

Others

18

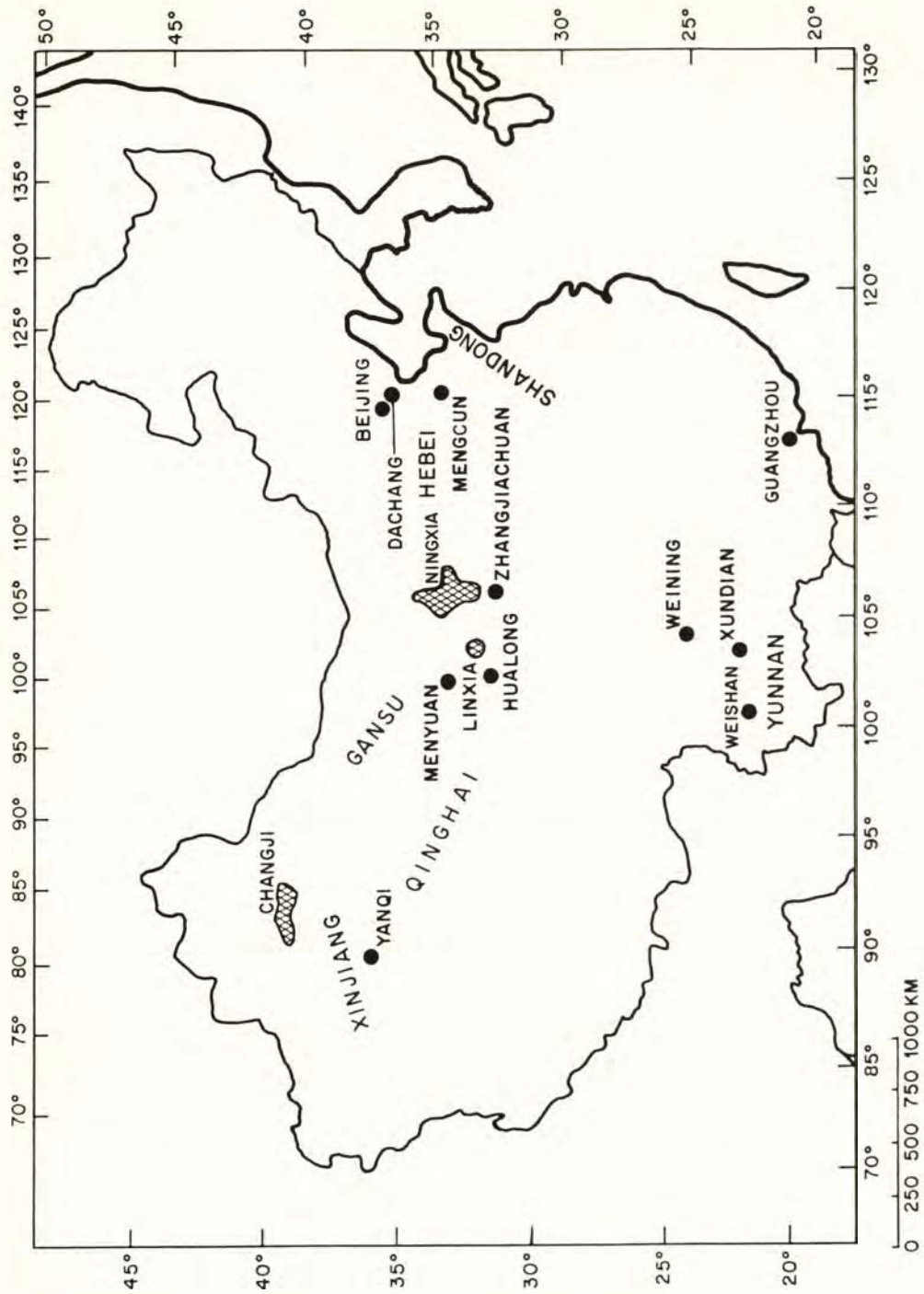
Hui

Size and Location

Like the Manchus, the Hui 回 can be found in virtually all parts of China. Most counties and cities have at least some Hui among them. Their numbers have increased from about four million in 1959¹ to 7,219,352 in 1982.² Larger concentrations of Hui are located in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Henan, Hebei, Shandong, Yunnan, and Xinjiang.³ The largest of the various Hui autonomous areas is the Ningxia autonomous region. Others are Linxia 临夏 prefecture and Zhangjiachuan 张家川 county in Gansu, Hualong 化隆 and Menyuan 门源 counties in Qinghai, Dachang 大厂 and Mengeun 孟村 counties in Hebei, Xundian 寻甸 and Weishan 巍山 (jointly with Yi) counties in Yunnan, Weining 威宁 (jointly with Yi and Miao) county in Guizhou, and Changji 昌吉 prefecture and Yanqi 焉耆 county in Xinjiang (see Map 18).

