

Myth as Memory: Muslims in China Between Myth and History

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Memory is evasive, amorphic, selective and flexible. It may be burdening and it may be relieving, creative or atrophied, open to elaboration and change or obsessively fixated. It can grip the individual and the collective and not let go, and it can be repressed and relegated to the farthest and darkest confines of the mind. It can be evoked to justify and rationalize deeds and events one wants to “remember,” or in fact create them (we call that myth). Memory can obliterate a fact, distort or project it on to others (we call that denial).

In Chinese society, where memory depends on the wisdom passed down the generations by venerated sages, it is natural that historical authenticity has to be imputed to any claim to tradition in order to render that claim authoritative. In Islamic tradition, in order to be accepted as authentic, one has to relate either to divine revelation via the Prophet, as essentialized in the Word of God, the Holy Qur'an; or to the Prophet's own doings and utterings, as handed down in the literature of the Hadith. Thus, we shall find the collective memory of Chinese Muslims curiously vacillating between those two traditions: on the one hand, claiming descent from Arabia, the place where the divine revelation and the life of the Prophet were enacted; and, on the other hand, resorting to remote Chinese antiquity or to more recent axial events or towering personalities in Chinese history in order to solidly anchor the history of Islam in China. In those cases, the two civilizations are made to meet, to collaborate, to inspire one another, and to justify and sustain each other by the power of the myth. To be sure, the past few centuries of Muslim rebellion and Chinese repression were not particularly conducive to memory building for the construction of solace and rapprochement, the bricks being too venomous and porous.

Nonetheless, the process of myth-creating, as a reinforcement of collective memory, continued.

The collective memory of Chinese Muslims, whose historical presence in China has been documented since the Tang dynasty (618-906), soon after the rise of Islam in the early seventh century, has stretched itself to encompass remote eras before there was any Islam, or even any historical China, for that matter. When myth is introduced by Chinese Muslims to bridge the lacunae of historical memory, it meets at times Chinese mythology at its earliest wellsprings. But, in other instances, it is created to fit into Chinese historical chronology. The one and the other sound "authentic" to the Chinese-Muslim mind because either their myth is as good as the Chinese's; or, their myth is made to anchor itself in acknowledged Chinese historical grounds, it becomes, *ipso facto*, genuine history itself.

We shall explore herein the process of the mythologization of early Islamic history in China, and account for the fact that the closer to our times Chinese-Muslim history was unfolding in its millennial course, the further back the Muslims had to resort to find their alleged roots. It is as if, in the early years of Muslim presence in China under the cosmopolitan Song and Yuan dynasties (10th-14th centuries), there was no need to prove anything to anyone, and commemorative steles in the courtyards of mosques (and synagogues, for that matter) sufficed to tell the source stories.¹ But, as the self-isolating Ming (1368-1644) and the hostile Qing (1644-1911) came upon the historical stage, the impulse to search for more ancient roots propelled the Muslim myth-making industry to new heights, into more remote areas and more antiquated times. Heaven was the limit.

We shall also see that mainstream Islam in China, which was predicated on having to contend with large-scale communities that constituted either local majorities or large minorities, tended to lean on allegedly Muslim myths to consolidate its identity. Marginal Muslim communities on their way to extinction were more Chinese-myth oriented, which made more sense to them, while the little Islam they knew made less and less sense.² In either case, myth-building served different purposes: e.g. those confident Muslim communities needed to be accepted as one of the many components of the Chinese scene, and the dying, tiny Muslim hamlets outside China proper needed to shout a last cry of identity before passing into history. In the past, the struggle for recognition was coupled either with ethno-religious bouts of unrest or proto-nationalistic or messianic ideas about deliverance from the Chinese yoke. In modern China, the identification of Muslims as one of the many "national minorities," indeed as many separate ethnic identities (Hui, Uighurs, Dungans, Kazkh, etc.),

has also necessitated a differentiation between each other. For marginal Muslims, myth-building may have been the last convulsion of a separate identity before extinction, or an exercise in trying to survive as long as they could.

It is noteworthy, at any rate, that most of the myth-building among Chinese Muslims has been elaborated among the Hui, the main Chinese-Muslim ethnic group, some fifteen million strong, which is scattered throughout the Chinese mainland, and whose sizable communities are located in practically every major urban agglomeration throughout the land. It is under such circumstances that the Muslims fear for their survival and are constantly threatened by assimilation. Conversely, the other Muslim minorities, especially the Turkic among them (such as the Uighurs, the Kirghyz, etc.) who are territory-bound (e.g. in Xinjiang), constitute local majorities, and are more self-aware and self-confident about their separate identities, are poorer in myth-creating, maybe because it is redundant. On the other hand, the border areas of China proper, which are widely populated by Hui, such as Gansu, Ningxia, and Yunnan, seem to produce the most fertile and imaginative yield of mythical stories, perhaps as a way to strengthen communal cohesion and build-up trends of secession in the future.

All Men are Brothers

The most striking stories of the Muslim origins in China relate to the remote antiquity of mankind, when there were no nations or cultures; an opportunity for the Muslims to claim a commonality of heritage with all, including the Chinese. For example, a folk tale from Heilongjiang:

When the world was created, there was only Allah but no human beings. Later, the Lord created a human being with fire-colored earth, named Adan. The Lord decreed that he could only lay down but never stand up. One day, when the Lord was not around, Adan tried to stand up, but as soon as he did, his head cracked and from it sprung out gold, copper and iron; birds and animals; fish, insects, crabs and shrimps. Adan cut off immediately with his nails a piece of flesh from the underside of the arch of his foot, to mend the crack in his head. Under his left rib grew a big bulge. When it broke, a human being fell down from it. This person was Hai-er-ma. With the Lord's consent they got married. Hai-er-ma gave 36 births with 72 children, a boy always followed by a girl. The population kept increasing. People talked and fought each other alternately, and they also joked and chatted freely. When the Lord became tired of them, he sent them to a place south of Tian Shan Mountains, that is where the Hui people are now.³

In this story, which comes in various versions throughout China,⁴ the message is the universality of the origin of man, although the very attempt to graft the Islamic creation narrative onto the Chinese produces some awkward results. Without explicitly saying so, this myth refers to the Pan Gu legend, which posited that mysterious creature as the link between chaos and the orderly world, including China, in which humanity, and the Chinese, came to play their historical role.⁵ Unlike the biblical story which depicts the creation of Adam and Eve as the apogee of the Lord's endeavor to make man the ruler of Earth and its fauna, here the physical and the animal creation of the world are generated, like in Pan Gu's story, from the first man on earth. The difference persists, nevertheless, in that Allah made him from earth, while the Chinese version of creation does not specify his origin. Also, while the Chinese creation is immanent in Pan Gu, in the case of Adam (A-dan in Chinese), the Muslim legend wants the creation to occur by accident, not by the design of the Lord, when Adam took advantage of the fact that the Lord "was not around" (again, a cute Muslim concession to the Chinese regarding the omnipotence and omnipresence of God), in order to produce precious metals and animal species, and, ultimately, also Eve from his rib.

