

RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY IN INNER MONGOLIA AND NINGXIA

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One of the major developments throughout most of the globe during the 1970s and 1980s has been the strengthening of religions, especially Islam. The fall of the shah of Iran resulted in a strongly Islamic regime which, although somewhat milder in form since the June 1989 death of the Ayatollah Khomeini, shows no signs of weakening, let alone collapsing. Countries formerly ruled by Marxist-Leninist parties have in all but a few cases seen their socialist systems overthrown, with socialist ideology being to a substantial extent replaced by religious. In China, which remains one of the few countries with a Marxist-Leninist party in control, religions have also become more influential, especially in certain of the minority areas. Tibet is a spectacular example of this, but, as in the world as a whole, Islam has been notable for its growing strength.

Sociologists and other theoreticians have wondered for some time just what impact religion produces on economic growth. In his *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism), first published in 1904-1905, Max Weber (1864-1920) connected Protestantism in Europe with the rise of capitalism. The high status accorded to labor and profit by the Protestant churches, especially Calvinism, had greater potential to lead to capitalism than the Catholic church, with its stronger focus on the next world and condemnation of profit. Weber was impressed by the work ethic spawned by Protestantism, coupled with a drive to accumulate savings which could contribute to further investment.

Certainly, nobody can doubt that, among the most successful industrial powers, the earliest showed more adherence to Protestant Christianity than to other forms of religion. But this does not need to be the case during all stages of history. The rise of the East Asian

economies in the last decade and more might point towards a different conclusion. The "work ethic" may be as easily attributable to secular ideologies.

In most parts of the formerly socialist world, Marxism-Leninism has shown itself a poor prescription for economic growth, despite the scientific rationalism which it claims to enshrine. Up to the early 1990s, China appears on the whole to be an exception. Its economy has been growing rapidly since the period of reform began in 1978. Even the crisis of 1989, which many believed would produce a devastating effect on the economy, has not resulted in any major slowdown, and as of the beginning of 1993 the rise appears to be faster than ever.

This essay seeks to analyze the recent development of religion in two parts of China, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia [宁夏], where there are, in terms of minorities, respective concentrations of Mongols and Muslim Hui [回] peoples. Although the focus is on the 1980s and early 1990s, that being the period when Deng Xiaoping [邓小平] was the effective supreme ruler of China, it is not sensible to ignore the more distant past altogether, since the impact of history on any contemporary situation is substantial. One of the aims of this essay is to shed light on the relationship between religion and economic development in those two regions.

My sources are primarily two research visits to Inner Mongolia and Ningxia in the autumn of 1990 and again in November and December 1992. The second visit, altogether just under a month, was longer, more focussed and more successful than the first. It was undertaken as part of a joint research project with the Nationalities Economic Research Institute (Minzu jingji yanjiu suo [民族经济研究所]) of the Central Institute for Nationalities (Zhongyang minzu xueyuan [中央民族学院]) in Beijing. I should like to express my gratitude for this research trip both to the Australian Research Council, which gave me a grant to undertake it, and to the Nationalities Economic Research Institute, two of the scholars of which accompanied me and contributed greatly with their company, knowledge and ideas, although I alone take responsibility for the content of the present article. One of the advantages of this and other research trips in China is that they yield written materials concerning the situation in China. The Chinese themselves, including those of all nationalities, have undertaken an enormous quantity of research on the minorities and, while it is not all of equal value, it includes a

great many statistics and data, as well as new and interesting insights. Some of this material has proved useful for the present study.

Some Population Data

The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region was established formally in May 1947, the only one of the five autonomous regions to predate the PRC itself. The most important of the minorities of Inner Mongolia is the Mongols. Others include the Daurs, Ewenkis and Oroqens.

The trend between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth had been for the Mongol population to fall, but for Han immigration to gather momentum. As the nineteenth century dawned, the Mongol population of Inner Mongolia was just over one million, but there were only about 835,000 Mongols in 1949.¹ There were a number of reasons for this long-term decline in the Mongol population, including the large number of people in the monastic order, poor levels of hygiene and general economic decline. The British military diplomat, Lieutenant-Colonel P.T. Etherton, noting that at least 45 percent of men were in the monasteries, concluded that the Chinese government fostered lama Buddhism "as the best means to restrict the population and so avert the possible resuscitation of the Mongol race."² On the other hand, Chinese social scientists of the time worried about the effects of lama Buddhism on demography in regions like Mongolia and Tibet, believing population decline in border areas to lay China open to aggression.³

Han immigration into Inner Mongolia began in the eighteenth century and has grown in scope since then. From a parity with the Mongols, about one million people, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of Han in Inner Mongolia rose to 1.55 million by 1912. It continued to grow during the Republican period, reaching 5,154,000 out of a total of 6,081,000 inhabitants of Inner

¹ Song Naigong [宋乃工], et al. (eds.), *Zhongguo renkou, Nei Menggu fence* [中国人口内蒙古分册] (Beijing: Chinese Finance and Economics Press, 1987), 50-2.

² P.T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1926), 202-3.

³ For instance, see Zhang Hanguang [张汉光], "Woguo bianjiang renkou wenti zhi tichu" [我国边疆人口问题之提出], *Bianzheng gonglun* [边政公论], I, 3-4 (10 November 1941), 112, 121-2, 129.

Mongolia in 1949, the Han thus making up 84.8 percent of the total.⁴

According to the 1982 census, the number of Mongols in Inner Mongolia was 2,489,378, and of Han [汉] 16,277,616, in a total population of 19,274,281, making the Mongols only 12.9 percent, with the Han 84.5 percent.⁵ Comparable figures from the 1990 census showed 3,375,230 Mongols of the total 21,456,798 people in Inner Mongolia, or 15.7 percent, with the Han comprising 17,298,722, or 80.6 percent.⁶ In other words, the proportion of Mongols rose while that of Han fell over the eight years from 1982 to 1990.

While the absolute number both of Mongols and of Han in Inner Mongolia has risen greatly since 1949, the proportion of Han has actually fallen slightly under the People's Republic of China (PRC) but remains high. Despite the low proportion of Mongols in Inner Mongolia, there are far more Mongols there not only than in any other part of China, but even than in the State of Mongolia. This country, which replaced the Mongolian People's Republic in October 1991, had a total population of 2.2 million in the same year.⁷

In the last century or so of the Qing dynasty, the population of Ningxia tended to fall, but during the Republican period the trend until the mid-1930s was reversed, but with further falls after that. In 1909, the total population was about half a million, but in 1947 it reached 1.12 million. In the south, where the main concentrations of Hui people were, the population was rather stable in the first half of the century, the main increases all being in the north. As a result, the proportion of Hui in the whole province tended to fall, being just over a quarter, or in absolute terms about 300,000, in 1947.⁸

⁴ Song, *et al.*, (eds.), *Zhongguo renkou, Nei Menggu fence*, 55-6, 62.

