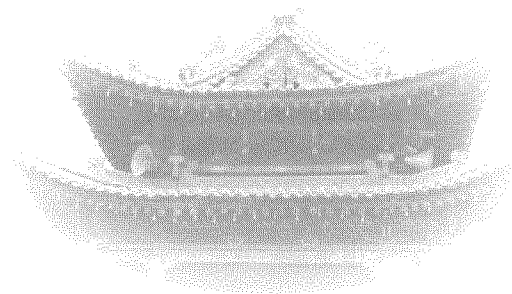


*Between Mecca and Beijing*

MODERNIZATION AND CONSUMPTION AMONG URBAN  
CHINESE MUSLIMS



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## Chapter Two

### HOUSING, EDUCATION, AND RACE

#### *Xi'an's Muslim District or Hui Quarter*

Just west of the Ming-dynasty Bell Tower in the city center and directly adjacent to the Drum Tower lies the residential district known locally as “the Hui quarter” (*Huiminfang*), or, more simply, “the quarter” (*fangshang*). This area, which occupies about one square mile, housed approximately 30,000 Hui or Chinese Muslims in 1994 (Wu 1992:99). Like most parts of Xi'an within the city wall, the Hui quarter was densely packed with residences. Unlike elsewhere in the city, however, it also housed ten mosques, several historic monuments, and a hundred or more small shops, food stalls, and eateries.

The quarter's mosques and historic monuments, particularly the Great Mosque (*Qingzhen Dasi*), drew large groups of Chinese and foreign tourists. In the mosque's vicinity were a multitude of shops with an array of goods and foods calculated to entice visitors into the nearby streets to look for a curio, a bargain, or some tasty cuisine. Many Xi'an natives who lived or worked near the quarter also foraged there for food: the area was renowned for the “little eats” (*xiaochi*) that residents sold. Lamb stew (*yangrou paomo*) and round, pan-baked flatbreads (*tuotuomo*) were two of the most popular Hui specialties.

Most of the quarter's shops and eateries were small-scale family enterprises. They contrasted sharply with the major department stores, imported designer-label specialty shops, and huge restaurants on the main city streets encircling the district. Local

Hui called their commercial endeavors *xiao shengyi* or “petty business,” as opposed to *shangye* or *qiye*, terms for business or commerce that connoted larger, more formal enterprises and industry. Most of the quarter's streets were lined with small restaurants, dry goods stores, bakeries, butchers, and sweets shops and were patrolled by a plethora of bicycle-drawn carts laden with prepared foods for sale (see Figure 1). Near a few of the area's mosques clustered some knickknack shops, antique stores, art galleries, and a couple of “Muslim products” (*Muslim shangpin*) stores that sold religious objects ranging from Qur'ans to veils. The vast majority of these private enterprises were run out of family homes. Most families dedicated one or more rooms on the ground floor of their house to running a business. Most Hui entrepreneurs who did not run shops or eateries out of their homes rented or purchased space on the main commercial streets of the quarter. Regardless of where the business was located, for the Hui of my acquaintance the family enterprise was an extension of the family living quarters. The space for gainful employment was not segregated from the space for domestic tasks and relaxation: for example, Mingjie's family used the kitchen at their business to prepare food for guests when hosting company and the courtyard of their family's residence as an extra storage space for the store. Similarly, the family enterprise was frequently a site for socializing, and the family home was often used to conduct business.

Most businesses also spilled beyond their architectural confines onto the public sidewalk. Hui entrepreneurs used the sidewalk for food preparation, storage, and seating for customers. Patrons used whatever space remained to park their bicycles while they ate or shopped. Often they were forced to leave their bicycles in the street. Proprietors' usurpation of the sidewalk for commercial purposes also forced pedestrians to walk in the crowded streets, dodging bicycle and car traffic as best they could. The biggest streets in the quarter were only wide enough to allow a single car to drive through, and much of the area consisted of small alleyways so narrow that a bicycle could barely squeeze by (see Figure



FIGURE 1. A bicycle cart vendor sells food on one of the quarter's street markets.

2). Traffic jams were frequent. Making the streets of the quarter even more difficult to navigate were deep potholes and the habit that most people engaged in construction had of storing materials such as sand, bricks, and concrete in the street in lieu of any other place to put them. This chaotic appearance was accentuated by the absence of trees and grass. The Muslim district had no lawns or gardens, unlike some other parts of Xi'an. Although some families had trees or potted house plants in their courtyards, these were rarely visible from the street.

Day and night the quarter was filled with the din of petty commercial activity. In the morning and early afternoon, sellers of meatball soup (*hulatang*), fried dough (*youtiao*), and steamed stuffed buns (*baozi*) hawked their wares, giving way to meat skewer sellers and noodle stalls at night. The shouts of street peddlers, the ringing of school bells, and the loud honking of frustrated taxi drivers trying to pass through the crowded streets filled the air.<sup>1</sup> The sounds of the call to prayer also permeated the Muslim district five times each day, but in syncopation, as each mosque independently determined the proper time for worship to begin. The sounds of Arabic chanting, which were broadcast by loudspeakers, defined the boundaries of the Hui quarter: residents formed an aural community whose members heard the sounds of worship throughout the day.

Most Xi'an Muslims (including many who did not live in the Muslim district) engaged in Islamic ritual practices in the quarter. Observances ranged from ordinary worship to life cycle and feast day celebrations. Most religious activities took place in either the mosque, the family home, or both. Ten of Xi'an's eighteen mosques were located in the quarter, and it contained the city's largest single concentration of Muslim residences. During the major Islamic holidays, such as the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast at the end of Ramadan, the Feast of Sacrifice that marks the culmination of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Prophet's Birthday, the area's religious character became even more visible than usual. At those times, residents bedecked their houses and the mosques with lights, banners, colored flags, and pictures of,



FIGURE 2. An alleyway in the quarter, decorated for the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast.

for example, religious architecture in Mecca (see Figure 2). The provincial and municipal Islamic Associations, organizations created by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to mediate between the government and the nation's Muslims, often hosted public martial arts demonstrations, film showings, and guest lectures on the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast and the Feast of Sacrifice.

The state had selected these two feasts as "nationality holidays" (*minzu jieri*) for the Hui, one part of a package of "customs and habits" (*fengsu xiguan*) that the government formally recognized as characteristic of the Hui race. Because the Hui were guaranteed the right to celebrate these holidays, all state organs that dealt with the Hui nationality formally marked these religious festivals in some way. As in most official references, "nationality" in the phrase "nationality holiday" meant "minority nationality." Only China's minorities had "nationality holidays"; the Han had none. Institutionalizing racial "customs and habits" such as "nationality holidays" was one way that the CCP supported its classification of China's non-Han races as more "backward" and less modern than the Han, who, under the party's guidance, had moved beyond such "feudal superstitions" during the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> This type of state policy guaranteed that the (minority) "nationalities" were marred with "customs and habits" (we might say "culture") that evidenced their low levels of social development, justified the state's evolutionary hierarchy, and demonstrated the need for state intervention to modernize these groups.

Three middle schools and five primary schools, all accredited by the Ministry of Education, existed in the quarter.<sup>3</sup> All were "nationality schools" because they exceeded the official requirement for "nationality" designation, which was to have 30 percent non-Han students. Very few of the teachers at the quarter's schools were Hui; at least 80 percent belonged to the Han nationality. Because the quarter's schools were "nationality" institutions, they celebrated the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast and the Feast of Sacrifice, even though the schools were entirely secular. None held classes and some hosted formal celebrations on these days. For example, during the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast in 1995,

the Hui Middle School celebrated with an all-school rally where students and teachers performed and special guests attended.

In accordance with government policy, most students in Xi'an attended school based on where they lived. This was common practice throughout the PRC (see, e.g., Ikels 1996:155). However, parents with sufficient money and connections could pay for their children to attend schools outside of their neighborhood. Several of Xi'an's public schools, in the interest of generating extra income, accepted a limited number of fee-paying pupils in addition to their students who attended based on residence. The exceptions to this system were the high schools that the government had selected to fuel its modernization program, called "key point" (*zhongdian*) schools (Ikels 1996:148). These schools accepted students on the basis of test scores rather than residence. They received a disproportionate amount of government resources and were known for academic excellence. However, as with the ordinary schools, sufficiently wealthy and well-connected students could purchase the opportunity to enroll in key point high schools.

The Muslim district had one district-level key point high school. It was considered far inferior to the city-level key point schools located in other districts. Very few residents of the quarter attended the municipal key point schools or attended high school at all. Of the Hui Middle School's 1994 graduating class of 70 students, only 16 percent (11 students) tested into high school: 3 percent (2 students) went to city-level key point schools, 6 percent (4 students) attended the district's key point school, and 7 percent (5 students) went to ordinary high schools. A total of 9 other students paid to go to high school: 4 attended the district's key point high school, and 5 attended ordinary high schools. These figures, which were typical for the quarter during the mid-1990s, were drastically lower than the Xi'an city-wide figures; for example, in 1994, 67 percent of middle school students continued their education (42,600 students out of a total of 63,100 middle school graduates); the figure rose to 72 percent (46,000 students out of a total of 63,500 middle school graduates) in 1995 (Xi'an Statistical Bureau 1996:381).<sup>4</sup>

Municipal residential designations determined school composi-

tion, but the government's districting did not correspond to urbanites' mental maps. The Hui quarter was not an official zone, but was part of the larger Lianhu District. This lack of formal state recognition did not affect its existence as a place in Xi'an. Xi'an urbanites all knew where the quarter was, including officials. Official documents referred to the Lianhu District (e.g., Wu 1992), but this did not affect government policy, which was to give the quarter special treatment. Officials tacitly recognized the quarter as an entity when they neglected to enforce municipal policies about sidewalk usage, taxes, or urban renewal there.

City officials told me that Xi'an Hui had been established in this part of Xi'an since the tenth century. Other sources indicated that Muslims had lived in this spot even longer: a stone stele in the Great Mosque records that the mosque was first built in the eighth century (it has been rebuilt several times; most of the current structure dates from the Ming dynasty). The quarter's streets also evidenced a long-standing Muslim presence. Names such as Western Sheep Market Street (*Xiyangshi*), Big Leatheryard Street (*Dapiyuan*), Small Leatheryard Street (*Xiaopiyuan*), and Barley Market Street (*Damaishi jie*) testified to the historical tradition of Hui commerce in the area; occupations such as butchery (lamb and beef only), leather working, and food selling were Hui specializations (or were regarded as such).

In 1998, the quarter was the only part of the city that retained a number of houses that were more than 100 years old. Its private homes and narrow, convoluted alleyways contrasted sharply with the wide streets and high-rise apartment complexes that characterized most other places in Xi'an. Large state-run and collective work units (which were divided into spaces for administration, labor, dining, and residence) dominated Xi'an, and the majority of retail and food sector businesses found outside the quarter were large-scale enterprises. The quarter stood out as a dense conglomeration of small private businesses and homes.

Locals frequently quoted two proverbs about Hui residence patterns. The first was that the Hui were "widely scattered but locally concentrated" (*dafensan xiaojizhong*). This proverb meant

that while members of the Hui nationality lived in every province of China (unlike, for example, the Tibetans, most of whom live in Tibet and Western China), in each area where there were Hui, they tended to live clustered together. The city of Xi'an had several examples of this phenomenon: in addition to the quarter, other smaller and more recently formed Hui neighborhoods existed in the eastern part of the city near the railroad station, and in the southern and northern parts outside the city wall.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps because they were more recent historical entities (for example, the Hui community near the railroad station had been in existence a mere 50 years), these Hui residential districts lacked the linguistic demarcation that the Hui quarter possessed. In the eyes of Xi'an urbanites, the city had only one *Huiminfang*.

Another phrase that Hui frequently applied to themselves was that they liked to live "around the mosque" (*zai qingzhensi de zhouwei nei*). Local Muslims often identified themselves as "belonging" to one of the quarter's ten mosques. When explaining where they lived, or who they were, families would say "we are the Middle Mosque's" (*women shi Zhongsi de*) or "we are the Great Mosque's" (*women shi Dasi de*). People generally lived near the mosque to which they claimed allegiance, but in some cases, their loyalty outlasted the residence pattern. This was most often true of Hui who moved outside of the quarter for work-related reasons; they continued to identify themselves as belonging to the mosque near their former home. The men of such families usually attended that mosque on holy days and for the occasional Friday collective worship (*zhuma*, Arabic *juma*). I knew several Hui families who had moved out of the quarter in order to set up a restaurant in a part of Xi'an where little Hui food was available (there were a large number of food-selling establishments in the quarter, so competition was stiff), or because their work unit provided housing in a different section of the city. Many of these Hui would speak about their "old home" (*laojia*) on, for example, Barley Market Street. They often still possessed rights of usufruct and ownership to part of a house in which parents or siblings lived.<sup>6</sup> Most Hui returned to their "old

home" to host circumcisions, engagements, weddings, funerals, and mourning rituals as well as to visit.

### *The Quarter as a Living Space*

The Muslim district's physical boundaries were indeterminate, and its population fluctuated. Many Hui who never lived in the quarter interacted regularly with those who did: for example, several young men who resided near the railroad station studied the Qur'an at the Great Mosque. Han frequently visited the district, and a few Han families lived there; most of the quarter's businesses depended on Han patronage to survive. Yet despite this permeability and unboundedness, residents of the quarter and their kin felt a strong sense of belonging to a defined unit. They clearly distinguished between those who were "people of the quarter" (*fangshang de ren*) and those who were not. In this study, I use the term "Xi'an Hui" to refer to those Hui who had close and frequent contact with the Hui residents of the Muslim district and possessed rights to property there, whether or not they actually chose to make the quarter their home.

A rapidly diminishing number of the quarter's residents lived in old buildings called "level houses" (*ping fang*). Most of these houses were more than 100 years old and had been passed down in families for generations. Hui who lived in such homes owned the building but did not own the land underneath it, since all land in China belonged to the government. Level houses were built of white-washed mud and straw, with a few timber beams for supports (see Figure 3). Their floors were gray flagstones or pounded dirt. Window openings were covered with rice paper and decorated or protected by wooden lattices, making these houses dark and cool.

