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Too Far from Mecca, Too Close to Peking: The Ethnic Violence and the Making of Chinese Muslim Identity, 1821-1871

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"聖城太遠，皇城太近"

杜文秀起義與雲南回民的身份認同

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Abstract: This paper discusses the Han-Hui ethnic conflicts during the 19th century in Yunnan, China. Between 1821 and 1856 a series of ethnic riots took place between the dominant Han Chinese and the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group in Yunnan. This paper attempts to explain how the Hui's blended identity as both Chinese and Muslims caused the two ethnic group's misconceptions of each other, and how these misconceptions were reinforced by the nation-building efforts of Imperial China. This paper also sheds lights on the contemporary ethnic relationship on China's western frontier.

Key Words: Ethnic Identity, Ethnic Riots, Yunnan, China, Islam.

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I. Ethnic violence in Yunnan, 1821—1856 (Wang 1974, 351-52)

II. Hui Communities in China (purple dots) (Picture courtesy of Igor Tchoukarine)

III. Hui Muslims in Yunnan, photographed in the backyard of a local Mosque, circa 1880.

IV. The name seal of Panthay Rebellion leader Du Wenxiu, on which both titles in Chinese and Arabic are presented. The Chinese title reads “Generalissimo of all Armies and Calvary”, while the Arabic script means “leader of all Muslims”

The Ethnic Violence and the Making of Chinese Muslim Identity

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I. Introduction

The year 1821 was a memorable year for China. Prince Minning, after a grandiose ceremony of succession, ascended the throne and became the sixth emperor of the Qing Dynasty. When the whole empire was celebrating the anointment of the new ruler, a brawl among miners in the western province of Yunnan seemed but a trivial episode. On April 15, 1821, a Han Chinese worker, Xu Shixiong, defecated in front of the mining camp of Ma Liangcai, a Muslim foreman. Xu was immediately caught by Ma's fellow workers, who beat him publicly with a rod. This trivial dispute suddenly agitated the anti-Muslim sentiment among Han Chinese miners. Within two days three hundred Han workers gathered in a Buddhist temple to prepare for revenge actions, while two hundred Muslims, in response, took up arms to defend themselves in a local mosque.[1] A bloody confrontation between Han Chinese and Muslims occurred on the night of April 17th, which resulted in 23 people dead and hundreds wounded on both sides. The unexpected escalation of the situation confused the Governor of Yunnan, who asked, in his memorial to the Emperor, "why did a trivial dispute like this evolved into a large-scale unrest?"[2]

The riot in the Baiyang silver mine was only one example of frequent ethnic conflicts between Han Chinese and the Hui people, a Muslim ethnic minority native

[1] The Governorate of Yunnan and the Judicial Commissioner's Office of Yunnan (1821), The Court Record of the Armed Fight between Han and Hui in Baiyangchang (Baiyangchang Han-Hui Xiedouan 白羊廠漢回械鬥案), Yunnan Provincial Library. Retreived August 20, 2013

[2] Original Text in Chinese: "臣史等以徐士雄在馬思訓(石曹)門便溺，事甚細微，何致互相糾鬥？"

to Yunnan Province, in the early 19th century. Large-scale riots also occurred in 1800, 1839 and 1845 respectively, each with increasing violence and degree of organization. In 1800, Han bandits in Mianning County raided the local Muslim community and killed over 170 Hui Muslim families. The Muslims responded with a counterattack several months later. In 1821, a verbal altercation between two Han and Muslim young men evolved into a full-scale attack on the Muslim neighborhood in Baoshan, resulting in the massacre of 400 Hui Muslim households.[3] In 1845, a troop of Han Chinese militia backed by local magistrates stormed the Muslim community in Dali City and caused over 1400 casualties.[4] The degree of violence in these riots surpassed most civil unrests in 19th-century China.

The series of ethnic conflicts finally triggered a massive rebellion of Hui Muslim people, known as Panthay Rebellion in history. In 1856, several thousands of Hui people took up arms and occupied the City of Dali, the political center of Western Yunnan. The Muslim rebels marched eastward and sieged the provincial capital Kunming and founded a separatist regime called the "Pingnan State". The imperial Governor Shuxinga committed suicide after losing control over the province. The Hui Muslim regime consistently fought with the imperial army in the following two decades and ended up decisively defeated by the imperial army in 1871.

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[3] Lin Quan. 2006. "Du wen xiu qi yi yan jiu" 杜文秀起義研究 (A Research on Du Wenxiu Rebellion). Kun ming: Yun nan min zu chu ban she. (The Chinese academia no consensus of the actual number of Hui casualty; this article chooses the commonly referred statistics in academic works). 63.

[4] Lin Quan. 2006. "Du wen xiu qi yi yan jiu" 杜文秀起義研究 (A Research on Du Wenxiu Rebellion). Kun ming: Yun nan min zu chu ban she. 63.

This study explores the cause of ethnic unrests in the 19th century Yunnan from the perspective of identity politics. It begins with exploring the development of the Hui Muslims' self-perception in the historical context. The Hui descended from Persian-speaking Inner Asian immigrants who came to China during the Mongol Conquest in the 13th century. In their 600-year interaction with the Chinese society, two major tendencies heavily impacted the formation of a distinctive Hui identity: first, their desire to justify their status as legitimate Chinese subjects by assimilating Chinese customs and culture; second, their hope to preserve their Islamic heritage by distinguishing themselves from the dominant Han Chinese with their Muslim practices. The Hui struggled to retain their ancestral identity as Muslims while gain recognition as Chinese in the society. Many Hui scholars made efforts to reinforce the internal consistency between Islam and Confucianism by applying Confucian principles to explain Islamic concepts. The Hui viewed their cultural assimilation not as a betrayal of Muslim principles, but rather as a necessary compromise to justify their practice of Islam in the Han-dominated society.

Next, this paper discusses how the Hui's historical evolution shaped their contemporary identity in 19th-century China. On one hand, most Hui people adopted a significant portion of Chinese traditions and showed little difference from neighboring Han Chinese in language, appearance, family structure and secular lifestyle. On the other hand, their religion played the central role in defining their ethnic identity and clearly distinguishing them from the Han population. The Hui's

shared religious belief and cultural practice created a strong group identity that united them into ethnic enclaves and separated them from the surrounding Han neighborhoods. The Hui's partial assimilation to Chinese culture and their religious heritage as Muslims created ambiguity for their ethnic status in the Chinese society.

This paper then shows how the Hui's blended identity conflicted with the ethnic norm of Han Chinese society. The Han's traditional view of ethnicity, a binary division of all human beings into "civilized (*Hua*)" and "barbarians (*yi*)" categories based on their degree of civilization. The Han Chinese were considered as "civilized" and a superior group destined to rule, while all non-Han populace was viewed as "barbarians" subjected to rule. The imperial courts of Ming and Qing Dynasties adopted different governing policies toward Han and non-Han peoples based on this binary categorization. The Han-inhabited regions were governed directly by the Imperial mandarins appointed by the emperor, while the non-Han population were allowed to retain their own customary rules and were governed indirectly through indigenous tribal chiefs. Yunnan, a border province with a significant non-Han population, was the most significant example of this differentiated governing policy.

The rapid increase of the ethnic Hui population in 19th-century Yunnan posed a great challenge to the Chinese view of ethnicity and the empire's governing strategies. The Hui did not fit comfortably into either ethnic category. Their considerable degree of assimilation made them distinct from indigenous peoples outside the Chinese cultural influence, but their strong Muslim identity prevented

them from integrating into the Han community. The blended characteristics of Hui ethnicity defied the existing order of ethno-cultural hierarchy in Yunnan by blurring the boundary between the Han and the non-Han. The internal solidarity and self-segregation of Hui Muslim neighborhoods further raised suspicion and anxiety from outside. Many Han documents in the 19th century condemned the "weird" cultural practices of the Hui and depicted the group as foreign, disobedient and disloyal. The Han society's prejudice against Hui cultural practice contributed to the ethnic violence in Yunnan.

The outbreak of Panthay Rebellion in 1857 was the Hui Muslim's radical response to the mass violence generated by this identity conflict. The establishment of a Hui-led regime not only attempted to reshape the Hui's identity, but also to overthrow the ethnic norm in the province. The Hui leadership underplayed their Muslim ancestry and claimed their unquestionable status as Chinese. The rebels questioned the legitimacy of the ruling Qing Dynasty and claimed their responsibility as Chinese to save their nation from the barbaric Manchu rule. The Panthay Leaders invited the Han Chinese to join the new regime and declared that Hui and Han, instead of fighting each other, should unite for their shared struggle against Qing suppression. These policies undermined the ethnic norm in Yunnan which revealed the Hui as a group hostile to Han Chinese, and consolidated the Hui's legitimate status living in the Chinese-dominated society.

This research is only a sketchy review of their ethnic relationship in 19th century

Yunnan. It does not aim to examine every specific detail of this historical event, but only to provide some limited insights into the ethnic disturbance faced by Imperial China during its political transition to modern statehood. In this paper, "Hui people" and "Chinese Muslims" are sometimes used interchangeably to reconcile the different terminology in the Western academia.

