

The Hui (Muslim) Minority in China-II

Hajji Yusuf Chang

The golden millenium of Chinese Islam began in 31 AH/651 AC, and ended in 1054 AH/1644 AC. During these 993 years, the believers in Islam developed from their status of scattered settlers into a full-grown minority. The Hui minority which consisted of Arab, Persian, and Central Asian Muslims and their Chinese spouses, was probably an unprecedented creation as a religious-multiracial people who were united together as an ethnic group by the teachings of Islam. In the concluding part of his historical overview, Hajji Yusuf Chang depicts the golden as well as the dark periods for Islam in China.

Chinese Communist Policy Towards Hui Minority

The Peoples' Republic of China declared its policy on religion in Article 46 of the 1954 Constitution and in its revised version. It stated: "Citizens enjoy the freedom to believe in religion, the freedom not to believe in religion, and the freedom to propagate atheism." At the same time the government continued to espouse the orthodox Marxist-Leninist conviction that religious practices are harmful to the people and must be made subordinate to state control. In order to carry out this policy, the Chinese government has taken the following steps since 1950:

1. Persuade the clergy and practitioners to abandon their religious positions and join the labour force.
2. Ban all contributions of money and property to religious organizations.
3. Confiscate all property used for religious purposes.
4. Start public education campaign to discourage religious beliefs.
5. Use force to disperse opposition by re-

ligious groups if necessary.²²

The purpose of these religious policies of the Chinese Communist government is, obviously, to uproot totally the Confucianist humanitarian traditions, the Taoist and Buddhist establishments, the Christian kingdom-on-earth theory, and the Islamic religion-and-daily-life-in-one philosophies from Chinese society. Communism is an atheistic and anti-God religion.

The Communists planned to minimize the value of religion which, according to Marxism, had to be eliminated through a proletarian cultural revolution. But they also attempted to maximize the value of nationalities because Communist power could be consolidated only on the mobilization of all nationalities in the building of a unified China. Therefore, they came to classify Muslims in China and Sinkiang as ethnic groups, not as religious-ethnic minorities. They were correct with respect to the nine non-Chinese Muslim peoples, but they were

wrong in so regarding the Hui minority.

Initially under Communist rule, all religions in China were on the verge of destruction. During the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), masterminded by Mao Tse-tung and led by his wife, Chiang Ch'ing, the government was practically in the hands of the Red Guards who were uneducated youths, aged between 15 and 30. They killed millions of innocent people and punished thousands of high Communist officials, including the strong man of China, Teng Hsiao-ping (1903-). They destroyed numerous cultural establishments, Confucianist edifices, Buddhist and Taoist temples, Christian churches and Islamic mosques. The whole country was plunged into hell fire as if it was ignited by the evil spirits of the Boxers of the 19th century that rang the death-bell for the Ch'ing empire.

In order to destroy Islam, the Red Guards formed the Revolutionary Study Group for the abolition of Islam,²³ which called for forcing Muslims to marry with the Han, the closing of all mosques, sending the Ahongs (Imams) to work in the field, prohibiting Muslims to read the Qur'an, abolishing circumcision, cancelling Muslim holidays, dispersing all Islamic organizations and replacing traditional Muslim burial practices with cremation!

Because the present Communist authorities in Beijing, some of whom were victimized at the hands of the Red Guards, have moderated their policies towards Islam, I do not wish

to dwell at length on the crimes committed by the Red Guards. I just wish to mention, however, one sad little episode which may help the readers understand the suffering Chinese Muslims experienced during the inhuman Cultural Revolution. My old friend, the highly honoured Imam of Beijing Haji Abdurahim Ma Sung-t'ing, who is presently 94 years old, was sent by the Red Guards to a work camp in Honan province for two years. Being an old man, he had to labour in the field to raise chickens. Later, he was ordered to plant rice. Finally, he was forced to feed pigs. I visited him in Peking in 1980. He told me of his personal suffering and humiliation. When he talked about feeding the pigs, neither he nor I could hold back our tears!

The death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976 marked the end of the Cultural Revolution. His widow, Chiang Ch'ing, and three other accomplices — the Gang of Four — went to jail. Their imprisonment paved the way for Teng Hsiao-ping's comeback to power in Communist China. He restored some human rights and freedoms.