Level houses lacked most modern conveniences. They were heated by small mobile cooking stoves (which to my eyes looked like diminutive oil drums) and by ovens located under raised sleeping platforms (*kang*). Some of these homes had private wells—wells being the sole source of water in this area before the



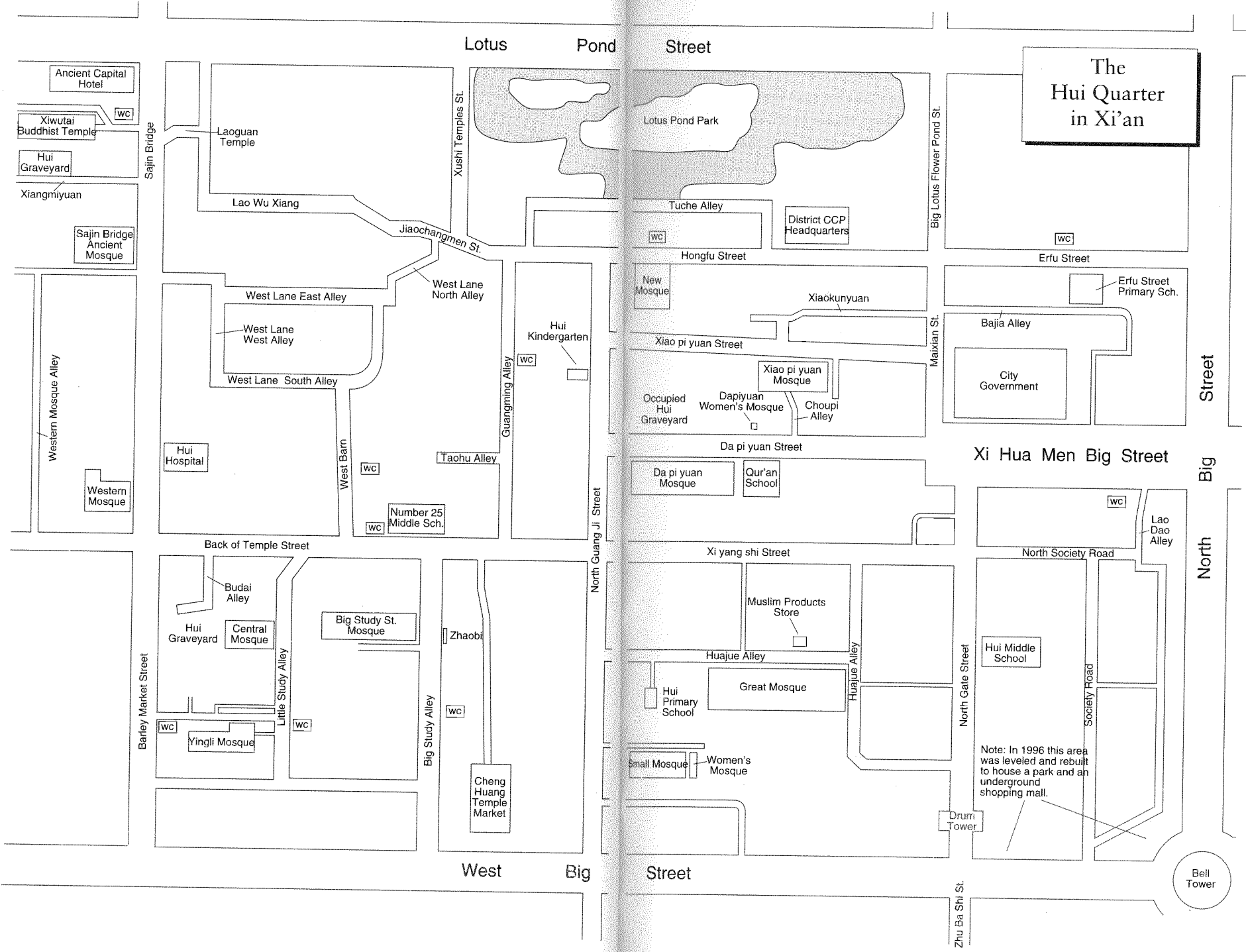


FIGURE 3. A “level house” (*ping fang*).

1960s—but few were in use. Most people who lived in level houses drew water from public faucets. These were spaced a few blocks apart on most streets and were also found inside the primary and middle schools that dotted the area. The level houses lacked toilet facilities, but this was true of most of the quarter’s residences. The government did not provide private homes with running water, and residents preferred not to have “dry toilets” (pits or buckets) in their homes because of the dirt and odors. Instead, they used the walled and roofed cement-covered pits dug in the ground, usually without running water, that the government provided. When residents wanted to bathe they visited the shower facilities provided by the local mosques (Map 2 shows the layout of the quarter, including the placement of mosques and government sanitation facilities).

Level houses were built in a courtyard style: four adjoining buildings, each one room deep, formed a square or rectangle, leaving open a space in the middle for a courtyard. Off to one side was a narrow entranceway that could be shut by a large wooden gate.<sup>7</sup> Usually each building surrounding the courtyard contained one family, and the families who shared a courtyard were related agnatically, by blood on the father’s side. For example, in one fairly typical case, three brothers and a male patrilineal first cousin (father’s brother’s son), along with their respective families, lived together in a level house.<sup>8</sup> Houses were built in close proximity and either shared external walls or were separated by narrow walkways. Adjacent level houses were sometimes but not always owned by relatives. The blocks of the wider streets in the quarter were the width of two back-to-back level houses.

Most of the quarter’s inhabitants did not live in level houses. Since the mid-1980s, many had constructed two- or three-story houses on the site where their family’s level house formerly stood. This trend of replacing level houses with multistory ones was continuing when I did my fieldwork. During the six years that I visited Xi’an between 1992 and 1998, some street in the quarter always had house construction ongoing, and usually many did. If



The Hui Quarter in Xi'an

Lotus Pond Street

Street

Big

North

West Big Street

Xi Hua Men Big Street

Zhu Ba Shi St.

Bell Tower

Ancient Capital Hotel  
Xiwutai Buddhist Temple  
Hui Graveyard  
Xiangmiyuan  
Sajin Bridge Ancient Mosque

Laoguan Temple  
Lao Wu Xiang  
West Lane East Alley  
West Lane West Alley  
West Lane South Alley  
Hui Hospital  
Number 25 Middle Sch.

Hui Kindergarten  
Taohu Alley

Lotus Pond Park  
Tuche Alley  
District CCP Headquarters  
New Mosque  
Xiao pi yuan Street  
Xiao pi yuan Mosque  
Occupied Hui Graveyard  
Dapiyuan Women's Mosque  
Choupi Alley  
Da pi yuan Mosque  
Qur'an School

Erfu Street  
Erfu Street Primary Sch.  
Bajia Alley  
City Government

Budai Alley  
Hui Graveyard  
Central Mosque  
Big Study St. Mosque  
Yingli Mosque

Zhaobi  
Cheng Huang Temple Market

Muslim Products Store  
Great Mosque  
Hui Primary School  
Small Mosque  
Women's Mosque

Hui Middle School  
Drum Tower

Note: In 1996 this area was leveled and rebuilt to house a park and an underground shopping mall.



a family was not building a new home, then they were making additions on an older house that no longer filled its owner's needs (or desires). These houses were known as "multistory houses" (*lou fang*), the same word used to refer to apartment buildings or any multistory building. Apartment buildings were in fact the inspiration for multistory houses, which mimicked their construction in materials and appearance (see Figure 2).

The multistory houses demonstrated residents' desire to modernize and their ingenuity in maximizing available space in the face of government building and land restrictions and families' budget constraints. City and provincial officials informed me that the municipal government restricted the height of buildings within the Xi'an city wall. Buildings near the wall could not surpass it in height, and those located in the city's center had to be lower than the Bell and Drum Towers. For this reason, most buildings in the old city were no more than five stories high. There were a few exceptions to this rule, most notably the sky-high Grand New World Hotel on the edge of the quarter and the Hyatt Hotel; both of these inns were joint foreign-Chinese enterprises built during the reform period. Before 1979, Xi'an had only three or four multistory buildings, all of which had been built by the Soviets. As one resident explained it, "We [Chinese] didn't have the technology to construct tall buildings."

In the quarter, most multistory houses were no higher than three stories. When residents first began reconstructing their houses, most built two-story homes; adding a third story became more common during the 1990s. One man, described by his neighbors as someone who had more money than he knew what to do with, built a private home that towered five stories into the sky. This occasioned some griping, in part because of the ostentation, in part because the taller the homes rose, the less light fell into neighbors' courtyards. A religious student (*mullah*) in his mid-twenties who lived near this man commented sarcastically, "What is he going to do, install an elevator?"

Multistory houses recapitulated the courtyard arrangement of level houses, with four buildings surrounding an open, paved

courtyard. They resembled level homes (and differed from apartments) in terms of residential arrangements: multistory homes were filled with relatives rather than unrelated individuals and families. Specific families, usually agnatically related, owned either separate floors of the level houses or separate structures. For example, in one case I knew in 1994, Mingxin, his wife, Xiulan, and their two school-aged sons lived in a two-story house in a courtyard complex shared by two other buildings. These three structures formed a small courtyard that was actually one half of the courtyard of the preexisting level house. On the half where Mingxin and his family lived, the other two multistory houses included Mingxin's brother, his wife, their unmarried daughter, adult son, his wife, their newborn son, Mingxin's patrilineal cousin, his wife, and their two children.

The amount of space that a family possessed related to its stage in a developmental cycle (see Harrell 1982:150-81 for examples of the developmental cycle in Taiwan). When an adult son married, he and his wife were given a separate space to live in, often the upstairs floor of a multistory house. After this couple had children, their per capita living space decreased. During the 1980s and 1990s, the typical response to such pressures was to expand the parents' house. Only in a few cases that I knew of did the adult son and his wife find a separate apartment to live in.

Multistory houses were constructed of steel poles, bricks, and cement, like the apartment buildings that they imitated. They had ample windows, which were plated with glass. Most were heated by mobile or stationary coal stoves or electric space heaters. As with the old level houses, in the new multistory homes the cooking area was often outside in the courtyard.

The courtyards of the quarter were multipurpose sites. In addition to using them for preparing food, families frequently ate there. They also used courtyards for chatting with relatives, neighbors, and business associates; watching children; washing and drying clothing; storing belongings; and hosting ritual events. Courtyards provided an intermediate space between private and public arenas in the quarter, being less private than rooms inside

the house and less public than the streets or food stalls. Courtyards could be shut off from the street by closing the tall wooden doors at the entranceway, but few families chose to do so. Leaving the courtyard gates open gave family members greater access to what was happening on the street, be it a gathering of neighbors, the arrival of an itinerant salesperson, or the solicitations of beggars. It likewise made the family more accessible. Visitors to a particular home made their presence known by walking into the courtyard, where some member of the household was likely to be at any given time.

The local wedding ceremony provides an example of how courtyards served as an intermediary space. When a family who lived in either a level house or a multistory house hosted a marriage or some other life cycle commemoration, most of the activities took place in their courtyard. These rites of passage included relatives and a few specifically invited guests, but neighbors, persons who attended the same mosque as the host family, and itinerant beggars freely wandered in as well. Beggars usually ate and departed quickly, but neighbors and fellow worshippers would stay for the festivities. Close relatives and friends also felt free to bring their friends without notifying the hosts.

During a wedding, the host borrowed tables from the local mosque to set up in the family's courtyard. These were used to feed guests and as a setting for Qur'anic recitation by local "men of religion" (*laorenjia*).<sup>9</sup> The *ahong* or religious specialist would later seat himself at one of these tables when he acted as witness to the marriage, a ceremony known as *fan yizabu*.<sup>10</sup> The courtyard was also where ritual teasing of the groom, and later the groom and bride, took place. It was the space where people sat, relaxed, and chatted during the six to twelve hours that most guests stayed at a wedding.

Multistory houses differed significantly from level houses with respect to modern conveniences. Facilities in the multistory houses were as modern as the family wished and could afford. Some multistory houses possessed running water, showers, and toilets. The families I knew who had showers in their homes rarely used them;

they preferred, like the residents of the level houses, to bathe at the mosque. This pattern suggests that families installed bathing facilities less for their functional convenience than for the opportunity to purchase consumer goods that demonstrated their wealth and their awareness of first world standards for sanitary facilities. Families who possessed a shower met an internally defined standard of what a modern house should include—whether they used it or not.

Having even an inadequate shower in the house conveyed a message about the family's economic level and determination to modernize because families had to pay to get running water in their homes. The municipal government had not put together a water system to service the city's private homes. Because the Muslim district contained few state institutions or enterprises, water was less available there than in other parts of Xi'an. In addition, city officials did not adequately maintain the existing water facilities, including faucets, drains, and toilets. Residents constantly complained about poor sanitation. The public toilets were filthy and stank. Ill-designed sewers meant that during rainstorms the streets and alleys of the quarter flooded. The limited number of public water spigots forced some families to haul buckets of water for long distances in order to cook and wash. Even for those who lived close to a faucet, supplying the family with water was a tedious and repetitive chore that was also time consuming, because people frequently needed to wait in line to use the faucets.

Faced with such inadequate provisions, some residents acted privately to improve their water and sanitation facilities. I knew of a few streets in the quarter whose inhabitants had pooled their money to install water pipes for the neighborhood. If the residents of a single block or alley could elicit the agreement of all their neighbors, garner their monetary contribution, and pay the government a substantial fee, they could have pipes installed and part of the city's water supply diverted into their area. The city government refused to service or repair these pipes, however, and in the event of a drought they were the first to have their supply of water cut off—as happened during the summers of 1994 and 1995.