II. An Overview of Han-Hui Interactions in History

Historiography of Chinese Muslim Studies

Since the late 19th century, Western missionaries and scholars have been discussing the hostile confrontation between the Han and Hui peoples. Emile Rocher (1886) takes an economic perspective and argues that the struggle for economic control over Yunnan's mineral resources raised the nationalist sentiment of the Han and Hui residents. Bromhall (1900) develops this economic view by arguing that China's modernization created the urgent need for raw materials and attracted massive Han immigrants to the resource-abundant Yunnan. The new immigrants' failure to compete with the experienced Muslim miners intensified the ethnic resentment between the two groups and triggered the conflict. However, this theory cannot explain race riots that occurred in major cities like Baoshan and Dali in which most perpetrators were local farmers in little contact with Hui community. Also, the first record of small-scale skirmishes between Han and Hui residents dates back to the Ming Dynasty, 300 years before the first discovery of mineral resources in Yunnan.

In Chinese academia, many scholars also explain the ethnic conflicts from a socio-economic perspective. Mainstream Chinese historians portray the ethnic incidents as an inevitable class conflict between an ethnic underclass and oppressive Han Chinese landlords. Bai Shouyi (1976) argues that "the Hui Rebellion is not ethnic in nature, but a revolution of the suppressed Hui masses against the exploitive landlords and gentry."[5] Lin (1991) interprets the anti-Muslim sentiment as a propaganda strategy used by Manchu rulers to maintain their shattering rule on the frontier. Lin argues that by inciting racial hatred against Muslims, Yunnan residents would turn their discontent of the Imperial Court toward a vulnerable ethnic minority. Although this interpretation is not entirely false, it overly exaggerates the economic disparity between the Han and Hui peoples. In fact, the Hui are the most prosperous ethnic group among all ethnic minorities in Yunnan. The Hui people traditionally engaged in lucrative occupations such as mining and the caravan trade, which made them generally better-off than most Han Chinese peasants. Ironically, it is the economic success and prosperity of the Hui that made Han Chinese describe their propensity as "full of strength, fierce and combative".[6]

Other scholars focus on the ethnic roots of the Han-Hui hostility and explain the unrests, as being caused by cultural misconceptions between two ethnicities. Wang Shuhuai (1980) argues that "the misunderstanding between the Han and the Hui,

[5] Bai Shouyi & Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she., Preface.

[6] David Atwill. 2005. The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press., p.96

was originally based on mutual enmity and hostility, beginning with simple misconceptions and discord and then eventually evolving into a battle between the two groups."[7] He also explains that the court officials' failure to reconcile ethnic relations "was compounded by government officials improperly handling the situation, causing the Hui to hate the Han and oppose the officials." [8]

In the 21th century, Atwill's research (2006) makes great contributions to the field by discussing the incompatible identities of the Han and Hui. Atwill argues that the Han-Hui ethnic riots were caused by the two groups' different conceptions of the ethnic hierarchy in Yunnan. The Han residents perceived Yunnan's ethnic makeup as a "binary dualism" which divided the entire population into the "civilized" and the "barbarians". The Hui people distinguished themselves from both categories and created a dilemma for the Han society to understand and recognize their identity. The Hui behaved as Han Chinese in language, appearance and lifestyle, but their adherence to Islam and Islam-related customs distinguished them from the Han majority and marked their ethnic uniqueness. Their cultural similarity to the Han and their distinctive Islamic practice formed a dual identity "betwixt and between" different ethnic categories. Their distinctive religious practice raised misconceptions of the Han and caused the large-scale violence in the 19th century.

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[7] Bai Shouyi & Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she.

[8] Ibid.

Atwill's work starts a new approach in exploring the roots of 19th-century Han-Hui ethnic hostility. His analytical framework, however, is not free from theoretical problems. Atwill's studies mainly focus on the Han's perception of Hui cultural differences and how the Han's ethnic prejudices evolved into large-scale violence against the Muslim minority. The 19th century ethnic conflicts were not initiated unilaterally by the Han against the Hui, but resulted from mutual misconception between the two groups. This paper aims to reveal how the Hui minority viewed the dominant Han Chinese and their own cultural uniqueness in a Han-dominated society.

Most previous studies only focus on the two groups' contemporary hostilities in the 19th century, but ignore the long-term development of Han-Hui relationship in history. Since the first arrival of Muslims in China over 600 years ago, the Hui has been interacting with the Han Chinese. The pattern of interaction and conflicts between the two ethnic groups was a long-term evolutionary process and underwent several changes and adjustments. It is important, therefore, to examine how the historical precedent influenced the Han-Hui mutual distrust in the 19th century.

Previous studies also rarely investigate Han-Hui ethnic conflicts in a larger national context. The Hui were not an isolated ethnic group local to Yunnan, but a transnational ethnic group widely scattered in western China and northern Burma. Due to their professions in trade, the Hui had a considerable degree of mobility and formed a close network of Muslim communities beyond the provincial and national

border through caravan gangs, mosques and madrasahs. As early as the 1860s, western observers noted that the Han-Hui violence in Yunnan was linked to the widespread Muslim unrest in Western China since the 1820s. Indeed, many Hui immigrants from outer provinces played a significant role in the ethnic riots in Yunnan by initiating the controversies and intensifying the ongoing conflicts. This paper will attempt to complement previous studies by addressing these questions.

The Hui: An Ethnoreligious Group

To understand the ethnic identity of the Hui people, it is important to examine how this ethnic group was formed in history. The ancestors of the Hui people arrived in China as soldiers and retinues of the Mongol Khan during the Sino-Mongol war of 1294.[9] The early Chinese Muslims were a heterogeneous group of immigrants with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It took nearly three hundred years, from the late 13th century to the mid-16th century, for the cultural integration to take place and transform early Muslims into a unitary ethnic group. The intermarriage among Muslim immigrants weakened their ties with their national origin and created a new ethnic community of hybrid lineage. The Hui is commonly believed to have evolved as a homogeneous group during Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).[10] Vernacular Chinese replaced Persian to become the Muslims' new *lingua franca*, and the distinctive physical features of Middle Easterners gradually

[9] Marshall Broomhall. 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, p.77.

[10] Liu Yingsheng, "Hui Zu Yu Yan 800 Nian Jian Yao Hui Gu: Cong Bo Si Yu Dao 'Hui Zu Han Yu' ", Zhong Guo Wen Hua Yan Jiu, Vol. 4, 2008.

vanished due to their increasing intermarriage with the Chinese and the conversion of new members. More importantly, the term *Huihui* was gradually accepted by both the Muslims and the rest of society as the standard name for the ethno-religious group of Middle Eastern descent. [11]

The formation of the Hui ethnic group is closely associated with the acculturation process of Muslims in China. The Muslims' adoption of Chinese language and customs became the common ground on which a new Hui identity was built. In the Ming Dynasty, most Hui males had customarily adopted a Chinese-style name (*guanming*) and used it more frequently than their Arabic-style religious name (*jingming*).[12] Public records also show that many Hui studied Confucian classics and participated in imperial examinations for public service. The integration had alienated the Hui from their remote ancestral lineage and strengthened their new group status as a Chinese ethnic minority. The Hui became to identify themselves as "Muslim Chinese (*mum'in*)" or "Hui Chinese (*hui'min*)" rather than merely Muslims residing in China.[13] Their "Chineseness" became a symbol of Hui group identity that distinguished them from other Muslim ethnic groups in Central Asia.

Besides the Hui's adoption of Chinese customs, a more positive form of cultural assimilation also took place. The Muslims interpreted their unique religious and

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[11] Liu Yingsheng, "Hui Zu Yu Yan 800 Nian Jian Yao Hui Gu: Cong Bo Si Yu Dao 'Hui Zu Han Yu' ", Zhong Guo Wen Hua Yan Jiu, Vol. 4, 2008.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Atwill, D. G. 2005. The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press., p.96

cultural practices with traditional Chinese concepts. The Hui attempted to prove that being Muslim was not necessarily being "foreign" and antithetical to Chinese society. The *Huihui Yuanlai*, a mythical book that described the early history of the Hui, attempts to justify the arrival of Muslims in China in a traditional Chinese context:

> In the third year of Zhenguan of the Tang Dynasty, on the thirteenth day of the third month, the Emperor in his sleep dreamed of a man with a turban on his head, chasing a monster that had rushed into the palace. Upon waking, the Emperor was disturbed in his mind, not perceiving the significance of the portent.
>
> He summoned the Court by a stroke on the golden bell, and all civil and military officials took place before him. Thereupon the Interpreter of Dreams stepped out of the ranks and said: "this man is a Mohammedan of the West. Far beyond Jiayuguan there is a Mohammedan king of lofty mind and great virtue…… As to a plan for the present, throw open the pass, and request a sage from the Mohammedan king to be sent to deal with the threatened evils, that the country may be kept at rest! [14]

The storyline of the "turbaned man" clearly resembles the tale of Buddhism's introduction into China in 64 A.D., in which the the Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty dreamed of a golden Buddha from the West. The Muslim author of this tale desired to create an origin for Islam as noble and remarkable as Buddhism, a well-respected yet "foreign" religion in China. Such origin stories intended to prove that the coming of Muslims, just as Buddhists and Taoists, was predicted and welcomed in the earlier Chinese history and never conflicted with the established culture of the Han society.