History⁴

The history of the Hui in China can be said to begin in the mid-seventh century when Arab and Persian merchants went to China and settled down in cities like Guangzhou (Canton), Quanzhou 泉州, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou 扬州. There they traded in ivory, jade and other precious commodities. Their prosperity resulted in sizeable communities which, however, did not intermarry with the native Chinese population. Until the mid-thirteenth century, when these merchants, called fanke 蕃客 by the Chinese, were



Map 18. Hui

believed to number as many as 100,000, they essentially formed foreign enclaves in several port cities in Southern China.

A far more numerous and important group of Central Asians arrived in China in the early thirteenth century. From 1219, when Chinggis Khan launched his western campaign, until the capture of Bagdad in 1258 the Mongols conquered vast regions of West Asia which were largely inhabited by Muslims. Tens of thousands of them were sent eastward to China, mostly as soldiers and civil servants. The Central Asians participated as cavalry units, called tanma chijun 探马赤军 in Chinese records, in the final assault and conquest of the Chinese rump state of Southern Song. After the latter's defeat in 1273 most Central Asian soldiers were released from military service and took up farming. Most of these demobilized soldiers probably intermarried with Chinese and were gradually absorbed into Chinese culture.

A smaller group of Central Asians, however, continued to serve the Mongols in China as residents of military colonies (duntian 屯田) whose task was to reclaim wasteland. There were four regions in which important reclamation centers were established. In the Northwest Central Asian military colonists, called Huihui in official records, opened up several areas around Liupan-shan 六盘山 in Ningxia and Hexi and Wutiaohe 五条河 in Kansu while others were active in Shaanxi and modern Xinjiang, especially in Foukang 阜康 county. During the Yuan dynasty the son of the Huihui administrator Saidianchi Shansidin (1211-1279), named Nasradin, divided his numerous sons and grandsons into four families with the names Na, Su, La, and Ding (after the Chinese transliteration of his name). These later developed into separate clans. The Na family established itself in Ningxia, while the La family concentrated in the Chang'an area.

A second important settlement area of Muslim reclamation troops were in the Kunming and Dali areas of Yunnan where, in cooperation with the indigenous population, they created six major irrigation works. Other Muslim reclamation centers were in Henan and Shandong; for example, in 1281 Hubilai ordered a Huihui camp established in the Kaifeng region. Finally, Southern China also had its share of Muslim reclamationists.

Although far fewer than the soldiers, Muslim artisans also were sent to China. As early as 1220, right after the fall of Samarkand, Chinggis Khan is said to have selected as many as 30,000 Muslim artisans to be sent eastward. Muslim intellectuals going to China included astronomers, mathematicians, physicians, pharmacologists, and civil servants. Quite a few of them achieved positions of influence during the time of the Yuan dynasty.

The period of the Mongol occupation, after 1260 called the Yuan dynasty, may be considered the formative stage of the Hui nationality. Its members were not yet a distinct nationality, but some of the features of the present Hui can already be discerned at that time. These people, who either themselves or whose

ancestors had come from various parts of West and Central Asia, began to marry Chinese women. They also began to speak Chinese, first as a supplement to their native languages, then after several generations, exclusively. At the same time they retained their religion and, at least some of them, resided in compact separate districts within cities or in their own villages.

These trends continued during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) when more Huihui communities arose in Ningxia, Gansu, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Zhejiang and elsewhere. Their inhabitants were Huihui who had served the Mongols as soldiers and officials and who, after the Mongols' retreat from China in 1368, turned to farming or occupations in the cities. In the countryside Huihui remained within their own villages, taking in Chinese wives who in time would be converted to Islam while, at the same time, accelerate the sinification of their families' secular customs and habits. In the cities Huihui concentrated in specific occupations such as butchering and tile making while they practiced in well-defined compact districts. Another factor, new in the Ming dynasty, that aided in the process of creating a nationality was the mingling of Huihui from various origins in these rural and urban communities. During the Mongol period, each community was often entirely composed of people sharing a common descent from the same home region in Central Asia and sometimes even the same lineage. Beginning in the Ming period, however, Huihui communities took in or were formed by people of widely different backgrounds but who shared their foreign origin and their religion.