Since 1976, Communist authorities also began to accept the idea that Islam was the force which united the Arab, Persian and Central Asian Muslims and their Chinese spouses into an ethnic-religious minority in Yuan-Ming times. They also came to understand that Chinese Islam as a religion was part of the Islamic World. As a result, they returned many confiscated mosques to the Muslims and renovated some of the ancient ones in Peking, Nanking, Canton and Sinkiang. They also opened many schools for Muslim children, reactivated the Peking Islamic Theological Institute, enlarged the Institute of Minorities and built the Ninghsia Academy of Social Sciences and several schools of Islamic studies in other provinces.

In cities, the Hui are now allowed

to operate their restaurants and perform religious services at the mosques without harassment. But in view of the actual size of the Hui population, which according to our careful estimate is approximately 40,000,000, the mosques, schools and other educational institutes they have now are far below the number to which they are entitled.

Population of all Muslim Minorities in Modern China

For more than a century, the size of the Chinese Muslim population has been a controversial subject among Chinese Muslims, Western and Eastern scholars and historians. During the last twenty centuries, China was ruled by different royal houses who built different dynasties. The emperor of each dynasty was the head of the royal family. Within the empire, the non-Chinese nationalities were satellites who had no influence in the government. After the Ch'ing empire was overthrown by the Nationalists, China became a Republic formed by five ethnic peoples: the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tsang (Tibetan). Each member held its influence in the government in proportion to its population; the Han Chinese, as the majority, held the greatest power.

In view of this political importance of demography the Hui minority from the beginning of the Republican period has been working hard to ascertain its actual size. Yet for more than seventy years, it has failed to determine its correct population size.

In 1878, the French Consul-General in China, M de Thiersant, who devoted eighteen years to investigate Chinese Muslim population, estimated their total at 20,000,000 in the 19th century,²⁴ with which, according to my research, I totally agree. Early in the 20th century the Christian Inland Mission made spot investigations in China Proper, Sinkiang, Manchuria and Mongolia. It gave a total of 9,821,000²⁵ which was

50% less than what was estimated by Thiersant. This discrepancy could be due to an incomplete coverage of all the Muslim regions, as well as to poor communication facilities at that time.

After the Christian missionary investigations, Muslims, who were regarded as one of the Five Races of the Republic of China, proclaimed "There are 50,000,000 Muslims in China". Obviously, this was an exaggeration. But in 1938, the Nationalist Republic of China repeated the error by announcing that there were 48,104,240²⁶ Muslims in China.

In 1953, four years after the Communist victory over the Nationalists, the Peking government declared China's Muslim population to be only 7,827,475. In 1957, the total was increased slightly to 7,977,000. In 1961, it became 8,665,267. And in 1980, it was changed to 13,152,000.²⁷ Finally, in 1982 the new census claimed that the total population of the ten Muslim minorities was 14,598,654,²⁸ of which the Hui constituted 7,219,352, and the other nine minorities, 7,379,302. The total Muslim population in 1982, according to the census, was even smaller than the 9,821,000 estimated by the Christian Inland Mission in early 20th century.

Assuming that the Communist estimate is correct, the increase in Muslim population from 1953 to 1982 would be:

(1982) 14,598,654 - (1953)
7,827,475 = (increase) 6,771,179. As
we can see, this reflects an 86.5%
increase over a period of 29 years.
Based on this rate of increase, the
total Muslim population in China in
1924 can be retroactively calculated
thus:
(1953) 7,827,475 - (29-year increase
at 86.5%) 3,630,437 = (1924)
4,197,038.

This figure is only about one-fifth of the Muslim in population in the 19th century. Were this true, there



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must have been fewer than 4,197,038 Muslims in China in the 19th century. If so, it would be impossible for some Chinese Western historians to assert that more than 10,000,000 Muslims were killed during the Ch'ing period. Can we find any population or census expert who believes that the Chinese Communist authorities have tendered accurate figures?