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[14] Marshall Broomhall. 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, p.121

Many Muslim scholars also attempted to reinforce the internal consistency between Islam and Confucianism by applying Confucian doctrines and terms to interpreting Islamic theology. The earliest Chinese translation of the Quran, published in 1724, borrowed a large number of Buddhist and Confucian terms to represent Islamic concepts. For example, the word "God" was translated as *zhenzhu*, a Buddhist word for "legitimate ruler"; the word "Prophet (Mohammed)" was represented by *shengren*, an honorific originally reserved for Confucius.[15] Another effort was made by Muslim Chinese scholars, known as "*yi ru quan jing*," to use Confucian moral principles to substantiate the truthfulness of Islamic works. Wang Daiyu, a prominent Muslim scholar, claimed that "Islam and the Analects of Confucius are internally one."[16] Other scholars, like the famous Hui theologian Liu Zhi, argued in their works that Islam perfectly complements and improves the truth developed by Confucians. The extensive use of Chinese cultural elements to adapt Islam was an effort made by Hui scholars to give their ethnic features a legitimate place in Chinese society.

However, the Hui's assimilation of Chinese customs should be viewed as a process of creating a new distinctive identity rather than replacing their ethnic uniqueness. Their adoption of some "Chineseness" never downplayed their strong desire to preserve their religious and cultural traditions in a non-Muslim society.

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[15] Liu Jielian (Liu zhi). 1724. [reprinted 1975, Taiwan]. *Tian fang zhi sheng shi lu.* Taibei: Guang wen shu ju you xian gong si. Preface.
[16] Idem.

Islam, the common religion of the Hui community, played the central role in defining their ethnic identity and distinguishing them from the Han. A 1827 imperial memorial reported that "a Han becomes a Hui when he joins the Hui's religion."[17] A 17th-century Muslim textbook also confirmed the religious characteristic of the ethnic group that "the Han and the Hui were mainly distinguished…by their different religious teachings (*jiao*)."[18] The most customary differences of the Hui ethnicity were those stipulated in Islam, such as the prohibition of pork, male circumcision, five prayers in a day, and special religious clothing. The Hui's preservation of Islam and Islamic culture in their long shared history marked their different identity from the Han majority.

The long-term interaction between Hui Muslims and Han Chinese determined the cultural traits of the Hui ethnic group in 19th-century Yunnan. According to the travel records of several Christian missionaries, The Hui Yunnanese were a highly sinicized ethnicity whose physical appearance and secular lifestyle seemed to show little difference with the Han Chinese. Their body features were "indistinguishable from the Chinese" and their apparel "follow[ed] the Chinese fashion."[19] Despite the Hui's apparent similarities with the Han, some missionaries note showed that the

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[17] Li Dianrong 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008(4). Original Text in Mandarin: "滇之回民，多由漢民化成。"

[18] Ma Changshou. 2009. *Ma Changshou min zu shi yan jiu zhu zuo xuan*. Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she.

[19] Marshall Broomhall. 1966. Islam in China: A neglected problem. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., p.66

Hui was a distinctive ethnic group "whose blood and traditions were blended." [20] The Western surveyors in the 19th century generally summarized three unique aspects of Hui Muslims in Yunnan:

First, the strong internal cohesion of Hui neighborhoods. The Muslims population was widely spread throughout the province, but almost all Huis lived within ethnic communities isolated by the surrounding Han area. A typical Hui community was centered with a mosque where the community members assembled for prayer and public meetings. The religious clergy (*ackhoond* or *a-hong*) served as the religious and community leaders who made important decisions and settled disputes among Muslim residents.[21] Their shared religion played an important part in the Hui's group identity and served as the cohesive force by which the whole Muslim neighborhood was united. An anonymous Christian clergyman identified this feature as the main obstacle for their missionary work, since he noted that Muslims applying for baptism would be "spat on the street by their peers and forced to hold back."[22] The boundary between the Hui community and the nearby Han villages was clear and visible, and any action to infringe upon this border could be considered an aggression.

The second feature of Hui Muslim life was their specialization in certain occupations. The majority of Han Chinese engaged in agricultural cultivation. Most

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[20] Ibid.

[21] 阿訇/阿洪 for Akhood in Mandarin Chinese. –Author's note

[22] Broomhall, M. 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., Preamble.

members of rural Han populations were self-sufficient farmers who possessed or rented small plots of land for sustenance. In contrast, the Hui population was known for their specialization in long-distance trade and mining. A European interviewee reported that "the *mafou* (muleteers) were almost all Muslim, so as the soldier escorts.....It was by [a Muslim muleteer] that I obtained much information about the commerce in Yunnan."[23] Another traveler's source recorded that two thirds of the caravan trade on the route connecting Yunnan and Burma was operated by the Panthays (Chinese Muslims). Due to the harsh climate and dangerous road conditions in Southwest China, the Hui caravan traders earned the reputation for being "rugged in constitution and resolute in spirit to endure hardships and dangers"[24]. The Hui were also talented miners who had been the first to exploit the lucrative resources of Yunnan. Emile Rocher, a French Jesuit missionary, recorded the Muslims' industriousness to "produce high quality products using primitive techniques."[25] A common saying in Yunnan that "there is no mine where there is no Hui" also confirmed the group's engagement in mining.

The third characteristic of the Hui is their high mobility beyond the provincial border. The Muslims' specialization in trade required them to travel frequently between Yunnan and adjacent regions including Tibet, Burma, Guizhou and

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[23] Marshall Broomhall, 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., p.110

[24] David Atwill. The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, p.40.

[25] Emile Rocher. 1879. La province chinoise du Yu¨n-nan. Paris: E. Leroux. Ch.3

Szechuan. In a 1821 census report, the county of Baoshan hosted over 300 households of Hui immigrants from Shaanxi, most of whom travelled to the province for caravan business. The long-distance travelers also effectively strengthened the interactions between Hui communities beyond the provincial border. A memorial to Yunnan's imperial prosecutor in 1763 noted that "[the Muslims] formed groups within themselves and convey messages between each other like a clique".[26] Since the Hui population was scattered across a wide geographic range, caravan traders and muleteers played the important role of maintaining the network between Hui neighborhoods in different areas. The high mobility of Hui tradesman effectively connected scattered Hui diasporas into a truly transregional group.

Neither Us nor Them: The Hui's Ambiguous Identity

Why did the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group with a high degree of assimilation, become the target of ethnic violence in Yunnan between 1821 and 1856? We cannot fully understand the reason unless we clearly examine the traditional Chinese view of ethnicity. Previous scholars (Wang, 1976; Lin, 2000; and Atwill, 2006) noted that Chinese society's classification of ethnicity is a dichotomy of the *Hua* ("civilized") and *Yi* ("barbarians") according to a group's adoption of Chinese culture. The *Hua* referred to those who observed Confucian moral principles and behaved culturally

[26] Li, D. 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008 (4)

as Chinese; the *Yi* referred to those "barbarous" groups whose rituals and customs did not reach the Confucian standard of "civilization." One's ethnic status was mainly determined by one's cultural identity rather than one's ancestral lineage. The imperial house of Qing Dynasty, a non-Han Altaic ethnic clan originated in Manchuria, was considered culturally "civilized" due to their voluntary assimilation into Chinese culture. The Hua-Yi ethnic distinction assumed a cultural hierarchy which confirmed the superiority of Confucian civilization over non-Han traditions.

Since the mid-Qing Dynasty, the ethnic policy in multiethnic Yunnan was predominantly shaped by the Hua-Yi distinction. The Han residents were directly governed by the imperial governor. The population control system (*bianhu*) required every Han household (*minren*) to report their family size, occupations and land property to the local registrar.[27] The non-Han indigenous groups, such as the Hmong, Yi, Bai and Tibetans, were granted considerable autonomy due to their unfamiliarity with Chinese law. The Imperial Court issued patents to local chiefs and authorized them to govern the indigenous clans according to their respective ethnic traditions. This differentiated ethnic policy often resulted in the disparity of legal enforcements: in the same region, a Han Chinese perpetrator was subject to strict Imperial penal codes, whereas an ethnic Yi criminal was only punishable by more lenient customary laws in his native clan.

