

to research Islam in depth but also to understand local cultures in Taiwan and make a comparison with Islam. Thus we can spread the message of Islam in a good way.”³⁴

This thinking with which the second generation of Chinese Muslims were eager to interact in society was strengthened in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. The CMA and the Taipei Grand Mosque frequently engaged in public affairs to ameliorate the public misunderstanding of Islam. For example, Muslim representatives participated in religious dialogues with different religious representatives; in addition, Taipei Grand Mosque opened its door and welcomed visits from schools, NGOs, and other religious associations. Although the second generation Chinese Muslims were working hard to introduce Islam to the public, they were unable to resolve the most pressing problem, the decline of Taiwan’s Chinese Muslim population.

In fact, the decline of the Muslim population was a long-term problem for Chinese Muslims that had been noted by the first generation of Chinese Muslims in the early 1970s. Senior Chinese Muslims were alerted that the number of Muslims attending Taipei Grand Mosque was gradually decreasing on the date of the congregational prayer.³⁵ The decline in the Muslim population implies that the descendants of Muslims were in the process of assimilation. The problem of assimilation for Muslim immigrants was no exception; it also took place in Europe. Tariq Ramadan indicated that the second generation of Muslim immigrants in Europe were facing assimilation problems. Due to a growing atmosphere of Islamophobia across Europe, some descendants of Muslim immigrants were voluntarily becoming as little visible as possible so that no Islamic feature appeared in their daily lives.³⁶

Ramadan’s analysis of the assimilation of Muslims in Europe applies to the second and third generation of Chinese Muslims. The sense of Islamophobia in Taiwan is not as serious as that in Europe, but many descendants of Chinese Muslims have tended to hide their religious belief in public and have gradually adopted the lifestyles of non-Muslims. The features of assimilation for the descendants of Chinese Muslims in Taiwan could be observed in two ways, one of which is marriage. Marriage has the function of continuing the bloodline of Muslims; however, the younger generation have few opportunities to meet other Muslims in Taiwan. It can be said that in schools and jobs, 99% of the people that Muslims know are non-Muslims. In this context, it can be difficult to find a spouse who shares their faith. Funerals also indicate the blurring of distinctions between Muslims and Non-Muslims; we often hear that when a Muslim elder passes away and was sent to the mosque by their children, their children did not attend the Islamic funeral because their children would say “My father was Muslim but I am not.” The problem of assimilation has a great impact on all Chinese Muslims. The sense of is that the Chinese Muslim community seems to have collapsed. Only individual Muslims still preserve the features of Chinese Islam in private. Most of

³⁴ ‘Inauguration for the chairman of Taipei Grand Mosque,’ *Islam in China*, No.269, 2001, pp.36-38.

³⁵ ‘A sense of eagerness for a discussion of developing Islam’ *Islam in China*, No.154, 1973, p.3-4.

³⁶ Tariq Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context* (Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 1999), p.113.