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Ways to be Hui:

An Ethno-Historic Account of Contentious Identity Construction
Among the Hui Islamic Minority Nationality of China

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Ways to be Hui: An Ethno-Historic Account of Contentious Identity Construction
Among the Hui Islamic Minority Nationality of China

by

Alexander Blair Stewart

Master of Arts in Anthropology
University of California, San Diego, 2009
Professor David K. Jordan, Chair

This paper explores the contentious ethno-historical process of identity formation among the Hui national minority. For complex historical and practical reasons, the Chinese government defined the Hui as a minority nationality despite the fact that they lack the traditional Stalinist criteria that define other Chinese minority nationalities. Often simplistically defined as Sinophone Muslims, the Hui generally embrace their somewhat arbitrary categorization. The actual variety within the Hui category and its vague limits combine to form a framework within which various Hui groups contend to define what it means to be Hui. The pressure to maintain traditional Chinese Islamic communities, the desire to achieve a more pure version of Islam, and the allure of the material benefits of integrating into mainstream Han society have created tension within the Hui community

for centuries. This thesis will contend that dialogue and contestation, shaped by external forces, but primarily taking place within the Hui community, are the driving forces behind the formation of Hui identity.

Introduction: Constructing Minority Identity

The complex and often contradictory definition of the Hui as both a religious group and an ethnic nationality poses the question of how a minority group can perceive and construct an identity in the midst of a great deal of internal variety and under the often oppressive purview of a majority-dominated state which attempts to define and delimit its minority nationalities. According to the most recent census in 2000, China is about 92% Han Chinese, with 55 different minority nationalities 少数民族 making up the remaining percentage of the population. The Hui nationality 回族 with an estimated 9.2 million members is the largest of ten such minorities that traditionally practice Islam. But Hui people lack the shared language and common ancestry that helps to define the other nine Muslim groups (listed in descending order of population): the Uyghur, Kazak, Dongxiang 东乡, Kirghiz, Salar, Tajik, Uzbek, Bao'an 保安, and Tatar. As with any system of ethnic or cultural taxonomy, the Marxist-Stalinist-inspired system of classification adopted by the Chinese is highly problematic, and this is especially true when considering constructions of Hui identity. Still, the government and many Hui perceive more or less common origins in periodic influxes of Islamic traders and mercenaries over the past 1300 years. And throughout this time, the Hui have displayed and maintained boundaries separating them from the Han through the practice of Islamic customs, especially the observance of a pork taboo. However, there is a great deal of variation within Hui ancestry and religious practices, making them both questionable charters for identity.

Since the Mongol Yuan Dynasty 元朝, the term *Hui* or its reduplicated form *Huihui* 回回 has been used as a general term for Muslims in China. But only under the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has Hui identity been legally distinguished from that of other Muslim groups within China. The inclusion of the Hui alongside the other ethnic nationalities has transformed the concept of the Hui from a religious to an ethnic identity. However, the diversity and lack of cohesion among various Hui communities has complicated this transition. Nevertheless, Hui people generally embrace their inclusion as a minority nationality and the government-granted benefits that come with it. But various regional and sectarian Hui groups seek to define themselves as the normative Hui variety and their brand of Islam as the definitive faith of Chinese Muslims. Furthermore, the CCP's construction of minority nationalities as quaint fossils of previous stages of cultural evolution entails a notion of identity that is both frozen in time and tasked with coming to terms with the present. Thus, Hui identity is in a state of constant tensions between conflicting notions of history, modernity, and proper Islamic practice.

China's opening to the outside world in the last couple decades has allowed several scholars access to the Hui, and they have developed theories to describe the process by which the Hui construe their sense of identity in the rapidly changing cultural and political landscape. Many of these theories are inspired by a history of conflict between various Hui groups and the Chinese state, especially during the Qing Dynasty. Emblematic of this school of thought is Raphael Israeli (1997, 2002) who views Islamic and Chinese culture as irrevocably opposed to one another and posits the Hui as a study

in cultural confrontation. He and many other scholars often conflate the Hui with other Muslim groups within China and tend to view Islam as inherently opposed to secular rule and prone to violence. This school of thought has drawn inspiration from recent concerns about Islamic fundamentalism, which in China includes violent separatist movements among the Uyghurs and incidents of Chinese Muslims joining together in protest against literature deemed insulting to Islam. But the Hui—let alone all of China’s Muslims—uniting in opposition to the government or any other cause is a rare exception to the normal state of division.

While the Hui still tend to live in insular villages and neighborhoods, numerous modern Hui have expressed loyalty to the Chinese state, including many who consider themselves atheist, but ethnically Hui. While some Uyghurs and other regionally concentrated groups occasionally rebel, the Hui are historically more likely to aid in suppressing separatist movements as to join them. And as will be explained later, the aforementioned protests were aimed at persuading the state to protect Islam rather than challenging its authority (Gladney 1991). To depict the Hui as defined by resistance is to commit what Sherry Ortner (2006) calls the problem of “ethnographic refusal,” reducing a complex culture to its relationship to the majority, flattening complex internal politics down to crude resistance, and removing the agency and subjectivity of individual actors in favor of broad cultural forces. Describing the evolution of Hui identity as a narrative of resistance against a hegemonic Han state is a gross oversimplification that undermines the diversity in notions of identity among various Hui communities, which is the fundamental attribute that makes Hui identity so interesting and problematic.

The Hui could also be described as community of Muslims that has gradually adapted in order to survive and thrive in the Chinese cultural and political milieu. Economic, political, and religious connections exist between the Hui and foreign Muslim individuals and nations (which the CCP and the Nationalist government both have sought to exploit), but many currents within Chinese Islam are of uniquely Chinese origin and some Hui attribute greater authenticity to them than recent religious innovations from the Arabian Peninsula. Historically, geography and periods of government-imposed isolation have separated Chinese Muslims from the rest of the Islamic world, but many Hui still make the pilgrimage to Mecca and return with new (or newly resurrected) ideas. Alles et al (2003) note that these and past currents only succeed through adaptation, but they downplay the fact that virtually none of them are accepted by all the Hui. Placing the Hui on a continuum “between Mecca and Beijing”—to borrow the title of Gillette’s (2001) book—fails to consider the agency of local Hui groups and individuals in fusing traditional and innovative elements of Islam and Chinese culture to form their own original identity. Ties to Chinese tradition or international Islam are tools for asserting and validating local Hui identity, not wholly constitutive of it.

Ethnographers and historians alike have puzzled over why diverse and often feuding Hui groups within China persist in embracing the rather arbitrary label the Communist government imposed on them. In many ways, the Hui occupy a middle ground between the Han and the other minority nationalities of China, but there is much contention over whether they can be considered a united entity. Barbara Pillsbury (1973) speaks of “cohesion and cleavage,” Elisabeth Alles and her colleagues (2003) discuss “unity and fragmentation,” and Jonathan Lipman (1984) attempts to determine whether

the Hui constitute a “network society or patchwork society.” None of these dichotomies are resolved since the Hui simultaneously profess to share a single identity while remaining divided into sectarian, regional and linguistic groups. The only official organization connecting various Hui communities is the Chinese Islamic Association, which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) created largely to monitor and control all of China’s Muslims. Tension still exists between some Hui groups and the CCP, but the latter has managed to transfer much of that tension to inter-Hui relations.

While the government has sanctioned the Hui as an ethnic category and has attempted to guide the discourse through sponsorship of Islamic schools and public pronouncements, Hui actors themselves discursively validate, reject, transform, or ignore the official pronouncements. In light of this situation, Gladney (2004:159-60) perceives the construction of Hui identity as “a process of dialogical interaction between self-perceived notions of identity and sociopolitical contexts, often defined by the state.” He characterizes this process as incorporating internal Hui dialogue and similar interactions with the state and outsiders, but this characterization over-emphasizes the exchange between the Hui and external forces, which actually only sets the scene for the discussion among various Hui sectarian, regional, and local groups which actually consists of the primary voices in defining Hui identity. While this may be true of all modern Chinese, each Hui’s ambiguous position in relation to the state, international Islam, and various Hui sectarian groups makes their words and actions particularly meaningful. In contrast to the above approaches, this analysis will reveal the agency of the Hui in contending with each other to define their own ethnic and religious identity in a discursive field loosely delimited by the hegemonic forces of the Chinese state and international Islam.

Defining the Hui

Of all the 55 officially recognized Chinese minority nationalities, the Hui are the most diverse and widespread, which helps to make their definition as a single nationality the most problematic. In the 1950s, when the government formed the classification system for nationalities, it viewed these non-Han peoples as the fossilized remnants of earlier stages in a unilineal evolution towards socialism. However, it has become apparent that these nationality categories, especially that of the Hui, are not fossilized, but in a constant state of contention and reinvention (Caffrey 2004). Yet most Chinese minorities have to some extent accepted a construction of their own identity as a set of traits that must be commemorated and preserved, a few relics of the past that must be carried, unchanged into the future. Some may clamor for recognition of ignored or mislabeled ethnicities, but the officially recognized groups are—at least officially—set in stone and projected backwards in time as historical fact (Caffrey 2004). At the same time, these same people are supposed to be moving forward into a Chinese, socialist modernity.

Nationalities, subgroups, and individual actors can manipulate ethnic categories to advance their own interests, and no category is more malleable than the Hui. In most cases, these surviving characteristics are superficial—colorful clothing, ethnic cuisine and traditional dances—but Hui do not invite tourists to dance in circles like other minorities, their cuisine is indicative of dietary restrictions that separate them from the Han, and distinctive dress is more often a sign of intra-Hui sectarian divides than nationality unity. Indeed, it may be impossible to address all of the multifarious groups encompassed under the Hui label within a single study despite the attempts of most

scholars of the subject to do just that. The ever-evolving but also ever-broad government definition has made the Hui an ideal locus for us to explore individual and local agency in shaping ethnic identity on a national scale. This thesis will examine the various attempts individuals and groups of Hui have made within a state-defined framework to (re)define their collective identity which simultaneously reinforces, transforms and belies the existence of the Hui as a nationality or ethnicity.

From the twelfth century until the advent of the present Communist era, the term *Hui* was used as a general word to refer to all Muslims in China, regardless of ethnolinguistic distinctions. The Nationalists recognized the Hui as one of the five nationalities making up the Republic of China, and the Communists maintained the classification when they further subdivided the population into 41 nationalities in the 1953 census, and 53 in 1964 before arriving at the present number of 56 in 1982 (Gladney 1991:17). With the exception of the Han majority and the Hui, each of these groups generally meets (or once met) Stalin's four criteria for defining minority nationalities: they speak their own language, are concentrated in the same general region, have some common subsistence strategies, and share certain customs that can be construed as evidence of a common "psychological makeup." The Hui loosely fit the last two requirements, but one might argue that these commonalities are a result of Islamic, not ethnic, identity. In spite of this, the Hui were among the first nationalities that the Communists recognized, receiving their first autonomous county in 1936. As will be seen in the historical chapters, it is quite possible that both Nationalist and Communist recognition of the Hui as a minority nationality were primarily political gestures of beleaguered parties in need of allies, which somewhat arbitrarily imposed an ethnic

designation on a religious community. The lack of common language, territory and uniformity of customs creates the appearance that the Hui are made up of all Chinese Muslims whom the government does not consider distinct enough to warrant their own nationality. Regardless of the reasons behind its emergence as a legal category, the Hui have been generally enthusiastic in adopting and altering their collective identity.

Nine Muslim nationalities speaking distinct languages have been separated from the Hui, but the remainder is far from linguistic homogeneity. With the exception of groups like the Manchurians, whose language has gone out of use, every minority nationality except the Hui speaks a common, non-Chinese language. The Hui generally speak the local dialect of wherever they live. In most cases this is a variety of Mandarin, but some Hui speak Tibetan, Mongolian and the languages of the Bai 白 and Dai 傣 people of Yunnan 云南 Province. And the boundaries between each of these is not necessarily just spatial or linguistic; Gladney notes that the insular Tibetan Hui distrust other Hui and would rather marry their children to other ethnic Tibetans. There is also one group on Hainan 海南 Island that is classified as Hui despite the fact that members speak their own Malayo-Austronesian tongue (Gladney 1991:33-4). While Hui from all over China share certain Arabic phrases, they are largely the same basic expressions used throughout the Islamic world and hardly the basis of a unique dialect. Some would contend that the Hui once spoke a common language, but have assimilated over time. Virtually all Hui trace their ancestry to foreign Islamic immigrants, but this migration came in several waves spanning many centuries. Many of these immigrants have shared some knowledge of Arabic, and Persian has served as a lingua franca in some instances, especially during a

large Persian influx during the Yuan Dynasty, but the Hui vernacular—if there ever has been a tongue worthy of the name—has varied across time and space. The broad linguistic variation between various Hui communities is at least partially due to their situation as the most widely dispersed of China's minorities.

Although Hui usually live clustered around mosques in urban neighborhoods or rural villages, their communities are scattered all over China. The Hui have the third largest population of all minorities and the most autonomous administrative areas, but even in their autonomous province of Ningxia 宁夏, Hui comprise only one third of the population, with over 80% of the Hui people living elsewhere. Hui live in every major city—usually in distinct neighborhoods—and are also scattered in villages throughout the countryside. The Hui are the most widespread of the 55 minorities, with members residing in 2,308 of 2,372 counties across China in 1982 (Gladney 1991). The Hui population is more concentrated in historic port cities such as Guangzhou 广州 and Quanzhou 泉州 and along trade routes on the fringe of China proper, especially in the Gansu corridor leading from Xinjiang into China proper, but there are just as many Hui living elsewhere. The wide dispersion of Hui communities could result from a tradition of pilgrimage and religious personnel, as well as generations of involvement in trading, military endeavors and acting as intermediaries between the Han and other ethnic groups. Some scholars (Broomhall 1910; Ekvall 1939) contend that among the Han strong social, religious, and Confucian ties to kin, native villages and ancestors' graves might discourage extended travel, while the perceived spiritual value of pilgrimage both to Mecca and to tombs and theological institutes within China encourages Hui to travel. Of

course, Han also go on pilgrimages, and they have famously migrated all over the world in the Chinese Diaspora. The relative proclivity of the Hui to travel may have been more pronounced in the era before modern transportation, but the distinction still exists—if nowhere else—in popular perceptions about the Hui. Regardless of their relevance to modern times, these stereotypical categories of occupations could define Hui territory around trade routes and centers of exchange, but they are more often construed—just as problematically—as a common economic life.

Despite the fact that the Hui have always been a rather small minority in China, they have historically dominated several profitable trades. The stereotypic examples of Hui occupations are long-distance trade and soldiering, and like many stereotypes, this contains elements of truth about the actual situation and popular perception. As will be seen from the historical chapters, the historical ancestors of the Hui typically practiced these trades, so some attribute contemporary Hui involvement in them to an inherited proclivity. But this may be largely an indication of the popular stereotype of the Hui as course, rural people from the northwest who are raised on horseback and taught to hunt and migrate for subsistence. In fact, just as many modern Hui spend their formative years in an urban milieu. While Hui may be more likely on average to participate in certain occupations, these means of subsistence are by no means exclusive to or dominated by the Hui. Many other occupations, such as ritual slaughtering and leatherworking, are merely outgrowths of religious customs. It could also be argued that trading excursions are often a secondary outgrowth of religious travel. Indeed, Arabic and Persian language skills among contemporary Hui often earn them prestigious careers in international business and politics rather than employment as religious professionals. Of course, more

Han have been seeking opportunities to work and study abroad as China has opened to the outside world. In short, Hui economic life is just as variable as that of the Han, but other practices set the two apart.

A taboo against eating pork is perhaps the most prevalent and noticeable attribute of the Hui; it shapes Chinese perceptions of Hui identity more than any other tenet of Islamic faith or practice. Some Hui as well as outsiders consider this to be *the* defining aspect of Hui identity, and all others are lumped into a single group of pork-eaters (Caffrey 2004). This creates a barrier between the Hui and Han because the Chinese eat more pork per capita than any other nationality—the word for meat *rou* 肉 used in isolation is assumed to mean pork—but the Hui cannot eat with any utensils that have been used to prepare or serve it. Eating is a huge part of Chinese social and cultural life, so difficulties in sharing food can create serious social rifts. Yet most observant Muslims (and Jews) all over the world hold this taboo, so its presence hardly constitutes a nationality. But the separation from the Han created is a major historical factor in preventing Hui assimilation over the course of their many centuries in China. The pork taboo is not constitutive of Hui identity, but a cornerstone of difference upon which it can be built. Other Muslim nationalities have linguistic and ethnic distinctions to set them apart from others, but the Hui participate in inventing ethnic traits out of the arbitrary unity of a common diet. These dietary restrictions encourage Hui to take in traveling co-religionists and open inns and restaurants for Muslims who will not eat or sleep in ritually unclean Han establishments. This situation may create a certain amount of interdependence and community among the Hui, but it could do the same among all

Muslim nationalities as well. These restaurants also display Hui identity to Han and foreign clientele, making them a locus for displaying and shaping public perceptions of Hui identity.