Data indicates that the Chinese population was 438,425,000 in 1910, 582,603,417 in 1953, and 1,008,000,000 in 1982. If the Chinese population increased by 130% between 1910 and 1982, why have the Muslims been reduced in size from 25,000,000 in 1900 to 14,598,654 in 1982? This is a good enough instance to show that the Peking authorities have, intentionally or unintentionally, distorted facts and figures. The size of the Muslim population is a very important problem for us to solve. Why is the official figure, 14,598,654, incorrect? Why is our estimate 40,000,000 correct? To answer these questions, let us first explain how we estimated the Muslim population, particularly, the Hui minority of the T'ang-Sung-Yuan-Ming periods:

The above figures are the various dynastic totals of the Hui minority. The Hui total during the Ch'ing was 20,000,000. If we add Sinkiang-Kansu Muslim minorities to this figure, that would make it at least 25,000,000 by the end of the 19th century.

Taking the 25,000,000 as the initial figure in 1912, the total Muslim population in China should have increased to 40,000,000 over a period of 70 years. This estimate is the close-to-the-fact total that I have insisted on for many years.

It is a well known fact that the birth rate of the Muslims is higher than that of the Han Chinese, but the Communist census shows that the size of the Muslim population has been shrinking from 25,000,000 in 1912 to 14,598,654 in 1982; while the total Chinese population has been increasing from 462,798,093 to 1,008,000,000 during the same period. This is impossible to accept.

Our estimates are deduced from historical statistics. They are more reliable and reasonable than either the exaggerated Nationalist figures or the minimized Communist figures. The Nationalist exaggerated

the Muslim population with the possible intention of pleasing the Muslims in order to keep them under control. The Communists minimize the size of the Muslim population for various reasons:

first, to reduce the Hui political and social base; second, to transform the Hui minority into a multiracial group without the spiritual domination of Islam; and third, the most important, to find excuses to transfer large groups of Han Chinese into the vast Muslim areas in order to enhance the Han population.

Keys to the Survival

The Chinese Hui Minority is the "Child of Islam". Without Islam as its religion, it is a multiracial group, not a Muslim minority. The Chinese Nationalists want the Hui to be a religious group and ignore their ancestral identity. The Chinese Communists want the Hui to be a multiracial minority and forsake their religious faith.

It is true that the Communists, in the long run, would not allow religions to survive. But under international and domestic political circumstances, the Communists would moderate their anti-religious policies and tolerate the existence of religions. While the ideological confrontation between the East and the West continues, China without much fanfare is changing her domestic and foreign policies.

Let us look at Mao Tse-tung and Teng Hsiao-ping. The former was the totalitarian ruler now deceased, the latter is the most powerful man in China at present. When Mao Tse-tung was in power, he was like a god to the Chinese. His *Red Book* was their bible. His word was law. After his death in 1976, his widow, Chiang Ch'ing, was sent to jail. His *Red Book* disappeared from book stores. His image was greatly diminished. In his place Teng Hsiao-ping now controls the Communist Party and the Peoples' Liberation Army. He has also replaced many of Mao's

Dynasty	Settlers		Settlers & Wives Chinese (in thousands)	Years of Natural Growth	Population Ending Dynasty
	Old (in thousands)	New (in thousands)			
T'ANG	---	40	80	240 years	500 thousand
SUNG	500	15.3	600	300 years	2000 thousand
YUAN	2000	2000	4000	89 years	4000 thousand
MING	4000	---	4000	276 years	20000 thousand
CH'ING	20000	-10000	+10000	268 years	20000 thousand

policies and loyalists with his own.

The capitalist United States, which was China's arch-enemy during the Korean War, is now considered China's friend. If the Communist authorities can change their foreign policy to gain the friendship of a capitalist country, then they can soften their atheistic attitude toward the Chinese Muslims to maintain internal peace and improve relations with the Muslim World.

In order to build a peaceful, prosperous and strong China, the Chinese governments need the Muslims to modernize the agricultural, industrial and military enterprises in the Great Northwest. The Muslims should pledge loyalty to their government by doing whatever they can in accomplishing these goals in return for their religious freedom. Religious freedom cannot be fully regained by the Muslims unless they fulfil their duties to the government, live in harmony with the Han people and reactivate all Islamic activities.

Hui Minority Population Census

Why does the Communist government not want to disclose the actual size of the Hui minority? My answer is that Peking does not want the Hui minority to know its religious-ethnic strength. If the Hui do not realize their potential power, they would not know what positions they are entitled to, what duties they should perform and what privileges they have a right to. Once they know the exact size of their population, they would know how many Muslims should be in military services, how many representatives they should have in the peoples' assembly, what kind of national enterprises they should participate in, what special areas should be allocated to them, what special schools should be established for their children and so on. They are legally entitled to all these rights in proportion to the size of their population.