The deteriorating quality of the roads was another sore spot in the quarter. All the roads in the Muslim district were paved with asphalt, because the government did not consider any of its streets important enough to warrant concrete. In June 1996, the poor condition of Dapiyuan Street stimulated a religious specialist at the Dapiyuan Mosque to broker an agreement among the street's businesses to fund repaving. The precedent set by families who banded together to improve water supplies most likely made such a cooperative effort conceivable. However, when I returned to the quarter in 1997 and 1998, the road's condition looked as poor as it had ever been.

In the vast majority of Xi'an's municipal districts, residents lived in high-rise apartments provided by their work units. Work units had been part of the government's efforts to industrialize and modernize China in the years following the communist victory, so they were equipped with employee housing that contained heat, running water, toilet facilities, and cheap cafeterias for employee meals. Although most Xi'an Hui had joined state work units during the 1950s, very few had applied for work unit housing. Residents cited "problems with eating" (*chifan de wenti*) as the key difficulty: as Muslims, they could not eat in the work unit canteens without violating their religious principles, and private cooking was strongly discouraged during the initial push for collectivization (see Watson 1991a for a discussion of collectivized eating in the PRC). Because the newly founded state enterprises had difficulty housing large numbers of employees in a short period, the local government allowed Hui to remain in their private residences. Some Han residents who lived within the city walls had also remained in their own homes.

The government exacerbated the gap between the quarter and other parts of the city during the economic reform period. In the 1980s, the city government began a massive demolition (*chaiqian*) and urban renewal (*jiucheng gaizao*) project that entailed replacing all the old housing and most of the old storefronts with new ones. One local official told me that this project was financed in cooperation with private businesses. Investors had provided the

money in exchange for the right to sell or rent space in the edifices they constructed. The new buildings were modernist high rises made of steel, glass, and concrete. They were equipped with running water, central heating, and private toilets and showers. Their upper floors were designated as apartments, and the ground floors were used for business and retail space. At the time of my fieldwork in 1994 and 1995, the Hui quarter was the only part of Xi'an within the city wall that had not been included in the urban renewal project.

A few Hui, only a small percentage of the community, lived in housing provided by their work units. These homes, on the peripheries of the quarter, consisted of apartments in five- or six-story residential complexes. Like the quarter's private multistory houses, they were constructed of steel poles, bricks, and cement. The number of rooms provided for employees in work unit apartments depended on the size of the family being housed, the seniority of the employee, and the relative affluence of the unit in question. Each apartment was equipped with a kitchen, bathroom, running water (at least part of the time, but often not hot running water), central heating, bedrooms, and a common area. The few Hui that I knew who lived in work unit housing shared their flats with the members of their nuclear families.

Some work units, such as the Hui Middle School on the eastern side of the quarter, had only a tiny amount of housing for employees. Instead of providing all the staff with places to live, employers like the Hui Middle School gave most of their employees a small monthly stipend to help defray the cost of renting an apartment elsewhere. Hui Middle School teachers described this stipend as woefully inadequate. However, because most were Han and not native to the quarter, having housing within the Muslim district was not a priority.

As a residential, commercial, and tourist district, the quarter was a uniquely Hui space. It had a long historical association with Chinese Muslims and a lengthy tradition of small-scale enterprise. The CCP had altered the quarter, particularly when the government shut down private commercial activities and restricted reli-

gious observance under Mao, but since the 1979 reforms Hui businesses had flourished, religious activities had resumed, and the quarter was recognizably a “nationality district” (*minzu diqu*). The Maoist government had done much to modernize the district by paving roads, building sanitation facilities, and constructing some schools (others had been built by the Nationalist government). Under Deng, the government had promoted modernization by encouraging private enterprise and otherwise seemed to have left the quarter alone. Since the 1980s, residents appeared to be in charge of their own living area. They had opened businesses, rebuilt their homes, and installed running water. They decorated the streets with banners and broadcast religious services into the air. However, even though residents looked like they exercised considerable control over the Muslim district, the state’s ideology of progress and modernization had profoundly shaped their perceptions of the quarter and their activities there.

#### *Perceptions of the Quarter*

Inhabitants’ opinions of the quarter were overwhelmingly unfavorable. Most women and men characterized it as unpleasant, and many blamed the local businesses for what they perceived as its degeneration. For example, on one occasion Lanying, a woman in her mid-40s who had been an accountant but now helped her father sell noodles, was walking with me the few blocks between her marital and natal homes. Suddenly she burst into complaints about how the local stores and restaurants had taken over all the sidewalks and were endangering pedestrians by forcing them to walk in the street amid the car and bicycle traffic. Using the public sidewalk for one’s business was illegal, she stated, but one could pay a fee for occupying this space to the government (*zhan ling fei*) and then operate as one pleased. She explained that nowadays, Hui were making so much money from their businesses that they could afford such expenses.<sup>11</sup>

Lanying’s comments were echoed on another occasion by a Hui man in his 40s sitting by the curb of the same street that she

and I had walked down. “Look at how dirty (*zang*) this place is,” he said. He wistfully remembered how, before the reform era, the streets in the Hui quarter were “so clean” (*ke ganjing*). Now that everyone was running a store from the front of their house, he said, the streets were a mess. Gesturing up and down the street with his arm and shaking his head, he sighed about how the quarter had deteriorated during the past ten years.

The first time that I met Chao, a 26-year-old Hui man who was a university graduate, he asked whether I thought the quarter was a good place or a bad one. When I explained that I was there to study the area rather than to evaluate it and that I had never thought about the quarter in those terms, he told me that he thought it was a bad place. Chao explained that the problem was that Hui were only interested in business, and not even large-scale business, but merely small-scale ones that families could set up easily. The petty enterprises of the quarter earned a good deal of money, he said, but instead of investing it in expansion, Hui just used it to buy things and “play” (*wanr*). People in the quarter had low expectations and were easily satisfied if they had a little money, Chao stated. He thought that residents were rough and boorish (*cu*) and had a bad influence upon one another. This was especially true at the schools. Chao said that Hui students were bright (*congming*), but they learned bad habits from one another and had no positive reinforcement at home. He criticized Hui parents for not understanding what studying was (*meiyou xuexi gainian*). Chao summarized his views by stating that all Hui had were “economic demands” (*jingji shang de yaoqiu*); they lacked entirely “cultural demands” (*wenhua shang de yaoqiu*). To prove his point, he remarked that when he was accepted into university in 1987, he was one of only three students from the entire quarter. By contrast, 39 percent of the total number of high school students in Xi’an entered university in 1987 (Xi’an Statistical Bureau 1988:527).

Many residents stated that the family enterprises of the quarter meant that children lacked “a studious environment” (*xuexi huanjing*) at home. A common complaint I heard was that Hui

parents were too busy operating businesses to oversee their children's homework. Residents believed that without proper parental guidance, students paid little attention in school, and many parents complained that children who started out highly motivated were quickly led astray by their classmates' bad examples. Upon completing middle school, most students went into private enterprise, thus continuing the cycle.

Even those parents who wanted to help their children felt unable to do so because they had received so little education themselves. The parents of the 1990s school-age children had attended school during the 1960s and 1970s—or more precisely, had not attended school then. During the Cultural Revolution's initial political campaigns (1966–1969), the schools closed and the students were told to go home. When the schools reopened, remembered Mingxin, all the students automatically advanced to higher grades. “We didn't even take a test” (*lian kaoshi dou meiyou kao*), he protested. At this point, the national education system shifted from teaching theoretical and empirical knowledge to experiential wisdom. Students were told to study the workers, farmers, and soldiers (*gong, nong, bing*) and many were strongly encouraged to go to the countryside to work. Those who went remembered this with bitterness. Conditions were difficult, and the young people could provide little practical assistance and were a drain on rural resources. Speaking of her three years in the countryside (1968–1970), Lanying said, “They [the government] said that the farmers would welcome us. In fact, they didn't want us! And the city didn't want us either.” Lanying was allowed to return to Xi'an earlier than most because of illness; others stayed for eight to ten years.

A young Hui man in his twenties whom I met at the Western Mosque also blamed the occupational and educational characteristics of residents for the dirty, chaotic, and crowded condition of the Muslim district. He said the quarter's poor physical condition resulted from its “low-class” residents (*cengci di*). If more Hui were educated, he said, then the quarter would be clean and orderly, “like America.” The problem with the quarter, he and

most other residents agreed, was that it was a place of “low cultural quality” (*wenhua suzhi di*). On the whole, both Hui and Han residents of Xi'an believed that the Hui “do not care about culture” (*bu zhongshi wenhua*) and that “Hui are good at business, not at culture” (*Huimin shanyu shengyi, bushanyu wenhua*).

The government promoted the stereotype that the Hui *minzu* excelled at business. In texts produced in state-funded research institutions and universities, scholars characterized the Hui race as having inherited a predisposition for commerce from the Arab and Persian merchants who came to China between the seventh and ninth centuries (see, e.g., Lai 1992; Hu 1993). Members of the Hui nationality and the government agreed that Hui had an innate facility for business. Since 1979, Hui have benefited from this supposed racial predisposition by receiving official support and encouragement to take advantage of the state's economic reforms (Gladney 1998a).

Residents' use of the phrase “low cultural quality” and their references to their lack of “culture” were also ideas that they took from government rhetoric. I frequently heard officials in Xi'an utter such remarks. “Culture” and the concept of “cultural quality” came from government propaganda. “Improve [our] cultural quality” (*tigao wenhua suzhi*) was an official slogan frequently written on signs and painted on walls. “Culture” or *wenhua* in this phrase refers to a body of knowledge defined by the government; it is not culture in the sense of “customs and habits” (*fengsu xiguan*). The most basic aspect of *wenhua* was literacy in Chinese (see Harrell 1995b:89). Beyond that, “culture” was what the state produced in its national educational system. The longer a person attended school, the higher his or her “cultural level” (*wenhua shuiping*), and the better equipped he or she was to assist in China's development. Given official emphasis on the four modernizations, students and their parents privileged scientific and technical knowledge (*like*) over “literary” knowledge (*wenke*) (see also Ikels 1996:163–6).

Although “education” was roughly synonymous with “culture” in the slogan, the term *suzhi* (“quality”) implied an innate

capacity to become educated as well as educational achievement. *Suzhi* was one concept in a national eugenicist discourse concerned with (re)producing citizens of the highest mental and physical quality. "Improving the people's quality" (*tigao renmin suzhi*) was integrally related to the CCP's racial and evolutionary ideas. China's success at modernization depended on the CCP's correctly engineering the "cultural quality" of the PRC's citizens (see Anagnost 1997a). When residents used the state's concept of "low cultural quality" to disparage the quarter, their words implied that its residents possessed inferior intellectual capacities as well as lacked education.

Many elements of the residents' understanding of themselves derived from state ideology. The government was responsible for dividing up China's populace in terms of race, for affixing racial characteristics, and for rating Chinese citizens' "cultural quality." The concept of "culture" that residents used to measure themselves was defined, promoted, and dispensed by the state. However, although residents of the Muslim district accepted that they possessed an innate proclivity for commerce, they did not entirely accept that their "low cultural quality" was an expression of their intrinsic racial inferiority. Rather, they held the government responsible for their lack of "culture," blaming officials for the quarter's poor educational facilities and their own lack of educational opportunities and accusing state officials of neglecting the quarter.

Parents criticized the quarter's schools for providing their children with a poor education. Without exception, every single parent I spoke with told me that the district's schools were inferior. After learning that I taught English at the Hui Middle School, one woman who ran a small noodle restaurant in front of her house and was the mother of two middle-school-aged boys, said that "those who had the means" (*you yidianr banfa de ren*) sent their children outside the quarter to study. "Having the means" meant having the money and personal connections needed to get children into schools located in other parts of the city. Her children both studied at good middle schools in other districts and were doing very well, she was proud to say. In a shop farther down the street,

a woman in her 30s explained that the teachers in the quarter's schools were poor (*cha*) and did not care about their students. If she had the money, she said, she would send her son to study outside of the quarter, but the school fees were too high for her to afford it.

Lanying's sister-in-law, the mother of a middle school student, cried to me for an hour one afternoon because she was afraid that her son lacked the grades to get into a high school outside the quarter. Sending him to any of the quarter's schools was useless, she said, for they were "mostly Hui" (*Huimin duo*). It wasn't that the Hui children weren't intelligent, she said, but no one made them work. If her son lacked the challenge of competing with better-educated and more studious Han pupils, he "wouldn't be afraid" and so would not study. Ultimately, she and her husband spent thousands of dollars to send their son to a newly opened private boarding school in the southern part of the city that had computer facilities, high-quality teachers, and strict discipline.

Fathers also censured the district's schools. While I was teaching at the Hui Middle School in 1994, one well-respected local religious specialist withdrew his daughter halfway through the school year. The principal and the girl's teacher were both very unhappy about this because they considered her a good student. When I asked Yingchun about it during a visit to his home, he complained that the teachers at the Hui Middle School were not good, and that the "cultural quality" was low (*wenhua suzhi di*). At his daughter's new school, located in the southern part of the city, she would learn in one year what it took two years to learn at the Hui Middle School, he said.

Perhaps the most direct criticisms of the government came from the Hui Middle School's principal, a Hui from the west side of the Muslim district. Jingxian had an exemplary "cultural quality": she had graduated with a Master's degree in physics from a military academy in Harbin (Manchuria) and would have had a career as a nuclear physicist had not she been faulted for her politically incorrect family background during the Cultural Revolution. Jingxian only agreed to become the Hui Middle School's principal



after city officials had gone to extremes to persuade her. When she reached the age of 55, the PRC's mandatory retirement age for women, the local government asked her to continue in her post. She refused. Jingxian told me that since she had passed the official retirement age, she had the power to choose what she would do. She felt that she had received inadequate support and resources from the municipal government while she was principal. Official rhetoric about education had not been backed up by monetary contributions, nor did officials assist her in obtaining and retaining the teaching and administrative staff that she wanted. Jingxian believed that she had had a positive effect on the Hui Middle School (an opinion that many residents of the quarter shared with her), but it was too much of a struggle without the government's assistance.