Indeed, the criterion Stalin set forth that most describes the Hui is also the most vague: a shared psychology or culture. In addition to a notion of common descent from Persian and Arab Muslims, customs related to Islam—in spite of varying levels of observance—are defining characteristics of the Hui. But many modern Hui who have forsaken Islam for atheism still avoid pork and maintain other Hui cultural practices such as distinctive dress and endogamous marriage. These secularized Hui could be seen as lending credence to the construction of Hui as an ethnicity rather than a religion, or they could simply be emblematic of the lapsed adherents on the periphery of any religious group. However, Gillette (2000) notes three distinctly racial, rather than purely religious, elements of Hui identity: the foreign origins of early Chinese Muslims, cultural differences associated with Islamic practice and Han notions of the Hui possessing an innate proclivity towards violence. In the popular imagination, supposedly innate racial tendencies and cultural practices also describe people from various regions within China, but both Han and Hui agree that foreign ancestry is an important aspect of what defines the Hui as a nationality. In his study of a Fujian Hui lineage that no longer practiced Islam, Gladney (1991) reveals how the Communists gradually shifted from a religious definition of Hui that excluded the lineage to a racial concept that included it. Of course, it is a historical fact that the Hui are descended from people of different ethnicities who spoke several different languages and came from various locations from Central Asia to the Middle East. But rather than using their motley ancestry to contend with each other

over who possesses a more authentic and exclusive identity, the Hui have apparently accepted an—at least nominally—unified modern identity based on a loosely shared vision of past, present and future.

Although they may disagree on specific traits and boundaries, Hui people generally consider themselves as a more or less cohesive group distinct from the Han because they share a religious faith and a similar ancestry, but there is a good deal of variety within each of these supposed commonalities. The Nationalists legally ratified this identity for political ends, but once it had been granted, many Hui zealously resisted subsequent attempts to downplay or revoke their special status. Of course, the minority policy in China today guarantees perks such as exemption from the one-child policy and extra points on university entrance exams, so there are practical reasons for Hui to guard their ethnic identity. However, even when religion became anathema during the height of Maoist extremism, most Hui did not assimilate. Of course, it is important not to conflate shared identity with cultural unity or an organized network. While connections do exist between various Hui communities, they are informal and sporadic. Indeed, the Hui appear to be the vaguest of Anderson's (1991) "imagined communities:" both the government and the Hui posit the existence of an ethnicity, but its boundaries are vague and membership varied enough to make it unrecognizable except as an arbitrary catchall for 'other' Muslims within China. The Hui is quite possibly more of an arbitrary construct than a useful unit of taxonomy, but it is of interest principally because of its persistence in spite of being rife with contradiction. Indeed, the constant struggle to define the Hui is precisely what maintains its existence as an ethnic group. The government imposed a broad category on an array of dissimilar Muslims, creating among

them a constant state of striving to define and delimit precisely what it means to be Hui. Diverse Hui communities—delineated by sect or locality—contend to be the most authentic Muslims, the most progressively modern of all Chinese nationalities, or experiment with unique combinations of the two. Hui position themselves in relation to both Islamic and Chinese notions of tradition and modernity, co-opting the government's notions of social evolution in order to reinvent or resurrect Islamic beliefs, practice and identity.

Organization of Hui Religious Communities

Islam is fundamental to Hui identity, and the group commonly is simplistically defined as Chinese Muslims, but periods of seclusion from the rest of the Islamic world alternating with the occasional influx of foreign reform and revival movements instilled Chinese Islam with a unique sectarian makeup. Divisions one might expect in a population spawned from various ethnic and religious stocks did not emerge among the Hui, but other debates have proven virulent and intractable. The Sunni-Shi'a schism dividing much of the rest of the Muslim world has been scarcely understood or recognized in China, even when it rose to the forefront of news coverage and international politics during the Iran-Iraq War (Gladney 1991). Many of the Hui's ancestors came from Shi'a-dominated Persia, so at least some of them must have been Shi'ites. However, once Sunni and Shi'a became isolated within China and juxtaposed as members of the same minority, they seem to have blended together. The Hui scholar Ma Tong (1989) asserted that superior numbers of Sunnis simply absorbed the Shi'a. As evidence of this, he cited a reverence for the Caliph Ali, who is not usually recognized by Sunnis, among all of the Hui. Popular Hui holidays also honor figures of Shi'a devotion including Ali and Fatimah¹ (Saguchi 1989). But exclusively Shi'ite Islam is only found among a small group of Tajik nomads living in southwest Xinjiang. In contrast to other Muslims, these Tajik Shi'ites pray (not facing west) only once or twice a day and do not

¹ Ali was Muhammad's son-in-law, whom Shi'a and not Sunni recognize as legitimate heir to the Caliphate. Fatima was the prophet's daughter and Ali's wife.

fast during Ramadan or go on pilgrimage. The “Twelver Shi’a²” among them also appear to have adopted some Sufi practices in their observance of Ashura³ (Gladney 1991). Moving rhythmically like devotees of the Jahriyya branch of Sufism reciting the *dhikr*⁴, they swing their arms while reciting lamentations of the death of Hussain (Ma Tong 1989). But despite the influence of Shi’a and Sufism, the majority of Hui subscribe to the same traditional branch of Sunni Islam that has apparently always dominated Chinese Islam.

Despite a great deal of variety among Muslims in China, the Hui predominantly belong to a school of Hanafi⁵ Islam called *Gedimu* (格迪目 or 格底木, a transliteration of the Arabic *qadīm*, meaning “old”), which roughly translates to “old tradition.” But the label only arose to differentiate these traditional communities when other sects arrived in China. In *Gedimu* communities, a council of village elders or *xianglao* 乡佬 runs each mosque, which is the traditional physical, social and spiritual center of all Chinese Muslim communities, whether in an urban ghetto or rural village. The members of this council, which—at least in Taiwan—is now called a “board of directors” 董事会, are wealthy, influential, and senior members of the community (Pillsbury 1973). They handle the mosque’s finances, which mostly come from member donations and real estate, and

² This is the largest branch of Shi’ism, which recognizes twelve divinely ordained imams. The twelfth of these, the Mahdi, disappeared in the ninth century, and twelvers await his eminent return to usher in a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

³ Shi’ite holiday to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, the prophet’s grandson and the third imam

⁴ “Remembrance” consisting of Allah’s names and other doctrines, which is recited, aloud or silently, during Sufi rituals

⁵ The oldest of the four major schools of thought in Sunni Islam, founded by Abu Hanifa an-Nu‘man ibn Thābit (699 - 767CE)

hire the *ahong* 阿訇 (the Chinese word for imam, from the Persian *akhund*, teacher), who will lead the prayers, pronounce judgments in accordance with Islamic law and teach in or oversee the local Islamic school. Pillsbury (1973:157) describes the elders as what F.G. Bailey defines as an “elite council,” which acts in the interest of the community and seeks to avoid conflict through unanimity. There is usually only a single *ahong*, but larger mosques may also employ a prayer leader and a crier to perform the call to prayer. Since the *ahong* is typically hired for only a two or three-year term, the power of the position is somewhat limited. There is no powerful, trans-local institution comparable to the *ulama* in Islamic-majority nations, but an *ahong* can enforce his interpretations of Islamic law by refusing to perform marriage or funerary rights (Saguchi 1989). While the vast majority of *ahong* are male, female *ahong* have taught Islam and Arabic to women at least since the early Qing Dynasty, and there are even mosques exclusively for women as well (Jaschok and Shui 2000). Since both male and female *ahong* generally are educated in centralized theological academies and serve for a short term at each of many mosques, these religious professionals have the potential to connect various Islamic communities. However, bonds between these short-term, hired leaders are most likely more salient among scholars and religious professionals than laity.

Gedimu communities, from urban neighborhoods to rural villages, share the same general pool of traveling *ahong* and similar religious communities and practices. But these ties are much looser than those forged by the Sufi orders prominent in the northwest where adherents in multiple communities owe allegiance to a single holy man and his saintly lineage. The influx of Sufism along the inland trade routes from Central Asia

transformed mosque organization and religious practice in many Hui communities of the northwest. The first Sufi leaders arrived as aesthetes, wandering, teaching, and amassing followers. Successful Sufi masters established their own orders and eventually built mosques, directly appointing *ahong*, without seeking approval from community elders as in the Gedimu model. Sufi leaders tend to rely on spiritual authority, based on intellectual or genetic descent from a Sufi master, religious knowledge gained in the Middle East or innate spiritual gifts. Not only does Sufism circumvent traditional community authorities, it also competes with Gedimu mosques for devotees since neither branch has won many converts from outside Islam (Lipman 1997). While schisms between Sufi orders have caused numerous conflicts in western China, traditional Sunni communities tend to view Sufism with more disdain than hostility. Indeed, the syncretic tendencies of Chinese thought might have helped diffuse what historically have been violent divisions within Islam. But as will be seen below, conflicts between various Sufi orders have persisted throughout Hui history.

Four major sects of Sufism have made their way into China: Khufiyya, Jahriyya, Qadiriyya, and Qubrawiyya; once there, they transformed and splintered into around forty different sub-sects which are each called *menhuan* 门宦. They hold certain practices in common such as meditation, recitation of the *dhikr*, and burial in domed tombs that become sites of veneration and devotion to a spiritual leader and his lineage. Many individual reformers and Sufi orders have decried hereditary succession, which was not initially the norm in Chinese Sufism, but Chinese lineage and inheritance practices may have encouraged hereditary succession just as it has among other trade groups and many

Daoist clerics. However, the divisions within Sufism are often simplified into a dichotomy of the Old Teaching, consisting of the Khufiyya and other sects whose members recite the dhikr silently, and the New Teaching, made up of branches of the Jahriyya who recite aloud and sometimes incorporate ecstatic exclamations and bodily movements. Of course, all of these distinctions are highly variable; the Sufis Gladney studied recited aloud despite their claim to Khuffiyya membership. Some scholars (Israeli 2002) contend that the Old Teaching encompasses the Gedimu, Sunni Muslims in contrast to the more recently established Sufis. There are no definitive works in English that distinguish among the various sub-sects of Islam among the Hui, and any attempt to do so on a scale larger than a single town or village might be futile.

In spite of the doctrinal claims of various sects, the Islamic hodgepodge present among the Hui enables a large degree of syncretic practice. Members of the monastic Qadiriyya sect advocating celibacy and solitude often attend Gedimu mosques but gather at tombs for holidays or to worship individually. Likewise, many Gedimu adherents will make pilgrimage to the grave of the Qadiriyya founder in the tomb complex in Linxia, one of the great symbols of Islam in China, though the more fundamentalist sects denounce this as idolatry. The smallest Sufi order, Qubrawiyya, is popular among the Dongxiang Muslims, but has found limited traction among the Hui. In spite of theological borrowings, membership in these sects is exclusive and usually determined by birth, in contrast to other Islamic nations where it is not uncommon for individuals to belong to multiple orders (Gladney 1996:44, 52, 58). To various degrees, all Chinese Muslim sects tend toward endogamy, and they compete with each other for believers and government support in addition to contending to define orthodoxy within Chinese Islam.

In spite of competition between various orders, there are no clear lines between them and numerous divisions within. This unruly tangle of sects makes assessing their respective numbers of adherents an exceedingly difficult if not impossible enterprise. Gladney (2004:141) cites multiple informants who identify themselves as both Gedimu and Khufiyya. While there are no official figures, Gladney (1996) cites Ma Tong's estimates of the percentage of Hui belonging to various sects: 58.2% Gedimu, 21% Yihewani, 10.9% Jahriyya, 7.2% Khufiyya, 1.4% Qadiriyya, 0.5% Xidaotang, and 0.7% Kubrawiyya. It is tempting to assume the normative Islamic community to be a Gedimu mosque in the Islamic heartland of Ningxia, and this is apparently what the government did when inventing the highly problematic Hui category. They studied the national Hui centers 国家回族重点 in Ningxia and the surrounding environs, then summarily applied the label to an assortment of local-dialect speaking Muslims (Caffrey 2004:248). While divisions between Sufi orders may have been the most contentious and violent historically, much variety exists among the various Gedimu mosques as well.

The biggest subject of contention in Chinese Islam today is the accretion of Chinese practices and classical scholarship versus a return to more fundamentalist, scripturalist forms of Islam and unity with the global umma. The Yihewani 伊赫瓦尼 or Ikhwan School is the Chinese offshoot of the Wahhabi movement that seeks to purify and return to a more strict and scripturalist form of Islam. It also denounces practices crucial to the maintenance of other Islamic sects such as hereditary succession and receiving payment for performing rituals and prayers. Such reform movements, which also include

the Salafiyya⁶, are generally tied to returning pilgrims who hope to bring Chinese Islam to the practices they observed in the Middle East (Gillette 2000:79). The Chinese term for Salafiyya is *Santai* 三抬 “lift three times,” since devotees lift their hands to their heads three times during prayer (Gillette 2000:80). In contrast, the only major Islamic movement with purely Chinese origins falls on the opposite end of the spectrum from the fundamentalist factions. The Xi Dao Tang 西道堂, the name of which translates to “western school mosque,” is popularly known as the Han Studies Faction 汉学派 *Han xue pai*. This accommodationist sect combines study of the Confucian classics with traditional Koranic learning. But criticizing other sects’ hereditary succession and accumulation of wealth has caused friction between it and other sects. This enormous variety and conflict within Hui religious faith makes it highly questionable as a unifying factor; however, virtually all Hui perceive a common ancestry, a legacy of Muslims in China that spans more than a thousand years.

⁶ This refers to a reformist movement of the late 19th and 20th centuries that sought to reconcile a return to the origins of Islam with ideas of modernity. The name comes from "*al-salaf al-salih*," which mean "the venerable ancestors."

The Hui Hui Story: An Overview

Muslims everywhere commonly cite a Hadith— of questionable authenticity, according to Islamic scholars outside China—quoting the prophet Muhammed saying, “Seek knowledge even unto China.” So at least according to China’s Muslims, the idea of Islam in China existed long before the first Muslim arrived there. Islam undoubtedly arrived in China during the Tang Dynasty 唐代, but popular Hui legends claiming that it did so during the prophet’s lifetime are rather dubious. Some stories also allege that the emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 dreamt of a turbaned man quelling demons, and his interpreter of dreams revealed that the man was a great sage from Arabia. He advised the emperor to send ambassadors that could bring his wisdom back to China. So the emperor sent a general to the west and the prophet’s own maternal uncle, Sa’ad Waqqas came to China in 628 or 631. Some even claim he secretly converted the emperor to Islam before he died and was buried in Guangdong 广东 (Lipman 1997:24-25). The veracity of these stories is questionable at best, but they are testament to the Hui’s sense of their historical heritage, which begins with the birth of Islam, but is set in China.

Even before the birth of Islam, maritime traders from Persia and Arabia came sailing into the bustling port cities on the coast to settle into the foreigners’ quarters 蕃坊. Shortly thereafter, Central Asian Muslims came in caravans trading horses and other goods for silk and tea. Muslim mercenaries came down the Silk Road as well, contending with China for dominance or helping to keep ‘barbarians’ in check. But that was only a trickle compared to the Yuan Dynasty 元朝 when the Mongol khans imported craftsmen, administrators and soldiers from Persia, Central Asia and elsewhere in the vast empire to

help rule the Middle Kingdom. These foreigners were second only to the Mongols in a “racial hierarchy” and many of them accumulated wealth and prestige. The Ming Dynasty 明朝 sought to diffuse tensions lingering from the earlier stratification by integrating talented Muslims into its bureaucracy, but also attempting to assimilate them through policies encouraging intermarriage. Also in the late Ming, Chinese Muslims began setting up Islamic schools to teach the Arabic and Persian languages of their ancestors and publishing original theological treatises in Chinese.