The people produced by Adam were settled in "south of Tian Shan," the most remote place one could think of in antiquity, but close enough to China so that its people constitute the same breed as the Chinese. The legend states that the Hui, a clearly and exclusively Chinese ethnic group, settled there, which means another meeting ground for Chinese and Muslims, in general. In this vein, another parallel story from Jiangsu tells a slightly different version:

Adnan and Han-wu⁶ stole fruits to eat, so they were demoted to the earth. After 55 years, Allah was moved by their piety and allowed the sun, the moon and the stars to appear in the sky so as to enlighten their lives. 500 years later they got married and made the Earth as happy as Heaven. Allah again granted them fruits, wheat and livestock. Since then, the world has become prosperous. The wife gave birth 73 times in total, in each of the first 72 times to a son and a daughter. But the 73rd time she only gave birth to a son—Shisi. After he overcame many difficulties, he finally settled in Heaven and became the Envoy of Allah, while Adnan, Han-wu and their descendants worked happily and led a good life.⁷

Once again, Adam and Eve preceded the creation of the sun, moon, stars, and the fauna and flora of the world (except for the forbidden fruit, which had been there from time immemorial). This time, the only son of

Adam, with a curiously Chinese-sounding name (Shisi), who did not share his birth with a sister, becomes the chosen Messenger of Allah who dwells in Heaven. At any rate, the descendants of Adam, who was himself obedient to the Lord, are identified as the ancestors of all human beings. Far more telling is the express linkage between Adam and the legendary Fu Xi,⁸ one of the founding a-historical figures in Chinese mythology:

He came from the West and his offspring are the Chinese. The doctrine of Islam brought by Fu Xi was altered in the course of time, but Confucianism is derived from it, though it has lost the notion of God, which became confused with Heaven.⁹

Fu Xi was canonized during the Han Dynasty, some six or seven centuries before the advent of Islam, as the oldest of the Three Sovereigns; that is, during the third millennium BC. The legendary Fu Xi was described as having a dragon's body and a man's head. His birth, like that of the founders of the great mythical dynasties, was miraculous, his mother conceiving him when stepping on the footprint of a giant. He was credited with the invention of the Eight Trigrams and nets for hunting and fishing.¹⁰ This event, which is detached from time and space, certainly makes Adam, the father of all beings and of Muḥammad the Prophet, who was also the spiritual mentor of Fu Xi, and therefore of all Chinese, the ancestor of all men. Unless, of course, we take cognizance of the fact that Islamic tradition itself claims descent from Adam, and then Abraham the Patriarch. The latter, in any case, was on the historical scene during the Bronze Era, i.e. he was contemporaneous with the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1500-1100 BC), which was itself preceded by Fu Xi. Interestingly enough, the involvement of Fu Xi with foreign cultures was also a theme borrowed by the famous Catholic convert, Li Zubo (d. 1665), in order to claim common descent for Christianity and Confucianism.¹¹

Ma Anli, an eighteenth century Muslim author who claimed that it was Fu Xi who had brought Islam to China in the first place, also invented a historical sequel to it. He claimed that,

Before the Three Dynasties¹² all literati were Muslim. After King Wu of the Zhou, Chinese literati were still predominantly true literati: they had not yet totally turned their backs on Islam. But after the era of the Great Feudatories, Yang and Mo¹³ brought about confusion of the Doctrine (*dao*). Fortunately, our Saint (Confucius) transmitted the Book of Change, presented a summary of the Book of Poetry and the Book of History, and preserved the tradition of Shangdi in such a way that it was no longer interrupted. He did so remarkably that the following genera-

tions were able to reassert the law of the literati and return to the Muslim cult.¹⁴

This amazing attempt to make Confucius himself Muslim was certainly part and parcel of the apologetic literature churned out by Chinese Muslims in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when hostility to Islam was at its height, and the necessity arose to reconcile the incongruencies between Islam and Confucianism.¹⁵ But this is quite another matter which does not pertain directly to myth-building as a means of deepening the collective memory of the Muslim community in China.

Grafting Myth onto History

In the shaky realm of mythology, one legend is as good as another, and the Muslims could graft their invented stories onto imagined Chinese ones. But when we come to the firmer grounds of history, though myth-building persists and even gains momentum, it is now solidly anchored in well-known and universally accepted events, names and places, and thus aspires to more historical credibility. It is no coincidence, then, that this category of myth-building has rooted its most numerous fruits in the fertile ground of Tang history. Tang was not only the era of conquests and expansion, which brought Chinese into close contact with Muslims in Central Asia, but was also an epoch of cultural and religious opening to the world. Therefore, it made sense that Muslims would first settle in the Middle Kingdom during that period.¹⁶ The only question that remained was of the legitimacy of that influx, and, therefore, myth was conjured to fill the gaps.

The most widespread myth in this regard revolves around the dream of the Tai Zong Emperor (626-649), a contemporary of the Prophet of Islam. Connected to this myth is also the An Lushan Rebellion (755), which the Arabs helped quell, and the Chinese defeat at Talas (751) by the Arabs, as a result of which Central Asia became mostly Muslim. The mixture of Islamic exuberance over their successes, with the high prestige and long reign of that Emperor of Tang, and the coming of Muslim merchants to settle in China, combined to make that epoch the most promising for the absorption of Muslim myth.¹⁷ This myth developed subsequent to the Tang, probably during the difficult times (for the Muslims) of the Qing, but the urge to anchor it in those most opportune events for the Muslims remained valid nevertheless.

The center-piece in Chinese Islamic mythology is, no doubt, Tai Zong's dream, which allegedly took place in the year 630, just two years short of the death of the Prophet in Arabia:

In the Third Year of Zhen Guan [Tai Zong] of the Tang Dynasty, on the 18th day of the Third Moon, toward midnight, the Emperor in his sleep dreamt of a man with a turban on his head chasing a monster which had rushed into the Palace . . . His presence was awe-inspiring and dreadful to behold as might be that of a sage descending to the palace. When he entered, he knelt toward the west [the direction of the qiblah in China], reading the book he had in his hand. The monsters, when they saw him, were at once changed into their proper forms, and in a distressful voice pleaded for forgiveness. But the turbaned man read on for a little, till the monsters changed into bloody matter, and at last into dust, and at the sound of a voice the turbaned man disappeared. . .

