

**MYTHOLOGY AND  
FOLKLORE OF THE HUI,  
A MUSLIM CHINESE PEOPLE**

**MYTHOLOGY AND  
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A MUSLIM CHINESE PEOPLE**

**Shujiang Li  
Karl W. Luckert**

**Translations by Fenglan Yu,  
Zhilin Hou, and Ganhui Wang**

**Chinese Editorial Assistance, Zongqi Yu  
Assistance with Arabic, Mahmoud Abu Saud**

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of  
Martha M. Metz (1896–1986)  
and  
Mahmoud Abu Saud (1914–1993)**

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# Preface

*Mythology and Folklore of the Hui* is placed into the hands of English readers for the first time. A small number of the stories that are included were written down in dynastic times. A few more in this collection were recorded in the decades before the disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) that erased most of the humanities, and much of China's historiography and culture, from her system of education. While early dynastic stories were written primarily to explain the Hui or Muslim presence over against the Han majority, some samples from the early 1960s show the restless Hui minority more or less in accord with contemporary revolutionary goals and with nation building. A trace of this sentiment has also shown up, here and there, after the Cultural Revolution, during the late 1970s and early 1980s. During the 1980s and into the 1990s Professor Li Shujiang, as director of the Nationalities Literature Center at the University of Ningxia, has, in collaboration with colleagues and graduate students, organized a team effort for collecting Hui mythology and folklore. Most of the stories in this collection were recorded by this group during the 1980s. Some stories were previously published by various institutions in China.

Meanwhile, during the 1970s and 1980s, the American co-author, Karl W. Luckert, had developed his own love for ethnology and folklore. He has recorded and published a number of Navajo Indian oral traditions. In collaboration with the Museum of Northern Arizona Press and the University of Nebraska Press he has published the American Tribal Religions book series. As an historian of religions he felt obliged to look beyond his American Indian area of emphasis. When China again opened its doors to foreign scholars he began traveling there since 1987, in search of folklore.

We thank professors Chen Yongling, Wei Cuiyi, Li Zengxiang, Hu Zhenhua, and others at the Central Institute for Nationalities, in Beijing, for their assistance and mediation. When Li Shujiang and Karl W. Luckert finally met at the University of Ningxia, in 1988, with the assistance of Mahmoud Abu Saud, they benefited from the goodwill and wise counsel of professors Zhang Kuei and Wang Shiyi.

Foremost appreciation for the existence of this volume is expressed, of course, to all the Hui people who have shared their stories with the world and with us. We also thank our friend, Chuma Wang Zhengwei, for his cooperation and for his many suggestions while the authors planned this collection. A special word of thanks is offered to Ningxia governmental as well as Hui religious leaders who have permitted our work and helped it along. In addition, field assistance to the authors was rendered by Chuma Wang Zhengwei, Wang Ganhui, Yu Fenglan, Hou Zhilin, Li Zengxiang, Zhou Pengqi, Li Shuanzhu, and Zhao Hui.

Translation of *Mythology and Folklore of the Hui* into English was first done in two parts, in Ningxia. Yu Fenglan has translated the first half, and Hou Zhilin and Wang Ganhui together have done the second half. Their translations were then revised by Luckert with the help of Yu Zongqi, who worked under a graduate assistant stipend provided by Southwest Missouri State University. The translators, in continual dialogue with Li and Luckert, have in turn reexamined the revisions.

Commentary was initially provided by Li and Luckert in approximately equal portions. Chinese introductory materials were translated by Yu Fenglan and adapted by Luckert to accommodate Western modes of curiosity and limitations. The extent to which the Chinese author's original contributions were omitted, neglected, or distorted in the Preface, Introduction, and the texts, should be considered the fault of the American co-author. Mahmoud Abu Saud has provided information and suggestions about Arabic roots and nuances; Jeffrey T. Kenney and Christopher Melchert have helped solve Arabic puzzles as well. Heidi Luckert helped with a round of proofreading. We thank Gregory D. Alles, Gary L. Ebersole, Wei Cuiyi, Dru C. Gladney, and Thomas J. Barfield, as well as some readers who remain anonymous, for having read the manuscript and having offered helpful suggestions. All mistakes that have survived in spite of the good advice of these people remain the burden of the American co-author.

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# Mythology and Folklore of the Hui, A Muslim Chinese People

Shujiang Li and Karl W. Luckert

"Not only does this amazing corpus contribute much to our understanding of the tremendous cultural and religious variety found within both Chinese and Islamic societies, but it challenges our conceptions and compartmentalizations of each."

—Dru C. Gladney, *University of Southern California*

"There is no comparable study of the Hui in a Western language. It will help break down the monolithic image we still have of China by bringing to light the vibrant cultural world of a minority people."

—Gary L. Ebersole, *The University of Chicago*

**Li Shujiang** is Vice President of the University of Ningxia and Director of its Research Center for Hui Nationality Literature. He is the author of *Hui Folk Stories; A Historical Outline of Hui Folk Literature;* and *Hui Culture and Literature;* and co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Chinese Hui.*

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