By the Qing Dynasty 清朝, Muslims had become commonplace in Chinese culture, but they were diverse, scattered and susceptible to transnational currents of change. The arrival of new Sufi teachings from central Asia radically altered the traditional, community-centered system of Muslim leadership. Rival Sufi orders began vying for control of adherents, mosques and northwestern communities at the same time as the Qing Dynasty sought to consolidate control over its northwestern frontier. Sectarian squabbles turned violent, and when Qing officials died attempting to intervene, it was construed as rebellion. Stereotypes of fierce and barbaric Muslims led to brutal crackdowns, which led to equally brutal reprisals, both of which ensured that Hui-Han and Hui-Hui enmity would last for generations. Yet both rebellious and loyalist, Sufi and traditionalist sects survived and many of them used the power and fierce reputation gained earned under the Qing to gain official authority under the Republic of China. While Islam and its factions were scarcely visible during the oppression of Maoism, the Hui identity of today is still irrevocably tied to the history of Chinese Islam. Though this account is rather tertiary and it sometimes conflates the Hui with other Chinese Muslims,

the same could be said of Hui notions of their own history. Indeed, Hui identity today is situated within a situation of tension and conflict between the same historical forces examined in detail here: centuries of Gedimu tradition embedded within individual communities, the Chinese government offering practical benefits in exchange for supporting its hegemony, and the allure of movements from the Middle East preaching an allegedly more authentic Islam.

Early Origins in the Tang and Song

The Tang histories record an emissary from the third Caliph arriving in 651, the first well documented arrival of Islam in China. Contrary to Hui folklore, scholars doubt that this embassy was actually Sa'ad Waqqas, the Prophet's uncle (Leslie 1989).

However, it is not impossible, since Arab and Persian merchants were common in the ports of Quanzhou 泉州 and Guangzhou 广州, and the Tang capital of Chang'an 长安 regularly received tribute missions from the distant west (Lipman 1997:25). But these mercantile foreigners were a far cry from the Hui of today. They were transient and largely confined to the cities, and Tang edicts restricted their intercourse (especially with Chinese women). Mosques in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Chang'an and Hangzhou 杭州 claim to date from the Tang, but they actually may date to the early Song (Leslie 1998:15). Though these early mosques may have been built primarily for foreign merchants and diplomats, Hui claims to trace their ancestry to the Tang are by no means implausible. But events on Tang China's western frontier probably had more lasting and widespread impact on the future of Islam in China than the deeds of merchants isolated in foreigners' quarters.

When the Tang Empire and Abassid Caliphate clashed in China's defeat at the Battle of Talas in 751, the Islamic empire replaced China as the prime influence over the states of Central Asia. Though the two powers soon mended their relations, Abassid hegemony allowed Islam to continue its spread eastward to the Chinese frontier. Also, when An Lushan 安禄山 rebelled and seized the capital in 756, the Tang emperor turned to Abassid Arab and Uyghur armies for assistance in quelling the insurrection. Unlike

wealthy merchants, who could sail home at will, many of these soldiers remained in China (Leslie 1998:12). Tibetans imported another group of Muslim mercenaries in 801 to help defeat the Nanchao 南朝 kingdom in present-day Yunnan 云南. As the Nanchao was a Tang tributary state, it helped them defeat the Tibetan and Muslim forces but reportedly allowed the Muslim captives to stay and settle in the area (Chang 1989). Though the Chinese government proscribed miscegenation at this point, it is doubtless that many soldiers married Chinese women, who would have likely convert to Islam and raised their children in the faith. This is generally required in Islamic law and is common practice among Hui today. While the merchants living in port cities were secluded in certain neighborhoods and could pack up and leave when the political tides turned, these fighting men spread out and settled down in towns and villages across western China. Thus, from the earliest days to the present, Muslims in China have been associated with horsemanship and with other military arts—especially in the west—and trade, both maritime and overland.

The thriving Song Dynasty saw an increase in exchange with all manner of foreigners from throughout Asia, and by this time many of these visiting merchants had undoubtedly settled in the major cities. While one Muslim scholar, Li Yansheng 李彦昇 is said to have passed the imperial exams in 848 during the Tang Dynasty, Muslims began to gain much more status in the Song (Leslie 1998:13). Those that had lived in China for multiple generations were granted special status and allowed to intermarry with Han and purchase land for mosques and Islamic cemeteries (Lipman 1997:29). In the west, the previously Buddhist and animist Turkic peoples of Central Asia were rapidly

converting to Islam. The first mosque in western China emerged in Hezhou 河州, Gansu 甘肃, which was destined to become a China's "little Mecca." Muslims had settled on the eastern and western fringes of China and helped goods to flow freely from the capitals of China to the Arabian Peninsula (Lipman 1997:30). Yet developments among the animist Mongol tribes to the north would soon alter the peripheral status of China's Muslims.

The Yuan Dynasty: the Mongols Conquer and Divide

Around 1124, the term *Huihui* 回回 first occurs in the records of the Western Liao Dynasty 西辽朝 as the name of one of the kingdoms its founder, Yelü Dashi 耶律大石, encountered in his campaigns near Samarkand (Dillon 1999). However, it may also have been a transliteration for the Uyghur (Huihu or Huihe) people who also occupied Central Asia (Gladney 1991). Regardless of its origins, the term became much more commonly used in the Yuan Dynasty when numerous Muslims and other foreigners were imported to help oversee China. When the Mongols conquered an area, they conscripted craftsmen, artists and scholars and put them to work elsewhere in their empire. In China, these foreigners, who mostly came from the predominantly Muslim regions of Central and West Asia, were known as *semu guan* 色目官 or “officials of various categories” or more literally, “officials with colored eyes.” They were second only to the Mongols in a strict racial hierarchy. The northern Chinese were placed below them and those from Southern China—the last region to fall to the Mongol armies—were the lowest class. As elite favorites of the Mongols, Muslims enjoyed government loans, tax remittances and distinguished official posts. These administrators would also invite decommissioned foreign soldiers to settle on land that dead or missing Chinese had abandoned during the conquest of China (Lipman 1997). In order to maintain control over the populace and guard their borders, the Mongols settled soldiers in many of the frontier areas that still boast large Muslim populations today.

Of course, as foreign administrators amassed wealth and power, this stratification was bound to incite Chinese enmity against these overlords from abroad. But in spite of

such resentment, many foreigners acquired an abiding respect for Chinese culture and even helped to increase its reach. A notable example is the Muslim aristocrat and governor of Yunnan, Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Din. In addition to building at least two mosques, he reconstructed Confucian temples and revived the Confucian education system. He is credited with Sinicizing Yunnan, but not necessarily encouraging Islamic practices. Indeed, there are no records of proselytization during this period, though conversion through intermarriage would have allowed the subjugated Chinese to claim a higher-class status. Indeed, the Yuan emperors did not favor Islam over other faiths. Kublai Khan actually banned ritual slaughtering and circumcision when told that many of his own officials would not eat (non-halal) Mongol food. However, he was forced to rescind this decree a few years later when it became apparent that trade had suffered because of it (Dillon 1999, Leslie 1998). Even the mighty Mongol Empire found it better to compromise with its Muslim subjects in at least on instance.

The Yuan Dynasty saw Muslims become a common sight in Chinese society, but they were far from being integrated. China's Muslim population included Arabs, Persians, Uyghurs and various Central Asian peoples wrested from their homeland and resettled in the Far East. Here, they shared the same religion, political status and foreign ancestry, the possible foundations of a collective identity. They also lived among themselves in urban enclaves or independent villages centered around a mosque. But many of those with official posts also had become literate in Chinese, read the Confucian classics and become versed in the traditional arts. Their families and connections had multiplied and they had amassed estates and revenue. Their separateness, continually enforced through

the pork taboo, drew them together, but did not necessarily prevent them from identifying with a larger Chinese culture.

Muslims in the Ming: the Formation of Chinese Islam

As the Yuan Dynasty collapsed, a number of Muslims, including a few key generals, threw their support behind Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 as he conquered China and crowned himself the Hongwu 洪武 Emperor of the Ming Dynasty 明朝. The Ming emperors took advantage of the Muslim intellectual tradition their predecessors had brought to China, even commissioning the study of Muslim calendrical science in the Imperial Bureau of Astronomy (Lipman 1997). The Yongle 永乐 Emperor appointed a eunuch named Zheng He 郑和 from a Muslim family as chief admiral of the imperial navy and sent his massive armada on seven voyages around Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and East Africa. He carried with him Ma Huan 马欢, a Persian-speaking Hui to translate and chronicle the voyages. Many of the crew even made the pilgrimage to Mecca during one of their visits to the Middle East. With Islam already entrenched under the Yuan, the Ming worked to assimilate Muslims and take advantage of their talents

After chafing under their complicity in the Mongol occupation, the Ming sought to defuse the barbaric otherness of Muslims and other foreigners through the time-honored, if unselfconscious, practice of cultural assimilation. In a reversal of the policies of earlier Chinese dynasties, the Hongwu emperor required Mongols, Muslims and other foreigners to marry Han women. This succeeded in persuading those who hadn't yet mastered the language to learn Chinese, but it also caused the Muslim population to grow as Han wives (for Hui would almost never give a daughter to a Han in marriage) and their children converted to Islam but spoke Chinese (Dillon 1999; Lipman 1997). Many of these people also translated or retranslated their surnames into more conventional

Chinese names. Though less common than conversion through marriage, Lipman (1997:46) claims that some Han began to convert to gain the commercial advantages of belonging to the Muslim trading network. Though Muslims were still set apart and distinguishable from the Han, they adapted to Chinese culture and began developing a distinct brand of Islam. It is at this point that Donald Leslie (1998:27) points out “Muslims in China” become “Chinese Muslims”.

The fact that China’s Muslims were becoming predominantly Sinophone created the need for an Islamic system of education to teach the language of the Koran, its commentaries, and other theological literature. In the sixteenth century, Hu Dengzhou 胡登洲 went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and decided that Chinese Muslims’ religious knowledge had degraded. He opened a religious school on his return to China, which would revolutionize the Islamic education system; it was known as *jingtang jiaoyu* 经堂教育, or “scripture hall education.” Hu and his followers selected two-dozen passages for students to learn in Arabic before they could study the rest of the Koran. Students learned the phonetic Chinese pronunciations for Arabic symbols, so the more literate could write Arabic with Chinese characters. In the more illiterate rural areas, educated Sinophone Muslims who remained illiterate in Chinese learned to write Chinese with Arabic script using a sort of Arabic *pinyin* 拼音 called *xiaojing* 消经⁷ (Lipman 1997: 49-51). These two educational innovations reflect Sinicized Muslims interest in maintaining linguistic

⁷ The characters of this curious term mean, “consume text,” but Lipman includes *xiaojing* 小兒錦 as an alternative, translating to “small child’s tapestry.” Perhaps the different connotations reflect the sectarian conflicts over religion to be discussed later. However, the former may simply be a shortened form of the latter, or they both may be descended from an Arabic term.

ties to both the Islamic and Chinese worlds though the language skills developed may have been more symbolic than practical tools for communication.

Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, Chinese Muslims published the first Chinese translations of Arabic and Persian texts as well as original writings about Islam. These and other canonical Chinese-language Islamic texts became known collectively as the *Han Kitab* 汉克塔布 (*The Book of the Han*). Wang Daiyü 王岱輿, educated in Persian, Arabic, and Chinese, published *The True Teaching's Real Commentary* (*Zhengjiao Zhen Quan* 正教真詮), in 1642. This work explained the theological and cosmological ideas behind Islam, only discussing specific practices that directly conflicted with traditional Chinese customs such as drinking alcohol, eating pork and gambling. The author's intended audience allegedly already fasted and prayed, but did not have the language skills to understand Persian and Arabic texts. Wang noted that he faced criticism for extensively citing the Confucian classics and referring to Buddhism and Daoism, but he contended that he only did so when Confucius echoed Islamic teachings about "cultivation of the personal life, regulating the family and governing the country" (Murata 2000:22). Wang's disciple Liang Yijun 梁以濬, even wrote in his introduction that Confucianism is not wrong in describing what is proper in this life, but it lacks an explanation of what comes before and after (Murata 2000:23). This text was written for Muslims who had received a Chinese education; rather than challenging Neo-Confucian ideas, it used them as a framework to explain Islamic ideas. Though little is known about Wang's upbringing or influences, aside from the fact that he was descended

from a foreign astronomer employed by the Hongwu emperor, his writing explained Islam in a mystical way that may indicate the growing Sufi influence at the time.

As various works of Islamic scholarship were published in the early Qing Dynasty, the diversity within Chinese Islam became more apparent. Ma Zhu 马住 was one figure who sought to standardize Muslim intellectual currents throughout China. Born in Yunnan in 1640, Ma received a Confucian education and served the last of the claimants of the Ming throne before moving to Beijing to study Islam. He wrote a text about Islamic thought and practice and carried it with him through central China, the Yangtze Valley, Sichuan, Shaanxi and Yunnan. Over four years, he showed his book to numerous Islamic scholars and recorded their criticisms, suggestions and additions. In 1710, he published the completed *Qingzhen Zhinan* 清真指南 (literally, Pure and True Compass, but the first two characters also mean halal or Islamic), which included theological discussions, issues facing Chinese Muslims, a series of queries and responses and dedications and endorsements by various well known Muslims. The final chapter consisted of a denunciation of a Qalandariya⁸ sect he had encountered in Yunnan, which he accused of violating both Islamic law and Confucian morality. This chapter actually resulted in official Qing persecution of the sect (Lipman 1997:79-81). Ma Zhu's travels and writings helped to unify China's Muslim community, but they also enforced his idea of orthodoxy, foreshadowing the competition to define Hui identity in the days to come.

⁸ A term used to refer to wandering dervishes in general or to Sufi sects whose poetry and practices often flaunt orthodox Islamic morality

The Qing Dynasty 清代: Division and Rebellion

Though Muslim generals and soldiers were involved in resisting the Qing conquest of China, they often were integrated with Han troops, not fighting for or because of Islamic unity. Indeed, even in the final days of the Ming, Ma Shouying, 马守应 known as Lao Huihui 老回回 or “Muslim Elder,” assisted the Han rebel Li Zicheng 李自成 in bringing down the Ming. As the Qing sought to consolidate their power in the ensuing years, they restricted trade along the Silk Road, allowing foreigners to trade only with certain merchants and Qing officials residing in Lanzhou 兰州 and Beijing 北京. Naturally, this angered merchants living in Gansu 甘肃, Qinghai 青海 and Xinjiang 新疆 whose livelihood largely depended on trade from Central Asia. Two Muslims from the northwest, Milayin 米喇印 and Ding Guodong 丁国棟, raised an army and seized Lanzhou and a number of smaller towns in the name of the former Ming prince Zhu Shichuan 朱识穿. The revolt failed, and all of the leaders were ultimately killed, but this insurrection had reinforced Han perceptions of Muslims being fierce in battle and violent-natured, which many Hui and other Muslims in western China would continue to live up to (Lipman 1997:52-56). While the causes of this rebellion were more economic and political than religious, it has been construed as the first of many “Islamic rebellions” that would plague the Qing emperors.

After the Qing had established control over its domains and reopened trade with the outside world, Sufi thinkers could more easily spread their message into China. In this period of relative calm, Muhammed Yusuf arrived from Central Asia to preach Sufi ideas to Islamic scholars in Gansu. He is also credited with converting the Salars, a Turkic

speaking group of Muslims in northwest China, and building a hospice among them. His son, Khoja Āfāq, continued his father's work. Muslims gathered from around China to hear him preach in Lanzhou, Didao 狄道 and Hezhou. His disciples are credited with founding at least three Sufi saintly lineages in northwest China. While recorded instances of proselytization and conversion were rare in previous years, these preachers not only converted Sunnis to Sufism, but also won many new converts to Islam. But the transformation Khoja Āfāq began really came to fruition in the person of one of his Chinese initiates' successors, Ma Laichi 马来迟, now revered as the founder of the Khufiyya Sufi order in China. A prodigious student, Ma was ordained as an *ahong* at the age of eighteen before embarking on the hajj and more extensive study abroad. The rare experience of travel and education in Arabia made Ma a powerful and respected figure in the ongoing process of defining Chinese Islam. As wandering Sufi *shaykhs* 教主 such as Ma Laichi traveled to China's borderlands and eventually began founding mosques, they not only altered the practice of Chinese Muslims, but as mentioned above, they transformed the system of independent local leadership as well. The increase in potential for cohesion and strong leadership that came with Sufism may have granted Muslims greater agency in the military and political upheavals of the Qing Dynasty.