As it is difficult to rely upon Chinese authorities to disclose the

actual size of the Muslim population, we suggest that the following steps be taken by the Muslims, particularly the Hui minority, to start a Muslim population census movement as soon as possible:

1. There were more than 40,000 mosques²⁹ in China before the Communist Revolution. The majority of them were either confiscated, damaged, or destroyed by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Legally, the Chinese Muslims have a right to ask the Communist government for indemnity. They should organize themselves and petition the Communist authorities for funds to reopen, repair and rebuild their mosques. We believe that the Communist officials will accept their requests.
2. With the government's indemnity funds, part of the damaged mosques can be repaired. Whenever one mosque has been reactivated, the Muslims under its jurisdiction should elect a qualified man to head it. Among his religious duties, the "census" investigation should be a top priority.
3. There should be a head organization in charge of the census project which should be coordinated with the Chinese Islamic Association in Peking.
4. The census project, which would take several years to accomplish, would need enormous funds. These, as suggested earlier, may be allotted from the government's mosque indemnity payments. It would also need tremendous manpower which should be voluntarily contributed by the Muslims. It is a very crucial, arduous and expensive mission that the Hui minority can neglect only at grave peril to its future.

Hui-Han Compatibility

Contrasting religious faiths and living habits have deepened the differences between the Hui minority

and the Han majority. Muslims believe only in Allah, the Han Chinese worship ancestors, Confucius, Laotzu, Buddha and spirits, individually or in groups. Muslims do not eat pork nor drink wine, but Han people refuse to live without them. If you ask an uneducated Muslim: "Why are you a Hui?" He would answer: "I believe in Allah and I do not eat pork". The mass of the Chinese Muslims believe that eating pork is the greatest sin. Any Muslim who eats pork will be ostracized by the Muslim community and will not be admitted in the group as a Muslim. We do not know who made this tough law for the Muslims, but because of it, the Chinese Muslims, who had been indoctrinated by the Imams for centuries against eating pork, even sacrificed their lives fighting the Han rulers that forced them to eat pork. Islam in China was partly protected by this law. The prohibition against pork has become practically the most important distinguishing characteristic of a Hui Muslim and a very effective weapon in safeguarding Islam.³⁰

If one travels in Kansu province, one will observe that the Hui and Han live in separate villages. In a Hui village, the streets are clean and people are healthy. There is no drinking, smoking, gambling and prostitution. The Hui are proud of themselves. There have always been hostile feelings between the Hui and the Han. If a Han woman married a Hui, her family would forsake her. Her children would not be accepted by her parents as their grandchildren. Rarely would a Muslim woman marry a non-Muslim Han. If she did, she would be punished by the Imam, according to the Islamic law of old times.

In the light of the above, how can the relations between the Hui and Han be harmonious, particularly at the present time when China is ruled by the atheistic Communists? The answer is not an easy one. As a Hui historian, I worry about the differ-

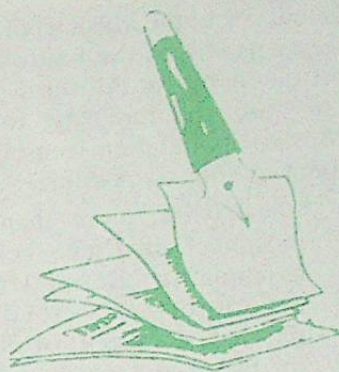
ences between the Hui and the Han. For many years, I have tried to establish a philosophical understanding and an ethnic link between these two different, but deeply related, peoples. Now I feel that the following analysis may hopefully produce a satisfactory resolution of this problem.

First, it must be noted that the Hui minority are the descendants of the Arabs, Persians and Central Asians on their paternal side; but they are also the descendants of the Chinese on their maternal side. Since they were legally recognized as Chinese citizens in the Yuan Dynasty, they have lived in China and abandoned any desire of returning to the West. The 40,000,000 Hui born in China will die in China. China is their motherland. They are Han cousins, a historical fact that cannot be denied. Thus, the Hui have to love the Han and the Han should treat them as cousins. Their mutual love and cooperation will certainly ensure their coexistence and co-prosperity.