⁵ Population Statistical Office of the State Statistical Bureau, *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian* [中国人口统计年鉴] *China Population Statistics Yearbook 1988* (Beijing: Zhangwang Press, 1988), 546.

⁶ Population Statistical Office of the State Statistical Bureau, *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian. China Population Statistics Yearbook 1990* (Beijing: Science and Technology Documents Press, 1991), 78.

⁷ See *Asia 1992 Yearbook* (Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review, 1992), 6-7.

⁸ See the account in Chang Naiguang [常乃光] *et al.* (eds.), *Zhongguo renkou, Ningxia fence* [中国人口宁夏分册] (Beijing: Zhongguo caizheng jingji chubanshe, 1988), 51-61.

The PRC's 1982 census found the population of Ningxia to be 3,895,576, of whom the Han were 2,651,336, or 68.1 percent and the Hui 1,235,182, that is, 31.7 percent.⁹ According to the 1990 census, the population had risen to 4,655,451 among whom 3,107,370 were Han, or 66.7 percent and 1,524,448 belonged to the Hui nationality, that is 32.7 percent. The growth rates of the population between the two censuses were 17.2 percent for the Han and 23.4 percent for the Hui. Ningxia is currently home to about 17.7 percent of all the 8,602,978 Hui people of China,¹⁰ who, however, live in virtually all parts of the country. The number of Hui in Ningxia is not as great as that of Mongols in Inner Mongolia, but the proportion of Hui to the total population is greater in Ningxia than of Mongols in Inner Mongolia. Ningxia did not come into existence as a province until 1929. The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was formally established in October 1958.

The rise in the proportion of Hui in Ningxia shows a parallel with that of Mongols in Inner Mongolia. One of the reasons is that neither Mongols nor Hui have been as constricted by the one-child-per-couple policy as the Han. However, there has also been a considerable amount of re-registration since the early 1980s. This trend towards reregistration suggests a heightened feeling of identity among the minorities in the 1980s, as well as a favourable response to government policy. Quite a few people who previously thought it wise to register themselves as Han now see advantages in being regarded as members of a minority.¹¹

Historical Background

Although the Hui are not the only Muslim nationality in China, they are the most populous. Moreover, their single most important characteristic is their belief in Islam. Several sects have developed over the centuries, among which debate and rivalry can be intense enough to cause social disturbances.

The Muslim community originated in the area now known as Ningxia in the thirteenth century, when Central Asians in the service of the Mongol rulers of China went there as residents of military

⁹ *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian* 1988, 546.

¹⁰ *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian* 1990, 78.

¹¹ For further discussion of population issues among the minorities in general under the PRC, see Colin Mackerras, *Integration and Modernization, The Evolution of China's Minority Nationalities in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994), Chapter 9.

colonies with the task of reclaiming wasteland. These communities stayed on after the Mongols were defeated, and turned to farming or urban activities.¹² The Hui people have always been noted for their commercial skills. They became shopkeepers, butchers and traders. One major PRC scholar claims that, down to the middle of the present century, they played a significant role in China's economic history, particularly by "pushing forward China's commodity production from the lower-stage to the higher-stage development."¹³

During early Qing there occurred a very substantial further opening up of land in Ningxia. In 1721 the Kangxi [康熙] Emperor issued an edict by which the pastoral Mongolians in northern Ningxia were moved to the east of the Yellow River, and their land reclaimed for agriculture. Over the following decades many Han immigrant farmers moved to the area, which resulted in growth of the population and expansion of the agricultural economy.

The nineteenth century saw a major decline in the economy of Ningxia, as in that of the rest of China. This was the period when Ningxia's largest Hui rebellion took place. Centered in Jinjibao [金积堡], very near Wuzhong [吴忠], itself south of the Ningxia capital Yinchuan [银川], the rebellion shook much of China's northwest in the 1860s and early 1870s. Its defeat resulted in large-scale massacres of the Hui population of Ningxia and "the essential distribution of the Ningxia's current Hui population distribution takes its pattern from that time."¹⁴

Right down to the middle of the twentieth century, Islam remained extremely strong among the Hui people of Ningxia, both politically and socially. The ahongs [阿訇] retained their authority within their communities, while the people generally maintained their strictness in religious taboos, such as those on eating pork, drinking alcoholic beverages or smoking, and the fasting month of Ramadan was universally observed. By the 1940s, relations between Hui and Han had improved to the point where the villages lacked serious

¹² Henry G. Schwarz, *The Minorities of Northern China, A Survey* (Bellingham: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 1984), 201-2.

¹³ Lai Cunli [赖存理] *Huizu shangye shi* [回族商业史] (Beijing: Chinese Commerce Press, 1988), 311.

¹⁴ Bai Lichen [白立忱] *et al.*, *Ningxia quqing* [宁夏区情] (Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press, 1988), 8. See also Chang *et al.*, *Zhongguo renkou, Ningxia fence*, 59.

ethnic communalism or friction.¹⁵ When the Chinese Communist Party set up its first minority autonomous government in October 1936, the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Yuhai [豫海] County Hui Autonomous Government, it chose the Great Tongxin [同心] Mosque in Tongxin, which dates from the Wanli [万历] period (1573-1620), as the site for the ceremony and meeting.

When the CCP came to power in 1949, it regarded Islam as a religion to try to win over to its side. One of the reasons for this was the PRC's attempt to form a united front against imperialism with some of the world's major Muslim countries of the time, such as Indonesia, Pakistan and most of those in North Africa and Western Asia. During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, however, the Islamic Hui of Ningxia suffered persecution, just like all other religious adherents in the PRC, although, with the possible exception of Tibetan Buddhists, resistance was fiercer and more persistent from Muslims than from other believers.

The Mongols are lama Buddhist by religion. In 1578, just outside Lhasa, there was a meeting between the Mongol chief Altan Khan and the Tibetan head of the Drepung Monastery. This produced an enormous effect on Altan Khan and encouraged him to speed forward the conversion of his people to the religion which the Tibetans had already espoused for centuries. Just as in Tibet, lama Buddhism exercised a profound influence over the Mongols, both of northern and southern Mongolia. During the Qing dynasty, when all Mongolia was absorbed into the Chinese Empire, the government adopted a policy by which lamas and monks were exempt both from corvée labor and conscription into the military. The high lamas enjoyed a range of privileges and became very powerful politically. As seen earlier from Lieutenant-Colonel Etherton's remarks, the number of males in the monasteries was extremely high. In some places up to 50 percent, and in general 30 or even 40 percent of the total male population belonged to the clerical order. Ordinary people were firm believers in lama Buddhism, so it was necessary for each family to dedicate at least one son to monastic life. What this meant was that many women remained unmarried while many men had more than one wife. However, in contrast to the Tibetans, the Mongols never practiced polyandry.

