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Interethnic Contact on the Inner Asian Frontier: The Gangou People of Minhe County, Qinghai

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INTERETHNIC CONTACT ON THE INNER ASIAN FRONTIER: THE GANGOU
PEOPLE OF MINHE COUNTY, QINGHAI*

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Introduction

China cultural studies have often pigeon-holed the subject in a convenient ethnic category giving cultural phenomena ethnic tabs. The preponderance of Han 漢 in China has meant that some minority groups or a substantial portion of the same have been sinicized to the extent that little remains of the original minority culture. Examples include the Manchu 滿 and nearly all minority people reared in urban areas.

Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to "Han" who have been much influenced by minority people, which this study focuses on. We have chosen a village in Qinghai 青海 [Kokonor] that illustrates this. It is an area where multicultural contact and mingling have a history of more than 2,000 years. For example, in 202 BC, speakers of an eastern Iranian Indo-European language fled to Qinghai where they settled and were absorbed by Qiang 羌 tribes. Succeeding centuries saw migrations of Xianbei 鮮卑, Xiongnu 匈奴, Tuyuhun 吐谷渾, Tibetans, Uygur, Mongolians, Han, and various Turkish stock into Qinghai, which formally became a province of China in 1928. Prior to that time, it was the Tibetan frontier district of the present Gansu 甘肅 Province (Schram 1954, 17-22).

The post-1949 period has seen a large influx of Han into Qinghai - particularly in urban areas. Table One shows the ethnic distribution of Qinghai's population in late 1985.

Table One: Ethnic Distribution of Qinghai's Population in 1985
(Bian 1988, 37)

Ethnicity	Population	Percentage of Total
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Han	2,459,600	60.31
Tibetan	797,400	19.60
Hui	553,400	13.6
Monguor (Tu 土)	133,000	3.30
Salar	65,800	1.60
Mongolian	58,800	1.40
others	5,800	0.10
Total	4,073,800	

Gangou 甘溝 Xiang 乡 (Township)

Gangou Xiang, the administrative region of this study, is a mountainous area situated at 102.40E--102.46E and 35.51N--35.58N in the southern part of Minhe 民和 Hui 回 and Tu Autonomous County in eastern Qinghai. To the south and southeast are two Monguor townships and to the north is a township inhabited mostly by Tibetans who have retained their language and culture. Ten km to the west and northwest are several townships populated primarily by Islamic Hui.

Table Two gives the population of Gangou Township by ethnic group as given to us by the township office.

Table Two: Gangou Xiang Population by Ethnic Group (1990)

Ethnic Group	Population	Percent of Total
Hui	4,427	35.76
Han	3,545	28.58
Monguor	2,777	22.43
Tibetan	1,631	13.17
Total	12,380	

Most residents are nearly self-sufficient peasants. Because of the terrain, there is little irrigation and consequently crop yields are low [about 500 jin 斤 (1 jin = 0.5 kg) per mu 亩 (1 mu = 0.067 ha)]. The problem of poor yields is compounded by a scarcity of land. There are approximately two mu of cultivated

land per person. Crops are limited to wheat, barley, beans, potatoes (on steep mountain slopes where grain cannot be grown), cabbage, radishes, and rapeseed (for cooking oil). Only one crop can be grown yearly due to a short frost-free period. Work is done mostly by draft animals (mules, donkeys, cattle, yaks, and various cattle/yak crosses). There are few tractors.

All of the above compare unfavorably with irrigated plain areas in Minhe County which routinely yield in excess of 800 jin/mu and where apple orchards are increasingly being planted for extra income. Additionally, double cropping is possible in plain areas because of a longer growing season.

Other than agriculture, villagers earn extra income by gold-mining. Each spring after sowing, middle-aged and young male adults leave the villages to mine gold, leaving all agriculture work to females, elderly men, and children. During the 1980s and early 1990s, gold-mining carried many risks. Lack of government supervision and fierce battles between different groups of miners at odds over mining claims make tales of the "wild American west" pale in comparison.