The parents of 1990s school-age children also blamed the government for their own low levels of education. Many described themselves as "good students" (*hao xuesheng*) who had "loved to study" (*ai xuexi*) but were denied the opportunity to attend school because of the Cultural Revolution. When the political turmoil subsided and the government reinstated the school entrance examination system, the Hui I knew thought it futile to attempt to re-enter school. Feeling too old and too far behind to compete, they placed their hopes upon their younger siblings and their children.

Education was not the only area in which Xi'an Hui faulted the government for inadequate attention. Residents were eager for the government to improve the quarter's public facilities, particularly water supply, sanitation, and roads. They were also aware that city officials, in order to encourage all forms of commercial activity, chose not to enforce policies about sidewalk use, construction, and peddling merchandise. Although residents knew that their prosperity was the result of Deng's emphasis on marketization and privatization, they also saw the government's drive for economic expansion as drawing attention away from routine city maintenance. Some residents waxed nostalgic about the neat, orderly

appearance of the Muslim district under Mao, even as they described themselves as "very poor" before the economic reforms.

### *Do Actions Speak Louder than Words?*

Despite their disparaging remarks, most residents were strongly attached to the quarter. Many informed me proudly that their families had lived there for hundreds of years. Very few chose to leave, including those who were wealthy enough to purchase private apartments in the newly rebuilt parts of Xi'an or those whose work units provided them with relatively inexpensive opportunities to buy housing. Those Hui who did move out generally did not sell their property in the quarter. Rather, when these "expatriate" Hui needed to celebrate a life cycle ritual, they returned to the "old home" to host it. Pragmatic concerns, such as having elderly, immobile relatives who lived in the quarter, motivated these decisions in part, but such actions also suggest that Hui felt they belonged in the quarter and considered it their home.

One of the more striking manifestations of residents' attachment to the quarter could be found at the Hui cemetery. Islamic law dictates that Muslims must be buried and prescribes a set of elaborate mortuary practices. Before 1949, Xi'an Hui buried their dead in the three graveyards located in the quarter. Because the PRC government found the Hui burial practices and cemeteries chaotic, unsanitary, and unsightly, officials took control of the cemeteries during the 1950s (Han and Liu 1987:175). Initially, some Hui ignored the government's efforts to regulate burials and continued to bury their dead in the original cemeteries; during the Cultural Revolution, however, the city leveled two of the quarter's cemeteries and built work units on top of them, thus forcing residents to use the government's graveyards (these two cemeteries had still not been recovered by 1998, although I was told that the mosques and the government were discussing the matter). By the early 1970s, those two cemeteries no longer had space for graves, so the government found a new site, Hongqing. Hongqing was located about an hour outside Xi'an in a Han agrarian commu-

nity. All Hui from the city, including those not resident in the quarter, buried their dead there.

After a resident of the quarter died and was buried, the bereaved family marked where their deceased relative lay by erecting a tombstone one year after the death. On the front, the tombstone was inscribed with the name of the dead, his or her position in the family (for example, “loving mother”), and his or her descendants. Most were also adorned with a picture of a mosque or some Arabic calligraphy (see Figure 4). When I visited Hongqing, I also noticed that inscribed on the back of the newer stones was the deceased’s address (for example, 101 West Sheep Market Street). The practice was clearly a recent one. Older tombstones were blank on the back (this was also true of the tombstones in the old cemeteries in the quarter).

During a visit to Hongqing for a funeral, a friend and I walked down the narrow paths between rows and rows of stones. He pointed out the addresses to me, saying “This Hui was from West Sheep Market Street, and this one was from North Court Gate. But that Hui over there was a Henan Hui, look, he lived over by the railroad station.” For anyone familiar with the quarter, each mention of an address revealed a great deal about the deceased. The Hui from West Sheep Market Street most likely belonged to the Great Mosque, as did the Hui from North Court Gate. The former probably lived in a multistory house, and the latter surely lived in a level house: West Sheep Market Street was the home of many affluent petty entrepreneurs, but North Court Gate contained a number of families who were not engaged in private business and were less wealthy, and so had more of the older residences. Both of these people were almost certainly from families that had lived in the quarter for a long time, because their homes were located in its oldest, most densely populated part. In contrast, the Hui who lived near the railroad station was “an outsider” (*wailai de*) and a relatively recent arrival in Xi’an; his address showed that he did not belong to the Xi’an Hui community but rather was a member of a Hui neighborhood established for a mere 50 years. Walking through the cemetery looking at the

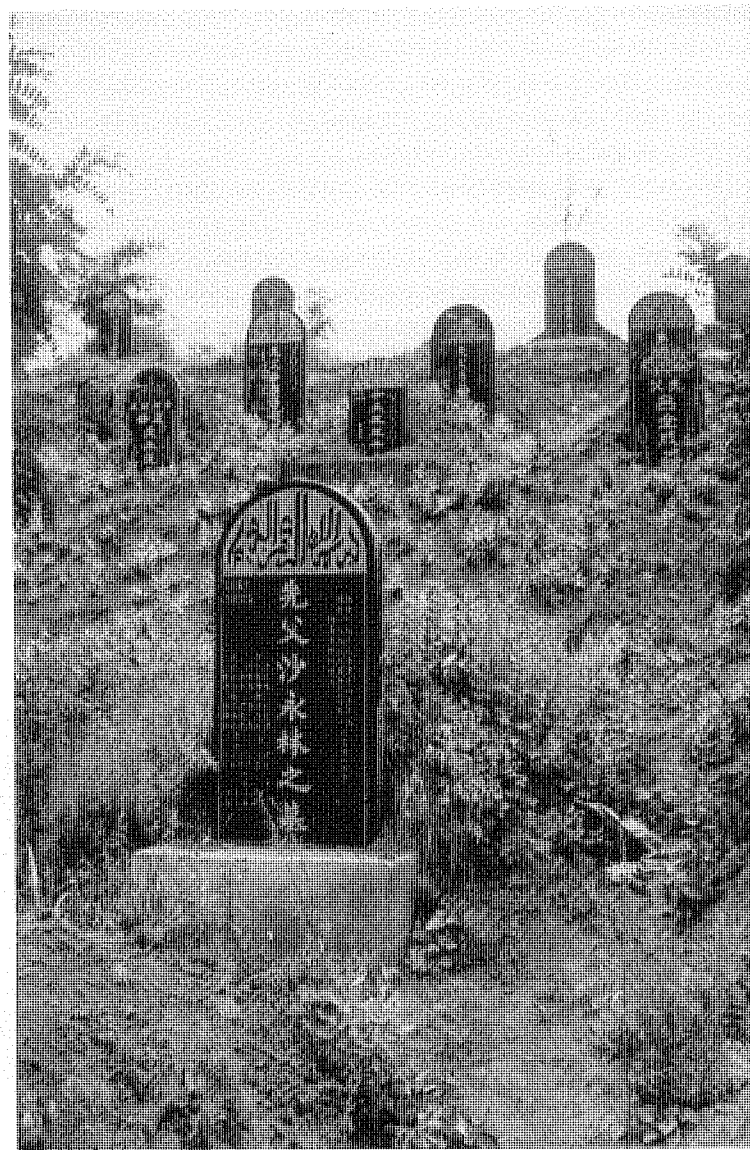


FIGURE 4. Tombstones adorned with Arabic calligraphy and mosque images.

addresses on the tombstones, Hui could instantly tell who was from the quarter and who was not, who was from an established Xi'an Hui family and who was not. They gained a sense of who had attended which mosque, engaged in what type of business, and lived in what kind of residence.

The street addresses that Hui carved on their tombstones located them socially and geographically. The emergence of this practice was no doubt linked to the government's removal of the Hui cemetery to a location far outside the city amid Han farmers: Hui began writing the addresses of the dead on the back of their tombstones to link them to their homes and their proper contexts. The act of making public the deceased's address suggests that residents believed that a person's identity was related not only to who their kin were but also to where he or she was from. The inscriptions demonstrate their attachment to the quarter, their home.

Hui also identified strongly with the quarter when they spoke of it. Though they had negative feelings, they also said that it was "easier to be Hui" there, to cite the words of one young female resident. Living in the quarter was intimately associated with being Hui. Many residents pointed out that the Hui who moved outside the quarter quickly assumed Han habits like drinking alcohol and eating pork and stopped coming to the mosques. The Muslim district was a "more convenient" place to live if you were Hui, one middle-aged woman told me. "Other places have fewer Hui." Though Hui criticized the quarter for its chaotic appearance and the low-class nature of its inhabitants, they also regarded it as the best place in Xi'an to live a Hui lifestyle. Only in the quarter could Hui eat without anxiety, attend the mosque with ease, find suitable marriage partners, host proper life cycle rituals, and associate with neighbors who shared their predispositions.

#### *Institutionalization of Hui Inferiority*

The ambivalence that residents expressed about living in the quarter was mirrored by the opinions of Chinese officials. Officials treated the quarter as the center of Hui activities, locating a

number of government institutions concerning "nationality affairs" and hosting most official events related to Islam there. They also used the phrase "low cultural quality" (*wenhua suzhi di*) in reference to the quarter. In the eyes of many Han officials with whom I spoke, however, the "low cultural quality" was a racial trait, as characteristic of the Hui as their success at business. The state was ideologically committed to viewing the Hui as an evolutionarily backward race; this led officials to erect institutions and create policies that perpetuated a set of variables that were officially viewed as antithetical to modernization.

One of the most important ways that officials institutionalized the Hui race's inferiority was by ensuring that Hui "nationality" practices continued, even while the government castigated them as "feudal," "backward," and "superstitious" (see MacInnis 1989: 7-36 for examples of this rhetoric). The Hui also received a number of affirmative action-style perquisites because of their developmental backwardness. On the national level, the state permitted Hui to have two children, exempted them from practicing cremation, allowed them to enter college with lower exam scores, and gave them disproportionately high political representation (Gladney 1991:161-2, 219-20). In Shaanxi, the provincial government provided Xi'an Hui with graveyards to facilitate Islamic burial practices, allowed Hui to engage in expensive mosque renovation projects (even providing funds in the case of the Great Mosque), and permitted them to construct new religious edifices while refusing analogous requests from Han religious practitioners (namely Buddhists and Christians). The government also defined "nationality holidays" for the Hui during which Hui were entitled to extra days off from work and school, despite the fact that these holidays create bureaucratic hassles because their dates change each year.<sup>12</sup> In Xi'an, the city government did not enforce municipal policies about uses of public space but allowed Hui to use the sidewalks and streets for business and construction materials. Officials did not tax the quarter's private businesses; residents who told me about this said simply, "No one comes to collect." The government made no attempt to license or regulate the many

peddlers who worked the district. Officials justified this special treatment by claiming that the Hui were “sensitive” (*mingan*) and “troublesome” (*naoshi*) and required careful handling. The assumption was that residents of the quarter were less capable of modernizing than the Han.

### *Demolition and Reconstruction*

During the 1990s, the Xi'an municipal government took action to change the city's image. In accordance with the national injunction to modernize, officials decided to tear down the old residential and commercial buildings in the city, widen the streets, and construct new, multistory edifices (see Lao, Zhao, and Luo 1993 for an official account). Although the government contracted out most of the work to private companies, officials controlled the project planning and organization, including the decision about which parts of the city would be demolished first. The government also monitored the rebuilding, at least to the extent of prohibiting the construction of buildings taller than five stories in the vicinity of the historic Ming-dynasty city wall. Officials were also in charge of notifying residents of eviction and compensating those who owned private houses or apartments; renters were simply told to leave. All the inhabitants of areas to be rebuilt were moved to temporary housing in the suburbs. The government stated that former residents could move back to the site of their previous homes, but few were able to do so when the construction was completed. The compensation that home owners had received was far less than the cost of the new “modern” apartments. Bluntly put, the project was a de facto gentrification scheme.

When I visited Xi'an during the summer of 1998, the demolition and reconstruction of the area within the city wall was almost completed—except for the quarter. That summer, after more than three years of rumors, officials announced that they would begin demolishing Barley Market Street, a Hui commercial area where officials wanted to build a major traffic artery. Government propaganda blared morning and night over loudspeakers on the

street, though the recording was so muddy that residents could not make out what it said. During that summer, “the nation” (*guojia*), as some residents called the government, was trying to arrange meetings with all the property owners on Barley Market Street. The few state-owned buildings had already been evacuated.

Several factors had caused officials to move slowly in reconstructing the Muslim district. Residents said that the predominantly Han government was afraid to begin work on the quarter because it was home to members of a minority nationality. The officials I spoke with made comments that supported this view when they explained the delay by calling the Hui “sensitive” (*mingan*) and the situation “complicated” (*fuzha*). According to Liangxun, the vice-director of the provincial Religion and Nationality Affairs Commission, the main reason that the government had been slow to implement urban renewal in the quarter was that officials had had difficulty finding an investor. The quarter was more densely populated than other parts of Xi'an, which made the rebuilding project less profitable. There would be less excess space to rent or sell once residents had been re-housed; the government's own restrictions on building height exacerbated this problem.

Officials had also wanted to find a Hui investor. Barley Market Street, where the government planned to begin, was the quarter's most densely populated commercial district. During the mid-1980s the state had selected this street as the “Hui food and drink street” (*Huimin yinshi jie*) and erected “Islamic decor” to denote this (see Figure 5). The logic behind procuring a Hui investor was twofold: first, a Hui would presumably be interested in improving local conditions, and second, if the reconstruction project was backed by a Hui, it would defuse potential conflicts between the Hui residents and the predominantly Han state.

Though officials failed to find a Hui investor, by 1998 they had located a businessman from the Muslim district who agreed to represent the Beijing company that would fund the renovation. Residents characterized this man as a local boy made good. He had opened a private construction firm as soon as the economic reforms began and made a killing on a hydraulic invention that powered



FIGURE 5. The “Hui food and drink street” gate erected by the local government on Barley Market Street.

water to the upper floors of the many multistory buildings that had sprung up during the 1980s. This invention was obsolete, but the man’s social status was firmly established. The government had offered him an official job after he had struck it rich.