¹⁵ A. Doak Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 182-4.

Despite its effects on Inner Mongolia's population, Mongolian Buddhism declined steadily during the nineteenth century and, until the 1980s, even more rapidly during the twentieth century. The Mongolian People's Republic was established in 1924 and its regime was extremely hostile to Buddhism, though in its twilight days, the government changed policy drastically. Its successor State of Mongolia has encouraged the incipient revival of religion to gather momentum.

The Xing'an [兴安] provinces of the Japanese puppet state of Manchuria (1932-1945) belonged to the area now known as Inner Mongolia and were Mongolian areas. The Japanese followed a policy of contempt for but relative non-intervention towards lama Buddhism. Their troops also occupied other areas of what is today Inner Mongolia. Japanese occupation and Han immigration and land takeover, along with population falls and general Mongolian cultural decline, were factors affecting Buddhism adversely during the Republican period.

Under the PRC, lama Buddhism was initially treated quite well as a relic of Mongolian culture. At the same time, firm steps were taken to prevent too many boys or young men from entering the monasteries. The new education system was very hostile both to monastic life and to Buddhism itself. During the Cultural Revolution years of 1966 to 1976, the situation worsened. Government fiat and red guards collaborated to close virtually all monasteries--even destroying quite a few--and sending monks and lamas away for labor. Although Buddhist monks and lamas are traditionally celibate, many were compelled to marry.

In an interview with a very old lama at the famous Wudang zhao [武当召] near Baotou [包头], which is currently by far the largest lamaserie in Inner Mongolia, I asked for a comparison between the years of Japanese occupation and the Cultural Revolution. The most striking difference he found for comment was the large number of monks in the old days, whereas only those pretending to be workers could stay on during the Cultural Revolution. The old lama recalled that a few Japanese had joined the monastery pretending to be lamas, but were suspected by the Mongolian monks of being spies. He added, however, that there were no major contradictions between the Japanese and the local monks. This was in sharp contrast to the Cultural Revolution, when monks and even the Living Buddha were abused as reactionaries, forced to

marry and sent away from the monastery. Although he did not spell out the comparison, he left me with the strong impression that the Japanese occupation had been infinitely preferable to the Cultural Revolution.

The General Situation For Religion Since The Late 1970s

The CCP's policy on religion at present is religious tolerance and freedom. However, it also attempts to control religion as far as it can through religious organizations which it tries to keep loyal to itself. During a major meeting on January 30, 1991, which CCP Secretary-General Jiang Zemin [江泽民] held with the leaders of five CCP-sponsored religious organizations (those for Buddhism, non-Catholic Christianity, Catholicism, Daoism and Islam), Jiang promised freedom of religion and declared, in the summary of one official account, that "the proper handling of religious issues was a significant part of the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics." For their part, the religious leaders declared their willingness "to contribute to socialist construction under the leadership of the Communist Party."¹⁶

In the 1980s religion has revived to some extent in Inner Mongolia. Some of the formerly closed monasteries reopened and in November 1992 the Head of the Religion Bureau in Hohhot told me that there were some 100 functioning temples and monasteries in Inner Mongolia, with the government allocating substantial funds to the task of reconstruction. There were about 5,000 monks and lamas, and 54 Living Buddhas. He said that although many Mongols still believe in lama Buddhism, it is impossible to estimate precisely how many, because some Mongols might believe one day and even kowtow, but then not believe the next day. However, one does not see in Inner Mongolia the signs of religious belief which cannot avoid impressing any visitor to Tibet.¹⁷ By comparison, there are very few pilgrims or worshippers in the Mongolian monasteries. Although the monasteries are very much better kept, they lack the vibrant spiritual atmosphere of their Tibetan counterparts.

The situation for religion is considerably stronger in Ningxia than in Inner Mongolia. A leader of the Ningxia Branch of the Chinese Islamic Association (Zhongguo Yisilanjiao xiehui [中国伊斯兰

¹⁶ *Beijing Review* XXXIV, 6 (11-17 February 1991), 4.

¹⁷ This writer visited Tibet in September and October 1985 and again in August and September 1990.

教协会)], formally set up in May 1953,¹⁸ told me in Yinchuan in November 1992 that there were at that time over 2,700 mosques in Ningxia and over 3,600 imams or ahongs, with 6,700 or so students studying to become ahongs. A compendium on Ningxia dated July 1988 states that the "current" number of mosques at that time was just over 1,800 with some 1,900 ahongs and 3,900 trainees.¹⁹ What this suggests is a quite rapidly expanding Islamic clergy. Driving from Wuzhong to Tongxin, I was impressed by the number of new mosques either just built or under construction, and by the fact that the mosque was usually the finest building in its village.

An Islamic leader I interviewed in November 1992 told me he estimated that about 6 to 10 percent of the total Hui or Muslim population go to the mosque to pray five times a day, and about 20 to 30 percent go every Friday. He said that not many women go to the mosque but instead pray at home, and acknowledged that the average age of those who go to the mosque for prayer is quite high. Inquiries at several mosques in three parts of Ningxia suggest that these figures are a vast exaggeration. In a famous ancient mosque in Najiahu [纳家户], very near Wuzhong, I was told that about 200 people, almost all men, come to pray at the mosque five times a day, which might be 2 percent of the adult male population of this exclusively Hui village. In December 1992, I happened to be at the mosque as men were coming for prayer on Friday. The number of worshippers was substantial, but what struck me most strongly was the rather small number of young men, with the majority being at least in their forties. In 1990 I had visited the mosque during Friday prayers. Not being Muslim myself I was not allowed to enter the prayer-hall, but only to look in briefly. There were a few women at the back and on the side, and the total number of worshippers was several hundred. Islam is said to be strongest in the remote villages of southern Ningxia. It is possible that the proportion of adult male Hui who pray five times a day at the mosque in that region is as high as 6 percent, but as a figure for all Ningxia that is far too high.

¹⁸ See *Zhongguo da baike quanshu, zongjiao* [中国大百科全书宗教] (Beijing, Shanghai: Chinese Encyclopedia Press, 1988), 552.

¹⁹ Bai *et al.*, comp., *Ningxia quqing*, 40.

Religious Education

One of the most important issues for religions with strong clergies, which would include both lama Buddhism and Islam, is how the next generation of monks, lamas and imams is to be recruited and trained. In Inner Mongolia, provisions for such recruitment and training are much weaker and restrictions much stronger than in Ningxia.