The interpreter of dreams stepped out of the ranks of officials and said: 'the turbaned man is a Muslim from the West . . . In Arabia there is a Muslim King of lofty mind and great virtue, whose country is wealthy . . . I have heard that in the West a great sage was born. On the natal day, the Sun showed many colors, the night was lengthened to eight watches [out of 12 a day, each of 2 hours], while clouds covered the hilltops, and when the True Book came from Heaven, a white vapor rose to the sky. . . Therefore, because of the birth of the Sage, favorable omens abounded. . . These monsters thus, must be dealt with by Muslims if they are to be destroyed.¹⁸

The apocryphal nature of the story is obvious, for Muḥammad was hardly known outside Arabia in AD 630. But the legend, short of making the Emperor a Muslim convert, at least made the Prophet save his life, hence creating a permanent debt by the Chinese to the Prophet of Islam. Beyond this first link between Islam and the glorious Tang Empire, one ought to look at the meticulous details with which this myth was constructed:

- a. The dating of the story, to the day and the hour, is so precise as to lend credence to it. This is not a story of the type of "once upon a time," or "people say," or "I heard from." It is solidly anchored in the reign of a respected Emperor of the glorious Tang, and it sounds like a concrete event both in time and in space;
- b. In one phrase, both the existences of the Holy Book and the Holy City of Mecca were invoked. The legend says that when the Prophet came to the rescue of the Emperor, he was holding the *Jen Jing*, an impossible Sino-Muslim combination. *Jing* is a classic, like one of the Five Confucian Classics (*Wu Jing*). But this one is also

Jen, the true one, the same epithet the Muslims in China lend to their religion: *Qing Jen Jiao* (the Pure and True Religion);¹⁹

- c. The Prophet of Islam not only rivals, but surpasses the power of the Emperor, the Son of Heaven who is said to maintain, through his moral example, not only this worldly rule but also the cosmic order. The Prophet can scare down monsters and condemn them to disintegration by the power of his reading from his Holy Book, something the Emperor could obviously not do, since the Prophet's interference was needed to save him;
- d. The very fact that the elements responded dramatically to both the birth of the Prophet and the revelation of the Book, suggests that Heaven was not within the exclusive powers of the Emperor;
- e. There are wealthy peoples ruled by Kings of lofty stature elsewhere outside *Zhong Guo* (the Middle Kingdom), something which questions the notion of *Tian Xia* (everything under Heaven), which was supposedly the realm of the Emperor;
- f. The recognition by the Imperial Interpreter of Dreams of the personality of the Prophet and his qualities is indicative of the acceptance of those events as genuine, instead of pushing them into oblivion or dismissing them as insignificant tales;
- g. This situation of a dream by the Emperor, which *a priori* justifies the entrance of a new faith into China, is a duplicate of the famous dream of Han Mingi (57-75) in AD 64, which is often cited as the rationale for the spread of Buddhism into China.²⁰

This founding story of Muslim mythology in China had many sequels and variations, made to fit arising local, regional or national circumstances. Some of them are worth examining briefly. One relates that following the Emperor's dream, he dispatched an officer to Mecca to interview Muḥammad, who sent the officer back accompanied by his uncle own Sa'ad Waqqas, bearing with him a portrait of the Prophet for presentation to the Emperor. As soon as the Emperor bowed before it in worship, the portrait disappeared, leaving only a white sheet as evidence of the Prophet's power. The Emperor was so impressed that he asked Muḥammad to send a contingent of 800 men, unencumbered with families, which the Prophet gladly did. These men were provided with Chinese wives and settled in the country.²¹ This story, which was clearly geared to aggrandize the miraculous powers of the Prophet, and to subject the Emperor to worshipping him in acceptance of his superiority, in spite of the Muslim proscription to adore men, also mixes in the Arab assistance to

the Chinese during the An Lushan Rebellion, which happened much later. In fact, this rebellion occurred during the realm of Xuan Zong (712-756), certainly after the death of both the Prophet and the Tai Zong Emperor (632 and 649, respectively).²²

A later story from Jaingsu, explaining the spread of Islam into Ningxia, has it this way:

The King of the Tang Dynasty dreamt that the beam of the palace fell down, and a Hui person from the Western Regions supported the beam. Therefore, the King of Tang sent Xu Maogong to exchange 60 Tang soldiers for 60 Hui soldiers to defend the Tang Dynasty. Later, those 60 Hui soldiers married Han women and settled in central China.²³

Those who collected this story say, unabashedly, that this tale "praises the good relations between Han and Hui peoples, and shows that long ago, the Hui people already became a member of the big Chinese family."²⁴ Regardless, it is clear that the theme of the rescue of the Emperor by a Muslim, this time by one who could substitute for the main beam of the Imperial Palace, again plays a central role. The An Lushan story has now become an exchange program of troops between the Muslims and the Chinese, never mind that "Hui" as a term to designate Chinese Muslims did not exist then, if only because there were no Muslims yet in China when that dream unfolded.²⁵ Yet another version reports that during the Tang Dynasty, an evil wind swept the Capital, as a result of which the King had a dream, which prompted him to send an envoy to the King of Mecca. The envoy returned with 500 disciples, including Wangasi [Ibn Waqqas] and the evil wind gradually disappeared. The Tang King chose wives for them, they stayed in China and the Hui nationality was shaped.²⁶

The most updated versions of the Tang legend were collected in the 1970s and 80s from Hui narrators in Ningxia, Gansu and Xinjiang. These are richer in detail than previous versions.²⁷ However, in various places in Northwest China, different narrators varied on the minutiae, which may lead one to speculate on the circumstances under which these varying tales were told. Some versions of the story vacillate between the Tai Zong (627-649) and the Xuan Zong (712-756) Emperors, which places the legend on a flexible scale of one century. This is probably due to the connection of the legend with the An Lushan episode which unfolded under Xuan Zong, and the difficulty to explain in some coherent fashion how Tai Zong, a contemporary of the Prophet, could have also presided over the coming of the Hui to China during and as a result of the An Lushan Rebellion. In order to avoid repetition, let us look at some additional details which elaborate and enrich the texture of the story:

- The Prophet appeared in the dream wearing a white turban, and also a green robe, and he had a towel draped around his shoulder and a kettle of water in his hand. Xu Mao, the official who stepped forward to interpret the dream, said that the turban and the robe are worn only for prayer when one goes to the mosque, and the water kettle is used to wash one's body. This was obviously meant to explain the "strange" ways of the Muslim in China: that they wore green tunics, in imitation of the Prophet's favorite color, which has also become the symbolic color of the Islamic faith;²⁸ and that they performed the *wudu*'(ablutions) prior to entering the mosque for prayer.²⁹
- It is interesting to note that while the beginning of the dream that is related to Tai Zong, with the exact day and hour, talks about the Prophet who came to rescue the Emperor from the monster, the other version about the beam of the Imperial Palace refers to the Tang Emperor in general, without any specific time.³⁰
- While in the early version, the vitality of the Muslims for the protection of the Emperor is only inferred, here it is clearly stated that the Tang Empire needs the Hui people for its defense.³¹ This emphasis goes a long way to show that the persecuted Hui during the Qing had a high stake in "proving" that not only were they far from being alien, but that the illustrious Tang Emperor himself considered their presence in China vital for the defense of the Empire.
- As a result of his dream, the Emperor, according to latter-day versions, held the following dialogue with Xu Mao, his trusted official, who is identified in these versions as the dream interpreter of the Emperor in the earlier versions:

Emperor: Let us invite some Hui people to come here.

