the stories are all written in Arabic and Persian. 'Abdu al-Qādir's style and viewpoint in his writing belong to a tradition of venerating *walīs* that is not uncommon in other Sufi orders around the world. So the narratives can also be read as addressing religious elites including the author himself.

Although the narratives of prophecy analyzed here are all short-term prophecies, that is, referring to catastrophes happening soon, I argue that unlike what Mould suggests (212), they can be both practical and “speak of a larger realm of experience.” They address many kinds of audiences for many purposes, including mundane resistance in this world, salvation in the afterworld, and honoring an authority (the *walīs*) other than the Qing royal court. The narratives' focus cannot be simply categorized as “community interaction in this life” or “individual salvation in an afterlife” (*ibid.*) but are a mixture of both and even more.

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■ NOTES

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1. This concept is familiar to Sufi followers around the world. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, "In the technical vocabulary of the religious sciences, *karāmah* (pl. *karāmāt*) . . . assumes the sense of 'charisma', the favour bestowed by God completely freely and in superabundance. More precisely, the word comes to denote the 'marvels' wrought by the 'friends of God', *awliyā'* (sing. *walī*), which God grants to them to bring about. These marvels most usually consist of miraculous happenings in the corporeal world, or else of predictions of the future, or else of interpretation of the secrets of hearts, etc." (Gardet). When discussing Islamic hagiographies around the world, J. Renard mentioned that "among the most prominent themes are a wide variety of saintly marvels (*Karāmāt*)" (8). *Karāmāt* is pronounced as *Ke lai mai ti* by its Chinese-speaking believers. Since the concept is originally *karāmāt*, I use the Arabic transliteration in this essay.
2. According to Zhang Chengzhi (foreword in 'Abdu al-Qādir iii), the work was composed between the late Qianlong (1711–1799) reign and the Jiaqing reign (1796–1820) after the persecution happened in 1781. So the time period is probably from the 1780s to the 1820s.
3. *Murshid* is an Arabic term meaning "guide" or "instructor." It is a title used in Chinese and other Sufi orders to address their leaders.
4. Islam has a long history in China since roughly the first half of the seventh century CE (see Ma 50–56, Pillsbury 14). Despite this long history, Islam in China in general and Sufi orders in particular usually fall out of the institutionalization of the

imperial state, and this leads to suspicion from the state.

5. The name *Khufyyah* means that its followers praise Allah in a low voice. This is another Naqshbandi Sufi sect in China that appeared earlier than the Jahriyyah and thus was accepted by the imperial government.
6. Many Chinese-speaking Muslims have two names, a Chinese one and an Arabic one to link them to the Islamic faith.
7. For a discussion of Zhang's self-realization and rediscovery of his Muslim roots among the Jahriyyah followers in the wake of China's economic and politic transformations after the Mao era, see Liu, chapter 9. About the revival of Islam among the Hui population as a social phenomenon, see McCarthy.
8. Florian Sobieroj also observed that this manuscript is "lost or inaccessible" (137). Other evidence supports this: even after its translation and publication, *Rashḥah* remained somehow invisible to the world. For instance, in the book *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts* published in 1994, *Re shi ha er* was not included, but some of the author's other recently identified manuscripts were (see Bakhtyar 63–116, esp. 91–92).
9. In this essay I use the Arabic name *Rashḥah* to designate the original book and *Re shi ha er* addresses the translation.
10. Chinese transliteration of the Persian word *akhond*, designating a member of the clergy.
11. Both *mawlā* and sheikh are titles for the order's leader. His name is a transliteration of Arabic *Wiqāyat Allāh*, meaning "Protection of God."
12. Persian *dustāni*, meaning "friends"; this term is widely used in Hui Muslim communities even today to address their fellow Muslims.
13. Birching is the punishment of beating a person on their back using birch sticks.
14. "Mosque member" is *xiang lao* in Chinese, literarily meaning "an old man from the village." The term is used by Chinese Muslims to designate a person who goes to the mosque frequently.
15. According to note 2 on page 25, Mi Shangde would have become a martyr in the 1781 uprising. He was caught by the governors and tortured. Because he did not disclose the order's secrets, he was executed.
16. There are other pieces about the persecution and its aftermath, such as on pages 62, 65, and 88, but these narratives do not have *karāmāt* in them, so I did not select them for analysis.
17. Of course, the perception and description of any historical event cannot be realized without imagination, but this piece of Zhang's narrative, as Liu Xinmin

- writes, reveals “the mental and psychological dynamics that has always been swept under the rug as mere superstition by the so-called ‘serious’ historiography” (274).
18. I use the word “truth” in quotation marks not because I am taking the existence of an absolute truth as only “illusory” (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 87). Rather, I think truth is meaningful to certain people if they choose to believe. In other words, to understand this “truth,” we have to “take the involved attitude seriously” (88). But this involvement is only the Jahriyyah followers’ involvement and their utterance of “truth.” Consequently, I put the word in quotation marks to acknowledge a possibility of an alternative interpretation of what the Jahriyyah followers considered as “true.”
 19. Tom Mould suggests that to perceive narratives of prophecy, scholars may want to explore five areas, including (1) the location of prophecy in a given community’s cultural and semantic system, (2) relationship between history and prophecy, (3) negotiation of and between worlds (i.e., whether the focus is community interaction in this life or individual salvation in an afterlife), (4) long-term versus short-term prophecy, and (5) the prophet and the origin of prophecy (211–13).
 20. In this section I use “semiotics” and the term “sign” arbitrarily to some extent, without discussing any specific theoretical framework, for instance, whether I am using semiotics in generally the Saussurean or Peircean system or the mode and vehicle of the sign. To address this issue very briefly, first, the manuscript as a sign is used in a material world, and the social context presented already could be seen as crucial in the sign system (as Roman Jakobson may agree). These two attributes decided that my reading of the sign is more Peircean. Second, as the relationship between the manuscript and what it represents could only be grasped by convention and acquisition of background knowledge, that is, the sign is “unmotivated” according to Saussure, we could probably define it as a “symbol.” For more discussion please refer to Chandler, Pelc, and Ransdell.
 21. I owe this idea to Mikhail Bakhtin, who argued that there are certain genres of expression and language that only insiders or participants in this genre can understand. However, he also stated that “for those not participating in the given purview, these languages may be treated as objects. . . . For such outsiders, the intentions permeating these languages become *things*, limited in their meaning and expression; they attract to, or excise from, such language a particular word—making it difficult for the word to be utilized in a direct way, without any qualifications” (289, emphasis in original). Although Bakhtin addressed the power of professionalized language in social stratification, I find the idea of considering

languages as things useful in analyzing *Rashḥah*. I agree with Bakhtin that if *Rashḥah* is considered as a thing, the meanings in its languages become limited compared to the rich meaning conveyed by the *karāmāt* narratives, but this limited meaning is also socially operational and worth noting. Moreover, when analyzing the narratives, I find it difficult to draw a definite line between insiders and outsiders. It is not necessary to be an outsider to be able to read the narratives or the manuscript as an object.

22. Of course, this phenomenon could be due to the translation of *Rashḥah* into Chinese and its recent circulation.
23. Actually not just for secret cults, literary inquisition was a major theme of the political and intellectual life in Qianlong's reign. Many books, whether printed from woodblocks or as manuscripts, suggesting dissident political ideas or considered as censorable were gathered from the people and burned (see Goodrich 30–37, 136–37).

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