In Inner Mongolia, in the capital Hohhot, there is one government-approved school with the task of training the next generation of monks and lamas, the Inner Mongolian Buddhist School. It had about thirty students in 1992, who undertook a three-year course to train them for life in the monasteries. The main aim of the school, according to two Living Buddhas whom I interviewed in Hohhot, is to try and create a better Buddhism through training lamas of a better quality. The curriculum consists of Mongolian, Chinese and Tibetan languages, and is geared to enable the students to understand the Buddhist sutras, the history of Buddhism and theology. Although students had normally already gone through the standard Chinese school system before being allowed to train for the monastic order, the Buddhist school also includes in its curriculum such subjects as history, politics, and, since the early 1990s, painting.

The Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia is not enthusiastic about having too many people in the monasteries. The secular education system certainly remains hostile, and before any young man is allowed to become a monk or lama three sets of approvals are necessary: from the young man concerned, from his parents and from his local government, usually from the *xiang* [乡] where he lives. The reason for this procedure is to prevent the kind of compulsion which was so characteristic of the old days, when children were sent off to monastic life in large numbers, hardly aware of what was happening to them.

In Ningxia the training of imams is very much better organized and pervasive than in Inner Mongolia. Since 1958, with a break during the Cultural Revolution when the system collapsed, there has been a nationwide educational standard level required for imams. Determined by the Chinese Islamic Association and measured by examinations, the aim of the level is to make sure that ahongs know the Koran and Islamic doctrine properly. It is the Islamic Association itself which sets and marks the regular examinations.

Attached to the great majority of mosques is a Chinese-Arabic School (Zhongna xuexiao [中阿学校]), with the function of training boys and young men to become *ahongs* and teaching them Arabic, the Koran and Islamic doctrine. The Great Tongxin Mosque in Tongxin, which I found generally typical of those I visited or learned about in December 1992, had over twenty students at the time of my visit. They all lived at the school, and paid for board and food, but not tuition, which was free. Those few who were married saw their families only from time to time, since there are no provisions for boarding women or children. There is no set time for the course, since the time taken to reach the necessary standard may vary from person to person.

By far the largest educational institution in Ningxia for training imams is the Islamic College (Jing xueyuan [经学院]) in Yinchuan. In West Asian, as opposed to Chinese, architectural style, it was founded in 1985 with a great deal of financial assistance from Islamic countries and the World Islamic Development Bank. In terms of status, salaries of teaching staff and academic level, the College is equivalent to a tertiary-level secular institute.

The students are chosen by examination with only one major criterion for selection: that they be fervent believers in Islam. Competition for entry is keen. When I visited the College in December 1992, there were two classes, with a total of some sixty students, all male, with ages ranging from just under twenty to under thirty. The married students saw their wives on Sundays only, since all students lived on the campus, three students to a dormitory room. There were eighteen faculty on the teaching staff.

The curriculum is 70 percent religious studies and 30 percent non-religious. The former includes Arabic language, the Koran, the life of Muhammad and Islamic history, the latter Chinese language, Chinese history, law and policy on religion. These non-religious courses are the same as those taught elsewhere in China, with the Chinese history placing no emphasis on the Hui people. There are also political classes, which encourage patriotism and obedience to Chinese law. According to the head of the College, there are no references to Marxism-Leninism, even in the secular courses, since this is a religious college, where the students are taught to believe in, worship and fear Allah. In addition to academic work, the students visit the homes of believers and other people as a form of practical training.

Assessment is carried out more or less entirely by examination. Retention rates are high, with the great majority of students who begin the course ending up as graduates. As of December 1992, there had been three groups of graduates, seventy-five men altogether. The students find their own jobs after graduation. If they cannot find a position as an *ahong* in a mosque, then they must take on alternative work. At that time, Ningxia and Gansu were exceptional among Islamic areas of China in having a superfluity of *ahongs*. As a result, many of the graduates will go to other regions, especially Xinjiang.

Another Islamic educational institution in Ningxia partly funded by the Islamic World Development Bank is the Arabic School in Tongxin which is, like Yinchuan's Theological College, in West Asian architectural style. In contrast, however, its aim is not to train *ahongs* but rather to train diplomats who will be posted to Islamic countries, Hui teachers and others. Entrance selection and assessment are by examination. The course lasts three years, the curriculum including Arabic, the Koran and other humanities subjects normal in Chinese schools. There were 163 students at the time of my visit in December 1992, all Hui, two-thirds male and the great majority from Ningxia itself. The state pays for their board and food if they are from Ningxia, but otherwise they are self-funding. All students live on the campus, four to a dormitory room in a special three-tiered block, the male students living on the bottom two floors, the female students on the top story.

Religion and Women

The reference to female students at the Tongxin Arabic School raises the issue of female participation in Islam in contemporary Ningxia, especially since in many quarters Islam has the reputation for being anti-feminist and even anti-woman.²⁰ In Yinchuan, I was told by religious officials that there were absolutely no female *ahongs* in Ningxia or Gansu, although there were a limited number elsewhere. However, my own investigations showed the officials to be either lying or, much more likely, badly informed. In Wuzhong I learned of five to ten mosques in that city alone which

²⁰ For another brief account of women in Islam in contemporary China, see the path-breaking book by Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese, Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991), especially 237-8.

had special subsidiary chapels restricted to women and staffed with their own female *ahongs*. I met and interviewed one of these female *ahongs*, an old woman who had formerly been a housewife and was more or less illiterate in Chinese, although it was her background spoken language. On the other hand, she could read enough Arabic to master the Koran. She ran a school for young women who wanted to become *ahongs*.

In Tongxin, apart from the Chinese-Arabic School discussed above, I went to a special Islamic school for young women which is attached to one of the largest mosques in the town. There were three classes, all taught by women who, although *ahongs*, currently had no mosque. There were some dozen students in each of the two classes I saw in action and, like their teacher, all wearing veils. The aim of this school is not to train female *ahongs*, but to teach local young women to be good Muslims and better people.

Among Christians, there has recently been much debate and controversy over women priests. One of the issues in this debate has been a feminist rethinking of some strands of Christian doctrine. There is, however, clearly no parallel whatever to this in the Islamic experience of Ningxia. One of the questions I asked the female *ahong* in Wuzhong was whether there were any differences in attitude or ideas between her and her male *ahong* counterparts. She was very clear that there were absolutely no differences. The only difference was in her social role: that she looked after women. One of the bystanders told me later that he thought my question rather Eurocentric, because it implied that Muslims in China ought to be following feminist trends in the West, a suggestion neither he nor the female Muslims concerned accepted.