Xu Mao: We may not be able to persuade some to come by invitation, but perhaps by trading.

Emperor: What shall we give in exchange?

Xu Mao: Exchange people for people.

Emperor: All right, it shall be done.

Thereupon, Xu Mao chose sixty young men and exchanged them for sixty Hui men who were led by Gens, Gais, and Wan Gars.³² Because they could not get accustomed to the climate, most of these men died along the way. Gens died in Xinjian, Gais died in Jinquan. Wan Gars led

the 20 Hui who were left and arrived to Chang'an, on the Day of Qurban [the Muslim Festival of 'Id al-Adha, considered to be the holiest in the Muslim calendar—yet another symbolic date].

Upon their arrival, the Tang Emperor [no mention which] himself went to welcome them outside the Palace gate; he addressed Wan Gars as 'Brother.' Meanwhile, the Emperor decreed that Wan Gars should be permitted to go in and out of the Imperial Palace freely. No one had the right to stop him. Wan Gars could sit at the same table with the Emperor, as an equal. No one could oppose this decree. Moreover, the Emperor ordered his top general, Jingde, to build a mosque where Wan Gars could pray. Thus, the Muslim leader, though a layman of no special line of descent, except if he is identified as Ibn Waqqas, the uncle of the Prophet, is made the equal of the Emperor and a member of his household, a status that no stranger, even no Chinese, had ever enjoyed in the annals of Imperial China. What is more, the mosque, as the holy place of prayer of the Muslims, was given legitimacy by the Emperor himself. Incidentally, another widespread story among Chinese Muslims is that the oldest extant mosque in Canton is related to Ibn Waqqas, the Prophet's uncle, maybe the same as Wan Gars, who had allegedly headed the first Muslim mission to China.

After having lived in the Palace for quite a long time, Wan Gars became homesick, and so did the teacher who was with the men. All day long Wan Gars had a worried look. The Tang Emperor then ordered a golden water kettle made for Wan Gars to wash his face and his body. Since that time, the Hui have kept a water kettle in their house, made of copper. It is actually called "Tang kettle." Copper has approximately the same color as gold, it is clean and durable. With the Tang kettle in his possession, Wan Gars never again asked to return to the Western regions.

Some time later, the Tang Emperor thought about the fact that the Hui men who had come with Wan Gars were all single without family. If in the future they died, there would be no Hui to guard the Tang Empire, and that would be a big problem. So he held a grand ceremony and permitted the Hui to choose their mates. Since that time, the Hui people have been settled in China. Even today, there is this saying among the Hui: 'Hui father, Han mother.'

This version shows that not only would the Empire always need Muslim protection, but also explains the mixed marriages between Hui men and Han women (the reverse would be forbidden by the Muslims) that was current among the Hui and which throws light on their rapid ethnic assimilation into the Chinese.³³

In another version, it is a military counselor to the Emperor who comes forward to interpret the dream and he says: "The Hui people are

very honest. They never deceive. If we treat them kindly they will remain loyal to Your Majesty and never betray you . . . Please send an envoy to the Muslim ruler in the Western regions. Request the assistance of some able person to defeat the evil spirit." This version, apparently dating back to the Qing Dynasty, had a slip of logic built in it: "They will remain loyal."? Were there any Muslims in China at the time of the Tai Zong? But the other part is even more remarkable: the need to counter the very denigrating stereotypes against the Hui (they were accused precisely of disloyalty, arrogance and deceit).³⁴ In this version, the Imperial envoy to Arabia was Shi Mingtang, who carried with him an Imperial edict to the Muslim ruler, and he returned to China accompanied by three eminent Muslims: Gens, Gers and Wan Gars, the latter only survived the trip and the others perished "because they were unaccustomed to the climate." Apart from the strange-sounding names of the Muslims, which certainly do not evoke any Arabic affinity [except for Wan Gars, if he was indeed Ibn Waqqas], it is understood that those individuals were supposed only to fight the spirit of the demons which had invaded the Imperial Palace, and there was no question of assisting in the defense of the Tang Empire, as in the other version. For that spiritual task, one or two persons sufficed, unlike the contingent of 60 or 500 troops, in various parallel tales, which was needed to accomplish the mission of defense. Only after the Emperor heard from Wan Gars about the Qur'an and its similarity to the Five Classics, and he was satisfied by the explanation, did he sent 3,000 troops to the Western lands "in exchange for three thousand Hui soldiers." When those arrived, it was "in order to keep Wan Gars company," not to fight, and then they settled in China, etc.³⁵

Yet another tale from Ningxia related some elements of the story in direct connection with the Xuan Zong Emperor, the contemporary of the An Lushan Rebellion, in order to make sense, a different sense, of the Hui troops sent to China. According to this version, Guo Ziyi, the commander of the Tang forces against the rebels, "went to borrow troops from the Hui people" because his army was not sufficient. But the Hui made the provision that for each of their soldiers, they must have ten Han soldiers. Since Guo was "in dire need," he complied with the demand and dispatched 3,000 troops in return for the 300 he received. One wonders, however, how a general "in dire need" could dispose so easily with so many of his troops, unless we are led to believe that the Hui troops were qualitatively so superior to the Han (in fact in a ratio of more than 10 to 1) that the deal was worthwhile. Another question: why would the Muslims from the outside (certainly no Hui, as explained above), be interested in having