Although Sufism created the possibility of uniting multiple Islamic communities under one sect, there was no recognized central authority to mediate conflicts between these sects that were amassing power. This situation would provoke imperial authorities to assert control as they had with various Buddhist and Daoist sects throughout history. Soon after returning from his education abroad, Ma Laichi became involved in a regional

conflict over whether one should pray immediately before breaking the Ramadan fast or eat first and then pray. Ma Laichi sided with those who ate first, but his influence was not enough to resolve the dispute. A leader of the rival faction brought suit against him in the Qing court, accusing him of heterodoxy and deluding the people. Ultimately, the Qing officials found his opponent guilty of slander and set legal precedent for imperial control over Islamic orthodoxy (Fletcher 1995; Lipman 1997). If all Chinese Muslims recognized Qing authority, this could have been a useful means of peacefully adjudicating increasingly hostile disputes between rival factions and keeping wealthy and organized Sufi orders from growing unchecked. However, a global Islamic movement inspired some Hui to renew emphasis on shari'a, they founded a new sect less willing to compromise with secular authority.

Division and Conflict within Sufism

In the 18th century, Islamic reform movements swept across the Islamic world from Africa to China. These movements opposed the adoption of non-Islamic customs, but generally perceived no conflict between strict adherence to scriptural law and Sufi mysticism (the Wahhabi movement still popular today was a notable exception among these movements). The Naqshbandi⁹ Sufi order, which had been popular around the Tarim River basin in present-day Xinjiang since the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, was on the vanguard of this movement. One of its primary leaders in China was Ma Mingxin 马明新, a Gansu Muslim who went to Yemen and studied under disciples of

⁹ Sufi order founded by Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari, which traces its spiritual lineage to the first caliph, Abu Bakr. It is known for practicing silent rather than vocalized recitation of the dhikr.

Ibrāhīm ibn Hasan al-Kūrānī, whose practice included chanting aloud, often accompanied by swaying and even ecstatic movements and dancing. This unorthodox practice earned the suborder the name Jahriyya, from the Arabic word *jahr*, “aloud.” Ma Mingxin’s followers bore a stark contrast to Ma Laichi’s Khufiyya sect, who practiced silent meditation and considered the Jahriyya’s practice superstitious and immoral. Ma Mingxin criticized the older order’s excessive veneration of tombs, demands for donations and hereditary succession of leadership. The two leaders educated in the holy land soon became rivals for territory, as well as adherents, and their donations (Fletcher 1995; Lipman 1997).

At this time the Qing Dynasty had banned foreign travel as it embarked on a successful campaign to conquer present-day Xinjiang. This prevented new Central Asian Islamic ideas from entering China and stopped Chinese Muslim scholars from traveling to the holy land, a prerequisite to founding new sects. Every community in China’s rugged northwest frontier possessed arms for hunting and defense, so religious conflict in this enclosed atmosphere rapidly led to violent raiding and rioting between Muslim sects. While the Khufiyya sect had learned to compromise with the secular Qing authorities, the Jahriyya were more resistant to imperial control. Thus, the Qing blamed the Jahriyya for inciting disorder and gave them the pejorative name “New Teaching” 新教¹⁰ (and the Khufiyya became the “Old Teaching” 老教). Qing authorities arrested Ma Mingxin and executed him in Lanzhou in 1781. Legendarily, Qing soldiers shaved his beard before his execution, so Jahriyya men began wearing their beards shorn on the sides as they

¹⁰ This was also a term used for Protestantism, which may have made it more insulting to Jahriyya adherents.

continue to do today. Some of Ma's followers fought Qing forces for four months, but the militant uprising was ultimately suppressed. Their land was confiscated and given to cooperative members of the Old Teaching, many of whom had helped quell the rebellion. As other internecine feuding continued to escalate into violence, the Qing government enacted stronger anti-Muslim policies. But despite the government's best efforts, the banned Jahriyya sect kept expanding (Fletcher 1995:31-4). Even while some members of the Khufiyya enriched themselves through an alliance with the Qing, the Jahriyya sect that appeared fresh from the land of Islam and unwilling to compromise its pure ideals gained followers.

Historians often categorize this and the subsequent warfare as simple cases of Islamic fundamentalist violence against the Qing and non-Muslim Han, but it is important to remember that Muslims were fighting against each other perhaps more often than they were against non-Muslims. Jonathan Lipman (1997) cites several factors that were not specifically religious that set the scene for violent confrontations: The Qing Dynasty's conquest of Xinjiang replaced the various Muslim rulers who had once claimed sovereignty over the region with the precise kind of secular authority that the Sufi reform movements denounced. As the emperors encouraged their citizens to settle the new buffer zone, many Hui Muslims from across China jumped at the chance to live among their co-religionists, which created a clash between traditional Gedimu and newer Sufi brands of Islam. The notorious corruption of Qing officials was also more pronounced in frontier regions, so it was probably a steady drain on the region's merchants and its general economy. The Chinese traditionally perceived outsiders as barbarians, but this became even more pronounced in the case of Muslims, who gained

special status under the law so they would receive harsher penalties for the same offenses (Lipman 1997:94-101). On top of all this, it is important to remember that the Qing was entering a stage of dynastic decline and violence was becoming increasingly common all over China; the White Lotus 白蓮教, Taiping 太平 and Nian 捻 rebellions would soon dwarf these Muslim uprisings in scale. Violent conflict is more indicative of the conditions in China at the time than a result of developments among Chinese Muslims. But in these turbulent times, various sects competing to define Hui identity tended to wield military force.

After defeating Ma Mingxin's followers, Qing forces set about punishing the surviving New Teaching adherents, a brutal and indiscriminate process which increased enmity against the Qing among Muslims of all affiliations. In 1784, the Jahriyya rose again, and this time the brutality of the Qing commanders increased; they ordered the slaughter of thousands of women and children. Imperial decrees had already proscribed the New Teaching, but they now turned against the religion in general, banning conversion to Islam, the building of mosques, the adoption of non-Muslim babies by Muslims, and traveling to different localities to preach or hear prayers. This may have actually driven more Muslims dissatisfied with the Qing rulers to convert to the banned sect as a means of subversion and helped to forge a sense of communal identity among the various sects that were now being treated as one under the law. Exiling adherents also spread believers into Manchuria, Yunnan and Turkestan, giving Islam a broad territorial reach and making it more of a threat to Qing authority (Lipman 1997). The tombs of

martyred masters became pilgrimage sites glorifying Islam and the spirit of resistance against imperial forces.

The New Teaching retained cohesion under an unbroken succession of *shaykhs* who were often distinguished, in life or death, by government efforts to suppress them. Ma Mingxin designated Muhammed Rabbānī as one of two successors, who in turn passed the torch to a Hui named Muhammad Jalāl. The Qing exiled the latter to a life of hard labor in Chuan Chang 船厂 in the far northeastern province of Heilongjiang 黑龙江. He died and was buried there, so he became known as the “Sheikh in Chuan Chang.” But a tomb was built for him on the other side of China proper in Lingzhou 灵州 (now Lingwu 灵武), south of Ningxia. His son, Ma Er 马二, succeeded him and met a similar fate. He is better known as “Sheikh Eighth of the Fourth Month” 四月八 after the date he was killed by Qing soldiers. Though Ma Mingxin had criticized the Old Teaching’s practice of hereditary succession in favor of transferring leadership to the most learned and meritorious disciple, the New Teaching had now adopted the way of the Old. Ma Er’s son, Ma Hualong 马化龙, succeeded him and led a rebellion that Fletcher believes to be the first such insurrection that could be labeled a jihad because it united various Muslims in a military struggle specifically aimed at defending the faith against the Qing (Fletcher 1995:38-39). While previous conflicts typically began when the Qing intervened in fighting between Muslims, now tensions between Han and Hui began erupting into military struggles that the overextended empire had difficulty quelling.

The Panthay Rebellion

As the political and economic situation deteriorated in the Qing provinces, tensions between various peoples increased all over the frontier. This was seen in the uprising of the Miao 苗族 in Guizhou 贵州 and the Hui in Yunnan. Ma Mengxin's family had been exiled to this southwestern province, and its cities each had a sizable Muslim population. When silver was scarce in the mines south of today's Kunming 昆明, Han miners sued for the right to work Hui claims. When they lost the suit, the Han turned on the Hui, killing hundreds of families and burning their farms. When the local Hui began killing the instigators in reprisal, a local official ordered the indiscriminate slaughter of Hui. Word of this outrage spread throughout the province, causing Hui to rise up in first in Yaozhou 要洲 (now Yao'an 要案) and then in Menghua 蒙化 (today's Weishan 巍山) in Yunnan where Du Wenxiu 杜文秀 soon conquered the city of Dali 大理. In the west this is generally known as the Panthay Rebellion (Panthay being a Burmese term for Muslim). In China, it is called Du Wenxiu's Uprising 杜文秀起义. Hui all over Yunnan began taking control of their communities, and they soon laid siege to the provincial capital of Kunming (Dillon 1999:58-9). The Hui were scattered in various communities, living apart from the Han and subject to legal and social discrimination, but many were quick to unite to defend their co-religionists against oppression.

Betrayal at the hands of government authorities allowed civil unrest in Yunnan to escalate into a war of secession. When Kunming had been under siege for over a year, the Qing government was able to reach a truce with the rebels through the mediation of influential Hui from Sichuan 四川 and Zhejiang 浙江. But this appeal to Muslim unity

was thwarted when the Yunnan governor violated the terms of the truce and began ordering Hui to be killed. Once again, the Hui rose in revolt, and Du Wenxiu set up a government for his “Peaceful Southern Nation” 平南国 in Dali. He reigned over as much as half of Yunnan during the eighteen years of his insurrection, calling on the Han people to help him overthrow the Manchu. Eventually, the Qing government sent a new general with modern Western weapons and techniques to quash the upstart sultan. In 1873, Du Wenxiu was defeated, captured and publicly beheaded (Dillon 1999:59). Though modern Chinese history emphasizes his role as leader of a specifically Islamic rebellion, there were also Han who supported him and Hui who opposed him.

Western and Han historians generalize Wu Denxiu’s and other rebellions of this era as conflicts pitting Hui against Han, but Caffrey (2004) offers an alternative narrative based on interviews with Hui living in Yunnan today that seems more apropos to the divisive nature of Chinese Islam. In addition to smaller communities of Hui such as Sufis who originated in Gansu and Zhongdian 重点 County Hui who came from Shaanxi, he describes the Yunnanese Hui as divided into three major regional groups: the *Dianxi* 滇¹¹ 西 Hui centered around Dali in the west, the *Diandong* 滇东 Hui centered around Zhaotong 昭通 in the east and the *Diannan* 滇南 Hui centered around Wenshan 文山 County in the south. While the first of these regional groups supported Du Wenxiu, the Diandong Hui served as mercenaries for the Qing in fighting against the rebellion and,

¹¹ The first character in each of these names comes from the ancient Dian Kingdom 滇国 which reigned in Yunnan before being subjugated by the Han Dynasty in the second century before the Common Era. Though it is commonly found in place names around Yunnan, it could also represent an attempt to place these distinctions among Hui groups before and outside Han hegemony.

and the Diannan Hui initially supported him, but then switched sides to join the Qing. An estimated population of 850,000 Yunnan Hui was reduced to 100,000 after the Qing's brutal reconquest and bitter memories are part of regional rivalries that persist to this day (Caffrey 2004:247). Thus, it is important to remember that the histories the state and other outsiders record tend to impose modern categories onto the past and emphasize Han-Hui interactions at the expense of Hui diversity and dynamism.

To Ally with or Oppose a Declining Empire

Chinese society grew increasingly militarized after the Qing government ordered local communities to form militias to supplement the army against rebels. Sufi *menhuan* and traditional Gedimu communities each armed their members to keep pace with the local Han militias. As the Taiping rebels moved north from their territory in Sichuan, Qing soldiers and refugees flooded Shaanxi 陕西 and Gansu, exacerbating the high tensions between Hui and Han. Four religious and military leaders, all named Ma and all owing allegiance to Ma Hualong, informally divided the territory of Gansu into four military districts. Stories abound about the specific incident that set off the violence, but fighting began in southeast Gansu and spread rapidly. In various places, Hui attacked Han militias, Han attacked Hui garrisons or the usual internecine Muslim feuding escalated into general Han-Hui rioting. Regardless, Han officials were killed, and the Qing government labeled it a Muslim rebellion. The Muslims laid siege to the provincial capital of Xi'an 西安, but were eventually defeated once the Taiping had been vanquished and reinforcements arrived. The revolt lasted for six years in Shaanxi, but

devastated the Muslim community there, with many refugees fleeing to Gansu where the fighting was yet to begin in earnest (Lipman 1997).

With the dangers of fierce Muslims fresh in their minds, the Qing army turned to pacify the Muslim heartland of Gansu, with special attention to the New Teaching. The hostility between the Jahriyya and the Qing government had long been evident, but Ma Hualong had made efforts at negotiation. In 1862, he had surrendered to the Qing and changed his name to Ma “Attends on the Qing” 马朝清. But in the ensuing years, he continued building his armies, defenses and connections. The Qing armies descended on his stronghold and used Krupp siege guns to force his surrender. They executed his entire family and all the leaders of the notorious Jahriyya order. Not distinguishing between loyal and rebellious sects, Qing armies next marched on Ma Zhan’ao 马占鳌 and the Khufiya leadership in Hezhou. Ma Zhan’ao beat back the Qing advance, but, aware that he could not hold out forever, he also sent his son, Ma Anliang 马安良 to negotiate his surrender. He declared himself willing to aid the Qing in putting down any future rebels (including Muslims), and was awarded a government commendation for executing those who denounced his decision and other rebels. The Qing troops soon pacified the rest of Gansu, ending with the fall of Xining 西宁 which reopened the road into Xinjiang. After the final Muslim surrender, the Qing killed 7,000 Muslim prisoners, and relocated countless more away from Muslim centers. The Shaanxi Muslim refugees were settled in remote parts of Gansu rather than being allowed them to return home (Lipman 1997:125-128). Though they settled Gedimu Muslims in what was traditionally Sufi territory, the

Qing could not diffuse the power of Sufi menhuan or prevent conflicts among them from continuing to escalate into violence.

The son of one of Ma Zhan'ao's successors, Ma Rubiao 马如彪 made the pilgrimage to Mecca and studied under members of the Shādhilīya order. As had happened numerous times before, the new ideas split the old order and led to internecine feuding. In 1894, the rival sects took their dispute to the local Qing court, and violence ensued when the judge refused to intervene. Soon the Muslims had Xunhua and Hezhou under siege (Lipman 1984). Authorities in Hezhou sent two well-known Sufis, Ma Yonglin 马永琳 and Ma Yongrui 马永瑞, to mediate, but Ma Yonglin harbored a grudge against the reformers and secretly encouraged attacks on the new sect. The reformers appealed to the provincial governor, and a military official arrived in Xunhua and executed the heads of the traditionalist Khufiyya sect. This led their followers to lay siege to the city. The general sent to relieve Xunhua declared that he would kill all Muslims in his path, which temporarily united the local sects against the Qing. Ma Yonglin took advantage of the situation to persuade other Hezhou Muslims to lay siege to the city and conquer surrounding communities. But the Hui general Ma Anliang still professed his father's allegiance to the Qing, and his forces broke the siege, earning Ma Anliang's family control of southern Gansu. Muslims also laid siege to Xining, hoping to take the walled city in order to defend themselves against hostile local militias and the impending arrival of Qing troops. But none of these uprisings were able to incite widespread Islamic rebellion, and they all ended in bloody failure due to the disunity of Muslim sects and uncompromising hostility of Qing authorities (Lipman 1997:138-166).

In spite of the numerous divisions within the Chinese Islamic community during the Qing Dynasty, virtually all Muslims suffered to some extent. Open rebellion in the restive western provinces would have made urban, eastern Muslims at least slightly suspect in the eyes of their Han neighbors. In spite of the fact that most “Islamic rebellions” were sparked by internecine fighting, the Qing government’s general tendency to conflate various Muslim sects and regional communities even when playing them against each other contributed to the development of a common identity among Chinese-speaking Muslims. Of course, Qing authorities might not have differentiated among the various Turkic language-speaking groups, but a shared, minority language was already a basis for a separate identity for each of them. The violent divisions within Chinese Islam were largely related to Sinophone Muslims fighting over who would define the single identity the Han majority ascribed to them, not simply an extension of competition for believers or debates over Islamic theory or practice. As the western provinces became more integrated into China proper and modern transportation decreased the effective distance between Islamic enclaves, it is quite possible that the Hui grew to consider themselves as a cohesive cultural unit. While most Han and some Hui may have agreed on this notion of Hui identity, Western missionaries of the late Qing also describe the Hui—though often conflating them with other Muslims in China—as a group culturally distinct from the rest of the Chinese populace.