Women appear to play but a small role in lama Buddhism in Inner Mongolia, except as ordinary worshippers. The XIth Living Buddha of the Xilitu [席力图] Temple in Hohhot, a Tibetan whom I interviewed in November 1992, told me that he knew of no female lamas in Inner Mongolia at present. He found this very disappointing, since there had for long been female lamas in Tibet and currently even two Living Buddhas who were women. He expressed himself as being in strong support of the decision just reached in Great Britain at that time in favor of ordaining women priests in the Church of England.

Religion and Economics

Moving from social to economic matters, we find that the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy in recent years has been far more focused on the southeastern provinces, such as Guangdong and Fujian and cities like Shanghai, than on the other regions. However, fast economic growth has been occurring in most parts of China, with impressive rises in the standard of living of ordinary people and in industrial and other production. Comparing figures for the total output value of industry and agriculture, the national result in 1991 was 4.4 times that of 1982, with comparable figures for the two years in Inner Mongolia and Ningxia being 4.0 and 4.6 respectively.²¹ In terms of average income per head of population, Inner Mongolia was ¥1,080 in 1990, putting it ahead of Ningxia (¥1,024) but well behind the leader Shanghai (¥4,822) and quite a bit behind provinces even like Guangdong (¥1,842) which are inevitably poorer than cities because of their large rural populations.²² In general, Inner Mongolia has a very much larger output than Ningxia. At the lower end of the economic spectrum, serious poverty is still much more widespread in Ningxia than it is in Inner Mongolia.

The Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities (Minzu quyu zizhi fa [民族区域自治法]) was adopted on May 31, 1984, and came into operation on October 1 the same year. Articles 33 to 36 allow for some degree of autonomy in the fields of budgeting, taxation, education and other areas of the economy.²³ In practice, a certain proportion of the budget is allocated to economic development, social welfare and so on, within which the autonomous government determines the specific projects. Between 10 and 15 per cent is left totally free, and in those autonomous regions where the local minority feels strongly about religion, the restoration of religious buildings inevitably looms large as an item of expenditure.

Since the early 1980s, both the Inner Mongolian and Ningxia governments have spent a good deal on restoring old monasteries and mosques and, in Ningxia, on building new ones. Even now, in Inner Mongolia, monks and lamas are given a small *shenghuo fei* [生活

²¹ These calculations are based on figures given in State Statistical Bureau, comp., *Zhongguo tongji nianjian* [中国统计年鉴] 1983 (Beijing: Chinese Statistical Bureau Press, 1992), 58.

²² See the figures in *Zhongguo tongji nianjian* 1992, 37.

²³ Among other places, the text of the Autonomy Law can be found in *Minzu gongzuo shouce* [民族工作手册] (Kunming: Yunnan People's Press, 1985), 427-440. The three relevant articles are on 434-435.

费], or stipend, although this privilege does not extend to Ningxia imams. At the same time, as the 1980s progressed, religious bodies were, like everybody else, increasingly called on to finance their own activities. This process was strengthened even further by Deng Xiaoping's famous visit to the south in February 1992 and by the emphasis laid on the "socialist market economy" by the Fourteenth Congress of the CCP in October of the same year.

In Inner Mongolia, monasteries are expected to carry out productive activities in order to support themselves. Among the major activities of monks and lamas are the raising of sheep or other livestock or functioning as doctors, using the traditional Mongolian medicine. The man who is concurrently the Living Buddha of the famous Wudang zhao and a smaller temple usually known simply as the Lama Cave (*Lama dong* [喇嘛洞]) situated north of the Yellow River between Hohhot and Baotou, told me that he earns some money teaching Mongolian language at a local secondary school. Most important of all, monasteries make money by charging entrance fees to tourists, making very substantial sums in this way. They do not, however, charge pilgrims to enter, and quickly get to know who is a genuine worshipper and who is not.

During our talk, the Tibetan XIth Living Buddha of the Xilitu Temple spoke with great enthusiasm of "Mr. Deng Xiaoping" and his policies. He not only opposed any suggestion of multi-party democracy in the short term, on the grounds that it could lead to instability, but strongly advocated setting up enterprises through which the temples and monasteries could make more money, such as hostels, factories and schools, and so on. He already saw such a process beginning, but believed it needed to go much further. Religion, he said, must be socially active and economically productive if it was to regain any kind of real relevance within society. One trend he favored in particular was the development of an enterprise for industrial arts in cooperation with Taiwan.

As in Inner Mongolia, governments at various levels in Ningxia have contributed money to the rebuilding or construction of mosques. Mosques do not charge entrance fees, but the faithful are encouraged to give money for the building and maintenance of mosques. In Tongxin, I met a rich peasant who made up to ¥300,000 per year out of a transport business he ran, and was able to afford a house as magnificent as any I have seen in China owned by a private individual. He was very proud of having donated ¥60,000 for the

building of a mosque in his village, that being over half the ¥110,000 necessary for its construction, and while nobody was pretending he was typical, neither was he unique, even in Tongxin. Many mosques run subsidiary businesses to earn their maintenance, such as hostels and restaurants where, not surprisingly, the Islamic rules are followed, with absolute proscriptions against pork, smoking, the drinking of alcoholic beverages, or gambling. The large Nanguan [南关] Mosque in Yinchuan runs its own shop selling Islamic goods, such as the Koran, for profit.

Cremation is absolutely inimical to Muslim practice and is forbidden in Ningxia. The former Premier Zhou Enlai [周恩来] advocated that burial be replaced by cremation, in order to save land. Muslims, however, are exempt from this rule as part of their autonomy. In practice, Ningxia is not populated very heavily and it is not difficult for Muslims to find land for burial which is not readily usable for crops anyway.

The long Hui tradition of expertise in commerce²⁴ has left a clear effect on the present. In the Ningxia of the 1990s, there are booming markets in Hui regions. The one in Wuzhong is famous as being among the premier markets, if not *the* foremost one, in all northwest China. Certainly, it was crowded, well-stocked and doing a brisk business during both my visits, in September 1990 and December 1992. The market in Tongxin, the main entrance of which is built in the style of a West Asian mosque, is also flourishing, and when I went there in December 1992, I found it overflowing with a wide range of consumer goods

In both Inner Mongolia and Ningxia, the many religious leaders with whom I consulted on the matter were convinced that religion and its influence were beneficial for economic development. Current policy on religion in China certainly makes this assumption. In particular, the suggestion that the religious bodies will "contribute to socialist construction under the leadership of the Communist Party" places what amounts to an obligation on religious bodies to contribute to economic growth.