3,000 "inferior" troops to their side? In any case, the battle lasted a long time, until An Lushan was defeated, and the Hui suffered very high casualties. Only Wan Gars and two others were spared. We can guess that the "two others" are Gens and Gais, whom we met before. The Emperor asked them to stay in Chang'an and rewarded them with high positions and handsome salaries.³⁶ The point here, of course, is to stress the Muslim devotion to the Tang and the sacrifices that they made, to the brink of total annihilation of their contingent. The Hui heroes wanted to go back home due to their solitude, but when the Emperor understood that they would not be able to take Han wives by consent of the families, he allowed the Hui to take spouses by force. Thus, during the Lantern Festival, the Emperor had the streets of Chang'an decorated with all kinds of lanterns. The Festival was celebrated in a variety of ways. People from the city and the surrounding area came to watch the lanterns. Chang'an Street was a sea of people. The Emperor told the three Hui men, "Tonight the streets will be very much alive. Surely, there will be many pretty girls in the crowd. You may go and take them by force. Those taken by you will be your wives."³⁷ According to the story, each one of the Hui carried away nine girls, perhaps duplicating the example of the Prophet who had as many, though Islam does not permit more than four at a time. Eventually, when the Emperor died, the three Hui-he and their families, sensing neglect, moved to Ningxia where they multiplied and were called Hui ever since and no longer Hui-he.³⁸ Another short version of the story takes us to Gansu, but only speaks of an Emperor without specification. Wan Gars and his two companions were said simply to be the Prophet's envoys to spread Islam in China. The Emperor of the Tang was so full of admiration for Wan's knowledge, piety and wisdom, that he allowed him to propagate Islam. Even though Wan Gars was homesick, the Emperor begged him to stay, every time urging him to prolong his stay by one more month, until the weather permitted his departure.³⁹

A variation of this story, also from Gansu, is said to explain the reason why the Hui in China chase the horse of the bridegroom in weddings. Wan Gars was invited by the Tang Emperor to his gardens and allowed him to marry any girl he liked. He approached one who agreed to follow him. The gate-keeper of the Imperial gardens, who was not aware of the Emperor's permission, ran after what he thought was an intruder. The Emperor then had a celebration of Wan Gars' wedding, which also happened to be Allah's will, according to the narrator.⁴⁰ This version, then, not only purports to dig up the origin of a custom among the Hui, and to situate it, again, for purposes of legitimacy, in the Han Empire, but also to

stress that an Imperial Edict regarding the wedding of Wan Gars could not carry through without the will of Allah. Another variation says that the Hui, which means "to return" in Chinese, derives from the perennial requests of Muslim soldiers who came to the Tang, "to return home."⁴¹ So this strangely named people, whose naming was often ridiculed by the Chinese and bastardized into such terms as Hui-zi, Hui-he, Hui-hui, and the like,⁴² were finally also allowed to rest respectfully in the repository of Chinese-Muslim myth.

The Art of Survival

The overarching macro-myths, which purport to provide "united-field" theories about the origin of man, the source of his beliefs and religions, the justification for his migrations and wars, or the rationalization for his aloofness and refusal to assimilate, are certainly the foundation of cultures and civilizations. Since it is difficult to root these tales and legends in actual chronology, myth-builders construct meta-historical "events" that are imputed either to the revelation of some superior power, or to human dreams which themselves transcend this-worldly form of activity. But when one comes to the nitty-gritty of everyday life, an industry of micro-myths is developed to explain away bothersome phenomena, to plead for acceptance in a hostile environment, or just to fill up the gaps in one's or in the community's knowledge of itself, and awareness of itself. It seems the larger and the more varied the area covered by the macro-myths, the more need arises for differentiation between various localities, each according to its own idiosyncrasies. This is the area of local micro-myths, which we call legends, which we shall explore now.

It seems that the stories, which are mythical and supernatural in content, are mainly calculated to refute the viciously anti-Muslim stereotypes that were deeply rooted in Chinese society. To the charge that Islam was inherently anti-Confucian, the Muslim could respond by citing the familiarity of both faiths with each other, or the similarity between the Sage of the West and the Sage of China, or by elaborating a whole apologetic literature in this vein,⁴³ or by legitimizing their presence in China with macro-myths of the kind discussed above. But what to do with the gibes that were current among the Chinese and which described the Muslims in despicable terms: hypocrites, greedy, selfish, aggressive, persuasive in talk and blarney, stingy shrewd and sly; or with the insults and abuses to which they were subjected?⁴⁴ If the Muslims could cite examples of their generosity, friendliness, their love of their neighbors, their honesty, and especially their *savoir-faire* in situations in which the

Chinese would be helpless, then the hostility towards them might be mitigated. Furthermore, if it could be shown that the Muslims were indispensable to the general community and cite their proven record of service to their environment, the Chinese majority might come not only to accept them but even to feel indebted to them.

A simple and cutely naïve story, for example, tells about the “Hui people’s ability to recognize treasures.” According to this narrative, a Hui tried to buy rice straw from a Chinese peasant, in order to lure the “Golden Ox” out of his hiding. The peasant, coveting the glory for himself, made the attempt personally to attract the ox and circumvent the intermediary power of the Hui man. But the whole thing backfired on him and he fell ill.⁴⁵ The lesson, of course, is that if one wants supernatural things to be done, one had better approach the skillful and knowledgeable Hui people. Another legend tells of a Hui who paid the enormous sum of 10,000 *taels* to buy on pestle, because, unlike its owner, who did not know, the Hui knew that it was magic and could stop the wind and high waves when at sea.⁴⁶ This theme of the Hui willing to spend exorbitant sums of money, which runs counter to their perceived parsimony, is also recounted in another legend about the Hui. In this story, the Hui sees a pot of shallots in front of a shop, knowing that among the shallots there was a spider whose belly contained a pearl which could stop the wind. He is ready to pay 100 *taels* of gold to buy it. He promises to come back the next day and pay for it, so the shopkeeper took the pot inside the store for safekeeping. The next day, the Hui discovers that the spider had fled and hid behind the black dragon tablet in the shop next door. So, he negotiates the purchase of the tablet for 500 *taels* of gold and promises to come the next day to pick it up. Upon arrival, he discovers that the shopkeeper had cleaned the tablet, and the spider had fled into a Buddhist temple, at which point he realizes that he did not have the requisite luck to possess the spider. He tells his story to the abbot of the temple, who ultimately gets hold of it.⁴⁷ In this case, the Hui, though he could not benefit directly from the spider, had the wisdom, perspicacity and knowledge to spot and pursue it, and the decency and generosity to yield it to another man outside his faith, although he had invested in it large sums of gold. This obsession about means to stop the winds, first by the pestle and then by the pearl, may well be related to wind-swept areas of the Northwest where the Hui were established.