Liangxun gave other reasons for the delays. He noted that a large percentage of the quarter’s inhabitants engaged in private enterprise. This made it more difficult for the government to move them. Persons employed by work units were more subject to bureaucratic control and had to accept the accommodations that their work units provided. The quarter’s residents owned their own homes and businesses and did not depend on the government for income; this made the task of dislodging them more difficult. Residents were unwilling to leave the quarter, but work could not begin until Barley Market Street’s inhabitants had been moved out. Other unresolved concerns included the fate of the district’s ten mosques, and how the government would ensure the community’s religious needs were met during the temporary re-housing and after the reconstruction. Liangxun said that some government leaders had considered creating an alternative “minority nationality district” (*shaoshu minzu diqu*), but the idea had received little support. In 1997, another factor emerged to slow the process: a Hui entrepreneur and resident of the quarter had died during a conflict with some low-level government employees, and the state and local residents disagreed over how the case should be handled. The state’s representatives who were at fault were Han. Manslaughter in China merits the death penalty, and the general opinion in the quarter was that the men should be executed. Government officials apparently disagreed: more than a year and a half after the event took place, the men had not been sentenced.

The government’s hesitation about renovating the quarter led to some striking visual incongruities. For example, a major four-lane road that passed in front of the provincial and city government complexes stopped abruptly at the edge of the quarter, degenerating into tiny alleyways and crowded houses. In general, the quarter possessed an informal, ragged appearance that contrasted sharply with the orderly, planned look of most other parts of Xi’an.



When I first heard about the reconstruction project in 1994, the Hui with whom I discussed the matter were quite unconcerned. It was only in April 1995, when the city declared it would begin widening Barley Market Street before the end of the year (which did not occur), that people I knew began to talk as if the reconstruction might take place. When I revisited the quarter in 1997 and 1998, feelings had intensified, and not just on Barley Market Street. To the east, the government had leveled all the housing and buildings adjacent to the quarter and built a public garden, roller-skating rink, and underground shopping mall. Residents said that the government had targeted that area, located between the city's Bell and Drum Towers, to make it more attractive to tourists. The Muslim district was abuzz with rumors that the houses near the Great Mosque would be leveled next, so that all three of these national historic sites would be exposed to view. Previously, the two towers, like the Great Mosque, had been surrounded by an unsightly conglomeration of homes, stores, and food stalls.

Residents knew that the proposed reconstruction would bring changes, yet few worried that the new streets and apartments might decrease the quarter's spaces for collective gatherings. Xi'an Hui discussed such topics only in response to my prodding; the two biggest concerns of Barley Market Street residents were the amount of compensation they would receive and what spaces they would be allocated once the street was rebuilt. When I asked the butcher Mingxin and his wife, who lived near the Great Mosque, what they thought of the reconstruction in 1996, they responded by talking about the improvements that the project would bring. When I persisted in my questions about the plan's effects, Mingxin began to speculate on how the reconstruction might affect the area's businesses. He pointed out that now most families ran their enterprises out of their homes and wondered aloud how would it be possible to run an eatery or a butchery from the third floor of an apartment building. It occurred to him that if a family were producing food to sell in their apartment, their neighbors might complain about the heat from the kitchen. Even more important, he felt, was that such businesses needed to be at street level. As he thought about the project, he wondered how the gov-

ernment would accommodate the large number of Hui who depended on private entrepreneurship for their livelihood.

Inhabitants of the area near the Great Mosque were slow to consider the fact that the apartments would provide no place to conduct ritual celebrations. Social births or *manyue* (a ritual that celebrated an infant's having lived to the age of one month), circumcisions, engagements, weddings, funerals, and mourning rituals were all held in the courtyards of private homes. If residents all lived in apartments, there would be no courtyards and therefore no place for preparing food, hosting guests, or engaging in collective Qur'anic recitation. The quarter would lose its collective spaces. During 1996, I heard that some residents had proposed that the quarter's apartment complexes be equipped with large common rooms containing tables and chairs that could be used for Hui rituals. The government had made no definite response, and residents allowed the issue to drop. The apathetic pursuit of this option probably arose from the lack of appeal it had. The only Muslim district apartment complex that I knew that had such a room was a dismal failure. None of the building's residents used it to host ritual events. In 1996, the sister of a woman who lived there tried to rent it for her daughter's wedding. She was prevented from doing so because the room was being used for storage. When I visited this apartment complex in June 1997, the room was still filled with oil drums and large cans.

The government's plans would cause other aspects of local life to change as well, though my acquaintances and friends did not discuss this. After the level and multistory houses had been torn down, extended families would no longer be able to live together. Residents would be assigned apartments by the government and would not control where they, their relatives, or their neighbors lived. The quarter's alleys and doorsteps, and many of the places to sit on the sidewalks (where eateries and shops put stools and tables), would vanish, replaced by rows of institutional apartment buildings. Even if the mosques were left untouched—an unlikely possibility—many important spaces for socializing would disappear.

During a lunch meeting in June 1997, Liangxun pointed out



another potential change that would have profound implications for the quarter. The new high-rise apartment buildings would provide living space for more families than was currently available. This meant that the reconstruction was likely to bring an influx of Han into the quarter. Liangxun did not elaborate on the difficulties that this might cause, but the outcome was clear enough. The presence of large numbers of Han would change the quarter's "racial" composition and affect residents' ability to maintain Islamic purity (see Chapters 4 and 5 for a discussion of Islamic purity with particular reference to dietary practices). An influx of Han might cause conflicts over the celebration of religious rituals and holidays as Han syncretism encountered Islamic monotheism in a close setting. Another question was the effect that a more integrated population would have on Hui marriage patterns: would most Hui continue to marry Hui if their neighbors were Han?

Despite all this, the Hui that I talked to were in favor of urban renewal. Many women and men thought that the new apartments would improve their individual quality of life and that of the community as a whole. No one seemed worried about the fate of the mosques, the possible break-up of the community into temporary housing for a year or longer, or the likelihood that residents would be unable to return to the Muslim district. Instead, Hui pointed to the advantages of living in apartments, which ranged from better facilities to the apartments' potential for raising the "cultural quality" of the quarter's residents.

#### *Reactions to the Reconstruction Project*

Residents enthusiastically supported reconstruction. They were convinced that they would continue to live on or near the site of their original homes, even though very few people who had been moved out of other parts of the city had managed to return to their former neighborhoods. Most Hui believed, as the 80-year-old religious specialist Jishu stated, that the government would provide: the state would rebuild the mosques, houses, and shops that it tore down and return such property to its rightful owners.

Guangliang, a man in his 40s who lived in the quarter and was employed by a work unit in the southern part of the city, told me that his entire family was looking forward to the demolition and reconstruction of the quarter. This was in spite of the fact that he had only finished building a two-story home to replace his "level house" in 1994. Guangliang related his eagerness for reconstruction to the appearance of the Muslim district, which he thought looked dreadful. "The entire city has been planned" (*zhengge chengshi dou guihua le*), he said, and the Muslim district could not be left out. Guangliang pointed to the condition of the quarter's roads, which were so poor that he could hardly ride his bike down the street, as evidence of the need for urban renewal. He believed that the many foreign tourists who visited the quarter received a bad impression because of the area's disorderly appearance. Guangliang said that he hoped that ultimately the quarter and all of Xi'an would look like Beijing, the nation's capital and one of the eastern cities that the national government held up as a model for development.

Mingxin, the butcher who speculated about the fate of the quarter's private businesses, also looked favorably on the reconstruction. He indicated the quarter's poor sanitation facilities as a major incentive to rebuild. The street where he lived even lacked a place to deposit garbage (*lajitai*), he said. His house was far away from the public toilet, and the drains on his street flooded every time it rained. Government officials had simply ignored these problems, but when the new apartments were built the city would provide better, more modern facilities.

Huiling was a woman in her late 40s who lived with her husband, two adult daughters, and adolescent son in a small compound that they shared with her husband's brother's family. The first time that I visited her, I noticed that her kitchen roof was constructed of two pieces of thick plastic board and had a large gap in the center. Seeing my gaze, Huiling said, "This old house is falling apart, but soon our family will move to a new apartment." Because she worked for a tiny local branch of the district government, one of the quarter's two "Affairs Offices" (*Banshichu*), she,

unlike most residents, knew where her new apartment would be: only a few blocks east of her current home, immediately behind the government office where she worked.

Huiling told me that she liked apartment buildings and was looking forward to moving. "Apartment buildings are much better than level houses," her co-resident sister-in-law agreed (*loufang bi pingfang hao*). This woman's daughter lived in an apartment building, and her visits there had convinced her that apartments were much cleaner. Huiling concurred, remarking that she really hated having to sweep the family's courtyard, which was constantly dirtied by wind-blown dust and trash.

Other women reiterated the favorable comments that Huiling and her sister-in-law made about the projected apartments. For example, 26-year-old Xijuan, whose family sold "little eats," said that when her family was assigned an apartment they would have more space, a separate kitchen, running water, and a bathroom. At that time her mother and sister shared a single room, hauled water from the public faucet down the street, and used the public toilets. Her family wanted their part of the quarter to be torn down first, she said. I asked her whether she too was looking forward to the proposed reconstruction. Xijuan lived with her husband's family in a well-equipped, three-story private home. Xijuan replied matter-of-factly that she thought living in an apartment building would be much the same as living in her marital residence.

Yue, Liangxun's 26-year-old daughter who had graduated from high school and college, also welcomed the proposed reconstruction. She believed that building apartment complexes in the quarter would improve its quality by separating the residents. The Hui of the quarter were "a little too united" (*you yidianr tai tuan-jie le*), she said. She believed that residents' closeness circumscribed their educational and occupational horizons, and she thought that dividing the Hui into apartments would cause them to take education more seriously, develop higher ambitions, and explore other careers besides commerce. In other words, if the government modernized the Muslim district's housing, Hui would advance beyond their current state of backwardness.

Yue was not alone in seeing the quarter as too close. Hui women of varying ages and lifestyles spoke to me with embarrassment and frustration about the Muslim district's narrowness. "Our Hui quarter is just these few streets" (*women Huiminfang jiu shi neme ji xiang*), some said. Such comments generally expressed the speaker's sense of confinement and restriction. Some women who uttered this statement felt that the quarter circumscribed their marriage and occupational choices. They thought that living in the Muslim district prevented them from finding husbands with "high cultural quality" and meant that they worked in petty commerce and low-level service jobs. Yan, a young woman in her mid-twenties who sold dumplings at her family's eatery, summed up the situation by saying, "Hui people love to stay at home; they don't like to go out. This prevents us from doing real business" (*Huimin ai shou jia, bu ai chuqu. Bu gan shiye*).

### *Rebuilding*

While the Hui community eagerly anticipated the results of the government's plan, they did not wait passively for the renewal to happen. "Construction in the quarter goes on throughout all four seasons" (*fangshang yinian siji dou you gai fang*), locals remarked. At a time when residents knew that their dwellings would soon be demolished, they continued to start new private rebuilding projects.

One reason that Hui engaged in private reconstruction was to improve their standards of living in the short term. No one knew when the government's project would really take effect; if residents really wanted to modernize then their most certain solution was to take matters into their own hands. Residents who built new multistory houses demonstrated publicly their economic success: they could afford to pay the workers' salaries, the costs of building materials, and the government fees and fines for private construction. The height of the multistory homes, the way that they loosely imitated apartments and sky scrapers, and the "modern" goods with which residents filled them also indicated their

owners' successful participation in the modern world. However, immediate modernization was not the only reason that Hui expanded their dwellings. They also rebuilt in response to the government's development program in order to obtain larger apartments when their housing was reassigned.

The government's policy of providing new housing on the basis of the size of a family's previous home was common knowledge all over Xi'an. The policy was known as "take one, give one" (*chen yi huan yi*): one square foot of space in the old house would be exchanged for one square foot of space in the new. When, early in 1995, rumors spread that the city government would soon widen Barley Market Street, Mingjie and his family quickly closed the small restaurant that they owned there. Aifeng (Mingjie's wife) explained to me that if they could finish building a bigger restaurant before the stores and restaurants along Barley Market Street were demolished to make space for the wider street, the city would have to give them a bigger storefront when the project was finished. A few weeks after construction on his new, three-story restaurant began (the upper stories of which later became his son's residence and the sleeping quarters for hired employees), Mingjie took me over to look at the site. Walking down Barley Market Street, he pointed to three neighboring shops whose doors were closed. "Their owners decided to expand too," he told me.

The Barley Market Street storekeepers were not the only residents to begin construction upon hearing of the government's plans. One March afternoon when I visited the Western Mosque, also located on Barley Market Street, I saw a huge pile of fresh lumber lying in the courtyard. Xiye, a woman in her mid-40s who sold tickets for the mosque's showers, told me that the mosque owned some level houses farther up the street that it had been renting to private families and had decided to replace these houses with multistory ones.<sup>13</sup> When I asked why, Xiye said simply that it was related to the government's decision to widen the street. In other words, the mosque, like the other property owners, expanded to increase the amount of space that the government would allocate it after the street-widening was finished.

### *Urban Renewal, Modernization, and Race*

The government presented its urban renewal project as a plan to improve and develop the city. Reconstruction was one tactic the government adopted to modernize. The results it produced were more than cosmetic. The new apartment complexes increased the state's ability to regulate and survey Xi'an's urban neighborhoods, including the Muslim district. Through its rehousing project, the government determined who lived together, whether or not families or extended families were co-resident, and whether neighbors remained neighbors. When the quarter was renovated, officials would also determine the degree to which it remained a primarily Hui area. State control over religious activity would also increase because the reconstruction affected who would reside near the mosque, who lived farther away, and where the mosques were located relative to worshippers. Where officials positioned Hui in the new apartments would strongly influence who engaged in private enterprise. Certain types of businesses and, even more likely, certain entrepreneurs who had cultivated good relations with the government would be rewarded with choice locations. Others would find their ability to run a private business curtailed when they received housing that could not easily be transformed into commercial space. Urban renewal enhanced the government's capacity to shape the quarter and its residents.

