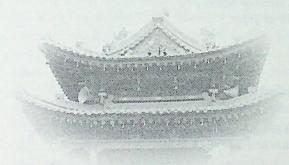


Between Mecca and Beijing

MODERNIZATION AND CONSUMPTION AMONG URBAN CHINESE MUSLIMS



MARIS BOYD GILLETTE

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M.B.G.

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

-Karl Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

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Between Mecca

and Beijing

Modernization and Consumption Among Urban Chinese Muslims

MARIS BOYD GILLETTE

"For Muslims in China, eating is a political act, and this book, the most detailed and comprehensive study of a Muslim community in China to date, explains why. In a society that views pork and secularism as the norm, to be a Muslim can be a challenging if not impossible endeavor. The book shows how a small minority can survive and maintain its values in the face of frequent intolerance by the dominant culture. It also translates the fascinating details of the lives of Chinese Muslims into larger modern problems facing communities across the globe."

-Dru C. Gladney, Asia-Pacific Center

Between Mecca and Beijing examines how a community of urban Chinese Muslims uses consumption to position its members more favorably within the Chinese government's official paradigm for development. Residents of the old Muslim district in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi'an belong to an official minority (the Hui nationality) that has been classified by the state as "backward" in comparison to China's majority (Han) population. Though these Hui urbanites, like the vast majority of Chinese citizens, accept the assumptions about social evolution upon which such labels are based, they actively

reject the official characterization of themselves as less civilized and modern than the Han majority.

By selectively consuming goods and adopting fashions they regard as modern and non-Chinese-which include commodities and styles from both the West and the Muslim world-these Chinese Muslims seek to demonstrate that they are capable of modernizing without the guidance or assistance of the state. In so doing, they challenge one of the fundamental roles the Chinese Communist government has claimed for itself, that of guide and purveyor of modernity. Through a detailed study of the daily life-eating habits, dress styles, housing, marriage and death rituals, religious practices, education, family organizationof the Hui inhabitants of Xi'an, the author explores the effects of a state-sponsored ideology of progress on an urban Chinese Muslim neighborhood.

Maris Boyd Gillette is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Haverford College.

Jacket photos by Maris Boyd Gillette Front: Bicycle-cart food vendor, Xi'an Back: Dapiyuan Women's Mosque, Xi'an

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