Christian Missionaries Among China's Muslims

As missionaries traveled through rural China in the late Qing, many encountered Chinese Muslims and a few chose to focus their efforts on these people, who already subscribed to an Abrahamic faith, viewing them as better prospects than the heathen Han. They met with limited success, but their writings depict a group easily distinguishable from the Han. Unfortunately, these missionaries rarely distinguish between the Hui and other Muslim groups, but they often describe Muslims as speaking Chinese, so many of their descriptions almost certainly apply to the Hui. The missionary descriptions maintain many of the same stereotypical attributes that the Chinese observe in Muslims, but the missionaries tend to see them as admirable traits. It is not entirely surprising that the foreigners would make observations similar to those of the Han in that the Han were all too eager to warn the foreigners about the dangerous Muslims, but the missionaries were reluctant to uncritically accept the heathens' prejudices (Botham 1950). They even saw some qualities in Chinese Muslims that they found lacking in the Han such as cleanliness, industry, abstention from alcohol, and exclusive adherence to their faith. The Christian missionaries admired many traits that are reminiscent of Western or Christian values, but these similarities were largely superficial or based in a common religious origins in the Abrahamic tradition.

The earliest descriptions Westerners in China offer of Chinese Muslims are remarkably flattering in light of their generally condescending descriptions of the Chinese. Many of the characteristics they found admirable are the same Western physical and cultural qualities they found sorely lacking among the Han Chinese. We find numerous descriptions of Muslim men's tall stature, facial hair (Anderson 1976,

Broomhall 1910) and “proud bearing” (O. Botham 1938). Muslims generally wore the Manchurian queue that was required by the Qing emperors and considered effeminate in Western eyes, but they often would conceal it beneath a cap, especially while praying (Broomhall 1910). But missionaries perceived fewer physical differences between Muslim and Han women. There’s no doubt that the predominantly male Westerners had less access to Muslim women than men, but the female missionary, Olive Botham, is a notable exception. She (1938) observed that the Hui women looked more like Han than the men, except they possessed a prideful bearing and Turkic features just as Muslim men did. Veils are only seen in the most conservative Muslim communities of the northwest. But Muslim women commonly covered their hair and the bright colors distinguished their clothes from those of the Han. Foot binding was present among turn-of-the-century Muslims, but the practice was less prevalent and the feet were generally more loosely than among the Han (O. Botham 1938). She (1926) also noted that corpses’ feet were unbound and covered with stockings to avoid offending Allah. While Hui women adopted some readily apparent aspects of Chinese culture, the men also flirted with Sinification through taking Han wives and concubines. However, the Hui maintained a distinct identity that the missionaries hoped would make them more susceptible to conversion than the Han.

Indeed, Christians saw more similarities between themselves and the Hui than they shared with the Han. Olive Botham (1938: 363) remarked that this recognition might have been reciprocal to some extent, writing that she found the Muslim women friendly in spite of their “hasty” reputation, and that the Muslims viewed Christians as being “in the same class as themselves” because they both share a “scorn of idolaters”. Many

missionaries hoped to align themselves with the Hui in opposition to the supposed oppression and backwardness of Han Chinese. In order to circumvent an alleged “race hatred” between Han and Hui, Mark Botham advocated that missionaries essentially immerse themselves in the Muslim community by living among them, employing a Hui servant and living the qingzhen 清真 (halal or Islamic) lifestyle (M. Botham 1926:383). But in spite of Christians sharing the position of monotheist minority and focused proselytization efforts, the social and political ties binding together the Muslim community resisted large-scale conversions.

Many missionaries believed that as followers of another Abrahamic monotheism, the Hui would be more likely to convert to Christianity than heathen Han, but Christian efforts at evangelization do not appear to have had much success. One such missionary, Mark Botham, expressed a grudging admiration for Hui loyalty to their theology, which bore stark contrast to the syncretic Han Chinese. He wrote, “The Moslem is distinguished from the Chinese by his refusal to agree to doctrines that he has been taught to look upon as heretical, unless he has something to gain by doing so” (M. Botham 1926:380). While he acknowledged that the occasional Hui may alter his professed beliefs to gain medical care or other practical advantage, Botham attributed the strength of Chinese Muslim faith to the power of the Islamic clergy and social pressure from the lay community rather than individual commitment to theology. The Hui viewed conversion to Christianity as an intolerable betrayal to the community. Many Muslim converts to Christianity did so only in secret for fear of community censure. Mark Botham (1926:380) noted, “Social ostracism and excommunication must be faced by the sinner, the backslider or the

believer in Christ, but it is only on the last that either is likely to come". Adherence to Islamic strictures and maintenance of practice varied immensely between communities and individuals. While this laxity may have been cause for gossip and derision, it did not necessarily invoke ire as an outright rejection of Islam would.

Regardless of sect or an individual's level of piety, Islam was crucial to what defined individual Hui communities and the ethnicity as a whole. Denial of the faith, unlike neglect, threatened the very cohesiveness of the community and the legitimacy of its political and social structure. Although Hui communities were largely set apart and distinct from Han Chinese, they had the same general spatial and social composition as other Chinese communities. Ekvall (1939:13) observed that in both cases the village is the "basic unit of control". But while the Chinese had provincial and central levels of organization and corresponding bureaucracies, ties binding Muslim communities together were much more informal. The fact that religion was in many cases the only commonality linking various localities made at least nominal adherence to Islam among the citizens crucial to maintenance of a trans-local identity. Mark Botham (1924:6) characterized this loose, non-hierarchical sense of Muslim unity as "organic rather than organized." This informal organization allowed for a great deal of differentiation among various villages and regions, but the common thread of Islam preserved a unified identity in the eyes of the Han and a loose unity among the Hui. Western missionaries' attempts at conversion and imperial authorities efforts at assimilation each failed to alter this fundamental characteristic of Hui communities. Thus, a loose form of de facto Hui identity had long encompassed Chinese-speaking Muslim communities across China, but

when Hui became an officially recognized legal category in the Republic of China, various individuals sought to define, delimit and exploit the idea of Hui-ness.

A Hui Renaissance under the Republic of China

The first flag of the Republic of China included five stripes, one for each of what Sun Yat-Sen defined as China's five nationalities: red for the Han, yellow for the Manchurians, black for the Tibetans, blue for the Mongolians and white for the Hui. Sun advocated the unification of these five peoples to form a united nation. This was indeed a lofty goal at the time of its writing, but Sun succeeded in creating a unified category for all of China's Muslims and established the general policy in effect to this day of embracing them as a nominally equal segment of the Chinese people. Sun was almost certainly aware that China contained many more diverse peoples, but each of these nationalities also represent a geographic region that had previously been autonomous or even dominated the rest of China. While preceding dynasties had conquered these areas by force, the nationalists sought to unify them under the banner of modern nationalism. Particularly in Western China, this was not merely a case of lofty idealism; the weak Republican government needed the help of regional military strongmen in order to create national unity. Like most intellectuals of his time, Sun sought to strengthen his nation using modern principles learned from abroad, but while he and his party looked to Japan and the West, China's Muslims looked to the Islamic world as well.

Of course, Sun Yat-sen never became president of the modern China he is credited with creating, and many of his policies remained unimplemented. In 1939, Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 shifted government policy by declaring that the Hui and Han were in fact one race; the former had just converted to Islam (DeAngelis 1997). Yet this view did not gain much traction among the Hui. In a 1934 speech in Cairo before the

Association for Mutual Knowledge of Muslims, the renowned Hui scholar Ma Jian 马坚 observed that the majority of Chinese Muslims denied this official viewpoint. He claimed that their religious sentiment outweighed their national identity, but he did not necessarily see a contradiction between the two. He also recalled Dr. Sun Yat-sen exhorting his supporters to cooperate with Muslims both in China and abroad (Vacca 1936). Ma saw the interests of nation and religion running parallel, and it is objectively true that Muslims generally prospered politically and culturally under the Republic of China. As it would in the founding days of the Peoples' Republic of China, the leadership of the nation sought to use the Hui to gain international recognition and support in the Middle East. Indeed, Hui scholars were in the vanguard both of militarily restoring order to the nation and seeking modern knowledge abroad.

Hui Political Machinations

By the time the Qing Dynasty finally collapsed in 1911, effective control of China was divided among regional strongmen. In the Muslim northwest, many of these militarists harbored sectarian grudges and had fought each other in previous conflicts. As a Qing loyalist like his father, Ma Anliang initially marched against Yuan Shikai's Republican armies. But before he attacked Xi'an, his advisors convinced him of the futility of the Qing cause, and he swore allegiance to the Republic. The Qing military commander Ma Fuxiang 马福祥, who had helped to brutally suppress the 1895 Muslim uprising, joined the Republican cause when the Northern Expedition showed signs of success, and he was rewarded with a seat on the Gansu Provincial Assembly. He later became commander of the Republican military post in Ningxia, which allowed him to

expand his territory to include northern Gansu and western Inner Mongolia (Lipman 1997:170-1). Although many Han were uneasy with the Hui military presence, the Islamic armies effectively protected the community in these tumultuous times. When the bandit army of Bai Lang 白朗 invaded Gansu in 1914, other Hui leaders also organized militias to defend themselves and Han citizens (Lipman 1987:305-6). Though the violence of the late Qing was still fresh in many minds, the proven martial prowess of Muslim leaders often had a stabilizing effect.

In the 1920s, the Republican government appointed Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥 as military governor of the northwest. The Christian warlord used his post to exact ruinous taxes in support of campaigns against his rivals, costing him support among the locals. Devastating earthquakes in 1920 and 1927, the former of which killed the leader of the Jahriyya order, Ma Yuanzhang, caused the economic situation to further deteriorate. This situation provoked violence among the younger generation in prestigious Muslim families. Ma Anliang's son, Ma Tingxiang 马廷勳, attacked the armies of Feng's subordinate, and Ma Qi's cousin, Ma Zhongying 马仲英, launched a two-year campaign in southern Gansu to drive out the Han soldiers. This small and brutal war was devastating to the local population and included unwarranted massacres of both Hui and Han civilians. The violence began to subside when Feng Yuxiang moved eastward to ally with Yan Xishan 阎锡山 against the Northern Expedition. Many Muslim generals went with him, but most of those who remained behind, led by Ma Fuxiang, joined the nationalist cause and received official Guomindang 国民党 titles (Lipman 1983:308-10). When the East Turkestan Republic centered in Kashgar came into existence between

1933 and 1934, the Gansu Muslims were too divided and tied to intrigues in China proper to unite with their Muslim brethren (DeAngelis 1997). During the early years of the Chinese Republic, Chinese Muslims participated in many intrigues among interconnected militarists that dominated Chinese politics, taking part in the great cultural upheaval associated with the end of a four millennia-old political system.

Muslim warlords consolidated their domains in northwest China, and as the Republican government gained power, they established relations with it in order to gain legitimacy. Together with Ma Qi 马麒 in Xining, the families of Ma Anliang in Hezhou and Ma Fuxiang in Ningxia would become powerful warlord lineages that would dominate politics in the northwest for the duration of the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. The all-Hui Gansu hamlet of Zhangjiachuan 张家川, created through the resettlement of Shaanxi refugees from the 1895-6 conflict, also became a prominent Muslim center under Ma Yuanzhang (Lipman 1984). In addition to military and religious power, these warlords and their Sufi lineages also wielded considerable economic power. Historically, they controlled the trade routes through the Gansu corridor, and as trade in opium and wool increased under the relative peace of the Nationalist era, they also became enriched through holding a near-monopoly on the manufacture and transport of these commodities in the west (Lipman 1984:303-4). Hui community leaders no longer focused their efforts on consolidating religious and political power among fellow Muslims; they were becoming more economically, politically and culturally tied to the larger Chinese milieu. Many Muslims were eager to cast off the ancient imperial system

and embraced new visions of modernity. The Hui participated in shaping Chinese national identity, but also sought to preserve and define a distinct Hui identity within it.

Cultural and Religious Developments

Like the days of the Warring States Period or the declining days of the Tang, this period of intense political and military maneuvering was accompanied by a diverse artistic and intellectual flowering. Some Muslim military leaders were also intellectuals and patrons of scholarship as well. Ma Fuxiang had served under the renowned general Dong Fuxiang 董福祥 during the siege on the foreign legations during the Boxer Rebellion. His experience fighting in eastern China led him to believe that Han and Hui were dependent on each other, and he formed the Assimilationist Group to encourage western Muslims to become more like their Han brethren. Ma Fuxiang's machinations got him sent east in service of the new national government where he joined with other Muslim aristocrats in forming the Chinese Islamic Association. He financed new editions of the works of Wang Daiyu, Ma Zhu and Liu Zhi as well as the Confucian classics, but he died before he could have the Koran translated into Chinese (Lipman 1997:173-76). His son would follow him in attempting to revive the syncretic ideas of the late Ming and early Qing, dispel the myth of Muslims as fierce barbarians and show Islam to be a moral and civilized religion (Lipman 1984). Of course, calling all Chinese Muslims Hui did not make them a homogenous group, and many were still wary of becoming too much like the Han.

The Muslim Brotherhood or Yihewani, a reformist movement inspired by the scripturalist Arabic Ikhwan movement in the Middle East, bore marked contrast to the

Assimilationists. In 1893, Ma Wanfu 马万福, a returning Chinese hajji, founded this order in China. He and his followers asserted that Sufism, the menhuan institution, performing prayers for payment and any accretion of Han culture were heretical. The extremist scholar even remained proudly illiterate in Chinese. Naturally, these ideas aroused the ire of the traditional Sufi powers in China (Lipman 1984:311-12). During the unrest in 1895-6, Ma Anliang managed to drive Ma Wanfu out of Gansu and into Shaanxi. The Gedimu communities to the east were more accepting of his reformist teachings, and the movement offered a way to tie these traditionally independent communities together. Ma Fuxiang in Ningxia supported the call to Muslim unity, but Ma Anliang finally managed to have Ma Wanfu arrested in 1917. Before the leader could be executed, Ma Qi seized the opportunity to co-opt the new sect and improve the balance of power with his rival, Ma Anliang. Ma Qi's soldiers rescued Ma Wanfu and brought him to live and preach in Xining. When he adopted the Yihewani order, Ma Qi passed strict laws against opium and decreased the power of menhuan in his domain. But the formerly fundamentalist Ma Wanfu also compromised in tolerating Ma Qi's Sufism and participating in Chinese politics (Lipman 1997: 200-208). In the early twentieth century, Hui forged their identity through cooperation as well as often-violent competition.

Forging Ties with the International Umma

During the Republic of China, many of the nation's scholars sought education abroad, which they used to build domestic educational institutions and publications that would unify their nation and elevate its position in the global community. This enabled such a surge in Islamic scholarship that it has been equated with three other major periods

of development in Chinese Islamic culture: the spread of the faith from Central Asia during the decline of the Tang Dynasty, the influx of foreign Muslims in the Yuan and the developments in Islamic education and literature during the late Ming and early Qing (Yang and Usair 1996). In 1906, the East Asia Islamic Education Society (*Dongya Qinzhen Jiaoyu Zonghui*) 东亚清真教育总会 was established in Zhenjiang 镇江, Jiangsu Province 江苏 in order to encourage education among China's Muslims. Just a year later, a group of 13 Hui students who had studied in Japan formed the Islamic Education Society 清真教育会. A year later, they began publishing the *Muslim Awakening* 兴回篇 magazine, the first major national publication dedicated to Chinese Muslims. In all, seventy to one hundred similar journals, many of them regional and short-lived, appeared between the downfall of the Qing and the Japanese invasion (Dillon 1999). . Hui scholars established private Islamic schools that would teach Koranic learning alongside the Westernized curriculum being introduced in the national public schools. Many Chinese Muslims incorporated a religious education taught at their local mosque into their studies as well.