The rapid growth of Hui Yunnanese population in the nineteenth century posed

[27] Li, D. 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008 (4)

a great challenge to the traditional Chinese view of ethnicity in terms of both social perception and governance. The estimation of Hui Yunnanese population in 1800 ranged from 10% - 30% (Atwill, 2006) to over 40% (Clark, 1910) of the total population, a percentage hardly negligible by the dominant Han society and the local government. The Hui's familiarity with Chinese customs enabled them to have frequent contacts with the Han population. Unlike the secluded lifestyle of indigenous peoples in the landlocked mountainous area, the Hui's highly mobile occupation as traders, muleteers and miners made their cultural difference more conspicuous to the public. Their exotic Muslim customs confused the Han residents, who produced several stereotypes to interpret their weird behavior. One common misconception is that the Hui avoided eating pork because they believed themselves descended from pigs. This rumor was so prevalent in Yunnan that the Hui neighborhood in the capital Kunming was even called *Zhuji Jie* (Pig Assembling Street)[28]. Their religion was also faced with various mistaken stereotypes. The recount of Wang Dingan, a Yunnanese scholar-bureaucrat, provided a typical sinocentric view of "Hui-hui religion":

> Concerning their religion, the Hui always worship and revere their demon god. They are encouraged to wage a pilgrimage to the tomb of their religious master [Mohammad], regardless of the length of distance. Their holy land, also known as Mecca, is eight thousand li west of Yunnan. Although the Hui has been staying in China for long, they still adhere to this foreign custom and refuse to change……"[29]

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[28] David Atwill. The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, p.61

[29] Li Dianrong, Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign., Studies in Qing History, 2008(4).

The Hui's blended identity as both Chinese and Muslims also incurred remarkable controversy. Their degree of assimilation in secular life made them sufficiently qualified as Han Chinese, but their distinctive religious customs apparently conflicted with the authentic cultural standards of Han-dominated Chinese society. Their insistence on certain "foreign" traditions raised questions why they did not adopt the "civilized" lifestyle without reservation. Lu Guohua, a provincial-level bureaucrat, expressed his concerns with the Hui's Islamic practices in the following report to the emperor:

> The Hui has been residing in China for such a long time and have no difference with the Chinese in many aspects. They are supposed to observe the customs of the Celestial Empire. However, I find that the Hui consider 360 days as a year, and they secretly designate a certain day as the beginning of their year. They also prefer the white color in their daily life and wear a weird white cap all day. I don't even understand why they wear it and what deity they worship……
>
> I hereby recommend Your Majesty to order the Hui to follow the authentic standard of clothing and ban all Mosques. Please make it a crime for the wearing of a white cap and the use of private calendars.[30]

Lu's recommendation, along with many proposals to regulate the Hui's undesirable customs, reflected the government's uneasiness toward the Hui's growing influence in late Qing Dynasty. Official documents cautiously depicted the Hui as "uncivilized," "cruel" and "disobedient," which respectively referred to their adherence to Islam, endurance of hardship, and gregarious lifestyle.[31] The Hui's self-segregation in ethnic enclaves was also seen as a great threat to Yunnan's

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[30] Broomhall, M. 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 231
[31] Ibid.

security, because, as a local official said, "the Muslims have the natural inclination to form private cliques and prepare for seditious acts."[32]

The difficulty of classifying the Hui into any established category, as well as the anxiety caused by their exotic Muslim traditions, fundamentally shaped the Qing Empire's governing policy toward the ethnic group. On one hand, the government attempted to downplay the ethnic uniqueness of Hui by subjecting them to the same governing policy as the Han Chinese. Despite being an ethnic minority, the Hui were required to register their households and observe Imperial decrees as ordinary Chinese subjects. On the other hand, the Qing court had provided various special ordinances to punish the undesirable habits of the Hui and restrict their ethnic network.[33] One ordinance [1763] specified that a Hui who commits a crime is subject to harsher punishment than a Han, since "the Hui are naturally disobedient and habitually violent (*xinqi xinghan, kuangye chengxi*) ."[34] Another ordinance [1821] forbade the Hui to carry a weapon when travelling as groups, by claiming that "the Hui's gregarious behavior and violent nature made them much more dangerous than bandits…which deserves great caution."[35] These regulations demonstrated the two main purposes of the Qing Dynasty's Hui policy: to eliminate their ethnic

[32] Li Dianrong. 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008(4)

[33] In the Chinese legal context, the *li*, or "special ordinances", are appendices to a law providing details and exceptions concerning its applicability. The Hui policy were included in the *li* attached to Empire's penal code, since they provide exceptions of applying the law to a specific ethnic group.

[34] Wang Dingan, 1887. "The Record of Imperial Xiang Army (Xiangjun Ji 湘軍記)", Yunnan Provincial Archive. Original text in Chinese: "心齊性悍，獷野成習"

[35] Li Dianrong. 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008(4).

uniqueness, and to destabilize the internal coherence of the Hui community.

The Hui's Clash with An Emerging Chinese Nation

By examining the Hui's development in history, the co-existence of Chinese and Muslim characteristics in the Hui's ethnic makeup was the underlying cause of the ethnic hostility between 1821 and 1856. The Hui's blended identity was viewed as antithetical to the homogenous Han society and the Chinese nation-state. Their similarities in custom and lifestyle with the Han Chinese allowed them to participate as members of Chinese society and increased their visibility to the public as traders, merchants and miners. Their frequent interaction with the Han society also made their unique ethnic lifestyle conspicuous to a homogenous people and incurred considerable anxiety and uneasiness from outside their ethnic enclave. In comparison, the unassimilated indigenous groups in Yunnan, due to their secluded lifestyle and large cultural difference with the ethnic Han society, remained segregated from the mainstream social scene and thus less likely to be the target of ethnic hostility. The Hui's high mobility and visibility did not help them culturally integrate into the Han society, but made their outsider characteristics even more apparent to the ethnic majority.

The court records of ethnic riots substantially support this hypothesis. In the ethnic riot of 1821, several Han perpetrators mentioned their discontent with a Hui mosque on the main street in the resource-abundant town of Baoshan, stating that "every time a [Han] divine ceremony passed the mosque gate, the Muslim students

in the mosque always showed contemptuous attitude and laughed loudly…Their lack of seriousness during the ceremony always infuriated other [Han] participants."[36] In a culturally homogenous society where every member was expected to conform to its cultural norm, an ethnic minority's insensitive response to symbolic cultural events was likely to cause misunderstanding and hostility. Similarly, the direct cause of the 1845 riot, was an ethnic slur uttered by a Han young man in an integrated teahouse.[37] The Hui customers immediately responded by more pejorative slurs and incurred an intense verbal exchange between the two groups. Although this verbal dispute seemed to be a trivial incident, it nevertheless reflected the ingrained cultural misconception between the two groups and intensified the situation. Those culturally insensitive events played the role of a "cataclysm" that transformed the Han's latent anti-Hui mentality into violent practices.

Another important contributor to the ethnic riots in Yunnan is the government policy. Starting from the late 18th century, the Imperial Court attempted to consolidate its control over frontier territories and converted the decentralized, multinational empire to a single nation-state. This power consolidation, known as *Gaitu Guiliu*, took the form of both government coercion and cultural assimilation. In

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[36] The Governor's Office of Yunnan and the Judicial Commissioner's Office of Yunnan (1821), "The Court Record of the Armed Fight between Han and Hui in Baiyangchang (Baiyangchang Han-Hui Xiedouan 白羊廠漢回械鬥案)", Yunnan Provincial Library.

[37] Scholars disagreed on what specific profanity that that Han man shouted to Muslims. The commonly held view, supported by Hui scholar Bai Shouyi, believes it to be a comparison of Muslims with pigs.

1724 the government appointed Han Chinese magistrates to oversee the indigenous chiefdoms in Yunnan and weakened the autonomous power of local tribal leaders. At the same time the government organized mass Han immigration to frontier areas to stabilize the ruling order and "civilize" the non-Han native peoples in the province. The traditional Hua-Yi ethnic concept was merged with the growing awareness of a unitary Chinese nationality, and one's cultural similarity was increasingly connected with one's political allegiance to the state. In the early nineteenth century documents, several new words such as "seditious traitors", "traitors to the Han" or "non-Han traitors" was coined to describe the non-Han bandits in Yunnan. The new metaphor suggested a causal relationship between their criminal acts and their cultural disobedience to the state.

In the context of the nation-building process, the Hui's strong maintenance of Muslim customs was not merely considered an exotic cultural practice, but also indicated their lack of loyalty to the emerging nation-state. During the ethnic riots, the local magistrates played an important role in intensifying the ethnic riot and supporting the violence against the Hui. In the 1821 riot, when the Hui community leader reported to the local governor the escalation of violence, the local magistrate had no formal response to their complaints. One year later, the organized counterattack of the Hui against the Han neighborhood was considered as "sedition" by the magistrate, who ordered several thousand troopes to suppress the "disobedient behavior of Hui bandits". The partiality of imperial officials in these

incidents justified the violence of the Han rioters and intensified the ethnic hostility between the two groups.