In Inner Mongolia, several religious leaders suggested that lama Buddhism was beneficial for economic development because it promoted a stable society, and in its present reformed state did not promote ideas, such as submission to fate, which might function as

²⁴ See this topic discussed in great detail by Lai Cunli in his book *Huizu shangye shi*.

an impediment to the growth of the economy. It is no longer the case that each family must send at least one son to unproductive monasteries, and, as noted above, nowadays monks and lamas are encouraged to engage in production anyway.

One matter weighing heavily in China in the 1980s and 1990s is the population question. According to those I interviewed, any influence which lamas and monks exert on the people is in favor of family planning, not against it. On the problem of family planning, the government policy in Ningxia is to restrict the size of Hui families to one child in the main cities, two children in northern rural Ningxia and three children in the south. In addition, the age of marriage allowed by the Ningxia Autonomous Government is twenty for men and eighteen for women, two years lower than the minimum ages laid down in the revised Marriage Law of the PRC adopted by China's National People's Congress in September 1980. The result can only be reasonably rapid population growth among the Hui of Ningxia, making the official figures claiming a growth rate for the Han as 17.2 percent between the 1982 and 1990 censuses, but 23.4 percent for the Hui scarcely surprising.

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The Wuzhong Islamic official cited above, acknowledging the greater flexibility of government policy for the Hui than the Han, claimed that progressive Hui in the cities try to restrict the size of their families anyway and argued that this was in accordance with Islam's influence. He put forward several reasons for his view that Islam favored population growth control. One was a claim that, according to the Koran, God gives his people convenience, not

trouble.²⁵ Although there is no direct reference to family planning in the Koran, it not having been an issue in Muhammad's day, he stated that this passage could be interpreted as favoring population growth control. Beyond the purely theological approach to family planning, he cited two aspects to the problem. Firstly, this is a PRC state policy, which means that Hui and others should follow it in the interests of equality of all citizens. Secondly, most Islamic countries have accepted family planning, including Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Egypt. While it is true that Saudi Arabia is an exception, it is a country with a large area and small population, and hence without a pressing need for control.

Several interviewees claimed that the influence of the local *ahong* was absolutely vital in implementing family planning. If the *ahong* agrees with the government, he will push family planning among his followers, in which case it has every chance of success. But if he refuses to cooperate, there is nothing the government can do. It is quite unclear what proportion of *ahongs* in fact agree with the government on this matter. I was told by officials that the great majority do so, but suspect the dissidents are considerably larger in number than those officials realize, let alone are prepared to admit. Reasons for this scepticism include the testimony of a Han friend who had visited some very poor regions of southern Ningxia, where there is very little sign of any effective birth control.

In Ningxia, religious leaders have clearly given a good deal more thought to the question of religion's economic values than have religious leaders in Inner Mongolia, simply because Islam is a real social force and the issue is consequently much more pressing. A forum arranged for me in Tongxin during December 1992, saw numerous Muslim leaders explaining in quite passionate terms the advantages of Islam for economic development. In Wuzhong, a young official of the Islamic Association quoted the Koran and Islamic history to the same effect. He noted that the Koran placed a very high value on labor.²⁶ The prohibition on drinking, gambling

²⁵ See, for example, *The Holy Qur'an*, lv. 29, p. 1476: "Of Him seeks its (its need) Every creature . . . on earth: Every day in (new) Splendour Does He (shine)!"

²⁶ One passage which can be cited in defense of this argument is "when thou art Free (from thine immediate task), Still labour hard" (xciv, 7). See the edition, in Arabic and English translation, of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an Text, Translation and Commentary* (Beirut: Dar Al Arabia, 1968), 1756.

and smoking²⁷ can only assist in economic development because it diminishes the ill effects which those practices exert on people, especially men. In practice, young Hui men in Ningxia smoke to an extent probably little different from that of other places. In the case of drinking, which differs from smoking in being specifically banned in the Koran, although he acknowledged a great deal of departure from Islamic ideals, he claimed that it was a good deal less serious a problem than among most of China's other nationalities.²⁸ The Koran bans excessive interest, but not trade: "But God hath permitted trade And forbidden usury" (ii, 275).²⁹

These arguments may have some merit. But although the Koran does indeed mention hard work, that virtue does not appear to this writer to rank especially high or recur with special frequency by comparison with some others in the holy book. In many parts of the Islamic world, it has proved quite possible to interpret the distinction between trade and usury to one's own advantage and to that of one's own family and country. I found that Hui people in general, and Muslim officials in particular, were well aware of the Hui tradition of commerce and very proud of it.

Turning from directly religious circles to those not connected with them, this writer found less enthusiasm in Inner Mongolia for the view that Buddhism favored economic development. One cadre interviewed in Hohhot in November 1992 thought the very idea rather ridiculous. His belief was that religion's contribution to economic development was negligible but, on the other hand, he could not see that it had obstructed it either. Hui economic cadres in Ningxia take much more notice of Islam than their Mongolian counter-

²⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 93, 270-271, "intoxicants and gambling" are described as "an abomination."

²⁸ Figures from a survey carried out in two Uyghur peasant villages in Kaxgar, Xinjiang, in 1983, show that among adult males 78.7 percent did not smoke and 99.65 percent did not drink alcoholic beverages. A similar survey carried out in 1984 among pastoral adults, both male and female, belonging to two Kazak peasant and pastoral communities, in Yili, Xinjiang, showed that 67.27 percent did not smoke and 87.83 percent did not drink. See Zhang Yongqing [张永庆], "Dui Shehuizhuyi shiqi woguo Yisilanjiao yu jingji fazhan guanxi de jidian sikao" [对社会主义时期我国伊斯兰教与经济发展关系的几点思考], in Zhang Yongqing, ed., *Yisilanjiao yu jingji yanjiu wenji* [伊斯兰教与经济研究文集] (Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Press, 1991), 11. Both these sets of figures, especially the first, would suggest wide differences from non-Islamic nationalities in China.

²⁹ *The Holy Qur'an*, 111-112.

parts in Inner Mongolia do and I did not find their view substantially different from that of the clergy. All over China, the Han appear to believe that their role in China's economic development, and especially in the development of industry, has been considerably greater than that of the minorities, including the Hui.