Many Hui making the pilgrimage followed the tradition of studying in the Middle East and bringing their newfound knowledge back to China. Foremost among these was Wang Haoran 王浩然 who returned to Beijing in 1912 to found Chinese Muslim Mutual Progress Association 中国回教俱进会. The organization grew to include branches in each province, totaling three thousand by 1923 (Dillon 1999). But this was only part of a general trend of surging numbers of Chinese making the *hajj*. From Wang Haoran's time through the 1920s only a few Chinese would make the long and expensive journey to

Mecca each year, but from 1922 to 1933, Bodde (1946a) records that 834 pilgrims made the trek, though he does not cite a source. Notable among these scholars is Wang Jingzhai 王静齋 who studied at al-Azhar University in Cairo while he completed the first complete translation of the Koran into Chinese, which would be published in 1932 (Spira 19). As more Chinese went to study in the Middle East, academic ties developed with Egypt. Groups of students studied in Cairo throughout the 1930s, and the government began offering fellowships in 1939. By the end of the war, the Ministry of Education announced that it would choose Chinese Muslims to study in India, Turkey and Iran as well. The beleaguered Nationalist government followed these Muslim students with official delegations to establish ties with potential allies in the Islamic world. During the war, China established or increased diplomatic relations with Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran.

One of the foremost of these foreign-educated Islamic scholars of this period was the aforementioned Ma Jian. While studying at Al-Azhar University between 1931 and 1939, he wrote about Islam in China, translated Confucius' *Analects* into Arabic, and lectured on the state of Islam in China. In a 1934 speech, he staunchly defended Chinese Islamic beliefs and practices, so vehemently that one can tell that their orthodoxy had been questioned. He maintained that separation from the Islamic world had not degraded the practice of Islamic faith. Ma claimed that the heterodox practices of excessive veneration of tombs and saints died with the Jahriyya leader, Ma Yuanzhong, but he did not paint an entirely rosy picture. He bemoaned the general dearth of knowledge among China's Muslims and blamed it on a deficient educational system. Upon returning to

China, Ma attempted to help rectify this situation by publishing a Arabic-Chinese dictionary and a new translation of the Koran which became the standard version used in China. In speaking to fellow Muslims, Ma asserted that the Hui's religious identity superseded their patriotism, but he acknowledged Sun Yat-sen's commitment to working with Muslims both at home and abroad (Vacca 1936). Both the Republicans and the Communists used Hui embassies and vague notions of Pan-Islamism to curry favor in the Middle East, but attempts by the Japanese government to use such an ideology to win Chinese Muslims to the cause of Japanese imperialism met with little success.

Invasion and Civil War: The Wooing of the Hui

Traditionally, Chinese Muslims existed between two poles: economic and cultural ties pulled them toward Chinese civilization in the East and religious and ancestral ties drew them toward Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and Islam. With the possible exception of the Yuan Dynasty, Muslims never really embraced the imperial system, but in the 1930s, they had to choose between three rival, modernist ideologies: the aforementioned nationalism, its domestic rival of Chinese Communism, and a Japanese pretense of Pan-Islamism. Situated along the crucial trade routes to Central Asia in territory forming a buffer against the imperialist Soviets, China's northwestern Muslims found themselves occupying a strategic and coveted piece of real estate. Chinese Muslims' reputation as fierce warriors living in rugged conditions earned them scorn during the Qing, but these attributes became progressively more valuable as chaos and warfare prevailed in the early twentieth century. While Muslim response was by no means homogenous, foreign Japanese propaganda generally fell on deaf (or illiterate) ears, and a desire to preserve a distinct Hui identity or a general distrust of outsiders contributed to preventing a close alliance with either the atheistic Communists or the assimilationist Nationalists, in spite of each party's attempt to recant past policy statements that the Hui had found objectionable.

Japanese wartime propaganda that claimed goals of liberating the Hui and establishing an Islamic empire, conducted while committing atrocities on civilians, would not likely have been very believable. But Bodde (1946b) traces the activities of Japanese Muslims in China back to pan-Islamic propaganda in 1888 Xinjiang and anti-Qing organizations in the 1900s. Though these people initially appeared to be individual

Muslim merchants or ahongs, Japanese Islam was infused with a deep sense of patriotism, and they were likely serving as government agents from their first entry into China. Contacts up until 1923 consisted largely of individual Japanese businessmen working in China and reporting information about Chinese Muslims to Tokyo. Bodde (1946a) notes that the aforementioned magazine published by Chinese Muslim students in Japan was distributed for free to Muslims in China and may have been funded by the Japanese government. In 1923, Sakuma Teijiro, who had studied Islam at the behest of the Black Dragon Society,¹² formed a Pan-Islamic organization in Beijing called the Light Society. It advocated sending Chinese Muslim students to Japan in order to spread Islam there, and it published an English language journal in which Teijiro used a Chinese penname to exhort Chinese Muslims to seek political power (Bodde 1946b). When Japan seized Manchuria and its imperial intentions became abundantly clear, the Japanese message to Muslims began to show a desire to resurrect Yuan Dynasty policies of using Muslims to rule over the Han.

As the Japanese embarked on the gradual conquest of China, they established mass organizations and educational institutions to groom Muslims to be used in their Chinese campaign. Soon after the Japanese created the Muslim League in 1932, with 15,000 members and 166 branches across Manchuria, the Japanese mullah of a Mukden mosque founded the Institute for Islamic Culture 回教文化学院, which would graduate over 100 Chinese by 1942 (Bodde 1946b). In 1938, the Muslim League expanded to become the All-China Muslim League with numerous local branches in each occupied

¹² Founded in 1901 by Uchida Ryohei, this militant nationalist organization advocated opposing Russian territorial expansion in East Asia by means of Pan-Asianism and Japanese Empire.

province of the northeast, of which all local Muslims were *de facto* members. The organization's monthly journal reveals a dedication to inspiring Muslim opposition to Western imperialism and Communism by means of working for the Japanese against Han Republicans and Communists as well as European forces. Aside from mere propaganda, the league also sponsored the Muslim Youth Corps 中国回教青年段, which indoctrinated Muslims, conducted military drills and sent 500 graduates into branches of the Chinese military. While these organizations were under the aegis of the North China Army, the Japanese Guangdong Army established a parallel Islamic league and youth corps in the more western provinces of Suiyuan 綏遠 and Chahar 察哈, both of which are now part of Inner Mongolia. They also trained a couple hundred Muslim infiltrators to be sent into the Muslim heartland of Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia where Japan hoped to eventually establish a Muslim buffer state against the U.S.S.R. But with such small numbers involved, a scope limited to north China and the majority of Chinese Muslims illiterate and unable to read Japanese-funded publications, these efforts had minimal effects during the war. But this episode illustrates that the Hui are not easily swayed by outsiders' rhetoric, whether it appeals to their religious, national or class identity.

The significance of these wartime maneuvers was not lost on Chiang Kai-shek and the nationalists. At a 1938 mass meeting in Hankou 汉口 (now part of Wuhan 武汉), delegates from across China founded the Chinese Islamic National Salvation Federation 中国回民救国协会. The minister of national defense and erstwhile warlord, General Omar Bai Chongxi 白崇禧, chaired the federation and recruited 1500 Muslim youths into the Central Military Academy's Guilin Branch (Dillon 1999). The Nationalists' efforts

did gain them some Islamic support, but a lack of Muslim political representation indicates that the Guomindang authorities still held a lingering distrust for Muslims; the People's Political Council had one Muslim among 240 delegates (Bodde 1946a). And many Muslims were still insulted by Chiang Kai-shek's assimilationist policies and assertions that Hui, speaking Chinese and being physically indistinguishable from Han, were merely Han who believed in Islam. However, Fletcher (1989) asserts that in '20s and '30s Muslims mostly supported the Guomindang, noting that militarists conquered most of Xinjiang in the name of the Nanjing government. On the other hand, the Japanese granted Muslims preferential treatment in court cases and politics and even appointed the Muslim, Ma Liang, as governor of Shandong. But organizing some traditionally Hui businesses, such as transport and butchery, into Japanese-run cooperatives and siphoning off much of the profits ran counter to this goal (Bodde 1946c). Although the Japanese offered Muslims, Mongolians and other ethnic groups their own "autonomous" states like Manchuria, they may have been more inclined to believe such promises coming from Chinese Communists.

While the Japanese and Nationalists each sought to portray themselves as sympathetic to Islam in the 1930s, the Communists' famed retreat from Nationalist forces known as the Long March carried them through the Chinese Muslim heartland of Gansu. As the Chinese Red Army passed through Hui and other minority-dominated areas, advance scouts asked permission of local leaders to encamp in their domains. They explained that their beliefs included Han-Hui equality and resistance against Japan and the leaders forbade soldiers to eat pork or enter mosques. Much of this was necessary to counteract Nationalist propaganda that alleged the Communists would "collectivise

marriage...[and would] eradicate Islam and ahongs would be boiled alive” (Dillon 1999: 88-9). But such niceties were not enough for the Communists to gain Muslim support in securing the Gansu corridor and access to Russian allies. When the Communists moved to seize the crucial trade route, Muslims from Ningxia, Qinghai and Gansu banded together to defeat them. Lindbeck (1950) attributes this Communist failure to win over Muslims to the portrayal of Islam as an ethnic peculiarity rather than a universal religion, attempts to turn Muslims against each other in class struggle and the threat that collectivization would undermine the economic base of Islamic institutions. It is doubtful that the Hui considered their actions in such intellectualized terms, but perceived threats to the practical foundations of Chinese Islamic communities and symbolic association with the greater Islamic world most likely factored into Hui motives. But Muslims didn't necessarily have to buy into the ideology in order to ally themselves with the Communists.

In 1936, the Communists set the tone for future minority policy by establishing the first autonomous government in Yuhai County in present-day Ningxia (Dillon 1999). The need for allies against the Nationalists combined with a desire to circumvent Japanese offers of future ethnically-based autonomous states along the lines of Manchukuo (Manzhouguo 满洲国) helped motivate this Communist generosity. In these early days, the CCP guaranteed minorities the right to secede, but this was withdrawn in 1940 as the party became entrenched at Yan'an 延安.

In order to fight escalating Japanese aggression in 1937, the Communists abandoned their attempts to preach class struggle and organize conquered areas into

soviets to focus on resistance against Japan. They resurrected the nationalism of Sun Yat-sen, permitted religious freedom, allowed government by local assemblies and organized guerilla campaigns involving both Hui and Han against the invaders (Lindbeck 1950). Communists, Nationalists and Muslims participated in an uneasy alliance until the Japanese surrendered and the Civil War recommenced in earnest in 1946. Once the Communists had driven their Nationalist foes from the mainland and could concentrate on pacifying the west, their Islamic allies showed little appetite for prolonged resistance. Fletcher (1989) also notes that while the Hui had helped the Nationalists conquer Xinjiang, the Turkic speaking Muslims later did the same for the Communists. Many battle-weary Muslims saw little distinction between Communists and Nationalists, and scattered resistance ended within a month (Lindbeck 1950). But the Hui would soon discover that this new ideology was much more hostile to their faith than the Han-Hui unity preached by the Nationalists.

The Honeymoon's Over: Islam under the Peoples' Republic of China

There was a great deal of debate inside the CCP over whether the Hui should be considered a nationality since they can only be construed as meeting two, if any, of Stalin's four criteria for determining a nationality: common territory, common language, common economic life, and common culture. The dispute was portrayed in a legendary conversation between Mao and Stalin just after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949; Stalin allegedly asserted that the Hui only should be classified as a religious group, but Mao observed that in order to gain their support in consolidating control of China, they must be considered a nationality (Gladney 1991). Indeed, once the Nationalists were vanquished in 1949, the CCP rapidly shifted its policy. Gladney quotes an Oct. 1949 cable from the Central Party Propaganda Office announcing the proscription of slogans formerly used in predominantly Hui regions such as, "Resolutely Oppose Han Chauvinism" and "Nationality Self-Determination" in the interest of unity and in recognition that the "Han today are the major force in China's revolution" (Gladney 1991: 89-98). This would prove only the first of many vacillations in Communist policies towards religion and ethnic nationalities.

In the Common Program¹³ ratified in 1949 and again in 1954, the CCP guaranteed "freedom of religious belief" to every citizen, but the interests of socialism, national security and public order largely superseded this right. Furthermore, the Communists enacted a xenophobic isolationism condemning all foreign and non-Russian things, people and ideas. Thus, Catholicism would be the most dangerous faith with its hierarchy

¹³ An interim constitution adopted when Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War appeared imminent. It was the basis of the government until a constitution was adopted in 1954.

and foreign leadership, but Muslims also literally focus their attention abroad each time they pray. But, whether the Communists feared internal rebellion or sought to curry favor in the Middle East, they made numerous concessions to Islam in the early years of their reign over China. A 1952 decree mandated respect for Muslim customs in all government institutions and required separate cooking equipment installed in schools, military barracks and government offices wherever there was a significant number of Muslims. Leaders of Islamic communities received government positions, and many who had served as officials under the Guomindang were allowed to remain in their posts, including the governor of Xinjiang who had defected only when defeat was imminent. Nationalities received their own autonomous regions, with Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region established in 1955 and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region founded in 1958, with Hui prominence included in the official title. Like the Nationalists and the Japanese, the Communists set up organizations and educational institutions, founding the Chinese Islamic Association in 1953, which published new editions of the Koran and works on Islamic theology and organized trips to Mecca, and the Chinese Institute of Islamic Theology, founded in 1955 to train among and Islamic scholars (Dreyer 1982). But it would not be long before the officially atheist expressed their disdain for Islam.

Despite placating gestures on the part of the national CCP, economic hardship, anti-Muslim discrimination at the local and regional level and Marxist indoctrination in Islamic schools led to renewed military conflicts in the 1950s. Muslims who were previously better off than their Han neighbors were now subjected to rationing and a tax on slaughtering animals that was waived only during certain Islamic holidays. Teachers at Islamic schools had to attend atheistic socialist education classes. Mosque lands were

confiscated and they were required to house clubs studying more Marxist political theory than the Islamic or general education curriculum they purported to focus on. The Communists also took part in the age-old tactic of relocation, moving Muslims in eastern China to the rural Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia region of western China. And various county and local governments would discriminate against Hui through mere exclusion and monitoring or overt harassment and humiliation (Dreyer 1982). Gladney (1991: 92) cites this as an example of following Lenin's strategy for controlling nationalities, in which one promises self-determination until seizing power, then assimilates them in a supposedly autonomous area while excluding them from the central government. In 1952, the Jahriyya order rebelled under Ma Zhenwu in Guyuan, southern Ningxia and in Zhangjiachuan, Gansu. Legendarily, Ma issued *pi'erhan* 皮尔汗, essentially a ticket to heaven, to those who might die while defending mosques, their lands threatened with confiscation, and especially the tombs on such lands. With rhetoric centered on protecting tombs, the movement persisted until the "religious landlord" Ma Zhenwu was arrested in 1958 (Gladney 1991). Clearly, religious freedom under the Communists had its limits, especially when it came to dissent.

When the party invited criticism during the 1956-57 One Hundred Flowers campaign, numerous Muslims complained of discrimination, anti-religion policies, autonomy that was merely a sham, and the division of Muslims into different nationalities. Overwhelmed by the response from all segments of society, the party lashed out in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957. Ahong, Muslims and other rightists were hauled into mass meetings to be accused of despicable crimes and humiliated in front of the entire

community. Vice chairmen of the Chinese Islamic Association were removed from their posts, and blamed for engineering anti-communist propaganda. In addition to repression, the CCP answered its critics with propaganda, pointing out that freedom of religion was enshrined in the constitution, asserting the differences among the 10 different Muslim nationalities and even establishing Ningxia as an autonomous zone in 1958. In spite of condescension and harassment, the rights and customs of Muslims were still officially protected. Though their stoves were often dirty and scarce, Muslims still had access to separate cooking equipment. But Muslims were fully integrated and collectivized during the Great Leap Forward.

Beginning in 1958, Chairman Mao plunged China into a massive socio-economic experiment to collectivize and exponentially increase industrial and agricultural production in the span of a few short years. With all resources dedicated to this task, the Chinese Islamic Association was abolished, lands that still belonged to mosques were confiscated, imams and women were sent out to work in the fields and—in a throwback to the Ming—Han-Hui intermarriage was encouraged. This last policy was likely enacted in hopes that—contrary to historical precedent—the Hui would dissolve into the Han and cease wasting valuable time praying and maintaining mosques and tombs. But this attempted surge in national production ended in famine, catastrophic failure, economic devastation and political backlash (Dreyer 1982). As more pragmatic cadres came to power in 1961, the reforms most odious to Muslims quietly faded along with the disastrous economic policies of the Great Leap Forward. Prominent Muslims gradually returned to the positions they had lost, and communal dining halls made changes to accommodate Muslims. But mosque lands were not returned and those mosques that

closed did not reopen. The government restrictions might have been loosened to help to dissuade Muslims from colluding with an increasingly hostile Russia or to support diplomatic efforts among nations in the Middle East and Africa (Dreyer 1982). But the fickle political winds soon shifted again, allowing the Great Helmsman to seize control and steer China into yet another tempest.