The Hui are not only generous and willing to share their knowledge, but they also connect the ignorant Chinese to sources of know-how and progress. A Hui walks into a store to buy a stone, and he promises to

return the next day to pick it up. In the meantime, the stone owner decides to wash it thoroughly in order to increase its price. But when the Hui man sees it clean and shining, he refuses to buy it because of a defect he detects in it: the stone had engraved in it twelve holes which represented the twelve two-hour periods into which the day was divided in China, and an ant was supposed to come out of the appropriate hole on the hour, to show the time; but the storekeeper worked so diligently at cleaning his stone that he destroyed the holes and made his stone worthless. Such subtlety was, of course, beyond the comprehension of a common Chinese. It took the skill and intelligence of a Hui to fathom the value of that mysterious stone which functioned with the help of those mysterious ants (also Hui?), which knew when to appear to show the time. An interesting theme is recurrent in this and in previous stories: commercial deals are struck between Han sellers and Hui buyers (not the usual reverse, where the Hui sell and cheat), but the goods are kept until the next day, and the Hui always reappear in time, showing how trustworthy they are.

Other legends refer to natural phenomena, which the Hui were probably used to show that not only were they part of the Chinese landscape but that they had a hand in shaping it. A legend from Ningxia, for example, without specifying that the heroes are Hui, nevertheless indicates their origin by their names.

A poor peasant named A-dan (like the biblical and Qur'anic Adam), who could not pay the rent of his land, had to yield his only daughter, Fashimai (reminiscent of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet) to his landlord, who in turn wished to sell her to his cousin Yang Ermazi as a concubine. But the girl resists, she cuts off her beautiful braids and asks someone to deliver them to Yussufu (the Qur'anic Yussuf and biblical Joseph), a simple hired hand, whom she loves. When she is forced into the home of her new master, she jumps into an abyss and dies. When Yussufu learns the news, he cut her braids into small pieces and spreads them around the grounds. As a result, hair weeds spread everywhere and they still grow at the foot of the Mibo Shan.⁴⁸

This tale includes a touching and emotional love story with the fact that the Muslims in China (though not mentioned directly) would not tolerate marrying off their daughters to the Chinese and lose them, while the reverse was rife because it brought in Chinese wives. Another legend, also from Ningxia, tells of the miraculous revaluation of that impoverished land.

A phoenix flew to Yinchuan from the rich lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and makes it as luxuriant and lush as the south: flowers and grass grow everywhere, crops are abundant, and herds of cattle and sheep

roam the place. And when the enemy came to attack (probably a reference to the Qing onslaughts during the Ma Hualong Rebellion of the 1860s),⁴⁹ the phoenix turned into a city wall to defend the people. When the mythical bird is killed by a Chinese official, her blood turned into a water canal to irrigate the land of Ningxia. That is the reason why Ynichuan is also called Phoenix City (*Fenghuang Cheng*).⁵⁰

Other supernatural legends which changed specifically Hui areas in China, one from Ningxia and one from Henan, speak for themselves:

The Nianguang lake outside of Wuzhong City did not exist before. A grandfather, Ma Guoren, used to live in a village there, together with his grandson. One day, the child was crying because he was hungry, and the grandfather cut open the last gourd he had. Someone from the inside began talking, and a young boy came out of the gourd. Since the gourd was magic, it responded to anyone's wish, and so the people in the village were living well. However, a landlord, Ma Pancai, robbed the gourd, but it refused to yield to any of his requests for gold, silver or other treasures. Angry, he threw it into the fire, and a stream of water began bursting from it, which drowned the landlord and finally became a lake in the shape of a gourd. The poor people all around started watering their lands and lived happily ever after, and they called their lake Naiguang (the Light of Milk).⁵¹

After fighting to the West, Genghis Khan turned to attack the Jin Dynasty, and he left a garrison to guard Luoyang. A young commander in his troops, named Abudu. . . , in order to save a girl named Hunyin, killed someone and escaped to remote mountains. There, he married the girl, but since there was a drought, he had to dig for water. The well collapsed and Abudu was killed, only leaving his kerchief behind him. Hunyin was so grieved that she refused to outlive him. She was crying when a stream of pure water began flowing from the well and turning into a river. To commemorate Abudu, people there called the stream Chan River, that is, the Kerchief River. Because of Abudu's origins and customs, Hui began settling in the area of Luoyang.⁵²

While the above stories may be said to have been created to smooth the socio-cultural acceptance of the Hui in China, by either impressing the Han majority with their background, character and exploits, or mitigating the anti-Hui stereotypes that were rife among the Chinese,⁵³ it was much more difficult to explain away the positions of power some illustrious Hui reached during Chinese history, from Seyyid Edjell, who conquered and ruled Yunnan for the Yuan Dynasty, to Zheng He, the famous sailor and maritime explorer at the time of the Ming, to Du Wenxiu who carved out a Muslim kingdom for himself in Yunnan during the Ching and threatened its

hegemony in the Southwest. Some of the coming legends attempt to find rationalizations for those major events.

The Muslim uprising in Yunnan (1856-73), which threw all the Southwest into chaos during the decline of the Qing, aspired to establish an independent Muslim state headed by Du Wenxiu, around the fortified city of Dali.⁵⁴ Both internecine fighting among the Muslims and the Ching counter-attacks resulted in killings on a major scale. The stories created thereafter attempted either to sustain the legendary qualities of benevolent Du, or to provide explanations for the massacres that occurred. According to one of them, Du sent out one of his gifted commanders, Wang Guan, to guard Midu. But the general extorted money from the local people and slaughtered many of them. One of the escapees went to Du to complain against Wang and Du was so angered by his behavior that he decided to try and execute him, in spite of the many Muslims who pleaded for him arguing that "all Hui are one family." At the end, Du won popular support, not only from his people, but also from other nationalities.⁵⁵ Another story from Dali tells how Du shunned fame: popular support wanted to make him a Generalissimo, but he refused. Only after the crowds played some tricks on him did he finally yield to their will.⁵⁶

Seyyid Edjell, a Muslim chieftain from Central Asia and an ally of the Yuan (1279-1368), who made him the first Governor of the Province, has been historically credited with the vast water works introduced into his domain. To his known historical glory, however, local myths were grafted to strengthen Hui legitimacy in the province and make their ancestor the benefactor of the entire population thereof. According to this local legend, "Seyyid Edjell led the Hui soldiers to fight against 100 flood dragons in Kunming. Finally, the Hui troops locked the flood dragons up, built a big dam and got rid of the flood."⁵⁷ This story, which is somewhat parallel to the mythical figures of Chinese history⁵⁸ who had controlled the floods, certainly carries a nucleus of truth inasmuch as Seyyid Edjell is known to have constructed dams in Yunnan.⁵⁹ Another widespread story credits Seyyid Edjell as the progenitor of unity among the various nationalities of Yunnan: "When he was leading troops personally to fight in Yunnan, he took unity among various peoples there as important. He did not like to use military forces, and finally formed a friendly alliance with the King of Abo. As a result, the war stopped and the different nationalities were friendly to each other."⁶⁰ Evidently, the point is that not only was this Muslim hero courageous enough to personally lead his troops in battle, but he also sought harmony and peace among the people of Yunnan, although he was the Governor and a Hui. If this legend was spread after the

Du Wenxiu Rebellion, there is no doubt that it sought to assuage the harsh anti-Hui memories of that time of disunity and blood-letting.

