

ARCHIVES | 1989

MUSLIM STUDENTS MARCH IN BEIJING

By **SHERYL WUDUNN** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 13, 1989

About the Archive

This is a digitized version of an article from The Times's print archive, before the start of online publication in 1996. To preserve these articles as they originally appeared, The Times does not alter, edit or update them.

Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems. Please send reports of such problems to archive_feedback@nytimes.com.

In the first demonstration by a Chinese minority group since a wave of student protests began last month, about 2,500 Muslim students marched to the city's central square today to protest the publication of a book they say blasphemes Islam.

"This book has defaced Islam and the Koran," said a student. "It is like 'The Satanic Verses.'"

The students said the book they were protesting, "Sexual Customs," has a section that refers to the architecture of a mosque as a phallic symbol, and other sexual references. They demanded that the Government punish the authors, who wrote the book under pen names, and the Shanghai publishing company that first released the book in March. Students said the book was not widely circulated in Beijing.

The protest came on the last day of a visit by the Iranian President, Hojatolislam Ali Khamenei, with Chinese leaders in Beijing. The Hojatolislam told reporters on Thursday that the death threat against Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses," is still in effect. Students, however, did not link their protests with the death threat against Mr. Rushdie. Demand a Public Apology

Brandishing banners written in Arabic and wearing white caps and veils, the

students submitted a petition to the Government demanding that a public apology be published in the official People's Daily and read on national television.

Relations between the overwhelming majority Han Chinese population and the 14 million Chinese Muslims, most of whom live in the far northwest, occasionally have been tense. The central Government has been wary of religious protests that might fan separatist sentiments in minority areas like Tibet and Xinjiang Province.

"Our pride has been hurt," said one student. "The authors wrote the book just for money." The banners called for freedom of religion, protection of the Koran and of China's various minorities. "Restore the dignity of Muslims," read one sign. Students said they supported the right to publish, but not the right to insult religions.

Recent protests have focused on freedom of the press, and religious issues have not been raised by student demonstrators until now. It was not clear whether this protest was related to the recent demonstrations.

The marchers had obtained permission from the authorities to hold the demonstration, and there were no confrontations with the police. But the police blocked traffic to the site of the demonstration in Tiananmen Square, in the center of the capital.

The Government spokesman today called on Chinese university students not to demonstrate during the Chinese-Soviet summit meeting next week.

A version of this article appears in print on May 13, 1989, on Page 1001003 of the National edition with the headline: MUSLIM STUDENTS MARCH IN BEIJING.