In a book about a historic Greek town on the island of Crete, Michael Herzfeld explores the negotiations that occurred between the Greek state, in the guise of the national historical commission that wanted to preserve the European domestic architecture and thus the European history of the town of Rethemnos, and the individual householders in the city, who resented the government's interference in how they used their homes (1991). The Greek state privileged a certain type of identity that contributed to Greece's modern image and furthered its goals of integration in the European community. Officials devalued those architectural forms that did not conform to these desired representations, such

as those that recalled the area's Turkish occupation. In his monograph, Herzfeld probes the uneasy relationship between the state, which wanted the householders to assist officials in their efforts to demonstrate that Crete belonged in Europe and Greece in the European Community, and the householders who strategized to control their own living space and meet their own needs.

Rethemnos and the quarter show similar kinds of interactions between state and citizen. In both cases, officials and locals shared the conviction that modernization was a desirable goal. The need for development and progress was not questioned; where citizen and state differed were in their assessment of how to achieve such ends.

From the state's perspective, the Hui race were innately inferior to the Han. The Hui possessed "feudal" customs and habits and had "low cultural quality." Officials used phrases to describe residents of the quarter that were reminiscent of the pre-1949 Chinese image of Muslims as barbarians: the Hui were "sensitive," liable to "make trouble," and required careful treatment. The Hui *minzu's* level of civilization was so inadequate that officials did not expect residents to behave rationally or to cooperate in the state's plans for modernization. These ideas about the Hui affected government policy.

As we have seen in this chapter, the state institutionalized traits that it interpreted as signs of Hui backwardness. The government created "nationality holidays" and saw that they were commemorated. The schools of the quarter, which residents criticized for being inferior to the schools of other districts, had been designated by officials as "nationality schools," thus linking poor educational outcomes to racial identification. When it came to urban renewal, officials found a Hui to deal with the Hui, which reinforced the notion that residents were not rational and could only deal with one of their "own kind." When officials refrained from enforcing government rules and regulations concerning taxes, use of public space, and construction in the quarter, they encouraged the Hui to behave in ways that confirmed official stereotypes of them as "mercantile" and as intemperate, unreasonable, uneducated, and

incapable of modernization without state assistance. The former stereotype aided the government's economic agenda (Gladney 1998a), and the latter confirmed the official evolutionary hierarchy, bolstered a sense of Han superiority, and provided a rationale for government intervention in the quarter.

Residents of the quarter disagreed with the government on several counts. Although they had internalized the discourse of "cultural quality," Xi'an Hui did not accept their "low cultural quality" simply as a racial trait. Residents saw themselves and their children as intelligent but denied the opportunities and environment that they needed to excel. They faulted the state for improperly overseeing the quarter's roads and public works, neglecting the district's school facilities and teachers, and depriving a generation of Hui (the parents of the 1990s schoolchildren) the chance to "raise their cultural quality." Residents were also aware of how officials had encouraged their commercial activities and the state's complicity in the "decline" of the quarter's physical environment.

Xi'an Hui also did not accept that modernization was contingent on the state. They took steps to modernize their own homes, businesses, and mosques when the government failed to act (see Chapter 3 for more on the district's mosques). Residents built their own homes, furnished them with modern goods, and privately made arrangements to have running water and better roads so that they could have first world standards of living. Some tried to give their children higher-quality educations by sending them to better-equipped schools outside of the quarter. They imagined that the quarter could become "like America" and "like Beijing." Through the consumer practices that they undertook to improve their homes and district, residents showed themselves to be better than the government's classification of them stated and capable of modernizing even without the government.

ALCOHOL AND "BUILDING A  
CIVILIZED SOCIETY"

Alcohol is one of the four substances that the Qur'an decrees Muslims must not consume. Residents of the quarter believed that alcohol was "dirty" (*zang*), some said even dirtier than pork. All of the Xi'an Hui I knew, both men and women, steadfastly abstained from alcohol. Some were not merely personally abstemious, but also rejected all contact with alcohol; for example, one man told me that he would throw away a glass that had ever contained alcohol, even if it had been washed. Others said that they would refuse to sit at a table that had alcohol upon it. However, not all Hui felt equally strongly about this issue. Residents were aware that Hui in other places were less strict in their behavior. For example, many Hui who lived in other parts of Xi'an sold alcohol in their restaurants, and several locals commented on the fact that young Hui men in Ningxia drank beer under the pretense that it "wasn't really alcohol" (this position can be justified, depending on how one interprets the Qur'anic passages concerning alcohol). A young Hui man who worked as a custodian at the Hui Middle School had traveled to a Hui community in northeast China, because his wife's family came from there; he told me that Hui there drank hard liquor and admitted to trying some while visiting his in-laws.

Alcohol had become both more available and more affordable during the 1980s and 1990s. Residents spoke of the new, Western liquors for sale on the market and described reports they had read about the conspicuous consumption of alcohol by China's new

rich. Like the Western-style mass-produced food or the new mosque styles, alcohol was a commodity that residents associated with modernization—but they did not see alcohol as desirable. On the contrary, alcohol violated residents' notions of what it meant to be civilized.

### *The Antialcohol Movement*

Many residents stated with conviction that the Hui who lived in the Muslim district did not drink alcohol. However, a number of people told me that in the early 1980s, when large numbers of families entered private enterprise, many sold alcohol in their restaurants and shops and allowed their customers to consume alcohol in their stores. The food businesses of the quarter depended on Han patronage for success, and Han, particularly Han men, were said to prefer to drink when they ate. My own experience bore out this stereotype: the Han men that I knew in Xi'an (and many that I had observed elsewhere in northwest China) regularly drank beer or other forms of alcohol at lunch and dinner. At mealtime the laughs and shouts of small groups of Han men playing drinking games over their food serenaded passersby and fellow diners in restaurants all over the city. Aware of this pattern, many Hui entrepreneurs tolerated the presence of alcohol on their premises because they thought it would increase their custom.

Most of the quarter's private food businesses quickly became profitable. The entrepreneurs I knew best generated three or four times as much money in a single day than they had earned in a month at the state-owned factories and work units where they were once employed. As the economic reforms proceeded and the government continued to permit "normal religious activities" (*zhengshi zongjiao huodong*) to occur without attack, a few men who operated restaurants on Barley Market Street began to criticize alcohol's presence in the quarter. These men felt strongly that it was inappropriate for Hui to tolerate alcohol, and they resented the social disruptions, such as fights and shouting, which often

resulted from Han drinking. According to Chen, who ran an eatery that sold prepared meat and vegetable dishes, in 1984 and 1988 he and a couple of men held a series of discussions with other local businessmen about getting alcohol out of the area, but to no end. In 1990, Chen and his associates successfully gathered all the Barley Market Street entrepreneurs to a meeting where they encouraged the shopkeepers to forbid customers from bringing alcohol into their establishments, but, as Chen put it, the meeting "had no long-term effects."

In 1992, on the other (eastern) side of the Muslim district, Yingchun, ahong of the Dapiyuan Mosque, began speaking out about the evils of alcohol at the exhortations he gave during *zhuma*. Because the Friday collective worship services drew big crowds, his explanations of the Islamic alcohol taboo reached a large audience. Yingchun strongly advocated that all Hui cease selling alcohol or permitting customers to drink it in their establishments. As the weeks passed, he targeted individual entrepreneurs and denounced by name those residents who sold alcohol. His bold attacks motivated religious specialists at other mosques to criticize publicly the presence of alcohol in a Muslim area.

As the censure of alcohol grew more public, some residents decided to take stronger action. A group of ahong and entrepreneurs visited the district government to petition that officials make alcohol illegal in the quarter. The government refused. Officials explained that alcohol was legal in the People's Republic, so such a policy would contravene national laws. The group was told that the residents of the quarter would have to resolve the problem of alcohol by themselves.

Although the ahong and businessmen failed to persuade the government to intervene, the increasingly vocal cries against alcohol did have an effect. All over the quarter, especially on Dapiyuan Street where Yingchun had exposed specific alcohol-selling entrepreneurs by name, Hui stopped selling alcohol or letting their customers bring it into their restaurants. Guangliang, who lived on Dapiyuan Street, remembered that public sentiment against alcohol became so intense that violence was threatened;



many local restaurateurs feared that other residents would smash their stores if they did not immediately ban alcohol from their premises. Meanwhile, to foster support of the ban, the Dapiyuan Mosque had signs printed that read "Qingzhen, alcohol prohibited. Thank you for your cooperation" (*qingzhen jinjiu, xiexie hezuo*) and had them distributed to local owners of food establishments. However, after a short time, the movement to ban alcohol lost momentum. Gradually, local restaurateurs returned to their policy of allowing customers to drink, and some Hui began selling alcohol again. Residents cited profit as the main motive: entrepreneurs feared losing their Han customers.

Although Dapiyuan Street did not sustain the ban, on Barley Market Street Yingchun's words sparked the few local entrepreneurs who had previously wanted to expel alcohol to try again. Ten businessmen, including Chen and his associates, formed an antialcohol committee (*jinjiu xiehui*). The committee defined its goal as making Barley Market Street completely alcohol-free. To do this, the ten members engaged in what, echoing CCP rhetoric, they called "thought work" (*sixiang gongzuo*): the group visited every restaurateur, food stall keeper, and convenience store owner on Barley Market Street, sat down with them, and discussed why they should prohibit alcohol from their establishments. Some entrepreneurs agreed immediately; others were more difficult to persuade. Meat-skewer (*rouchuan*) sellers were particularly resistant to the idea of a ban on alcohol, insisting that its consumption was crucial to their sales. The members of the antialcohol committee also recalled that the few Han businessmen who operated convenience stores on Barley Market Street were extremely difficult to convince. These entrepreneurs believed that since they were not Hui, they should not have to participate in the prohibition. In each case, the committee members persuaded these entrepreneurs by persistent, relentless pressure. They returned repeatedly to those businesses whose owners were unwilling to participate and described the importance of removing alcohol from a "Hui people area" (*Humin diqu*) and the increasing numbers of businessmen who had agreed.

Finally, all 88 shop owners on Barley Market Street promised not to sell alcohol, permit its consumption on the premises of their establishments, or tolerate its presence on the street.

After obtaining their business associates' compliance, the committee decided to launch a propaganda campaign to promote awareness of Islam's position on alcohol and encourage continued support of the ban. Using money that they had earned from their private businesses, the members of the committee made signs and banners to hang on Barley Market Street (see Figure 1). These signs explained what *qingzhen* meant, listed the Qur'anic injunctions on alcohol, and described Muslims' obligation to avoid all contact with alcohol. The committee also paid to reprint a pamphlet written during the 1950s that explained the evils of alcohol, which they distributed to the Barley Market Street entrepreneurs. In addition, the members of the committee acted as Barley Market Street's unofficial alcohol police, watching for people carrying alcohol and asking those who did to leave the area.

I first learned of the antialcohol committee in 1994, two years after its founding. At this time, the group would hang propaganda banners and signs over the street each week. They organized at least four antialcohol rallies between February 1994 and July 1995 that were attended by residents who lived in the neighborhood of Barley Market Street and by some Hui from other parts of the quarter. In May 1995, the committee sent a letter of appeal to the quarter's ten mosques. This letter explained the nature of committee's work and asked the *ahong* to use their exhortations to persuade Hui to keep alcohol out of the quarter. Word of the group had spread far beyond Barley Market Street and the Muslim district: a Henan Hui newspaper published an article about the committee, and a group of Hui in Sichuan sent the men a large wooden plaque to commemorate their efforts. When I left Xi'an in August 1995, some residents in other parts of the quarter allowed their customers to drink in their food establishments, and a few stores sold alcohol, but Barley Market Street remained an alcohol-free zone.

*Reasons for the Movement*

When I asked members why they had formed an antialcohol committee, they spoke first about the Qur'anic prohibition. Several of the men explained that alcohol was forbidden because it confuses people and leads them into trouble. As one man put it, a person who drinks alcohol speaks wildly and forgets about God. Ma, the spokesman for the group, continued the conversation by saying that all the members of the committee ran businesses on the officially designated "Hui food and drink street" (*Huimin yin-shi jie*). Having a Hui food and drink street, Ma said, meant "meeting the standards of the Hui people" (*Huimin*), which included prohibiting alcohol. At this, Chen objected. "You mean meeting the standards of *Muslims*" (*Musilin*), he said. "The law prohibiting alcohol is an *Islamic* law." In a fine example of how local definitions of Hui extended beyond the state's racial definition, Ma dismissed Chen's comment by saying "Here in China we say 'Hui people.'" Ma went on to state that they could not control what happened elsewhere in Xi'an, but "this part of town is a Hui people district" (*Huimin diqu*), so Hui standards should be enforced.

Ma and the other committee members were proud that they were playing a role in "propagating Islam" (*chuan jiao*). They saw alcohol's appearance in the quarter as symbolizing the decline of religion: "Hui people" were no longer adhering to the laws of Islam. The men described their acts as "doing a service" for Islam. Several members stressed that the committee wanted to prevent the younger generation from turning to alcohol. This was their duty as Muslims and as children of their parents. As Mingjie, one of the group's founding members, explained, "Our parents in the 1950s and 1960s passed on what they knew about Islam to us, even though no one dared worship or talk about religion then. It is our responsibility to ensure that the young people today follow Islam."

Several committee members and a number of other residents commented that the change in material conditions that had

occurred since the early 1980s made it difficult for youth to observe Islamic precepts. They attributed the problem to the sharp increase in disposable income and the wider availability of alcohol. Some residents also pointed out how the media glamorized alcohol consumption, associating it with prosperity and a modern lifestyle. Children saw alcohol consumed on television programs and in the movies, and news reports detailed the vast expenditures of China's new rich on imported liquor. Worse yet, Han students encouraged their Hui classmates to drink. "Hui youth today don't know why they shouldn't drink," Ma said. "It is very easy for young people to get involved with drink, drugs, and gambling. If we allow alcohol in the quarter, young people will think it is just another beverage."