Second, the Hui were never disloyal to the T'ang-Sung-Yuan-Ming dynasties. They revolted only against the Ch'ing dynasty, which adopted anti-Muslim genocidal policies. They were forced to revolt. The Ch'ing government, under the influence of Han politicians, wanted to eliminate the Hui. That, of course, was wrong. Hereafter, the Muslims, including non-Chinese Muslim minorities in Sinkiang must not plan to pursue secession. It will never be achieved, no matter who rules China. Loyalty to the ruling authorities is the only way for the Muslims to survive. However, Chinese governments also must treat the Muslims with dignity, justice and generosity, to win their loyalty.

(Courtesy: Al-Ilm, University of Durban-Westville. The writer is a former lecturer in Chinese at the University of Chicago, Chicago, U.S.A.)

(Concluded)



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China Applies Curb to Muslim Xinjiang

China is limiting the numbers of mosques and Qur'anic schools in Muslim-majority Xinjiang province as a part of a broad campaign launched to stem the rise of Islamic movement. Her six-point action plan includes an assortment of warnings against "hostile foreign forces" engaging in proselytizing and stirring up tensions, the *Xinjiang Daily* paper said in its March 11 issue.

The move underscores the increasing worry among Chinese federal officials that the autonomous north-western province of 15 million people, many of them Uyghurs of Turkic descent, might become gripped by the kind of religious and nationalist fever that has erupted in neighbouring Soviet-occupied Central Asia. The province borders the Soviet republics of Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

As Xinjiang is off limits to foreign journalists, the seriousness of the potentially explosive situation could not be immediately confirmed. But occasional travellers to the area have reported arrests, and the handing out of tracts urging the faithful to mobilize, particularly in Kashgar and Urumqi.

The head of the regional government, Tomur Dawamat, recently stated his determination to "smash" saboteurs, whom he called "the scum of the nation." The *Xinjiang* paper said the federal battle plan was announced on March 10 by the speaker of the provincial general assembly, Amudun Niyaz, during a joint session with representatives of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference — a Communist Party advisory body — with "religious leaders" also present.

The plan reiterated "the absolute supremacy of the party over religion" and ordered a halt to activities by those "who require non-believers to practise religion." It also criticized the "opening of Qur'anic schools" and called for a campaign against "the penetration of hostile forces coming from abroad."

Amudun stressed that it was forbidden "to proselytize in the monasteries and mosques." Using the excuse of not wanting to burden the faithful with religious taxes, local Communist authorities have said that the existing mosques were "sufficiently numerous to care for the believers' needs" and, therefore, all new construction would henceforth be "subject to prior authorization." Religious officials were told to "contribute to the social unity and stability of the nation" and to dis-associate themselves from those "who propagate separatist views under the religious pretexts, while attacking national unity." Amudun warned that these "provocateurs" were linked to "hostile foreign forces," and said he hoped that China's "religious friends would continue to serve the edification of socialism, to actively help the party ... and to support government family planning efforts."

China has notably exempted its Muslim citizens, largely hostile to contraception, from its single-child population policy. Last May, Iran's then-president Ali Khamenie toured Xinjiang during an official visit and said: "I have the feeling that China's Muslims are satisfied with government policy toward them on the issue of freedom of religion."

The return to power in 1978 of China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, signalled an end to the religious persecution common during the 1966 to 1976 Cultural Revolution. Nonetheless, Kashgar was the scene of anti-Chinese demonstrations during the 1980s, and there were reports of demonstrations there during China's pro-democracy movement in 1989.

Chinese officials have not identified the "hostile forces" held responsible for the revival of unrest, but many Muslims cross the Soviet-Chinese border, which despite the presence of additional Chinese troops, remains porous. Diplomats said they see Muslim activities as an element that could cause tension between the two Socialist powers, which were publicly reconciled in 1989 after a 30-year rift in relations.

They said Beijing's measures in Xinjiang could also possibly backfire by heightening tensions there, making the province a flashpoint for domestic unrest just a year after anti-Chinese demonstrations in the Tibetan capital Lhasa led to the imposition of martial law that is still in effect. (AFP) — Denis Hiault.