In conclusion, the antagonistic sentiment toward Hui people reached its peak in early 19th century. The hatred toward Hui people was caused by the group's ambiguous ethnic identity. As an assimilated minority group, the Hui adopted considerable Chinese characteristics and formed a self-identity as Chinese nationals. Their Muslim heritage, however, marked their distinctiveness as an outsider group from the Han Chinese perspective and made them subject to negative stereotyping. The Hui people's mixed cultural traits also blurred the ethnic categorization of Hua(civilized) and Yi (barbaric), and obstructed the Empire's modernizing efforts to build a nation-state. The hostility between Han and Hui peoples resulted in severe ethnic riots in Yunnan and finally led to the Muslim-led Panthay Rebellion against the Qing Empire.

III. The Panthay Rebellion and Ethnic Reconstruction

The Panthay Rebellion: A Historical Overview

"Panthay", a Burmese word borrowed from Chinese word *panzei* (traitors), was used by British observers to name the Hui Muslim uprisings from 1857 to 1871. In May 1857, a group of Hui Muslim peasants suddenly stormed Dali, the largest city of western Yunnan, due to the rumor that local Han gangsters were planning a massacre of all Muslims. Angry Muslims soon occupied the whole city, killed the local magistrate, and raised the white flag on the city wall. In the next three days, all informed Muslims in Yunnan took up arms and formed a troop of 30,000 people. The Governor-General, Shuxing'a, committed suicide after Dali fell into Muslim hands. The rebels soon occupied most western Yunnan and marched east toward the province capital Kunming. Despite huge casualties on the Hui side, the rebels took control of Kunming in 1859 and temporarily drove the imperial force out of the province.

The success of Panthay Rebellion in overthrowing the imperial administration in Yunnan gave birth to a new state, the Pingnan State (*pingnan guo*), led by rebel leader Du Wenxiu. The nature of the new regime remains a central question to observers. Many Western scholars termed the regime as a "sultanate", which bears the connotation that Panthay State should be viewed as a part of the Islamic world.[38] This argument is intuitively reasonable, given the fact that the regime was founded

[38] The Most remarkable example is Atwill's 2006 book, named "The Chinese Sultanate".

by, and consisted of, Yunnanese Muslims. However, the major weakness of this view is that the Panthay regime lacks most typical features of an Islamic state: the clerics had no influence over the state affairs, no Sharia law is imposed on its subjects, and the Muslim leaders never adopted Islamic-style honorifics (sultan or caliph) for their leadership position. During the regime's 14 years of existence, its politics remained secular in general, and its institutional structure observed a clear separation of church and state.

Another major view, mostly accepted by Chinese and Taiwanese scholars, claims that the Panthay state is no different than other contemporary peasant rebel regimes in restive 19th-century China. Similar to the Taiping Rebellion in Canton and the Nian Militias in the Chinese Far West, the Panthay rebellion is just another angry reaction of Chinese peasants against the corrupt imperial rule. This view underplayed the rebels' Muslim character and emphasized their economic status as underprivileged peasants. However, the Panthay rebellion differs remarkably from typical peasant rebellions in two aspects. First, the cause of the Hui's rebellion is not economic hardship, but ethnic intolerance agitated by the Imperial Court and local Han militia. Second, the major leaders of the Panthay regime came from the local intellectual class, most of which received formal education in both Confucian and Muslim way. Suleiman Du Wenxiu, the regime's supreme leader, held an imperial exam degree and was known for his mastery of Classical Chinese literature. The

conception that Panthay Rebellion is a "peasant revolt" apparently oversimplified the real scenario.

The preserved written evidence of the Panthay State, although limited in number, can be used to restore the political institution of the regime.[39] These sources include 1) official documents, such as decrees and resolutions issued by Du Wenxiu and his military government; 2) private letters, especially those between senior Hui officials, military leaders and local elders; 3) diaries and records written by local intellectuals, including ethnic Han and Hui, residing in the Muslim-controlled region between 1857 and 1871. Unfortunately, most written evidence was destroyed by the Qing officials immediately after the Panthay defeat in 1872, and those documents preserved today can scarcely reflect the entire scenario of the short-lived regime. But a careful review of those available sources can offer us valuable information about the political agenda of the newly-founded regime.

This chapter discusses three important findings that will contribute to the study of Panthay political structures.[40] First of all, the Hui Muslims did not monopolize the political power of the rebellious province. The regime's leadership was ethnically inclusive, where all three ethnicities – Han, Hui and Yi peoples – are represented in the new authority. More surprisingly, the supreme leader, Suleiman Du Wenxiu, is

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[39] The institutions that maintain Panthay-era documents includes: the Prefectural Museum of Dali City (hereafter, PMDC), The Prefectural Archive of the Dali City (PADC), Yunnan Provincial Archive (YPA) and Yunnan Provincial Library (YPL).

[40] YPL, the Qing Dynasty Imperial Files, yearly, 1857-1871; Bai Shouyi, The Muslim Rebellion 回民起义 (internal publication of Zhongguo Shixue Hui [Chinese Historical Association], Shenzhou Guoguang She, 1951); PMDC, The Chronicle of Dali County (Dali Xian Zhigao 大理县志稿),

not an ethnic Hui, but a half-Han Chinese adopted and raised in a Muslim family. Among the rank-and-file soldiers in the rebellious army, Han Chinese and indigenous Yi people constituted the majority of the military force. Based on these facts, the perceived conception that Panthay Rebellion is an ethnic uprising of Hui people in Yunnan is questionable.

Ethnic issues, which triggered the outbreak of the Panthay Rebellion, continued to be an important problem for the rebel leaders. Since the Panthay rebellion is initially a Muslim reaction to the Han militia's violence, many anticipated that that the new regime would launch a bloody counterattack against the Han Chinese. Many Han landlords, especially those involved in Anti-Hui revolts, were prepared to escape the province to prevent a Muslim revenge. The Panthay authorities attempted to pacify the public's anxiety by clarifying that the rebellion was not anti-Han in nature. The Generalissimo argued that the Han and Hui were originally "brothers and friends", but the Qing court intentionally instigated the mutual hatred between two peoples and was responsible for the tragedy. Since both Han and Hui were victims of the government misdeeds, the mission of this rebellion should be overthrowing the corrupt government and reuniting two peoples under one union. This explanation blamed the government, instead of the Han Chinese, for causing the ethnic conflict and gained much support from local Han population.

Another important finding is that despite the rebellion's non-Han nature, the leadership used Chinese nationalism to justify their rule over a predominantly Han

province. The official proclamation claimed that although the Han and Hui were two "religions", they are both Chinese subjects and obliged to save China from the Manchu Empire's barbaric rule. The Panthay regime adopted a wide range of traditional Chinese symbols, including clothing style, flags and calligraphy, to distinguish it from the ethnic Manchu patterns of Qing Dynasty. On many occasions the Panthay leaders also publicly stated the rebellion's mission as "reviving China and destroying the barbarians (*Quchu Dalu, Huifu Zhonghua*)". By embracing Chinese nationalism the Panthay leaders attempted to strengthen the regime's cultural orthodoxy to govern a predominately Han province.

The third finding is that, according to existing documents, the Panthay regime's political institution shows remarkable Chinese characteristics. The Panthay authority borrowed the government structure of Han Dynasty – the strongest dynasty in Chinese history. The official titles of Panthay bureaucrats, such as Silu, Sima or Sikong, were archaic Chinese honorifics existing only in Classical Confucian books. However, the Panthay polity also showed many innovative features. The regime was not a monarchy in which the Generalissimo had absolute power; instead, a deliberative council (yishi tang) consisted of civil and military leaders collectively made important decisions. This decision-making body closely resembled the way village elders in Yunnan decided local affairs. All those evidence showed that the Panthay regime was not a "Sultanate" which showed no significant characteristic of an Islamic state.

Why did the Panthay State, a short-lived regime founded by rebellious Muslims, contain so many apparent Chinese features? In order to answer this question, one should again understand the Hui Muslim's ambiguous dual identity. To most Hui, Islam faith is just a personal faith practiced in the private sphere, but never a political ideal that should be promoted in the society. As a result of 800-year assimilation, the Hui never saw their Islamic faith as antithetical to their political identity as Chinese nationals. The Panthay leader's adoption of Chinese governing model was also a practical strategy. Given that the majority of Yunnan residents were ethnic Han Chinese, it is necessary for Muslim leaders to gain popular support by respecting their political tradition. Therefore, the Panthay regime's lack of Islamic features is nothing but reasonable.

This chapter will use both primary and secondary evidence to strengthen this argument. The primary sources include the archival records of Panthay State, including proclamations, appointment letters and legal codes between 1857 and 1871; the secondary resources includes historians' narratives, both by the Chinese and foreigners, in different time periods. Among all the precedent research, Bai Shouyi's *Huimin Qiyi* (The Muslim Rebellion) and David Atwill's Chinese Sultanate provided the most comprehensive resources and are cited most frequently. In order to prevent repetition, the "Panthays", "Huis" and "Chinese Muslims" are roughly synonyms and are used sometimes interchangeably in this article.