Finally, two tales about Zheng He, the Muslim eunuch from Yunnan, who led seven sea voyages to the coast of Arabia and East Africa between 1405 and 1433, under the Ming Emperor.⁶¹ Regardless of his status as a eunuch, the Muslims throughout China venerated him for his exploits and the favor he achieved with the Yung-lo Emperor. Once again, the legends woven around him are meant to emphasize the lofty qualities which made him a worthy man in Chinese eyes:

When Zheng He was a child, his father often told him about foreign affairs and customs. At that time, he made his determination to travel far away across the seas and go on a pilgrimage to the Sacred Place [Mecca]. He swam every day until he attained high performance. Once, when a corrupt official was chased by the Ming troops, he tried to escape by a boat. But Zheng He jumped into the water and pushed the boat back to the shore. Due to his contribution [to state affairs], he was given a family name by the Emperor and kept as a eunuch in the Palace.⁶²

Another story situates Zheng He's exploits in Quan Zhou, Fujian, one of the first Chinese cities in which Muslim foreigners had settled and the base from which he set out for some of his daring navigations.

When Zheng He stayed in Quan Zhou for rest and reorganization before his fifth navigation to the West, he was acquainted with Guo Zhongyuan, a Hui old man. Zheng helped at that time solve a conflict between Hui and Han and arranged a match for the son of Guo. To thank Zheng, the Hui people there built [an official] welcoming pavilion at the Baiqi Ferry outside Huian, where they lived in a tightly-organized community. Zheng He's care for the Hui people and help to others have become current stories on everyone's lips to this day.⁶³

Here, Zheng He is an acknowledged universal Chinese hero, not a parochial Hui figure. His help and care extend to all Chinese and his mark on history is not merely limited to that of the Hui in China.

In Lieu of Summary

Remembrance among Chinese Muslims was no less a tool of self-defense, self-perpetuation and self-legitimization than a constant search for roots, for the traumatic events which had made the history of the Hui both a particular and peculiar trickle within the Middle Kingdom, and an integrated and undifferentiated part of the large stream of the Chinese Great Tradition. We have seen the admirable sense of creativity with which the Muslims traced back their coming to China, or simply stated, their being

part of it since its inception. The former was anchored in real events in Chinese history, such as the An Lushan Rebellion, or the historically acknowledged exploits of Seyyid Edjell; the latter was imputed to ancient China and the commonality of legends about Creation, or to the founding figures of Chinese history, such as Fu Xi, a common father to both.

It is noteworthy that other minorities in China such as the Jews, who had always been attached as an appendix to the much larger Muslim community, developed a similar strategy of survival. For example, Chinese Jews too had collated the legend that they arrived in China during the Han,⁶⁴ something evidently apocryphal, unless we are to believe that after the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth (AD 70), some Jews made their way to China, obviously well before Muslims, or unless we pick up those most imaginary tales about the lost tribes of Israel who have been dispersed throughout Asia since the destruction of the First Temple during the seventh century, BC. Other Jewish legends also related their genesis in China to Pan Gu, whom they charmingly renamed Pan Gu A-dan, thus merging the two founders into one.⁶⁵ Or, they simply took the legendary figure of Nu-Wa and reinterpreted it as biblical Noah,⁶⁶ probably because the former was also fabled to have mended the skies with five-colored stones and stopped the flooding waters, something of a feat like Noah's rainbow as the pledge of God that no more floods would destroy his creation on earth.⁶⁷ The organic proximity, both spiritual and material, of the Jews to their Muslim fellows must have generated a flow of ideas to-and-fro, which must have also contributed to the respective myth-building of the two communities.

It is also remarkable that the founding myth of the Muslims in China was based on a dream of an historical Emperor (Tai Zong or Xuan Zong of the Tang), a repetition of the same tool of myth-building that had previously been associated with the entrance of Buddhism into China during Han Mingdi of the Han. In both cases, it took many years before the religions themselves entered China, but their way was paved by their official acceptance by a reigning Emperor. In both cases, delegations were dispatched to foreign lands (India and the Muslim Empire of Da Shi, respectively), and foreign scholars came to China to help spread the new faith. The legend of Bodhidharma,⁶⁸ the monk who is said to have introduced Chan Buddhism from India into China around AD 520, was countered by the parallel Sa'd Ibn Waqqas uncle of the Prophet legend, which coincides, perhaps, with Wan Gars and his colleagues who arrived in the Tang court. However, it seems that Bodhidharma received harsher treatment from Chinese sources than the Hui's kind descriptions of Wan Gars:

Bodhidharma was depicted as “a fierce-looking fellow with a bushy beard and wide-open, penetrating eyes, which baffled anyone.” His encounter with Emperor Liang Wu-di (ca. AD 520), which determined the fate of Buddhism in China, was brief and abrupt. The Emperor described all he had done to promote the practice of Buddhism and asked what merit he had gained thereby—taking the popular view that Buddhism is a gradual accumulation of merit through good deeds which led to better incarnations and finally into the bliss of nirvana. But the monk answered: “No merit whatsoever!” This so undermined the Emperor’s idea of Buddhism that he asked “What, then, is the sacred Doctrine’s first principle?” The monk replied “It is just empty, there is nothing sacred.” “Who then are you?” asked the Emperor, “to stand before us?” “I do not know” was the reply.⁶⁹ Despite this unsatisfactory interview between the reigning Emperor and the legendary monk and the many objections of Confucian scholars to this teaching of emptiness, Buddhism was to fare well and attain its apogee under the Tang. Maybe it was due to its success that it could afford to advertise in its founding legend a straightforward and no-frill philosophy. Islam, the persecuted faith of the minority, never stopped, by contrast, ornamenting and sprucing up its façade, and making itself legitimate and acceptable, for fear that it might be totally eradicated by the overwhelming Chinese culture.