Most importantly, the meaning of Huihui changed. During the Yuan dynasty, it was a term used by the Mongols to designate all non-Chinese who had originally come from West and Central Asia. During the Ming dynasty these people began to refer to themselves in their private writings as Huihui. It was a clear sign that the Huihui had begun to identify themselves as members of a group, something one might call a proto-nationality, which transcended their various geographical and family backgrounds while collectively distinguishing itself from the Han majority.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), Hui communities staged several major uprisings, the most notable ones taking place in the 1860s and 1870s in Yunnan and Shaanxi provinces. This tradition of resistance against Chinese central governments continued into the twentieth century when for about forty years the clan of Mao Bufang 马步芳 maintained a largely autonomous government in Qinghai province, complete with its own military forces.⁵ Other Hui leaders in Gansu, Ningxia, and Xinjiang provinces also maintained a degree of local independence for various lengths of time.

Language and Literature

At the time of their eastward migration (see preceding section), the Hui

still spoke Arabic and Persian,⁶ but soon after settling in China, they completely adopted the Chinese language. No Hui community anywhere in China currently speaks its own separate language, although one can, of course, distinguish a number of local Chinese dialects among them.

Literary production among the Hui of Northern China has been slim during this century. At present only a few Hui writers have come to the attention of the general reading public. Perhaps the most notable representative of Hui literature is Gao Shan, born in 1935 and resident in Ningxia, who writes poems and short stories.⁷ Others include the fifty-four year old Bai Chongyi, an editor and reporter in Xinjiang, who writes short stories, Ma Zhiyao of Ningxia, Mali of Jilin, and Zhang Chengzhi of Beijing. They are all essayists.

Society

Among the Hui in Ningxia as well as those in some parts of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, there are quite a few farmers. Most Hui, however, have been city dwellers for generations. They are mostly shopkeepers and artisans and, increasingly since the 1950s, factory workers and civil servants. Before the advent of higher hygienic standards, Hui butchers in the cities had earned the reputation of selling the best and cleanest meat.

Hui clothing is virtually identical to that of the Han, except for their white (and occasionally black) round visorless caps (see Illustration 37). The Hui diet consists of rice and flour as staples, admixed with beef and mutton. There is a religious taboo on pork as well as on the meat of horses, donkeys, mules and all wild animals. The Hui are also prohibited from consuming animal blood and the meat of animals dead of natural causes.

Their traditional method of interment is to wrap the corpse in a shroud and to bury it without the use of a coffin.⁸

Religion

The Hui, who are frequently called Chinese Muslims by foreigners, are believers in Islam. For generations the center of all public social life in a Hui community has been the mosque. While some Hui belong to other sects, the great majority of them have been members of the Sunni sect.⁹

Recent Developments

Since many Hui live in relatively compact communities, a sizeable number of autonomous areas have been created for them. There are no less than twelve at the county level and above. Most of them were established in the early 1950s, as follows: Zhangjiachuan (seat at Zhangchuan) on July 6, 1953,¹⁰ Menyuan (seat



Illus. 37. Hui Man and Woman

at Haomen) on December 19, 1953, Hualong (seat at Bayan) on March 1, 1954, Yanqi on March 15, 1954, Changji on July 15, 1954, Weining (seat at Chengguan) on November 11, 1954, Mengcun on November 30, 1955, Dachang on December 7, 1955, Weishan (seat at Weicheng) on November 9, 1956, Linxia on November 19, 1956, and Ningxia (seat at Yinchuan) on October 25, 1958. Since the end of the so-called cultural revolution, one more autonomous area has been added in Xundian (seat at Rende) on December 20, 1979.

The largest of these Hui autonomous areas, the province of Ningxia, officially called an autonomous region, has undergone considerable development during the past three decades. One can find in the capital, Yinchuan, and several other cities many factories producing coking coal, electricity, iron and steel, consumer items, petroleum products, and electronic machinery. These industries currently employ about 44,200 workers.

Education, too, has made great strides, with schools now operating everywhere in Ningxia. School enrollment, however, has reached eighty percent in only one county and is considerably lower elsewhere. In addition to particular local causes, this relatively low enrollment record is mainly due to the Hui's traditional reluctance, now weakening, to send girls to school. Ningxia has a university, a medical school, and an agricultural college.¹¹

Notes

¹Jiankuang, v. 5, 1.

²Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80.

³There were 570,788 Hui residing in Xinjiang. See Minzu tuanjie 150 (1983), 10.

⁴The most comprehensive description of the Hui nationality's history is Huizu jianshi, 5-33. See also Jiankuang, v. 5, 1-2 and Zhongguo, 23-125.

⁵A detailed description of this clan's activities can be found in Ma Bufang jiazuo tongzhi Qinghai sishinian. See the general section of the bibliography.

⁶Zhongguo, 125.

⁷See the article about him by Tong Mingguang in the bibliography.

⁸Huizu jianshi, 3.

⁹Zhongguo, 125.

¹⁰Unless otherwise noted, the name of the government seat is the same as that of the autonomous area.

¹¹For more details on recent developments, see Zhongguo, 135-138.