The Ethnic Makeup of the Panthay Regime

Most previous observers considered the Panthay Rebellion as an ethnic revolt by Hui minorities against the dominant Han population. John Anderson (1876), the earliest chronicler of Chinese Muslims, depicted the rebellions as "a Mohammadan riot against the Chinese who were threatening the Panthay town".[41] The rebellion gave rise to a "Mohammadan king", Du Wenxiu, who "hold his court in Dali". Bai Shouyi (1956) also defined the Panthay Rebellion as a "Hui peasants' collective resistance against the Han landlords".[42] These views perceived the Panthay Rebellion simply as a Hui-versus-Han conflict where only two ethnic groups involved.

More recent research showed a different perspective. David Atwill (2006) argues that the Panthay Rebellion cannot be explained solely in an ethnic context. Atwill marked the difference between new Han immigrants who came in the 19th century and local Han inhabitants who resided in Yunnan for generations. He argues that the rebellion is a response to the aggressive behavior of new Han "colonizers", rather than the Han population who coexisted peacefully with other groups.[43] He also found that the Panthay Rebellion is a multiethnic involvement where many ethnic groups joined the Muslims in the resistance. Li Wenxue, an ethnic Yi

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[41] John Anderson. 1872. "Chinese Mohammedans". The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. 1: 147-162.

[42] Ibid.

[43] David Atwill. 2005. *The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. 26.

("barbarian") who suffered from Han occupation of his land, led his indigenous tribesmen join the rebellion and pledged allegiance to Du Wenxiu.[44] Atwill even found many impoverished Han peasants who chose to join the Muslim rebels as a way of survival.[45] Therefore, Atwill defined the rebellion as multiethnic rather than a Hui-against-Han ethnic riot.

On the individual level, the ethnic identity of Hui rebel leaders was also ambiguous. Many Western resources refers to the rebellion's major leader, Du Wenxiu, as "Sultan", an Islamic title that suggested his undoubtable Muslim identity. A brief survey into his family background and early life will greatly undermine this statement. Contrary to the wide conception that he is a Hui, Du's biological parents were both Han Chinese. His father died shortly after his mother became pregnant, and he was born into a Muslim family since his mother remarried a Hui tradesman. As a stepchild, he is given the Muslim last name Yang and an Arabic name Suleiman by an imam of a local mosque. Although a Muslim, he received Confucian-style education at a traditional Chinese academy (*xiangxue*) and showed great talent in classical Chinese literature.

Du Wenxiu's early adulthood witnessed a gradual awareness of his Han Chinese legacy. At the age of eighteen he passed the local examination and achieved the scholar's degree (xiucai). His academic achievement made him proud of his

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[44] David Atwill. 2005. *The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China, 1856-1873*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. 30.

[45] Li Dianrong. 2007. "Du Wenxiu's Appeal to Beijing in the Daoguang Reign", Studies in Qing History, 2008(4) –Translation mine.

ancestral legacy, and he changed his family name to Du, the family name of his Han Chinese ancestors. He also worshipped the ancestral graveyards to honor his ancestral lineage – a traditional ritual for new-elected scholar-bureaucrats.[46] Du's recognition of Han Chinese legacy had never affected his strong self-identity as an ethnic Hui and a Muslim, but his hybrid cultural background had prevented him from seeing Han and Hui as two distinctive and adversary groups.

Another important rebel leader, Ma Rulong, also had an interesting biography that also showed a certain level of ethnic ambiguity. Ma was the second-highest commander of the Panthay troop before he defected to the Qing army in 1861. He came from a noble origin whose ancestors served the Chinese emperor as a court guard in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). He was ambitious to serve in the Imperial Army and obtained the first rank in the Imperial military exam, but the increasing Han assault of his local community forced him to join the rebel force. He expressed a different ethnic view and disputed the cause of rebellion in his 1862 letter to Du Wenxiu. He believed that Hui and Han were "one people only divided by their religious beliefs", rather than two hostile ethnic groups. He also expressed his loyalty to the empire and argued that the rebellion is only a "defensive action" against local Han bandits rather than a revolution against Han Chinese in generals. He persuaded Du to prevent the escalation of the conflict and surrender to the

46 Lin Quan 2006. "Du wen xiu qi yi yan jiu 杜文秀起义研究 (A Research on Du Wenxiu Rebellion)". Kun ming: Yun nan min zu chu ban she. 30-44.

imperial force "as soon as possible". His opinion represented the views of many Hui rebels --- that the rebellion should be a resistance to local injustice rather than an ethnic revenge against a hostile people.[47]

On the level of rank-and-file insurgents, there is no accurate data showing what portion of the rebel force are ethnic Hui Muslims. However, most sources indicate that the Panthay soldiers were multiethnic in a large degree. Atwill (2006) and Bai (1952) both cited a significant number of non-Muslim indigenous people, such as Yi, Bai and Hmong, led by indigenous chieftain Li Wenxue, to join the rebellion. Lin's research (2001) cited a decree that allows Han soldiers to consume swine in a separate camp from the Muslims, which shows that a certain number of Han Chinese existed in the rebel force. These sporadic sources all suggested the ethnic diversity among the rank-and-file combatants.

From this perspective, the traditional view accepted by Western scholars--- that Panthay Rebellion was an extension of historical Han-Hui conflicts and aimed to establish an Islamic Sultanate --- is questionable. The rebellion's leadership did not have a strong ethnic consciousness, and its participants were composed of multiple ethnicity. If ethnic hatred was not the actual cause, then what motivated the people to take up arms? What political agenda did the rebels aim to achieve by this uprising?

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[47] "A Letter to Du Wenxiu", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 97. An internal publication preserved at PADC

An appropriate answer to this question will depend on the existent written sources of during the Panthay Rebellion.

Leading Ideology of the Panthay Rebellion

If the Panthay rebellion, as elaborated in the previous chapter, is not an ethnically-oriented conflict, what ideology did the rebels use to justify their defiance of imperial rule? A study of Panthay-era written records lead to a surprising finding: the Panthay leaders used Chinese nationalism as the rebellion's ideological foundation. The rebels repeatedly claimed that the Manchu Dynasty was a "tartar barbarian" regime that had no legitimacy to rule, and the rebellion's ultimate goal was to restore the Chinese civilization from the suppressive Manchu rulers.[48] An important question then rises: how can the rebels justify their claim of Chinese sovereignty, when the majority of them were actually non-Han? Some Panthay documents showed how a non-Han regime reconcile the inconsistency between their non-Han identity and the rebellion's nationalist goals.

One remarkable document, The Muslim's Proclamation of War in Jianshui (*Jianshui Huimin Xiwen*) stated in the beginning paragraph that

> …We the Muslims, no different than Han Chinese, are granted good nature by Heaven. We have adopted the Central Kingdom's civilization for a long time. Since the beginning of the dynasty, we produced countless loyal courtiers and model children in the

[48] "Xingshi Xiwen", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 129. An internal publication preserved at PADC

nation's long history…[49]

This statement attempts to broaden the ethnic category of "Chinese" and argue that Hui Muslims are no different than Han Chinese in their cultural heritage. By emphasizing Hui's long history of assimilation, the rebel leaders attempt to justify that Hui and Han are both legitimate heirs of the Chinese civilization. Therefore, when Chinese civilization is endangered, the Hui also shares the obligation to save China's cultural authenticity from barbarian rules.

Many war proclamations (xiwen) issued by Panthay regime showed similar rhetoric that the Hui bear the moral obligation to rescue China from barbarian rule. An 1861 proclamation openly claims that

> The goal of this offensive is to revive the Han; therefore, no killing of civilians should be conducted. If the troop meet Han people on the way, we should clarify our missions and gain their support. It is necessary to unite Han and Hui to take revenge against the Qing.[50]

Those Panthay-era documents showed a mixed view of disdain and sympathy toward the Han population --- disdain for their collaboration with the Qing rulers in massacring the Muslims, and sympathy for their subordinate status under a barbarian empire. Some Panthay writings even depicted the rebellion as the Hui's heavenly mandate – a mission to enlighten the Han Chinese and help them restore the Chinese civilization from the ruins.

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[49] "Jianshui Huimin Xiwen", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 53. An internal publication preserved at PADC.

[50] "Xingshi Xiwen", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1951. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 129. An internal publication preserved at PADC

Du Wenxiu's personal records, including some unpublished manuscripts, frequently reflected his ambition to revive the Han national spirit. A calligraphy hanged in his study reads: [51]

What a hero I am, sent by Heaven, to restore the Chinese land!

天降英雄挽回中华世界

What a hero I am, dispatched by the Earth, to overthrow the Tartar's reign!