Related to the committee members' concerns about their children was their desire to make the quarter a clean, safe place to live. Members said that the alcohol ban had made Barley Market Street more peaceful and orderly. According to Ma, once alcohol was no longer available, street fighting had diminished, and the families who lived in the area were able to sleep peacefully at night. The committee members believed their efforts had greatly enhanced Barley Market Street's reputation. "Customers know that Barley Market Street is clean and safe, a place to find qingzhen food in a wholesome environment," Ma stated. The members argued that the ban had not caused economic decline, and suggested it had even been good for business. Although Ma acknowledged that food enterprise incomes had decreased when the ban first went into effect, he insisted that all losses suffered had been temporary. Certainly, food sales on Barley Market Street were booming during 1994 and 1995. However, the street had very few meat-skewer sellers, only one or two compared to the dozen or so on North Court Gate, for example. Though Ma neglected to mention this, apparently those Hui who ran shish-kebab businesses had vacated Barley Market Street in favor of places where alcohol was not banned.

The members of the committee hoped that the effect of their efforts would not simply be local. As Ma put it, the committee

believed that Barley Market Street should serve as a model for the quarter, the nation, and foreign countries, too. By carrying out the antialcohol movement, the committee members were "building a civilized society" (*jianshe wenming shehui*). "Building a civilized society" was one of the CCP's official goals for China; I frequently saw this phrase in government documents, in propaganda promoting the national birth control policy, and on signs urging citizens not to litter, spit, or engage in other "uncivilized" behaviors. Officials also gave "civilized work unit" (*wenming danwei*) awards to factories, schools, and other institutions, and "civilized village" (*wenming cun*) campaigns had been carried out in rural China (see Anagnost 1992, 1997a; Litzinger 1995:121; see also Huang 1989:168-9). The antialcohol committee saw the cessation of alcohol consumption as a critical component of a "civilized society." By enforcing the ban on alcohol, the committee would make Barley Market Street an exemplar of "civilization."

#### *The Members of the Antialcohol Committee*

In 1995, twelve men constituted the antialcohol committee. Three new men had joined the original ten, one of whom had died. Each member of the committee ran a restaurant, food stall, or store that sold packaged food and drink in an establishment he owned or rented on Barley Market Street. As petty entrepreneurs with businesses adjacent to or close by one another, the men had similar concerns and tended to rely on each other for business contacts. All the committee members lived in close proximity to one another. Several lived with their families behind or above their businesses on Barley Market Street; the rest lived in the neighboring alleys. All were married with children and were between the ages of 30 and 55.

Each of the twelve men belonged to one of the three mosques that were near Barley Market Street. These mosques were associated with different religious factions: the Western Mosque was Sunnaiti, the Middle Mosque was Gedimu, and the Yingli Mosque was Santai. The men's differences in religious practice

were not a bar to the committee's cooperation, however. Similarly, the activities they organized were for the benefit of all those who lived, worked, and ate on Barley Market Street regardless of factional differences or nationality affiliation.

The committee members described themselves as "middle class" (*zhongceng*), neither the wealthiest residents of the quarter nor the poorest. In terms of city-wide incomes, they earned well more than the average urbanite. The homes of those committee members I visited varied in size, but they were universally replete with the consumer goods that marked the attainment of a comfortable standard of living: televisions, videocassette recorders, stereos, refrigerators, and in several cases telephones. Each member possessed sufficient disposable income to contribute money for the group's activities. The antialcohol committee did not receive support from any government body, including the state-instituted Islamic Association. When I spoke with committee members in 1994 and 1995, they repeatedly emphasized that the group's activities were privately funded by the members. This characterized at least the first four years of the committee's operations. During late 1996 or early 1997, however, the quarter's ten mosques made a 5,000-yuan donation to the group. This contribution did not affect the committee's autonomy. The members continued to exercise complete control over what antialcohol activities took place on Barley Market Street.

Membership in the committee provided these men with an important opportunity to earn good reputations in the quarter. Having a "name" (*ming*) was a valuable resource for these entrepreneurs, as was true for most Chinese involved in public life.<sup>1</sup> The most successful businessmen in the quarter were described as "having a name" (*youming*), and residents believed that a good reputation improved business. Xi'an Hui could achieve a good reputation through several methods. One way was through the longevity of their businesses. For example, Lanying, when describing her family's noodle stall, said her father "particularly had a name" (*te youming*) for his noodles. This fame was based on the family's history: her father had sold noodles before 1949, as had

his father before him. The family's business was excellent, largely because of their product's enduring reputation for consistent good quality. Lanying's family made so much money that they could afford to operate their eatery on a seasonal basis. Unlike other noodle stall owners, Lanying's family opened their eatery for business in March and closed by late October.

Residents also gained a name through good works. Three of the quarter's wealthiest entrepreneurs contributed money to the local middle schools, gave scholarships to students who passed the high school and college entrance exams, and occasionally funded academic contests. These men also funded and participated in religious activities; for example, all three were key donors at a ceremony commemorating the Ming dynasty teacher Hu Dengzhou that was organized by the Great Mosque and the provincial Islamic Association. The principle at work behind these activities was the same as any instance of corporate sponsorship or philanthropy. The reputation that the men gained from such charitable activities heightened their prestige and was good for business.

The members of the antialcohol committee could not compete with the quarter's three "big bucks" entrepreneurs in the size or frequency of their donations. The committee members could, however, use the antialcohol movement to build their reputation as devout and civic-minded businessmen. By donating their time, energy, and incomes toward the promulgation of one of the basic tenets of Islam, the twelve committee members acquired a degree of renown on Barley Market Street that increased their ability to influence local affairs and built up their business reputations.

Three of the committee's members specifically harnessed their participation in the antialcohol movement for their economic advantage by establishing a "Hui Quarter Antialcohol Committee Food Processing Factory" (*Huifang jinxie shipin jiagongchang*). They set up this steamed bread factory on Barley Market Street during the fall of 1995. When I interviewed the three co-proprieters during June 1997, they stated that the factory "had no relationship" to the antialcohol committee, despite its name. As our discussion continued, however, the men demonstrated that they

connected the factory's activities with the committee. For example, in 1996 they hosted a one-year anniversary celebration of the factory's founding at which they gave 6,000 yuan to local handicapped people. Ma described this donation as "one of the antialcohol committee's small-scale activities" that had been carried out in my absence. Mingjie, a member of the antialcohol committee who had not become a proprietor of the steamed bread factory, sourly characterized the three committee members as "using the name of the antialcohol committee to benefit themselves and make a profit." According to him and other local entrepreneurs, the committee's evangelical and philanthropical activities had paid off: the Hui Quarter Antialcohol Committee Food Processing Factory was extremely profitable.

No women were formal members of the antialcohol committee, although a few wives of the members occasionally attended group functions and helped clean up afterward. Two women, one a wife and the other a daughter of men who had founded the committee, said that the group's affairs were "men's business" (*nanren de shi*). The committee's masculine bias arose from two local expectations: first, that only men spoke out in public, and second, that men were more likely to consume alcohol.

Generally speaking, in the quarter men were acknowledged as heads of households, proprietors, and mosque representatives. Even when, as was the case with Lanying's family, a family business was operated entirely by women, a male member of the family (in this case, Lanying's elderly father) was credited as being the owner and decision maker. Most female residents regarded their families as their primary concern. Women's public roles, whether these were attending parent-teacher meetings at school, working in the family enterprise, or supporting their husbands' participation in the antialcohol movement, were more limited in scope because of women's domestic orientation.

Most residents perceived women to be less vulnerable to alcohol's lures. Several factors accounted for this perception. Hui women were far more likely to spend the majority of their time in the quarter than were men. This meant that female residents had

fewer close contacts with Han and fewer opportunities to eat in restaurants or socialize outside the quarter. In the private businesses with which I was familiar (both food and other types of enterprise), women acted as laborers and in-store managers while men assumed the task of procuring resources, making business connections, and distributing the goods produced. For example, one family I knew operated a trucking concern. Two brothers drove the truck and their mother and sister attended the telephone and took requests for future loads. Similar social and occupational differences between the sexes have been recorded in many other Muslim societies (see, e.g., Abu-Lughod 1986:72-4; Boddy 1989: 36-7, 41-6). In my experience, they were more true of the quarter than other parts of Xi'an, probably because Xi'an Han women were more likely to work in work units.

#### *Propaganda and Rallies*

"Thought work" in the form of public propaganda was the primary form of committee activity. Committee members hung signs in their establishments proclaiming that alcohol was prohibited and thanking customers for complying with the ban. The large banners that they strung over Barley Market Street were inscribed with messages such as "qingzhen does not mix with alcohol" or "respect the Muslim traditions." Barley Market Street was bedecked with at least one antialcohol banner during the entire eighteen months I lived in Xi'an. The antialcohol committee wrote their name in the corner of every banner or sign, a tactic that ensured that the group's members were credited for their efforts. Although other associations, such as the Dapiyuan Mosque management committee (*siguanhui*), occasionally hung signs in their neighborhoods that denounced alcohol, only the Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee maintained continual publicity for the cause. This was a source of pride for the committee's members, for the mosques to which they belonged, and for the Barley Market Street neighborhood—referred to as the "Western" (*xitou*) half of the quarter—whose residents saw them-

selves as being at the forefront of the movement to eradicate alcohol.

At the antialcohol meetings and rallies, committee members supplied participants with food and soft drinks from their enterprises. They used their businesses' tables and chairs to set up a meeting place in the street in front of their stores. One rally I witnessed in April 1995 included guests from two local mosques. Originally, the antialcohol committee had prepared to host only the Middle Mosque congregation. Committee members had organized a meeting where one of the Middle Mosque's religious specialists would speak to the Middle Mosque congregation and the shopkeepers on Barley Market Street about the Islamic prohibition of alcohol. However, at the last minute the neighboring Yingli Mosque congregation asked if they could also attend, and the committee had agreed. Aside from funerals or meetings organized by government institutions, the resulting interfaith mass rally was the only public event in the quarter that I knew of that included both Gedimu and Ikhwan adherents.

The two congregations marched toward the meeting site in two separate processions. First, the Middle Mosque congregation lined up its male members inside the mosque and paraded along a circuitous route until they reached the site of the rally. At the front of the procession, several members of the congregation carried a large wooden plaque inscribed with the phrase "the glory of the believers" (*mumin zhi guang*) that the mosque had prepared to commemorate the antialcohol committee. Other men carried flags that read "Middle Mosque." Heading the whole ensemble was a parade leader swinging a baton. The clamor of the local markets surrounded the procession as the group paraded toward Barley Market Street. Contrary to the committee's original intentions, no women from the Middle Mosque participated. When the Yingli Mosque had petitioned to attend the rally, the antialcohol committee asked the female members of the Middle Mosque congregation not to come for fear that there would not be adequate space for everyone to be seated.

After the Middle Mosque had completed their procession, the

Yingli Mosque's began. Although the Yingli Mosque and the Middle Mosque were located on Small Study Street only a few blocks apart, the Yingli Mosque congregation began in their own mosque and paraded along a different route toward the meeting site. Because the Yingli Mosque's participation was rather last-minute, the congregation had not been able to commission a plaque for the committee. Not to be outdone by the Middle Mosque, however, they purchased and framed a large poster instead, inscribing it as a gift from "the entire peoples of Small Study Street" because only those members of the Yingli congregation who lived on Small Study Street attended the rally.<sup>2</sup> Rather than displaying banners and wielding batons, the Yingli Mosque group instead shouted "God is great!" together in Arabic (*Allahu akbar*) as they walked to the rally site. Both the purchase of the poster and the shouting of Islamic praises were examples of the quarter's factional competitions. Although the Yingli Mosque's gift may have looked second-class compared to the Middle Mosque's specially made plaque, the Yingli Mosque subtly asserted their superiority and greater authenticity through their Arabic calls, which were in "standard" Arabic learned through what the congregation touted as "scientific" educational methods.

After both processions arrived at Barley Market Street, the two congregations were seated, with the men from the Middle Mosque on one side of the tables and the men from the Yingli Mosque on the other. The Yingli Mosque women seated themselves together at a couple of tables at the end of the two rows of men (see Figure 17). The crowd listened patiently under the hot midday sun as a number of men made speeches. First, a representative of the antialcohol committee spoke, then the head of the Middle Mosque management committee, and then the ahong of the Middle Mosque. The first speaker gave a brief history of the antialcohol committee's formation and activities, after which discussion focused on the Islamic prohibition of alcohol and Muslims' duty to avoid it. After the speeches, the committee members, helped by their wives and adult children, served their guests sweets, pastries, tea, and soft drinks. The guests ate quickly and left, the Middle

Mosque congregation leaving together in one direction and the Yingli Mosque members heading the opposite way.

Although the joint Middle Mosque–Yingli Mosque gathering was a success, not all of the antialcohol committee's events proceeded so smoothly. Shortly after the Middle Mosque–Yingli Mosque rally, members of the Western Mosque (the other mosque in Barley Market Street's immediate vicinity) informed the group that they also wanted the opportunity to express their appreciation for the committee's efforts. The Western Mosque's request was clearly an effort to stake their congregation's position in the ongoing status competition that occurred among the mosques and factions. Members of the antialcohol committee offered to sponsor another public rally at which the Western Mosque congregation would be the guests of honor. On the day of the event, however, I arrived to find Barley Market Street set up for the meeting, but no participants in sight. A few others who had shown up for the rally were equally confused. Finally, one committee member's wife came by and said that at the last minute the men had gone to attend the reopening of the Yingli Mosque, which had temporarily been closed by the government. Whether because of inertia, the expense of hosting such an event, or for some other reason, the meeting was never rescheduled.