Among those I interviewed at the Social Sciences Academy in Yinchuan was the Han scholar Zhang Yongqing, who had carried out excellent research on the relationship between Islam and economic development. He was very impressed with how well Islam is integrated with the economy, a situation in sharp contrast with that in his home province of Jiangsu. In a closely argued article, he has advanced two related propositions: first, that Islam does indeed exercise a generally beneficial impact on economic development, and second, that socialism has strengthened this influence still further. Some of his points have already been canvassed. Two interesting and important negative notions in support of the second proposition are worth repeating here. One is that in the past Hui people contributed anywhere between 35 and 55 percent of their annual income to support Islam, a burden from which socialism has relieved them. The other is that Hui women were once barred from the commodity economy, but now participate in a wide range of activities contributing to its development.³⁰

To this writer, the points raised are valid, but not necessarily the whole picture. Both in Inner Mongolia and Ningxia, religion still costs money, a major item being the construction of religious buildings. These can be productive in attracting tourists and in other ways, but the building of mosques in Ningxia may well have reached the point where the money could be better spent on schools or other activities with more direct bearing on the economy. Several people in Ningxia told me that in some places there were now more mosques than primary schools,³¹ whereas it appears to this writer difficult to see that the illiteracy which must come from this can produce anything but a harmful effect on the future of the economy.

³⁰ Zhang, "Dui Shehuizhuyi shiqi woguo Yisilanjiao yu jingji fazhang guanxi de jidian sikao," 13, 16.

³¹ In 1987 there were 4,320 primary schools in Ningxia, down 998 from 1978, when the figure was 5,318. See *Ningxia quqing*, 462. This would make the total number of primary schools much greater than of mosques in 1987, but the balance has probably changed since then, although it is extremely doubtful that the overall number of mosques has overtaken that of primary schools.

Religion and Politics

At present, despite official rhetoric, it is very clear that the government is being forced to accept strong religious activities at the present. It was my overwhelming impression that it was reasonably happy to do so, but only on two conditions. The first is that in return it receives, if not support, then at least political tolerance of the Chinese Communist Party by the main religious groups; and the second is that the religious bodies offer no hint of secessionist activities. The first point is relevant to the situation in Ningxia, and the second to that in Inner Mongolia. In general, religion is not only socially but also politically a far more powerful force in Ningxia than it is in Inner Mongolia.

All three Living Buddhas met and interviewed in Inner Mongolia seemed very sure of themselves and confident of their influence with the government. The Tibetan Living Buddha in the Xilitu Temple was even a member of his local people's congress. At no time during our interview did he say anything even slightly out of line with official government policy. A cynic could readily regard him as controlled by the CCP. All three Living Buddhas spoke very positively, both about their own religion and their experiences as clerics during the last few years.

On the whole, however, the support of the lama Buddhist monasteries is not something which weighs very strongly with the CCP, because the monasteries' social influence is no longer great. There may be some Mongolian lamas who would like to secede from China and join the State of Mongolia, but it is doubtful there are many of them or that they are a force of which the CCP needs to be afraid. While religion has revived strongly in the State of Mongolia, the economy of Inner Mongolia has been doing much better, lessening any attraction which the State of Mongolia might hold for Chinese Mongols. A Mongolian monk in his thirties, brought to the Great Temple (Dazhao [大召]) in Hohhot by his father at the age of seven, told me in November 1992 of his three loves: in descending order of importance they were his motherland (China), his religion (lama Buddhism) and his nationality (Mongol). I have no way of knowing whether such an order of priorities is sincerely held or not. Certainly it is what the government would like him to believe and has no doubt taught him, but it is typical of what monks in his position say. The impression of confidence in their position within

China was very marked in all the monasteries I visited in Inner Mongolia.

On the other hand, frequent questioning concerning the relationship between lama Buddhism and Mongolian identity brought forward the response that it was either weak, just one factor among many, or nearly irrelevant. In other words, most Mongols in Inner Mongolia feel and insist on their Mongolian identity without the need to believe in traditional Mongolian religion. The feeling of Mongolian identity and consciousness is still quite strong in Inner Mongolia, certainly very much more marked than it was in the late 1970s. But if the comparison is with earlier centuries or even the first two or three decades of the present one, then Mongolian consciousness in Inner Mongolia is weak.

Whereas the CCP is in a position strong enough in Inner Mongolia to impose its wishes on the lama Buddhist monasteries, the same appears to hold with much less clarity in Ningxia. There has probably been a political trade-off between the state and the Islamic hierarchy in Ningxia, which is by no means entirely on the terms of the CCP.

Several people, both Hui and Han, official and non-official, told me that they believed the *ahongs* were actually more powerful in their own communities are than the government cadres. If the government wants a policy adopted, it tries to persuade the *ahongs* to accept its point of view and carry out its propaganda on its behalf. The issue of family planning, already discussed above, is a prime example illustrating the problem.

The reason it is necessary, as noted in the section on Religion and Education, for the Islamic College in Yinchuan to teach its students law is because the *ahong* has a status in society so high that he often functions as the village mediator and is involved in conciliating between people. Since villages generally lack courts of law, the *ahong* often finds himself acting in the place of the law. In such cases, Chinese state legal code must be followed, not Islamic law. For instance, the *ahong* must not permit any man, including an *ahong*, to marry more than one wife. In practice, a few old *ahongs* have two, left over from the old society, but polygamy is said to be disappearing rapidly in Ningxia.

Another point of great interest concerning the relationship between Islam and politics impressed me in Ningxia. This was the issue of identity, the strong connection between being regarded, and

regarding oneself, as Hui on the one hand, and belief in Islam on the other. One government cadre told me in Wuzhong that not to believe in Islam was equivalent to not being Hui. When I asked him whether the same stricture applied to members of the CCP, he replied that it most certainly did. My pointing out that Party members are bound by the CCP Constitution to believe in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and hence reject the existence of God elicited the response that he himself was a Party member and what mattered was what was in the heart, not any formal matters. People such as my friend are probably quite numerous. He certainly showed no shame whatever at being both a Muslim and a Party member.

The Tibetan XIth Living Buddha of the Xilitu Temple told me that, in the late 1970s, a special internal document had been issued allowing Tibetan Party members to believe in Tibetan Buddhism. The reason for it was the fear that Tibetan Party members would become "divorced from the masses" if they did not believe in Buddhism, since it is well known that virtually all Tibetans are Buddhist adherents. In more recent times, the government appears to have taken an increasingly lenient view about whether minority CCP members, including not only the Tibetans but a whole range of others as well, may believe in religion.

One particular event in recent years showing the strong political influence of Islam in China is over the book *Xing fengsu* [性风俗] (*Sexual Customs*). In brief, what happened was that the publication of the book by the Shanghai Cultural Press resulted in major demonstrations by Muslims all over China in May 1989, at the same time as the student demonstrations in Beijing and elsewhere. The reason for the demonstrations was that the Muslims found the book insulting because one part of it suggested that the structure of mosques was designed to resemble the male genitalia. Ningxia was only one of the Islamic areas of China affected by the demonstrations, but those in Yinchuan and elsewhere in the Autonomous Region were reported to be particularly large. The head of the Ningxia Islamic Association in Yinchuan told me that he had personally taken the lead to organize demonstrations against the book, its publisher and authors. When, in 1990, I interviewed a leader at the Nangan Mosque in Yinchuan about this matter, he told me he was strongly in support of the demonstrations. Indeed, he praised the Chinese government for its effective handling of the matter, comparing it very favorably with the British government's failure to take

any concrete action on the matter of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, over which a storm had raged among Muslims world-wide since 1989. When I returned to the same mosque in 1992, there was an exhibition of press articles about the *Sexual Customs* affair, and the same leader expressed even stronger views in favor of the Chinese and against the British government.