Never could one imagine in a Muslim myth in China such an intransigent dialogue as the one between the Emperor and the Buddhist monk. It would seem that in times of adversity and danger, especially in areas in which it constituted sizable communities, Islam in China learned to stand on its own feet, either by overthrowing the yoke and rebelling, even seeking secession, or by churning out ever creative and imaginative myths of acceptance and compatibility with the environment. A parallel dichotomy holds true in times of easing tensions and relative quiet too: the Muslims either assimilate into their Chinese environment, especially in tiny communities facing extinction, thus making good on their ancient pleading for compatibility between the host and guest cultures; or they rise in arms in demand for complete self-determination. Hui myth-building in China, which is sometimes shared by other non-Hui Muslim minorities (like the Uighurs in Xinjiang or the Dungans in the Northwest) can provide the “historical” infrastructure for either course of action. A vivid collective memory, expressed orally or in writing, and capable of expanding in time and in space, through the creation and diffusion of myths, legends, tales and stories, true and apocryphal, anchored in history or totally imaginary, all woven together into a powerful and resilient fabric of remembrance, is

what lends to Chinese Islam, Hui and otherwise, its extraordinary viability and longevity.

Endnotes

1. See e.g. the Sian Monument in Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1910), 84-5.
2. For the distinction between mainstream Islam and marginal Islam in China, see R. Israeli, "Established Islam and Marginal Islam in China: From Eclecticism to Syncretism," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol XXI (1978): 99-109.
3. Collected by Zhang Wenbin and first published in *Mianjian Wenxue*, No 1, 1981. See *Zhong-guo Hui-zu Da-ci-dian* (Jiangsu: Jiangsu Guji Chu-ban Shi, 1992), 461.
4. See e.g. 459, *op. cit.*
5. For the legend of Pan Gu, see Cotterell and Morgan *China: An Integrated Study* (London, 1975), 22.
6. Note the different transliteration of Adam's spouse name: Han-wu in contrast with Hai-er-ma previously, possibly due to the different regions of China where that legend spread orally, and which only when written down revealed the differences in intonation and pronunciation.
7. *Zhongguo Huizu Dacidian*, *op. cit.*, 459.
8. For details on Fu Xi, see Marcel Granet, *Chinese Civilization* (New York: 1958), 9, 10.
9. A. Vissiere, *Etudes Sino-Mohamétanes*, Vol. I (Leroux, Paris, 1911), 120-21.
10. W. Watson, *Early Civilization in China* (New York: Mc Graw Hill, 1966), 12.
11. See Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 25. See also A. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley: 1942), 1222-23.
12. The first three major Chinese Dynasties, according to traditional Chinese historical reckoning: the Xia, the Shang and the Zhou (approximately 2,200-200 BC).
13. These apparently refer to Yang Zhu (a fourth century BC Confucian philosopher) and Mo Zi (a fifth century BC utilitarian philosopher).
14. Cited by Vissiere, *op. cit.*
15. For details, see R. Israeli, *Muslims in China: a Study in Cultural Confrontation* (London: Curzon Press, 1980), Chapter III.
16. For a background on the Tang period, see Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia: the Great Tradition* (Boston: 1958), Chapters 5 and 6.
17. *Ibid.*
18. See Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China: a Neglected Problem* (London: 1910), 65-67.
19. For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 7-14.
20. For the entire story, see Reischauer and Fairbank, *op. cit.*, 123, 146.
21. *Ibid.*, 68-69.
22. For the An Lushan story, see *ibid.*, 191-92.
23. First published in *Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe* (Jiangsu: 1992), and picked up in *Zhongguo Huizu Dacidian*, *op. cit.*, 461.
24. *Ibid.*

25. The Muslims who settled in China in those days and down to the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), were associated with the Islamic Empire of the Abbasids (See R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, 190-92; and F.S. Drake, "Muhammedanism in the Tang Dynasty," *Monumenta Serica*, VIII (1943), 23, 34.
26. See footnote 14.
27. See footnote 23.
28. When the flag of the Republic of China was devised after the collapse of the Empire, the green stripe among the five represented the Hui people.
29. Narrated by Bei Wenhui and Ma Yuanqin, 1979. See Li Shujiang and Karl Luckert, *Mythology and Folklore of the Hui* (Albany: 1994), 237.
30. E.g. *ibid.* versus another story by Liu Sanjie, *The Origin of the Hui People*, written during the Ching Dynasty, *ibid.*, 239-40.
31. *Ibid.*, 237.
32. These non-Chinese and non-Arabic sounding names were transliterated by Li and Luckert who collected the legends orally and wrote them into their book, *op. cit.*
33. For the text, see *ibid.*, 238.
34. See R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, especially chapter II.
35. Liu Sanjie, excerpted by Li and Luckert, *op. cit.*, 239-40.
36. Narrated by Wu Jinlong from Ningxia, and recounted in Li and Luckert, *op. cit.*, 240-42.
37. *Ibid.*, 241.
38. For the story of these various appellations, see R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, Chapter II, especially 22-23.
39. Narrated by Ma Jinhai of Linxia, Gansu and published in Li and Luckert, *op. cit.*, 242-43.
40. Narrated by Ma Quanfu of Linxia, Gansu and published *ibid.*, 244-45.
41. Narrated by Wu Wangliang of Xinjiang and published *ibid.*, 245-48.
42. See R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, 22-23.
43. *Ibid.*, especially Chapter III.
44. *Ibid.*, 22-24.
45. *Zhongguo Huizu Da cidian* (Jiangsu: Jiansu Guji Chuban, 1992), 459.
46. *Ibid.*
47. See footnote 45, 459-60.
48. Collected by Li Dexiu and published in *Zhongguo Huizu Dacidian*, *op. cit.*, 460.
49. For the story of the rebellion, see Chu Wen-djang, *The Muslim Rebellion in Northwest China* (Mouton, 1966).
50. *Ibid.*
51. Collected by Ma Xiaojan and published *ibid.*, 460.
52. *Ibid.*, 460-61.
53. See R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, Chapters 2-3.
54. *Ibid.*, 27-28, 114-15.
55. *Zhongguo Huizu Dacidian*, *op. cit.*, 457.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, 463.
58. Many legendary rulers in ancient China, such Fu Xi, the Yellow Emperor and Emperor Yu, were credited with the power to control floods, one of the recurrent disasters in the Yellow River Basin, the cradle of Chinese civilization.
59. See *Mission D'Ollone*, cited by R. Israeli, *op. cit.*, 81.
60. Collected by Li Qingsheng and recounted in *Zhongguo Huizu Dacidian*, 463.
61. See Israeli, 60, 83.

62. *Ibid.*, 463.
63. Collected in Quan Zhou, *ibid.*, 469.
64. See A. Neubauer, "Jews in China," in *Studies of Chinese Jews: Some Western Views*, ed. H. Kublin (New York: Paragon Publishing, 1971).
65. H. Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1878), 1607.
66. D. Mac Gillivray, "The Jews of Honan: a Tragic Story of Submergence," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, LIX (1928).
67. *Ibid.*, 31.
68. See Reischauer and Fairbank, 172.
69. A. Cotterell and D. Morgan, *China: an Integrated Study* (London: 1975), 70-71.