ARE CHINESE MUSLIM HUI PEOPLE INDIGENOUS CHINESE OR MUSLIMS?

A TALK BY DR MICHAEL BROSE (IU)

ABOUT DR MICHAEL BROSE

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ABOUT THE TALK

The very existence of Chinese Muslim “Hui” as an official ethnic minority group in the PRC invites an examination of the idea “indigenous” since their two-fold identification with “Chinese” and “Muslim” embeds several points of contact and separation. First categorized by the Mongols as an administrative category in China, the Hui have suffered (or profited) from several re-definitions over time. They are now one of 10 groups of official Muslim “ethnic minority” groups recognized in the PRC, but their current identity status in China is just as idiosyncratic and dependent on the state’s meta-governance of population groups as in earlier eras, if not more so. Because Hui merges the racial/ethnic category “Chinese” with the religious category “Muslim” they occupy several categories at once and regardless of where they now live, Hui can be native/foreigner, unique citizenship/member of the global ummah. The existence of the Hui may in fact uniquely illustrate the problems associated with trying to define “indigenous” for any group of people. At a minimum, the Hui reveal ongoing tension between local and global that have not really changed all that much from the 14th century.