What the Chinese government had done was to ban the book in response to the demonstrations and burn many copies of it. As a result, the Shanghai Cultural Press went out of business and the Press's editor and two of the authors, including a woman, were prosecuted before the law courts. The case came to a final conclusion in 1991, with the court finding in favor of the Muslims and against the Press, the editor and the authors. All three of the latter were condemned to varying periods of imprisonment.

The fact that the government and law courts were prepared to adopt this course of action shows that they were not willing to offend the Muslims or the minorities. To yield to the Muslim demands had no major implications for the security of the state, such as those which the leadership saw in the student demonstrations shaking China at the same time.³²

The government could quite easily crack down on the lama Buddhists of Inner Mongolia if it wanted to, for instance if it discovered a secessionist movement in one of the big monasteries, but the same does not hold true in Ningxia to anything like the same extent. While the government could no doubt suppress a Muslim rebellion in Ningxia if it had to, the cost in terms of money, blood and resentment would be so large that the government and CCP are currently prepared to make very substantial concessions to retain at least formal loyalty from the Islamic authorities and clergy.

Reports speak of riots killing one person in Tongxin during 1992. The issue concerned theological and political rivalry between two sects of Islam, not rebellion against the government. Yet the central authorities were worried enough that they were contacting the Ningxia autonomous government by telephone on a daily basis.

Conclusion

The very substantial political power wielded by the Muslims of Ningxia should not disguise the fact that China remains a secular

³² For further commentary on the *Sexual Customs* affair, see also Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 1-5.

state. The Islamic clergy may be influential, but they are not actually members of the state, as happens, for instance, in some West Asian countries. In theoretical terms, if not always in practice, Chinese Muslims have always been subject to the Chinese legal system, not to that of Islam, and this remains the case today.

Has religion in Inner Mongolia or Ningxia produced anything like the Protestant work ethic which Weber claims for Protestantism in Europe? In the case of Inner Mongolia, the answer is probably no. What work ethic exists derives more from Han immigration, Japanese occupation and Marxism-Leninism than from lama Buddhism. Religion may indeed have come to accept the need for production and may now function as a force favoring social stability. But its former emphasis on the chanting of sutras and on a non-productive clergy taking up a substantial proportion of the population's able-bodied males surely suggests that it is a late convert to a work ethic rather than a source of that ethic.

In the case of Islam, a better argument could probably be made for its contribution to a work ethic. In this case, the clergy was never as large nor as totally separated from production as were the lamas. Moreover, the point raised by the Wuzhong official about the value placed on labor by the Koran does carry some weight. The Hui tradition of commerce does not seem to have been diminished, and may even have benefited from, the Muslim religion.

Yet this does not really show that Islam is the only or even main contributor to a work ethic in Ningxia. The disapproval of usury and its extreme other-worldliness might relate Islam more closely to medieval Catholicism than to Calvinism. It is likely that what work ethic exists in Ningxia derives as much from the Han and from Marxism-Leninism as it does from Islam.

Inner Mongolia has been much more developed economically than Ningxia for virtually the whole of the twentieth century. At the same time, however, religion is considerably more strongly rooted in Ningxia than in Inner Mongolia. Among all China's province-level units, the Muslim ones are not spectacular for economic development, even during the period of reform since 1978. This would suggest that religion is either a disincentive or not particularly relevant in terms of economic development.

Topography is a major factor influencing economic development. Both Inner Mongolia and Ningxia benefit from the Yellow

River, but Ningxia is in general considerably less fertile and more arid than Inner Mongolia.

Other factors in which religion has a more obvious role would include education and the role of women. In the case of education, religion has a definite contribution to make, but it is hardly of the kind which would propel the economy forward. In the case of Islam, its quality remains strongly religious and moral to this day. The question of the relationship between the social status of women and economic growth is an extremely vexed one, and one well outside the scope of this article. But it does not seem to this writer that the revival of traditional attitudes towards women, such as those observed in Ningxia, is really a factor contributing to economic development.

Yet the fact remains that the economy *has* grown both in Inner Mongolia and in Ningxia. Women have contributed to this development. Hui women are better represented in the professions, in administrative work and in official positions than those of any other of the most populous nationalities in China, including the Han, and also do very well in commerce and laboring jobs.³³

The primary reason for the changes in both women's role and in economic development is not religion, but government policy since 1949. Although the policies over that period have not been consistent, they appear to this writer to have produced an enormous impact. In the case of the economy, the policies aimed at encouraging private enterprise have resulted in great expansions everywhere in China, including both Inner Mongolia and Ningxia. They have brought with them widening inequalities as well, and some regrowth in traditions, including the revival of religion and old-style attitudes towards women.

One of the features of this regrowth in tradition is a sense of national identity and culture. In the Islamic states of Central Asia, including those which used to form part of the Soviet Union, the revival of Islam and national cultures has gone hand in hand with the independence of republics created, ironically, by the Soviet Union itself. The revival of religion in Ningxia is certainly on a large scale but, by contrast, does not threaten China's unity because the Hui are not different enough culturally from the Han or sufficiently con-

³³ See the figures in Tao Chunfang [陶春芳], Gao Xiaoxian [高小贤], a.o., comp. *Zhongguo funu tongji ziliao (1949-1989)* [中国妇女统计资料] (Beijing: Chinese Statistical Press, 1991), 308-13.

centrated in terms of physical geography to wish to found their own state. In the case of Inner Mongolia, the religious and cultural revival is somewhat weaker than in Ningxia. Unless the Chinese state collapses altogether, it is unlikely to lead to a wish to amalgamate with the State of Mongolia anywhere near strong enough to form the basis for success of such an impulse.



The Living Buddha of the Wudang zhao, near Baotou, Inner Mongolia, and of the Lama Cave just north of the Yellow River's Great Bend to the south in Inner Mongolia (figure on the right), and the Great Lama of the Wudang zhao (figure on the left). Photo by Colin Mackerras.



A female ahong (seated) with her students inside a women's mosque in Wuzhong, Ningxia. Photo taken by Colin Mackerras with the express permission of the female ahong.