When Mao Zedong launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, a generation of students across China banded together into columns of Red Guards hell-bent on a Maoist Crusade. Muslims and other minority nationalities were emblematic of the “four olds” (old ideas, customs, culture and habits) that Mao had marked for destruction. The Chinese Islamic Association disappeared again, mosques were closed and vandalized and Muslim leaders struggled against. In the Sufi village in Ningxia where Gladney conducted research, the mosque became a ball-bearing factory and Muslims were encouraged to raise pigs during this period, but only a few Muslims hoping to win favor with party officials actually did so. Villagers later recalled an increase in illness in the village at the time, supposedly caused by the unclean animals. Gladney (1991) also reports Muslim protests in Beijing, Ningxia, Henan and Hebei, and leading Muslim cadres in Ningxia and Gansu were charged with political offenses and removed (Dreyer 1982).

Violence between rival factions of Red Guards was common at the time, but one such clash in Shadian 沙甸, Yunnan pitted Han against Hui in an ethno-religious confrontation. As was historically the case with many ‘Muslim rebellions,’ the violence began between rival Muslim sects, only this time they were two armed factions of Hui

Red Guards who began killing each other in 1968. When village leaders welcomed Han soldiers to quell the violence, the soldiers began a struggle campaign against the local along and other religious leaders. Muslims were forced to eat pork, act like pigs and roll in the mud; soldiers also polluted the local wells with pig bones and carcasses. Even when local mosques began reopening in 1973, Shadian Muslims were denied permission to resume services at their mosque. A year later, officials in Kunming arrested local leaders who took their petition to reopen the mosque to the provincial capital. When a neighboring township formed a Han militia to oversee Shadian, the local Hui formed themselves into a "Huihui militia." Clashes between the two caught the attention of Beijing, and authorities sent the People's Liberation Army to resolve the situation. Shocked by the size of the contingent and wary of soldiers after their experience in 1968, the citizens of Shadian refused to let army into their village. Intolerant of this obstinacy, Beijing ordered a surprise attack, and PLA soldiers stormed the village in the middle of the night on July 29, 1975. The village was burned to the ground and over the next week one to two thousand Hui were killed. In 1979, reparations were made to survivors, those responsible for the brutality were criticized and the village was rebuilt with seven new mosques in the area (Gladney 1991). But the Communists had made a clear statement about the limits to ethnic autonomy and religious freedom.

Post-Maoist China: Islamic Resurgence (with Chinese Characteristics)

In the years immediately following the Cultural Revolution, religion gradually crept back into the public sphere. Muslims reopened and repaired mosques, and they regained their function as centers for community social life and education. They were apparently more sorely missed than similar institutions in other religions, as Gillette (2000:95) notes that Muslims in Xi'an repaired their mosques rapidly while Buddhist sites were still in disrepair decades later. Indeed, various sects competed to rebuild their mosques quickly and with grander, more Islamic architecture. In 1984, the sixth National People's Congress adopted a new law granting minority autonomous regions more independence with regard to legal and economic decisions and requiring that the heads of autonomous regions be members of one of the nationalities granted autonomy. This resulted in increased representation for minorities, but a second-in-command Han cadre often would exercise more authority than the minority executive nominally in charge of a prefecture or county (Newby 1988).

The government also increased investment in education, particularly in western China's autonomous regions. The Communist government opened numerous Hui primary through high schools in areas where the nationality's population was concentrated. In contrast to other public schools, these institutions did not serve pork, sometimes offered classes in Arabic or Persian, and taught *minzu changshi* 民族常识 (nationality general knowledge) in addition to the standard curriculum taught in other schools. Together with granting Hui preference on college entrance examinations, these government efforts aimed to end the disparity between Hui and Han (Gladney 2004:273). Mosques also regained their role as educational institutions, offering after-school and summer classes,

night classes for lay adults, and limited slots for training for future *ahong* (Gillette 2000:85). These reforms may have been an attempt to convince potential minority separatists that it was in their best interest to remain part of the PRC (Mackerras 2005) or to curry favor in the Middle East by displaying how well Chinese Muslims were treated. But it is more likely the former, as Islamic countries generally didn't seem to mind continued repression of Uyghur separatists (Alles et al 2003), possibly because they would rather not encourage separatist movements in their own nations.

Especially in rural communities, the government was only partially successful in raising the educational level of the Hui. Families dwelling in the countryside—especially those without access to public Islamic education—would often eschew public schools in favor of giving their children a Koranic education at home or in the local mosque. Urban Hui were more likely to seek and find opportunities to apply secular education, and the language skills learned in Hui schools could earn them a profitable living as translators or businesspeople abroad as China gradually opened to the outside in the 1980s. But their rural brethren who lacked the same array of secular opportunities often found religious education to be more prestigious and profitable. Large rural families sometimes would encourage one of their sons to become an *ahong*, which could raise the family's social status and earn more than the typical income for a rural high school graduate (Gladney 2004:273). Thus, rural children receiving a strictly Koranic education largely studied at home, as each mosque legally was permitted to support only two to four full-time theological students, called *manla* 满拉, who were required be at least eighteen years old and junior middle school graduates. In addition, aspiring Islamic scholars began to flock

from all over China to study at famous mosques in Linxia 临夏 and other Islamic centers, each of which host dozens of students (Gladney 2004:273-8). These large mosques boasted the most well known scholars that producing the most prominent Islamic leaders, but greater numbers of ahong still were ordained in small, local mosques (Gladney 2004). Hui generally received a standardized secular education in regular or Hui public schools, but community mosques supplemented this with religious instruction specific to the students' sect and region. Likewise, manla could be trained in large, centralized mosques and Islamic academies, or under the tutelage of disparate local ahong. While all of these institutions fell under the aegis of the Chinese Islamic Association and its local branches, diverse modes of education perpetuated the contentious nature of the Hui community.

While the growth of Islamic education perpetuated acrimony between various sects, other developments encouraged standardization of Islamic thought within China. Despite a growing interest in learning foreign languages for communication that spans all segments of contemporary Chinese society, Arabic generally supplanted Farsi—long the language of much Islamic scholarship in China, especially within Sufism. This reflected a combination of the increasing influence of reformist factions advocating direct study of the Koran and government policies aimed at both improving relations with Arabic-speaking countries and discouraging potentially subversive Sufi orders. A more Western, institutional form of education replaced the traditional master-disciple system of learning, and the final exam to become an ahong is supervised by representatives from the local Bureau of Religious Affairs and Chinese Islamic Association in addition to a local ahong (Alles 2003). While permitting and monitoring this relative centralization of traditional

mosque-based learning, the government also funded exclusive university-level Koranic Institutes 伊斯兰教经学院, with both of the most prominent in Ningxia Province at Yinchuan 银川 and Tongxin 同心. These expensive, well-funded academies admitted far fewer students than private Islamic schools and trained ahong, teachers, and translators in addition to offering electives in subjects like calligraphy and martial arts. But many Muslim parents were reluctant to send their children to these academies as government cadres—rather than religious authorities—controlled the curriculum. However, graduates of these schools were more likely than students from private Islamic schools to gain government permission to study abroad, granting them greater access to knowledge than could increase their ability to advance in economic, political or religious spheres (Alles 2003). Thus, government attempts to standardize Islamic education with public Hui schools and close monitoring by national, party-controlled Islamic organizations could have allowed the government to gain some measure of control over the Hui, but teaching about a single Hui identity did not make it so.

As the government decentralized and delegated control over education to the Chinese Islamic Association, communities of Muslims began opening private schools to supplement the traditional mosque-based education. The funding and quality of mosque schools varied with the local socioeconomic context, but they generally offered classes for every age group: in the mornings for the elderly, after-school and weekends for children, evenings for adults, and sometimes preschool during the day for young children (Armijo 2006). These schools were generally fee-based with financial support from the mosques and scholarships for the economically disadvantaged. However, some operated

independent of local mosques with distinct specialties including Arabic language, theology, or Hui culture (Alles 2003). Many were coeducational with separate classes for girls, and they often offered classes in more non-traditional subjects such as computers and English. While all children legally were required to attend nine years of compulsory public education, these schools presented educational opportunities for some Hui girls whose parents otherwise would not send them to be educated in the male-dominated mosques or secular public schools (Alles et al 2003).

In some cases, students were allowed to attend one of these schools as an alternative to public secondary school; however, most non-mosque-based private Islamic academies catered to graduates of junior middle schools (making them roughly equivalent to junior colleges in the U.S.¹⁴), offering language training, teaching credentials, and training for future abroad. They also prepared students to gain admittance to foreign universities (Armijo 2006). Indeed, dozens of these popular schools opened during the 1990s, and some Hui contended that they were better suited for teaching abroad and teachers for service in China than renowned institutes in the Islamic world. They became so popular that some claimed the government stopped allowing new schools of this type to open (Armijo 2006). Perhaps most interesting, some Han and other non-Muslim students also enrolled in these schools, converting upon matriculation, because they offered better educational opportunities than other schools near their homes (Alles 2003). Actually, secular occupations became the norm for graduates of these Islamic

¹⁴ The first nine years of education are compulsory in China (six years of primary school and three years of junior middle school). Less than half of students, generally those hoping to attend universities, complete the final three years known as senior middle school. Others may attend vocational or, for Hui, Islamic school.

academies (People's Daily 2008). Many students traveled to attend these schools from Qinghai and Xinjiang Provinces, where mosque-based and other private Islamic schools were banned for fear of fostering separatist or extremist sentiment, potentially creating ties among various Hui communities around China (Alles et al 2003). Armijo (2006) argued that these institutions helped strengthen the information networks connecting Islamic communities, and that these schools increased recognition of levels of religious devotion, which led to greater distinction between religious Muslim and ethnic Hui identity. But her construction essentially defined *Hui* as non-observant Chinese Muslim, a somewhat devalued, default category. Indeed, the increased flow of information and the desire to define the bounds of Islam perpetuated the contentious process of defining a Hui identity that is irrevocably tied to both Islam and the Chinese context.

Hui education was not only divided between public and community-funded institutions, sectarian divisions extended to the realm of education in spite of government attempts to standardize religious learning. In 2001, the Chinese Islamic Association established the Committee in Charge of Islamic Education Affairs, a national, specialized commission dedicated to "Eliminating among the masses the false interpretations (*wujie* 误解) and confusion (*hunluan* 混乱) about religious matters" (Alles 2003:21). This committee published a book of recommended sermons, began sponsoring sermon competitions, and took charge of publishing textbooks and translations of Islamic texts. Ten out of sixteen members of this committee were Hui, perhaps a case of the government using the less unified, Sinophone Muslims to control those judged more likely to harbor separatist sentiments like the Uyghurs (Alles 2003). For the Chinese

government, the Hui were the Uyghurs' polar opposite as the most assimilated and therefore most trustworthy of the Muslim minorities. For many Hui, the practical benefits of subservience to the Chinese government tended to outweigh abstract notions of loyalty to their coreligionists (Gladney 2003:466). Likewise, the government used the Gedimu Muslims within the Chinese Islamic Association to moderate the more extremist fringes of the reformist Yihewani and Salafiyya movements (Alles et al 2003). However, the conflict between these factions was still evident in the different approaches to Islamic education in China.

Historically, the Hui have struggled over how to render sacred Arabic terms into Chinese, often pronouncing Arabic words transliterated into Chinese characters and bearing little resemblance to the sacred language of Islam. In order to replace this mangled Arabic mocked by foreign Muslims, mosque schools recently began teaching Arabic as a spoken language suitable for international communication and translation, instead of a textual language only suitable for reading the Koran in Chinese mosques (Alles 2003). To this end, mosques began importing texts, audiocassettes and videos from abroad (Gillette 2000:85). However, this transition caused a rift with the older generation who learned under the old system of *jingtang jiaoyu* 经堂教育 (scripture hall education). These traditionally educated Hui used Chinese characters to approximate the sounds of Arabic (Allah = *an la hu* 安拉乎) whereas Muslims learning under the new system translated the meaning of Arabic words (Allah = *zhen zhu* 真主, true god) (Gillette 2000:104, Wang 2001). The former system first came into use in Gedimu communities during the Ming Dynasty, but critics—largely from the Yihewani and Salafiyya

communities—recently began decrying it as inaccurate and representative of the accretion of Chinese culture spoiling the purity of Islam. On the other hand, advocates of jingtang jiaoyu contended that their pronunciation and practice was closer to the original Islam, which arrived in China during the days of the prophet and remained insulated against theological change and cultural evolution in the Islamic world (Gillette 2000:104-109). This debate showed that the Islamic world was not necessarily the sole source of legitimacy for Hui Islam. Some believers in the dominant Gedimu sect even privileged their own form of Islam over that practiced in the Holy Land. Alles and her coauthors (2003) asserted that the Yihewani and Salafiyya would also have to adapt their internationalist message to the Chinese milieu in order to be successful. Indeed, when China's Muslims united in symbolic defense of Islam, the CCP played the role of beneficent mediator, protecting the Hui and building understanding within the Han majority.

Islamic Identity in Conflict with the State

As China's Muslims increasingly looked to the Middle East for an example of more authentic Islamic culture, the CCP increased efforts to conflate Hui religious loyalties with Chinese patriotism. Official propaganda portrayed the state and Islam in a mutually beneficial relationship, with the state educating the Hui so that they may enrich themselves and establish international business relations that strengthen the Chinese economy (Gillette 2000). But the Hui were not mere pawns of the Chinese government in controlling other Muslim groups; they sometimes jeopardized their relatively good relations with the government to collaborate with other Chinese Muslims in decrying insults to the Islamic faith. The first widely noted such instance in the modern era took place in 1989 when the Hui were instrumental in organizing 3,000 members of various Muslim nationalities to march on Tiananmen square protesting a book entitled *Sexual Customs* (*Xing Fengsu* 性风俗), which they found insulting to Islam (Alles et al 2003). The book attributed sexual symbolism to minarets, domes, and Islamic tombs and alleged that the hajj was an excuse for homosexual relations and sodomy with camels (Gladney 1991:3). Subsequent marches of 20,000 Muslims in Lanzhou 兰州, Gansu and 100,000 in Xining 西宁, Qinghai dwarfed the Beijing march. Though this movement roughly coincided with the Tiananmen Square democracy protests, the government response starkly differed. The Muslim protests received full government support complete with street closures, police escorts, and buses to local universities. The objectionable book was banned and publicly burned, the editors were fired, and the authors had to make public apologies. It is little surprise that the CCP was more willing to enact censorship than democratic reforms, but these protests marked the potential for Muslims to act as a united

social and political force (Gladney 1991:3-6). However, this unity between various Muslim nationalities would prove as fleeting and conditional as the government's toleration of mass protests.

The CCP's reaction to dissent was contingent not only on the issues being contested, but on the population doing the contesting, and where the contestation was taking place. When these same protests led to riots in Urumqi, the government declared martial law and arrested the instigators (Alles et al 2003:20). While there was an obvious escalation of civil unrest from organized protest to riot, this difference could also result from regionally disparate government postures. In 1993, when Hui and other Muslims managed to have a children's book banned for an insulting illustration of Muslims, protests were tolerated in numerous cities, but in Xining 西宁—home to numerous Muslim and other minorities and the onetime headquarters of Muslim warlord, Ma Qi—they encountered severe repression. Likewise, there were no private Islamic schools in this region, and the Chinese Islamic Association published the only Islamic publication in the province of Qinghai (Alles et al 2003:21). In general, the government met demands for respect of minority culture with conciliation, but separatism or violent factionalism was violently quashed and hidden from public view. Hundreds were incarcerated after a February 1997 uprising in Ili, and the People's Liberation Army intervened in violent clashes between Ningxia Sufis in 1994 (Gladney 2005:461-2). While it came as little surprise that the government would suppress such civil unrest; anecdotal accounts indicate that preemptive arrests may be a more insidious (and possibly more prevalent) means of control.