地遣豪杰踏破胡儿乾坤

Du Wenxiu's another calligraphy scroll, initially a gift to his cousin-in-law, expressed his political platform more explicitly:

联回、汉为一体	To unite Hui and Han as one,
驱除鞑虏	To expel the Tartar barbarians,
恢复中华	To revitalize China[52]

These writings clearly demonstrate Du Wenxiu's self-conception as a savior of all Chinese people sent by Heaven, who bears the responsibility to restore Chinese civilization from tyranny. It is worth noted that "to expel the Tartar barbarians" later became a popular nationalist slogan used by anti-Qing revolutionaries, which was famously adopted by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925) during the 1912 Revolution. The Confucian idea of "Heavenly Mandate" effectively resolved the inconsistency between the Panthay's non-Chinese ethnicity and their claim of Chinese sovereignty. The rebels believed that since the Han Chinese was incapable of restoring their lost

[51] "Lian'e Lu", A series of calligraphy scrolls by Du Wenxiu preserved in the exhibition room, PMD.
[52] "Lian'e Lu", A series of calligraphy scrolls by Du Wenxiu preserved in the exhibition room, PMD.

land and civilization, the Heaven had transferred this obligation to the Hui – a non-Han group yet an equal subject of China.

The cultural symbolism used by the rebel army also reflected their attempt to reconstruct a "real" Chinese identity. The rebel leaders claimed to adopt the clothing of Ming Dynasty --- the last Han-dominated regime in Chinese history. A local historian recorded that "the Muslims… cut off their hair queues, burned their Manchu ropes, and put on Ming-era white ropes which was forbidden after the Manchu takeover..." The change of clothing style was considered by rebel leaders as a "return to cultural authenticity (huifu zhengsu)" and a rejection of Qing Dynasty's legitimacy.

Besides the nationalist ideology, the Hui rebels also uses the Qing Dynasty's bad governance to justify their uprising against the empire. The rebels' political writings include a pervasive condemnation of the Qing court's corruptive rule, including its inability to resist foreign invasion, heavy taxation, and suppressive social policy. The rebel leadership claimed that, since the Qing court imposed so much suffering on the people, it had lost its legitimacy to govern China.

The most remarkable evidence of this ideology is a handmade diagram of early Panthay leaders, titled "Situation of Manchu Empire". The diagram showed a circle divided into four parts, each of which displays the words "frequent foreign aggression", "an incapable emperor", "a corrupt bureaucracy of thieves" and "an empress dowager who controls politics". All four sides points to the center of the

circle, which reads "a doomed country and a suffering people". The diagram also provide the solution to the crisis, which is "a people's revolution". This diagram demonstrated the Hui's strong discontent of the regime's dysfunction and their resolution to rebuild a well-governed polity through revolutionary means. This diagram also showed the Hui's perception that their sufferings are caused by the Imperial Court rather than local magistrates. Compared to previous small-scale ethnic riots, this rebellion pursued a larger political agenda --- the overthrow of Qing court nationwide. (See photo below)

"Situation of the Manchu Empire", a graph made by Du Wenxiu, photographed by Qian Jingyuan in August 19, 2013, exhibition at PMD Yunnan.

In their official propaganda, the Panthay rebels repeatedly mentioned the disastrous consequences of the Qing court's bad governance. In "Public

Proclamation to Yunnan Residents", General Ma Rulong compared the local bureaucrats as "dogs and mice" who "abuse their powers to achieve personal gains regardless of the survival of people." He also pointed out that local bureaucrats "manipulated the public sentiment … and caused Han and Hui, two brotherly peoples, to fight under one roof". Du Wenxiu's military declaration Xinshi Xiwen also made a smiliar statement that "The suffering people were in an urgent state, but the demonic bureaucrats still led comfortable and luxious lives, as if nothing had happened… They abandon the people like throwing a rubbish."[53]

Following their accusation of Qing bureaucrats, the Panthays then publicly promised to build a better government to improve the well-being of local people. In the Xingshi Xiwen (Announcement of Military Discharge), Du Wenxiu publicly stated that "after our heroic military pacified the area…the peace and happiness of the people will be better preserved…" [54] General Ma Rulong, in his "Public Proclamation to Yunnan Residents", also expressed his plan to establish good governance in the province. The document began by an accusation of local bureaucrats for "harassing the innocent civilians and disturbing social virtue". It declared the rebel's commitment to promote social justice and exterminate "the chronic disease of the province's governance".[55]

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[53] "Xinshi Xiwen", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1988. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 133. An internal publication preserved at PADC.
[54] Ibid.
[55] "Xiaoyu Dianhuan Shenmin", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1988. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 69. An internal publication preserved at

The Panthay's claim to improve people's livelihood was not simply a propaganda, however. In Du Wenxiu's private letter to his distant cousin Yang Zhengpeng, the leader elaborated his policy agenda for relieving taxation, reducing corruption and maintaining public order, as a "strategy to gain public support for our revolutionary cause". A Panthay-era military brochure demonstrated the rebel's efforts to protect the local livelihood. It provided death penalty for "disturbing local peace", including raping, robbing and breaking into private homes. It even specified that if a family have economic hardship, the young man in the army does not need to serve in the Hui military. By constructing the rebellion as a justified response to government misbehavior, the Panthay rebels managed to seek legitimacy on the moral grounds.

Based on these written sources of Panthay Yunnan, it is clear that although Han-Hui ethnic conflict remarkably influenced the outbreak of the Panthay Rebellion, the insurgents did not have an obvious political agenda on ethnicity. Instead, the rebellion showed a significant extent of ethnic diversity and included members from Han, Hui and Yi groups. The leadership also understated the rebel's predominantly non-Han identity and employed extensive Confucian ideology to justify their uprising as an act to preserve Chinese civilization and livelihood. Given these facts, to term this uprising as a "Muslim rebellion" is obviously a misnomer and a cultural prejudice.

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The Political Institutions of the Panthay State

Another significant topic of the Panthay rebellion is the foundation of Pingnan State (*pingnan guo*), a newborn separatist regime founded by rebels in their occupied areas. The political structure of Pingnan State is closely associated with the rebel force, due to the consistent warfare between rebels and imperial troops in the regime's 14-year life. Is this regime a "Sultanate" ruled by Muslims founded in Islamic tradition, as claimed by Western researchers such as Rocher, Anderson and Atwill? A brief review of primary sources will provide some hints on the regime's political structure and help answer this question.

The Pingnan regime was officially founded in 1856, shortly after Du Wenxiu's troops successfully occupied the city of Dali, the largest city in western Yunnan. He conferred the city residents and officially accepted the title "Generalissimo of All Armed Forces and Calvary" (*zongtong bingma dayuanshuai*). Although his administration was informally referred as "Pingnan State", he never considered himself as the leader of a separate country, but rather as the legitimate leader of all Chinese people. In a diplomatic note to the British Governor of Burma, he styled himself as "Du Wenxiu, Generalissimo of China" to claim his status as the sovereign of the entire Central Kingdom. In Du's inaugural address, he claimed Heaven's mandate and pledged allegiance to ancient Chinese sages of Yao and Shun. Du Wenxiu's inaugural ceremony generally followed the Confucian tradition and did

not suggest strong Islamic traits.[56]

However, some of Panthay symbols contained certain Muslim elements. One significant feature is that the official seal of Du Wenxiu was rendered in both Chinese and Arabic. The Chinese text wrote "Generalissimo Du of All Armed Forces and Calvary", while the Arabic text showed his title as "Leader of All Muslims" (*Qa'id Jami al-muslimin*). The Arabic script on Du's seal was frequently cited as an evidence that Pingnan Regime was an "Islamic sultanate". However, this argument ignored the fact that Du Wenxiu, the owner of the seal, was illiterate in Arabic and only used Arabic calligraphy as a decoration. In most Panthay government decrees and court verdicts, Classical Chinese was the only language that appeared on the paper, while Arabic was never used as a working language except for important religious occasions. Some evidence even showed that Du Wenxiu rarely used that seal --- in an appointment letter issued in 1862, he used his signature instead of his seal to authorize the document. Therefore, the half-Arabic signature alone cannot suggest his political status as an Islamic leader.[57]

Although the Panthay regime was headed by Hui military leaders, it also included a large civil bureaucracy in charge of domestic affairs. A complete list of civil officials in the Panthay regime, compiled by Bai Shouyi, showed two important features of the bureaucracy. The first feature is that Han Chinese composed the

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[56] YPA, Official Seal, Generalissimo Du Wenxiu (see Illustration 4); Promotion letter for Yang Zengxi to the position of Da Sikong.
[57] Ibid.

absolute majority of the administration. Among the 195 senior officials appointed by Du Wenxiu, 176 people were ethnic Han Chinese and 19 were Hui Muslims.[58] Du openly emphasized the need to include Han Chinese into the regime, by claiming that "we need to build trust and emotional ties among the large Han population of Yunnan". Another feature is the high level of autonomy on the regional level. Many sources show that the Panthay administration did not change the political structure on the county level. The county magistrates appointed by Qing court, as long as they pledged allegiance to the Generalissimo, were allowed to retain their regional power. Du Wenxiu also issued patents to indigenous chiefs, which guaranteed their right to govern themselves and their obligation to pay taxes and provide soldiers.

Based on these limited sources, the Panthay political institution seemed to be secular, decentralized, and generally multiethnic. Although the regime's major leaders were Hui Muslims, they did not intend transform Yunnan society into an Islamic one. As an ethnic minority ruling a predominantly Han province, the Panthay leaders adopted a pragmatic ruling approach and maintained the established order on the regional level. The view that Du Wenxiu's regime was a "sultanate" that attempted to Islamize Yunnan, therefore, lacked historical validity.