#### *Building a "Civilized Society"*

In the Chinese Communist Party's vision of progress, the roots of which lay in anticolonialist sentiment, social evolutionism, nationalism, and Marxism, "civilization" was viewed as the end point of modernization and the outcome of history. In government rhetoric since 1979, the party has divided "civilization" (*wenming*) into two parts: "material civilization" (*wuzhi wenming*) and "spiritual civilization" (*jingshen wenming*). Deng's program of modernization, in which the party promoted marketization, privatization, and the creation of a consumer economy as necessary steps for China's development, brought about the rising standards of living and material changes that were characterized





FIGURE 17. Antialcohol committee rally on Barley Market Street.

as "material civilization" or at least progress toward this goal. "Spiritual civilization," on the other hand, was more elusive, but nevertheless an essential concern after 1979 (Anagnost 1992:182; see also Anagnost 1997a). One facet of "spiritual civilization" was Marxist or socialist. Deng's economic reforms created a kind of capitalist economy in China, but the party saw capitalism as only a passing stage en route to true civilization, which meant communist utopia. One of the CCP's concerns after 1979 was to avert the rise of "bourgeois individualism" that accompanies the capitalist stage of development and to inculcate socialist ethics. Augmenting this aspect of "spiritual civilization" was the need to develop the racial capacities and performance of China's population, which was couched in terms of improving the "cultural quality" (*wenhua suzhi*) of Chinese citizens. In addition, a Confucian or "Chinese" definition of civilization infiltrated notions of "spiritual civilization," such that the party held up the Han race as a model of civilization for the other *minzu* to emulate (Harrell 1995b:26-7).

The blending of Marxist, racial, and Confucian components made the CCP's push to build "spiritual civilization" a multifaceted program. Educative campaigns and propaganda to improve etiquette and sanitation were one element of "building a civilized society" (*jianshe wenming shehui*). Compliance with the official birth control policy, described in eugenicist terms as "quality births" (*yousheng*), was another. Orderly behavior, effective conflict management, the eradication of prostitution, and good relations between party members and ordinary citizens were also elements of the government's ethical campaigns to create a "civilized society" (see Anagnost 1992; Litzinger 1995:120-1). In each case, the government positioned itself as the arbiter of civilized behavior and the nation's guide to civilization.

Residents of the quarter accepted the idea that they needed to develop a "civilized society." They believed that "civilization" was the ultimate outcome of history. When, during the early stages of the antialcohol movement, a group of residents peti-

tioned the government to make a law prohibiting alcohol in the Muslim district, they acted in a way that affirmed the government's paramount role in developing a "civilized society." The Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee, however, went beyond the CCP's program for "building a civilized society." The members of the committee took the initiative as private citizens to ban alcohol, which was legal in the PRC. They condemned alcohol consumption as immoral and causing uncivilized behavior. Their private prohibition worked against modernization from the state's point of view, because it restricted and had the goal of totally eliminating a form of consumption that generated money for the economy. Just as bad was the committee members' failure to take the party as their guide for dealing with alcohol; rather, the model of civilization that the committee adopted was an Islamic one. The antialcohol movement pointed to Islam as the true locus of civilization. Their Islamic vision of "civilized society" challenged the government's monopoly on civility and modernization and upset the state's evolutionary hierarchy that defined Hui as less civilized than Han. Instead, the antialcohol committee held itself up as a model for others to imitate, and members took upon themselves the role of purveying civilization to local, national, and international communities.

The case of the Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee provides an example of how Islam can serve as an ethical guide, stimulate political action, and provide the basis for a utopic vision of the future. Watts (1996) describes an analogous case in Kano, Nigeria. His study focuses on a charismatic leader who, in response to the rapid economic transformations occurring in Nigeria after the oil boom, used the Qur'an to critique rampant materialism, social inequities, and government corruption. Ultimately, this leader's calls for reform led to military opposition to the government and an attempt to seize control of the key institutions in Kano city. The Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee was far less radical than the group that Watts studied, but important similarities exist. Both movements arose in response to "modernization." Both were grassroots crusades inspired by

Islamic doctrine. Both looked to Islam as the ultimate ethical source and found a model for a "civilized society" in Islamic observance.

Although the antialcohol movement's vision of civilization was not isomorphic with the government's, the methods that residents used to achieve a civilized society and the nature of that society were strongly influenced by the state. These characteristics were shared by other social movements that occurred in China after 1979. For example, Wasserstrom and Liu point out that during the 1989 Beijing protests, the students used state-created student organizations to order the movement, and the student leaders emulated the managerial techniques of party officials (1995). In the quarter, Yingchun's public censure of residents who sold alcohol resembled the public denunciations and scapegoating that the party used under Mao. The social pressure exerted through threatened physical destruction of local establishments that sold alcohol mimicked but did not fully reenact the repressive Cultural Revolution tactics whereby Red Guards destroyed the property of non-conforming "enemies of the people." The coercive techniques of social persuasion that the committee members adopted to convince the entrepreneurs on Barley Market Street to ban alcohol are strongly reminiscent of the "thought work" carried out during the Maoist era, when teams of cadres used group pressure and barages of propaganda to "persuade" dissenters to adhere to the party line. Once the ban was in place, the committee's stress on propaganda, mass rallies, and ideological indoctrination was also borrowed from the CCP.

The form of the "civilized society" that the committee built was also heavily influenced by government policies. Even though the men legitimated their activities in Islamic terms, the society they created did not adhere to Middle Eastern models. For example, women participated in the movement, and public events were not gender-segregated. A number of the committee members considered their wives to be part of the movement. When the committee commissioned me to take formal photographs of the group, the members made certain that I photographed their gathered

wives as well. They relied on their wives to work at and help oversee the rallies. At many of their public meetings, the committee also welcomed the participation of both men and women. The exclusion of the Middle Mosque's women from the April 1995 meeting was, Ma's wife stated, an unfortunate exception, and several women from the Yingli Mosque had attended. The committee's inclusion of the women evidenced their belief that women were important social actors with public roles, a position that the CCP had promoted since the party was first formed.

The committee also followed the government's lead in designing activities that crossed the diverse loyalties to mosque, religious faction, neighborhood, and place of origin that characterized the quarter (and most other Hui communities in northwest China; see Lipman 1984). The joint Middle Mosque–Yingli Mosque rally was an event that brought together members of different congregations and factions. The letter of appeal that the committee sent to all ten mosques in the quarter also exemplifies the breadth of their social vision. When committee members invited Yingchun, the Dapiyuan Mosque along credited with instigating the antialcohol movement, to speak at a meeting of Barley Market Street shopkeepers, they ignored the "East-West" cleavage (*dongtou, xitou*) that characterized the district. Such acts went against local prejudices and behavioral patterns. Residents of "the East" and "the West" tended to distrust one another and had limited social interactions unless they were linked by kinship ties. The families who lived in "the East" saw themselves as more civilized than those who lived in "the West." Several families who lived on Dapiyuan Street encouraged me not to visit the Barley Market Street neighborhood, because "those people had low cultural quality" (*naxieren wenhua suzhi di*). The Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee overrode these parochial loyalties and stereotypes. When I left Xi'an in August 1995, the committee was making plans to organize a quarterwide rally that would include representatives from all ten mosques (and all three factions).

### *The Antialcohol Committee and the Government*

During the first four years of the antialcohol committee's existence, the government did not interfere in the movement. This lack of official response was related to a number of factors. First, residents had asked the government to intervene. This reaffirmed the state's authority. Second, many government officials were reluctant to involve themselves in the Muslim district's affairs because of the reputation that residents had for being "troublesome" and "sensitive." Third, district officials were primarily concerned with economic development and so may have regarded the antialcohol committee's propaganda efforts as harmless. Because the committee organized public rallies sporadically, it was possible that the district government was unaware of them or that district officials could pretend to be so. Fourth, the goals of the antialcohol movement, defined as "building a civilized society," were not overtly incompatible with the government's program.

When I returned to the quarter for a brief visit in June 1996, however, the situation had changed dramatically. According to Chen, some "unbeliever" who sold alcohol had complained about the antialcohol committee to local officials. Once a complaint had been registered, the government was forced to do something about the group. Officials reacted by declaring the committee an "illegal organization" (*feifa zuzhi*) on the grounds that it had not received state permission to form. Some members of the committee ceased participating when the group was declared illegal; Mingjie, once an extremely enthusiastic member (and the person who had first told me about the group), was one. The remaining committee members petitioned all the mosques in Xi'an, including the eight mosques that were outside the quarter, to express their support for the committee to the government. Confronted by the mosques' advocacy, the government designated an official to investigate the committee and its activities. Until these investigations were concluded and officials reached a decision, the remaining committee members decided to remain quiet. Chen said they

did this so that the government would not perceive them as having an "antagonistic" (*duikang*) attitude.

When I visited four members of the antialcohol committee during June 1997, the government had concluded its research. An official had interviewed seventeen businesses, work units, and homes in the quarter to ascertain their opinions of the antialcohol committee. Twelve of these had been Hui, and five were Han. All those interviewed had been extremely supportive of the group. The committee members said that everyone the official had spoken to "had a relationship" with members of the committee, a testimony to the group's influence and its members' strong social networks. After the interviews were concluded, the government convened a meeting for the committee members, the district government officials, city government officials, and the provincial Islamic Association. Many spoke out in the committee's defense; Ma told me that a high-ranking member of the provincial Islamic Association praised the group for its activities and strongly urged that the government withdraw the label of "illegal organization" that had been applied to the group. The officials responded by praising the "civilized spirit" (*wenming jingshen*) of the committee. However, they chose to adhere to the letter of the law: the organization was illegal and could not receive official permission to exist unless it accepted a representative of the CCP who would report to the state as a member.

The committee's reputation suffered from these events. According to Xijuan, who ran an eatery with her husband on Barley Market Street, the committee had "scattered" (*san le*) and the antialcohol movement was in disarray. She and some other residents stated that the group had not hosted any events for a few months. Xijuan claimed that alcohol had reappeared on Barley Market Street. Some of the local entrepreneurs were once again allowing their customers to consume alcohol, and a few even sold it. She said that she and her husband now ran one of the few remaining enterprises that prohibited alcohol.

Mingjie, now an ex-member of the committee, voiced suspicions about the remaining members, whom he characterized as

"using the group for other purposes." One complaint he made was that the men used the committee's name on the steamed bread factory; Mingjie saw this as a moneymaking venture that had nothing to do with the committee's original purpose. Mingjie also suggested that the other committee members were less than honest in their organizational accounting. The group had received 500 yuan from each of the quarter's ten mosques to support the committee's antialcohol propaganda. Five thousand yuan was a large sum, Mingjie stated, but "no one knew" to what uses the money had been put. The implication was that the remaining committee members had pocketed the money.

When I left Xi'an in late June 1997, the men who continued to associate themselves with the committee disagreed about what they should do next. Chen was very excited by a recently published newspaper article that described the regulations on qingzhen foods that the provincial government had developed. Chen interpreted the new regulations as an official recognition of qingzhen and its worth (despite the fact that the policies had nothing to do with Islam) and wanted the group to offer to publicize the new policies. Other members refused to have anything to do with the government, stating it was "untrustworthy" (*bu shou xinyong*). Ma explained that official propaganda and official actions had diverged too many times, and if the group were recognized by the government, state officials would interfere with their ability to convey their message. The presence of a party member in the committee would prevent them from even being able to talk to me. Regardless of these disagreements, the men agreed that at the moment nothing could be done: the "glorious return" of Hong Kong was fast approaching, and "it was a bad time to do propaganda work."

#### *Alcohol and Civilization*

Residents generally applauded and looked forward to modernization. They embraced many aspects of the consumer lifestyle that the Deng reforms had made possible. Yet the problems with

alcohol developed in response to Deng's modernization program. Privatization provoked the need to make a profit, which residents blamed for alcohol's appearance in the quarter. Privatization and marketization produced the increase in disposable incomes that made it possible to buy alcohol and to buy the newspapers, magazines, and televisions that depicted alcohol-drinking Chinese "big bucks" and Westerners. These media representations and the kinds of knowledge they engendered were also results of Deng's reform policies. The state's promotion of personal consumption since 1979 compounded the problem, because a ban on alcohol could be interpreted as counter to official goals.

Rather than allowing themselves to be perceived as reactionary, unprogressive, or antistate, the members of the Barley Market Street Antialcohol Committee co-opted the government's rhetoric of civilization and promoted the ban on alcohol as good for economic development. They presented the alcohol-free Barley Market Street as a clean, wholesome place that was more attractive for customers. They claimed that the ban had minimized drunken brawls and disorderly behavior, making Barley Market Street a more civilized place to live, work, and eat. The committee members used the movement to build reputations for themselves that improved business, with the most obvious financial gains coming from the "Hui Quarter Antialcohol Food Processing Factory." The committee's activism broadened members' social networks within the quarter and to Hui communities elsewhere in China, which could also yield economic benefits (as well as increasing the committee members' prestige, influence, and social standing).

Committee members saw themselves as promoting a form of civilization that was guided by Islam. They conceptualized their acts in terms of Islamic standards rather than "socialist ethics" or Han society. By forming an antialcohol organization, the committee challenged the CCP's monopoly on progress and morality and the leadership role that the state apportioned to itself—however unwillingly at the start. When the committee members positioned themselves as exemplars and condemned the Han practice of

drinking, they also upset the official evolutionary hierarchy that ranked the Han as more civilized than the Hui.

In June 1997, it appeared that the government had quashed the threats posed by the antialcohol movement and muzzled those who had usurped the official role of "building a civilized society" in the quarter. Yet the state's efforts produced no conclusive results, largely because officials had not succeeded in changing anyone's mind about the committee or about alcohol. The persistence of a local vision of civilization was perhaps best symbolized by the name of the steamed bread factory that some of the committee members had formed. When the government tried to eliminate the antialcohol committee, officials demanded that the name of the factory be changed. The owners were not willing to refuse for fear that local officials would shut down the business, yet at the same time, the men did not want to give in meekly to the government's request or admit that the committee was anything other than temporarily dysfunctional. Instead, they found a resident who could translate the factory's name into Persian and submitted the Persian translation, which they said also meant the "Hui Quarter Antialcohol Committee Food Processing Factory," to the government's registration bureau. The sign bearing the name in Chinese they left hanging over the entrance to the factory.