In general, ethnic separatism received little support from the Hui, and it would appear that the resurgence of religious practice resurrected sectarian conflicts rather than built support for notions of pan-Islamism (Alles et al 2003, Gladney 2003). While part of the Chinese Islamic Association's charter was to mediate conflict, it also became a locus for contention between Muslims. While individual sects could privately ignore the association's official pronouncements on doctrine or curriculum, Muslims were legally dependent on official permission to fulfill their duty to visit Mecca. Official pilgrims traveled for free, but privately funded hajjis also had to receive permission, which was denied to potentially subversive elements. However, the numbers of unofficial pilgrims who reached Mecca from Xinjiang via Pakistan or Turkey has been on the rise (over 50% of hajjis traveled without permission in 1993-95). But this was another source of tension, because the Hui lacked the geographic location or international connections to circumvent the bureaucracy with these "irregular pilgrimage routes" (Alles et al 2003). Even the hajj, which was generally perceived to unite Muslims of all stripes, also divided the Hui and the non-Hui Islamic communities through competition. The Hui generally perceived themselves as descendants of nomads, and they often traveled for religious and secular purposes, but aside from the contest for bureaucratic permissions, one might ask what this state of transience—actual or perceived—has had on various constructions of Hui identity.

Hui Mobility and the Formation of Trans-local Community

Although the Chinese government allowed growing numbers to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, the time, expense and bureaucratic manipulation required were still out of reach for most Chinese. The hajj provided some level of connection with the international umma, but religious travelers within China probably built stronger relations between various Hui groups than international bonds created through the hajj. Numerous Chinese Muslims made pilgrimages to sites such as the Sufi tomb complex in Linxia 临夏, Gansu as well as smaller, local tombs, but various tombs held different significance for different sects. To a Sufi, a tomb usually represented the founder or notable sage in a “saintly lineage” of spiritual masters, extending from the time of the prophet into the present. To a mainstream Gedimu Hui, the same tomb could serve as a representation of his or her own Islamic lineage (Gladney 1987:64-5). But the more strict Yihewani believers would only visit tombs “without names,” that is, those not dedicated to specific holy men and associated with certain menhuan (Gladney 2004:141). Though the specific tombs venerated might have varied between Hui communities, both practices of burying rather than cremating the dead and venerating rather than fearing gravesites distinguished Hui from Han. But as virtually any generalization about the Hui, the veneration of tombs was also the subject of dispute as some fundamentalist Yihewani sects condemn the practice altogether and other sects disagree on which tombs are worthy of veneration.

After Deng Xiaoping’s capitalist reforms, numerous studies examined the concept and application of *guanxi* 关系 (problematically translated as connections or social relations) among Chinese businesspeople, but virtually no studies were dedicated to the

role of such relations among coreligionists. Scattered throughout China, renowned for their business prowess and connected through a loosely defined ethnicity and various degrees of religious devotion, the Hui represented an excellent locus for such study, although there is no room for more than a passing consideration here. Jonathan Lipman's (1984:264) attempt to establish whether Islam in China was a "network society" or "patchwork society" provided a starting point for this discussion. He noted that shared categories of occupations, mobile religious persons such as pilgrims and itinerant ahong, and a Muslim identity endowed with requirements and practices that contrast with the dominant Han culture all tied China's diverse Muslims together. However, linguistic, regional and sectarian divisions prevented the complete unity among the Hui that its legal definition as a single nationality purported. But the social, economic and religious similarities brought disparate Hui communities together in an ongoing discussion about what it means to be Hui.

Historically, Hui people traveled for both secular and religious reasons, more typically around China but internationally as well, indicating an overlap between religious and commercial *guanxi*. While the requirement of all able-bodied Muslims to make a pilgrimage to Mecca is well known, it is doubtful that incorporating business into religious practice was the sole cause of a Hui tendency toward secular occupations involving travel. Pillsbury (1973:70) traced an alleged proclivity towards travel to the Hui's supposed Central Asian nomadic ancestry and noted that the literal meaning of the most prevalent Hui surname, Ma 马, "horse" was just as significant as its other meaning, Muhammad. Gladney (2004:310) proposed that transient occupations might have been a

necessary adaptation of the relatively marginal Hui living on the geographic or cultural fringe of China proper to make a living mediating between the Han and more peripheral minorities and nomadic peoples such as the Tibetans. Regardless of the historical and cultural reasons behind their tendency to travel, when Hui and other Muslims moved between communities their dietary restrictions drew them towards other Hui. Despite the enormous variety among various sects and regions, a common value placed on hospitality meant that a Chinese Muslim could find a home virtually anywhere in the vast country. As the popular saying Pillsbury (1973:77) related goes, “千里回回是一家” (For a thousand miles, all Hui are one family.” This broad notion of hospitality could create a sense of trans-local community, but encounters with Muslims from distant locales could also make regional differences more apparent.

Many Hui no longer professed a strong belief in Islam, and many foreign Muslim visitors considered the practice of most Chinese faithful to be lax, but traveling religious professionals could reinforce and invigorate religious practices among other Hui. Numerous sources agreed that Hui were more inclined to follow dietary restrictions when around other Hui, regardless of their usual practices. These travelers were often pilgrims or ahong, so they tended to carry with them a higher than average level of religious knowledge and fervor. As discussed above, young Muslim scholars traveled from communities throughout southwest China to study to become ahong at famous institutes of Islamic theology in Yunnan 云南. Graduates, hired on a short-term, contract basis, could tie the various communities they served together by spreading news of distant Islamic communities and developments in Islamic theory and practice (Pillsbury 1974,

Gladney 1991). While these preachers' ideas were most likely too diverse to spread theological homogeneity, they would disseminate news of various Muslim communities and their faith, practices, and hospitality.

While wandering religious scholars and pilgrims illustrate the devout side of Hui identity, the more prominent stereotype among the Han of an itinerant Hui was the shrewd trader, the fierce warrior or an unsavory combination of the two. This perception was based in the historic precedent where Northwest Muslims held "virtual monopolies" over certain trades including "muleteers, raft and boatmen, coolies and coolie foremen, innkeepers, carters, soldiers, bandits smugglers and even migrant laborers" (Lipman 1984:266). Lipman attributed success in these trades to an ability to make use of connections between various Muslim communities, whereas the Han would have to negotiate between regional prejudices and dialects. Of course, he made the questionable assumption that the value placed on hospitality was strong enough to transcend these factors that also separate different Hui groups. But the Hui bridged international divides in serving as ambassadors and intermediaries between the CCP and Islamic countries. Urban Hui were also put on display as well-furnished mosques are displayed to foreign dignitaries as symbols of China's eager embrace of Islamic culture. One could place Hui identity in a gray area between civilized center and foreign periphery, but even if such a simplistic dichotomy were accurate, there are too many shades of gray for this construction to be very useful.

One primary divide among the Hui was between urban and rural. Though Hui living in the western Islamic heartland long represented the stereotypical view of the

nationality, urban Hui were too numerous and too far removed geographically and culturally to consider the former as the normative variety. Pillsbury's (1973) analysis of the Hui refugees in Taiwan who reconstituted themselves into a Muslim community illustrates the adaptive and cohesive nature of Hui society independent of the traditional geographic and economic milieu. Like other people from the mainland who fled to Taiwan after the Communists won the civil war, the Hui settled wherever they could, believing their new homes to be temporary. However, as time progressed without a change in the political situation, they began to seek homes near mosques and close to other Hui. Living in clusters was common practice for Hui across China, but Pillsbury's study provides the unique opportunity to see the formation of such Muslim neighborhoods.

Pillsbury suggests that the Hui used an existing socio-religious network to help each other find homes closer to mosques and each other. But the more interesting argument is that these Hui were trying to recreate the communities that they had grown up in on the mainland. Rather than displaying a purely transient identity, the Hui émigrés exhibited attachment to their land and hometown in recreating familiar forms of social, religious and spatial organization (Pillsbury 1973:80-5). Though the Hui are a very mobile and adaptable population, their success is enabled by an ability to inhabit a facsimile of their hometown or neighborhood wherever they travel. Likewise, pilgrimage locations are simply grander versions of these same communities. Just as a mosque is the center of a Hui enclave, pilgrimage destinations in the Hui heartland are the center of Chinese Islam and Mecca is the great center of international Islam. But while the local

and global communities have one center, the national Hui community has many centers that often contend with each other to define Chinese Islamic orthodoxy and Hui identity.

Contesting Hui Identity

Hui from different communities share the pork taboo and certain religious rituals, and these similarities tend to draw them together. But even though value attached to hospitality may supercede divisions among individual Hui when they welcome fellow Muslim travelers into their homes, these scattered instances of interpersonal connections have little net impact in bridging sectarian and regional divides. Indeed, mobile Hui individuals, particularly among or religious scholars, allow the spread of ideas as well as acrimony resulting from attempts at reform and innovation. It may have been easier for Hui to envision themselves as homogenous, if they were not continually confronted with a wide variety of transient Hui. Yet in spite of the apparent difficulties of the nationality as a category, the Hui have insisted on retaining it. They resisted Nationalist attempts to assert that Hui were merely Muslim Han, and they subsequently embraced Communist categorization as a minority nationality. While the latter came with practical advantages, it also entailed a condescending connotation of primitivity and attempts to monitor and control Islamic practice and education.

However, the Communist notion of the Hui as an archaic nationality progressing into modernity creates a framework for an identity that is in constant flux. The Hui have transformed the customs the government views as quaint relics to be left behind into defining traits for various alternative visions of modernity. The continuation of this sort of variety among Hui communities belies the nominal homogeneity the government has imposed. This dichotomy leads scholars to speak of “cohesion and cleavage” (Pillsbury 1973) and “unity and fragmentation” (Alles et al 2003), but these two seemingly contradictory ideas are, in fact, complementary. An ongoing state of tension and dialogue

continually reproduces the notion of Hui identity within a loose framework of ethnic unity constructed by the state and other socio-economic forces.

Considering the history of sectarian and regional divisions among the Hui, it would be a mistake to place too much emphasis on trans-local unity. Nevertheless, virtually no Hui dispute the validity of *Hui* as an ethnic category. Indeed, the national Hui community, like the international *umma*, is arguably a form of imagined community with little prospect of actual unification into a uniform identity or cohesive network of local communities. As Talal Asad (2003:197) writes,

The Islamic *umma* in the classical theological view is thus not an imagined community on a par with the Arab nation waiting to be politically unified but a theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the disciplines of *din*¹⁵ in the world. Of course the word *umma* does also have the sense of a “people”—and “a community”—in the Qu’ran. But the members of every community imagine it to have a particular character, and relate to one another by virtue of it. The crucial point therefore is not that it is imagined but what is imagined predicates distinctive modes of being and acting.

The government’s legal definition of the Hui nationality and Hui perceptions of a sort of national Hui *umma* tie the various imaginings of Hui-ness together. These ideological formulations ratify the idea of the Hui as an identifiable category, but they do not definitively describe its content, nor do they require that the category be outlined with a single definition. Indeed, part of the practice of Islam involves a striving for authenticity and an ongoing debate about appropriate theology and practices. The overly broad definition of the Hui ensures fertile ground for these sorts of contention. The national Hui community is a microcosm of the global *umma* with niches for all of China’s diverse

¹⁵ Arabic for “religion,” as an all-encompassing “way of life”

brands of Islam, which allows for a broad array of religious expression while also preventing a high level of unity among Muslims, which the government fears could threaten its exclusive hold on power.

Indeed, the CCP's principle means of shaping Hui identity is through using Hui cadres in the Chinese Islamic Association to maintain the appearance of Muslim autonomy. This association generates a hegemonic discourse in tune with the official government line, but the various strains of Chinese Islam are fertile ground for counter-discourses. The need to negotiate between these different definitions forces Hui to tacitly acknowledge that their identity cannot be determined solely through government decree or claims to Islamic orthodoxy. Indeed, Hui religious and political movements draw inspiration from disparate sources in the Islamic world, from the Han kitab, or even from classical Chinese sources, all of which are far removed from the modern Chinese sociopolitical milieu.

Just as the process of formulating Hui identity cannot be reduced to a dialogue between a religious minority and the state, it would be too simplistic to characterize the Hui as a peripheral or frontier people whose identity is a simple function of their relation to Beijing or subordinate position between the Chinese center and the center of Islam in Mecca (Gillette 2000). Piscatori and Eickelman (1990) present a compelling challenge to this hierarchical approach. They observe that the Muslim world has long resisted the centralization of authority, but instead "there exist multiple linkages among the various ethnic, kinship-based, regional, and religious communities which do not arrange themselves into an agreed ranking or which do not allow the emergence of a code for

such a ranking” (1990:13). This characterization seems particularly appropriate to describe the loose connections that bind the Hui together independent of any legal distinctions. Of course, Mecca and Beijing each wield different forms of power in Hui communities, but this power is mediated at the local level and its meaning often is transformed without regard for the intentions of those in the power centers. Throughout history, Hui have returned from hajj carrying with them religious knowledge from the Islamic Holy Land, translating it into largely independent Sufi orders or reform movements such as the Yihewani. While Mecca is the undisputed center for spiritual power, the political center in Beijing exercises more direct political power. While the government uses forceful oppression when it is directly challenged, it more often exerts subtle influence through propaganda and bureaucracies such as the Chinese Islamic Association. Such government policies that construe minorities as primitive have led the Hui to invent their own visions of modernity (Gillette 2000). Hui are able to take advantage of malleable political and religious hegemonies to shape unique versions of Hui identity in various local worlds.

Conclusions: Implications of Hui Identity

As stated earlier, the Chinese have been reluctant to recognize new minority nationalities since the initial classification campaign in the 1950s. The Marxist ideological basis of this policy calls for minority nationalities to evolve under Han tutelage until they catch up with the cultural level of the Han (Caffrey 2004). However, Hui often construe themselves as more advanced than the Han; the term *qingzhen* 清真 (halal) literally means “clean and pure,” and they use it to describe not just their food and restaurants, but the Hui way of life in general. Hui also portray Islamic customs and morality as more modern and scientific than Han culture (Gillette 2000). Some Hui construe actual or perceived international connections within the Hui community, particularly with wealthy Middle Eastern nations, as proof of their greater capacity for modernization. Hui often buy Arab or other foreign-style products, rebuild their mosques with Arab-influenced architecture, and attempt to consume on a par with affluent foreign tourists as proof of their modern identity (Gillette 2000:231). These practices observed in contemporary Xi’an may be more prominent among urban Hui, but consumption of Islamic foods and clothing plays a role in displaying Hui identity throughout China. While the government supports consumption practices that are in accordance its economic and political goals, Hui become suspect if they conflate modernization with Arabization (Gillette 234-6). The government encourages Muslims to glorify China through building international relations with Islamic countries, but Muslims cross the line when they seek to emulate those foreign locales.

The Hui represent an extreme case of ambiguous ethno-religious identity, but the contentious process by which it is forged may be applicable to the study of other ethnic

and religious minorities. Many diverse nations categorize people by ethnicity or religion, reinforcing the illusion that these are static categories. Inter-marriage, syncretism, sectarian factionalism, and transnational as well as regionally specific notions of identity, simultaneously blur boundaries between—and create new distinctions within—previously defined categories. Indeed, a group of people sharing notions of commonality such as a shared history or religion, which contrasts with the majority, may be the fundamental prerequisite for forming group identity. Of course, one commonality does not create actual homogeneity, but the majority tends to construct minority identity around the least familiar or most visible, and therefore, most readily recognizable attribute(s). Thus, outsiders establish a loose framework for minority identity centered on areas of majority ignorance and minority expertise, leaving the latter to continually struggle with the former's often ill-conceived category. This notion of difference precludes assimilation, and minority status may make outright rejection of an imposed categorization difficult. The path of least resistance is to embrace and transform the imposed minority identity, but there is no reason to expect a uniform strategy from such a vaguely constructed group. Contention over minority identity is more likely the rule than an exception. Over time, this process can mold an arbitrary categorization into a semblance of ethnic identity, problematic and divisive as it may be.

Indeed, the Hui are an excellent locus for the study of the contentious process of identity formation. Islam is flourishing amid the current Chinese economic boom and the corresponding increase in international exchange and funding for Chinese mosques. But it is unknown whether this general openness and prosperity will mend or exacerbate tensions within the Hui community. Interviewing a new generation of Hui could reveal

whether a shared history is what is most salient in sustaining identity for an increasingly forward-looking Hui population. Examining the role of the Chinese Islamic Association in guiding Islamic education and orthodoxy could test the above arguments alleging relative primacy of Hui agency over government hegemony in establishing Hui identity. Also, further study could reveal how the Hui combine and transform Islamic and Chinese government conceptions of modernity or how they develop their own unique constructions. The Hui see themselves as one group with a more or less common ancestry, but they are constantly debating exactly what defines who they are today and what they will become in the future. This divergence and discord does not threaten the perpetuation of Hui identity; by the very act of discussing a collective present and future—even in the midst of vehement disagreement—the Hui continue to reconstitute and redefine themselves as a dynamic, collective entity.

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