IV. Conclusion

This research attempts to answer one central question: why did the Panthay

[58] "Du Wenxiu Zhiguan Minglu", Bai Shouyi and Zhongguo shi xue hui. 1988. Hui min qi yi 回民起義 (The Muslim Rebellion). Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she. Vol.2, 133. An internal publication preserved at PADC.

Rebellion – a massive revolt of Hui Muslims against the Han-dominated society, take place in the 19th-century Yunnan? Instead of seeing this incident as an isolated ethnic conflict, this study focuses on ethnic identity and explores how one group views the other in its own cultural context. On one hand, the Hui people strived to be recognized as a member of the Han Chinese society while maintaining their unique Muslim characteristics. On the other hand, the ethnic view of Han Chinese only defined a person as either Han or non-Han and cannot accept a group that possess both familiar and unfamiliar traits. Therefore, Hui's increasing involvement in Han Chinese society only caused the Han population's anxiety and violent response to this imagined enemy.

Following the outbreak of Panthay Rebellion and subsequent establishment of the new regime, the Hui leaders attempted to reconstruct the definition of ethnicity in Yunnan. The regime reconstructed the concept "Chinese" as one including both Han and Hui peoples, who shared the common experience of suffering under Manchu's barbaric rule. The Panthay leaders also highlighted the Hui's responsibility as Chinese subjects to restore China from Qing Dynasty rule. In general, the Panthay rebellion was the Hui's attempt integrate their ethnic identity into the Han-dominated society. This research is a preliminary and immature attempt to examine the role of identity in ethnic conflict, but it will hopefully serve as the entry point of more comprehensive research on this topic.

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Annotated Bibliography

Primary Resource

"A Chronicle of Hui Rebellion in Yunnan (Dianhui Jiluan, 滇回纪乱)", Weishan Hui Autonomous County Library.

The autobiographical account precisely described the origin, development and outcomes of the second ethnic riot in Yongchang, Yunnan. The authors are Han Chinese gentlemen who directly involved in the offensive against Hui people. Both authors attribute all faults to the "disobedient" Hui people and justifies the killing as a self-defense action, and therefore his narrative's objectivity is questioned. However, it presents the Han Chinese perception on local ethnicities, which will contribute to my discussion of Hui identity.

Broomhall, M. 1966. "Islam in China: A neglected problem", New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp.

This book published in 1910 is written by Rev. Broomhall, an American missionary dedicated to converting China's Muslim population from late 1870s to early 20th century. He traveled to densely Muslim regions of Yunnan, collected their oral history and narratives, and recorded the ethnic unrest from 1830 until the outbreak of Panthay Rebellion in 1856. Although filled with religious overtone, his narrative generally takes an objective viewpoint toward the long-lasting conflicts between Han and Hui, which revealed a great deal of historical facts.

The Governor's Office of Yunnan and the Judicial Commissioner's Office of Yunnan (1821), "The Court Record of the Armed Fight between Han and Hui in Baiyangchang (Baiyangchang Han-Hui Xiedouan 白羊厂汉回械斗案)", Yunnan Provincial Library.

This court record was published jointly by the executive and judiciary branch of Yunnan, which contains testimonies of nearly fifty suspects, eyewitnesses and local nobleman from both Han and Hui sides. This document accurately records the proceedings of the first race riot (1821) in Baiyangchang and deserves comprehensive study.

Rocher, Emile. 1879. "La province chinoise du Yu¨n-nan". Paris: E. Leroux.

This book is written by Rocher, a French sinologist and ex-officer of Chinese imperial custom. The author discusses the Panthay Rebellion in Chapter 3, where he collected materials both from official documents, private gazetteers, and oral narratives. He comments on the cause of the Yunnan unrests and showed his strong

sympathy toward Muslims. However opinionated, his records provides plenty of sources about the ethnic relations in 19th century Yunnan. The book won the *Prix Stanislas Julien* in 1881, the highest prize in French sinology.

Wang, Dingan, 1887. "The Record of Imperial Xiang Army (Xiangjun Ji 湘军记)", Yunnan Provincial Archive.

The author, Wang Dingan, is a prolific historian and military official in the Imperial Xiang Army, the main force dispatched to suppress the Panthay Rebellion. The book records major military activities of the Xiang Army in chronological order, which contains an extensive chapter "Pacifying Yunnan" (*Ping Dian Pian,* 平滇篇) on the suppression of Muslim rebels in Yunnan. The narrative is from the viewpoint of the military and contains many derogative and racist elements when describing the Muslim customs. However, it reflects how contemporary Han Chinese understand the culture, custom and identity of ethnic minorities.

Secondary Resource

Atwill, D. G. January 01, 2003. "Blinkered visions: Islamic identity, Hui ethnicity, and the Panthay rebellion in southwest China", 1856-1873. The Journal of Asian Studies, *62*, 4, 1079-30.

This article is the first systematic analysis of Hui-Han ethnic unrest in the 19th century Yunnan. The author was the first to note the "binary dualistic" identity of Hui ethnic group and how this identity influenced the Han's perception of them. It also contains numerous primary resources in the 19th century Yunnan.

Atwill, D. G. 2005. "The Chinese sultanate: Islam, ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in southwest China", 1856-1873. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
Bello, D. January 01, 2005. "To Go Where No Han Could Go for Long". *Modern China*, *31*, 3, 283-317.

This book written by Atwill is an expansion and supplement to the author's aforementioned article. It added more information on the Muslim Rebellion following the ethnic riots.

Bai, S., & Zhongguo shi xue hui. (1988). "Hui min qi yi 回民起义 (The Muslim Rebellion)". Shanghai: Shen chou kuo kuang she.

Bai Shouyi was an ethnologist and Hui Muslim historian. This book was the first scholarly work to inquire the ethnic unrest and rebellion in the 19th century Yunnan. This book follows a Marxist approach and considers class conflict as the main momentum of the conflict.

Evans, B. L. March 07, 1985. “The Panthay Mission of 1872 and its Legacies”. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 16, 1, 117-128. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.
Israeli, R. 2002. “Islam in China: Religion, ethnicity, culture, and politics”.

The Panthay Mission was a Presbyterian mission to Yunnan and Burma from 1872 and 1949. The missionaries recorded many activities and customs of Hui people and greatly helped people understand the characteristics of this ethnic group.

Jing, D. 1986. “Yunnan Hui min qi yi shi liao 云南回民起义史料 (A Sourcebook of Yunnan Hui Rebellion)”. Kunming Shi: Yunnan min zu chu ban she.

This sourcebook collected over 30 reports from Qing bureaucrats, official chroniclers and Han Chinese scholars on the ethnic unrest during 1821-1856. The series of reports reflects different perspectives on how the unrest was initiated. However, no recount of the incident from the Hui Muslim side was preserved. It is a major disadvantage of my research.

Lin, Q. 2006. “Du wen xiu qi yi yan jiu 杜文秀起义研究 (A Research on Du Wenxiu Rebellion)”. Kun ming: Yun nan min zu chu ban she.

This book by Prof. Lin Quan is widely considered the most important work of Chinese academics in this field. Lin investigates the origins of Han-Hui hatred and considered rivaling economic interests as the main cause of conflict. This work collected rumors and folktales in the 1820s before the race riots and deserved great research.

Rocher, E., & Zeng, J. 1986. “Hui zu bei zheng zhi: Di 1 ce 回族备征志：第一册 (Record on Hui People’s Military Preparation: Vol.1)”. Beijing: Beijing shi fan da xue shi xue yan jiu suo Hui zu ren wu zhi bian xie zu.

This masterpiece written by Emile Rocher was translated by Zeng Jian from the French. It is a factual account of how the Hui prepared for the anti-Muslim sentiment of nearby Han community in the early 1830s

Yegar, M. March 24, 1966. “The Panthay (Chinese Muslims) of Burma and Yunnan”. *Journal of Southeast Asian History, 7,* 1.)

The Panthay people are Muslim Burmese of Chinese origin. The Panthay’s ancestors were Muslim refugees fleeing from Yunnan during the ethnic unrest. The Panthay’s collective memory served as a great source to explore the Hui identity.

Other Works

Jing, D. 1991. "Du Wenxiu qi yi 杜文秀起义 (Du Wenxiu Rebellion)". Kunming Shi: Yunnan min zu chu ban she.

Kim, H. 2004. "Holy war in China: The Muslim rebellion and state in Chinese Central Asia", *1864-1877*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Lin, G. 1957. "Qing dai Hui min qi yi 青海回民起义 (Hui Rebellion in Qinghai)". Shanghai: Xin zhi shi chu ban she.

Ma, C. 2012. "Wan Qing Yunnan ju bian: Du Wenxiu qi yi yu Dali zheng quan de xing wang, 1856-1873 杜文秀起义与大理政权的兴亡 (The upheaval of Yunnan in the late Qing)." Chengdu: Sichuan da xue chu ban she.