

.The Hui Ethnic Group



In China, there are mosques wherever the Hui people live. The architectural pattern that a crescent stands on the Arabic domical vault is most commonly seen and identified in the building of the Chinese mosques. The Mosques are the places where the Huis and Muslims do worshipping and other religious activities. The wedding and funeral ceremonies and other important activities as well as many aspects in the daily life of the Huis are closely connected with mosques. Therefore mosques are the most holy places in the eyes of the Huis with most symbolic significance in the Hui culture.

The environment and the population

Now the Hui People with the population of 9 816 805 is the ethnic group that inhabit in almost every corners of the country. The Hui People mainly scatter in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu Province, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regions, Henan Province, Hebei Province, Shangdong Province, Anhui Province and Beijing, etc. In addition, there are comparatively more Huis in Liaoning Province, Jilin Province, Heilongjiang Province, Tianjin and Jiang Su Province, etc.

The inhabited regions of the Huis spread mainly along the traffic lines and the water lines with the characteristics of scattering in large scales and inhabiting in small groups. The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is the largest Hui-inhabited are in China, where nearly 20% Hui people of the whole country live, so it called the “Hometown of the Huis”. There are not only the mountains that look like” thousands miles of green mists floating with the sky”, but also the desert as “vast land of yellow sand with no end”. The Yellow River, the mother river that nurtured the ancient culture of the Chinese nation, flows over the regions and creates the Ningxia Plain, called “the South of the Yangtzi River in the North”. There are also the Mausoleums of the Western Xia Emperor, Known as “the Orient Pyramid”, the mysterious cliff painting on the Helan Mountain, the grottos in the Xumi Mountain which is the historical relic about the culture of Buddhism, and also the natural conditions and social customs with strong character of the people.



The historical origin

The Hui people is the ethnic group that came into being comparatively late in China, which is mainly composed of the ethnic groups who believe in Islam in or out of the country amalgamated with the local inhabitants by migration. The primordial origin of the Huis could trace back to the descendants of “fanke” (guests from outlying regions) who were Muslims coming to China to do business and stayed in the Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty; the main origins of the Huis were that Muslim technicians and the

soldiers surrendered to the Mongols during the Western Campaign in the 13th century and various Muslims coming to China in the Yuan Dynasty from Persia, Middle Asia and Arab, etc. In addition, the Hans, Uygurs and Mongolians living in the regions were assimilated in the formation of the Hui people.

The appellation of the people and the language

The Huis called themselves “Huihui” or “Hui people”. The appellation of Huihui first appeared in the literature of the Northern Song Dynasty. It was the changed sound or the abbreviated form of “the Huihe people”, “the Huihu people” and mainly referred to the Muslims who came from the Middle Asia, the West Asia and the Arabic countries to the East in Yuan Dynasty. In the end of the Yuan Dynasty, “Huihui” gradually became the appellation of the Hui People themselves with the formation of the ethnic group.

The Hui People has many other appellations, such as ‘Kaxi” (Tibetan transliteration) called by Tibetans; “Donggan” called by Uygurs, Kazaks and Kirgizs; “Majia” called by the Yi people; “Paxi” called by the Dai People and the Wa People in Yunnan, and so on.

Living together and associating with the Han People for a long time, the Huis use the Chinese language and the Chinese Characters.

The resident characteristics—“Living around Mosques” and “Clean Housing”



Most of the Huis are used to live around Mosques, forming the communities one and another with the Mosques as the center. The Huis’ house has special ethical style, different from the similar buildings in the world’s Islamic countries and regions. It is close to the traditional Chinese quadrangle (rooms arranged on each of the four sides respectively in the square yard) with stone dragons on the left and tigers on the right at the gate, and screen walls facing the gates of the houses in the middle, ring-rooms and pavilions lined on the both sides facing each other. It has well-proportioned frameworks and are richly ornamented by landscapes, geometries, plants and flowers, etc. Besides, there are Arabic calligraphy and paintings put on the indoor walls.

The Huis pay more attention to the cleanness and beautifications of the living surroundings, called “Clean Housing”. The gardens are always cleaned up. They like planting grapes, fruit trees, flowers and plants. The houses are tidy and look pleasant. To care of environmental sanitation is the remarkable characteristics of the Huis’.

The garment characteristics—“Hierurgical hat” and “head-kerchief”

The Huis pay more attention to the tidiness and decency of the dresses and ornaments. Men like wearing brimless hats commonly called “Hierurgical hat”. Most of the hats are white yarmulkes; some of them are grey, black and thick green flat birettas or hexagonal peaked hats. Men wear white shirt and black sleeveless jacket. In the past women generally wore head-kerchief and kinds of black Chinese-style jackets and coats with buttons on the front. In country the Huis women like wearing

colorful clothing. From 1950 on the Hui most women wore white hats like nurse-hats. In some places, the married and old women still wear head-kerchief.

The dietetics characteristics—Youxiang, Sanzi and “Baboo covered-bowl tea”

The Huis has strict dietary customs. They pay more attention to the edibility, cleanness and abstinence of food, generalized as “the dietary cleanness”. The Huis have some special taboos on diet. In general they choose the “birds that eat cereals” and the “herbivores” that do not look ugly, greedy and lazy, whose hooves are divided into two lamellas as ruminants. Besides the aquatic products, the Huis must pater “Taisimi” when slaughtering the animals, and they can only eat these whose throats are cut off when killed. The Huis and other Muslim ethnic groups together created and developed the culture of Chinese Islamic diet.

The Huis’ Islamic food made from flour and snacks are famous all over the country, such as Youxiang



(salted cake fried in sesame oil), Sanzi(fried noodles), fried dough twist, while flour cake, hand-pulled noodles with minced beef, noodles with mutton, saute noodles, pieced cakes, etc. The Huis like tea, especially “the eight-treasure tea with the covered cup”. When making a covered-up tea, they put tea into a covered cup and mix with red jujubes, kernels of walnuts, longan pulp, sesame seeds, raisins, dried fruits, etc. After pouring boiled water in cup, you can drink the tea. “Covered-cup tea” can satisfy the thirst,

nourish the stomach and improve the health. The proportions of the components in the tea all depend in different regions and seasons. It is up to the economic condition, the bodily condition and the personal taste. For example, “the Brown sugar brick tea”, “the Crystal sugar green tea”, “the three-flavor tea”, “the white four-taste tea”, “the brown four-taste tea”, etc.

The festival customs—Lesser Bairam and Corban

The Huis celebrate mainly two festivals: Lesser Bairam and Corban that originated from Islam. During the celebration of the festivals, all the family members take a bath and put on the best clothes, while making some snacks and presenting gifts with best regards to each other. The well-to-do families usually slaughter cattle and sheep. The pious Muslims gather at the mosques for the collective worship.



The religious belief—Islam

The Huis believe in Islam, which had great influence to the Huis during the formation and development of the Huis. But the Huis are divided into many sects because of the different interpretations of the Islamic doctrines and regulations. On the whole, there are two kinds: Janitor system and Non-janitor system.

The sect of Janitor system is called Islamic Janitor Tao who worships "Saint's wife", "Saintess" and their religious heads besides the "Allah" and the "Holy fire". It has thick color of mysticism and asceticism.