Roads are limited. There is only one dirt track leading to the county town, Chuankou 川口, 70 km from the township. There are no inter-village roads suitable for tractors. Most transport is done via donkey.

Medical care may be the worst in the county. The single government-run clinic does little more than offer first-aid. Village "medics" have little knowledge of medicine.

Jingning 靜寧 Village

Jingning is in the center of the township and boasts a history much longer than that of villages established within the last half-century. It is also a center for township religious activity by virtue of being home to Kadikawa 阿拉伯土地廟 Temple (discussed later).

Population, nationalities, and origins. Jingning has 24 households and a total population of 164 people (including 18 lamas). Three families are Hui who moved here from the nearby township of Maying 馬營 40-50 years ago. Though in the midst of non-Muslims, they have preserved Islamic customs and have minimal contact with other villagers, e.g., they do not attend non-Hui wedding and funeral rituals.

Remaining villagers participate in all village religious and festival activities. The Bai 白 clan originated from the present Xining 西寧 (capital of Qinghai Province) area centuries ago and claims Tibetan ancestry. Other clans trace ancestral roots to Shanxi 陝西 and Gansu provinces. Though

there is no Monguor clan in the village, a number of Monguor have married into the village and it is not uncommon for a household to have members of three nationalities. For example, one Han informant married a Tibetan woman but later, their son claimed Monguor ethnicity by showing that his mother had Monguor ancestors.

Most non-Hui Gangou residents believe Han are superior to non-Han. Even so, they register as Tibetan or Monguor in order to enjoy advantages extended to non-Han, e.g., being able to enter colleges with a lower university entrance exam score, increased access to government employment, and more lenient birth control policies. Such registration is possible because marriage between Tibetans, Han, and Monguor was common in the past and usually an ancestor can be found that is of the desired ethnicity. Ironically, once they do obtain minority status, they stoutly insist, and instruct their children, that they are "really" Han and that their "real" ancestors were inland Han. Only with the advent of various benefits accorded minorities have many "Han" sought officially to change their nationality from Han to that of a minority nationality.

Language

In this very brief discussion of language, we use Chinese pinyin 拼音 (romanization system) and International Phonetic Symbols (indicated by []).

Dialects consisting of predominantly Chinese words are found throughout eastern Qinghai, show considerable variation, and have been little studied. Some consonants and vowels found in Putonghua 普通話 (Modern Standard Mandarin) are absent from these dialects. "i" becomes [z] when used alone. Thus, 衣 (clothes) and 一 (one) become [z]ishang and [z]i rather than yishang and yi. "w" becomes [v]. 五 (five) and 王 (king) are pronounced as [v]u and [v]an rather than the Putonghua wu and wang.

When the consonants "j," "q," and "x" combine with the vowel "i" they become "z," "c," and "s" and are pronounced as "zi," "ci," and "si." In these combinations, the vowel "i" is pronounced [l]. Thus 鷄 and 子 are pronounced the same, 漆 and 刺 are the same and so are 洗 and 死. When used with other vowels they may become "g," "k," and "h": 解 (untie) and 鞋 (shoe) are pronounced jie and xie in Putonghua but in dialect become gai and hai.

There is no distinction in dialect between the endings en and eng; in and ing; and un and ong. Thus 盆 and 石並; 心 and 性; 松 and 孫 are pronounced the same, i.e., they become nasalized vowels.

The vocabulary of the Minhe Chinese dialect and that of the people of Jingning in particular has been influenced by Monguor and Tibetan (Table Three).

Table Three. Borrowed Words in the Jingning Han Dialect

Jingning Pronunciation	Part of Speech	Definition	Likely Origin
<i>qia</i> (GS)	v.	jump over	Guanting/Sanchuan Monguor
<i>danzhan</i>	v.	flee	GS Monguor
[z]ao	adj.	happy	??
<i>manfu</i>	adj.	satisfied	GS Monguor
<i>oli</i>	interj.	Yes! OK!	GS Monguor/Amdo Tibetan
<i>daola</i>	n.	wedding song	GS Monguor
<i>fula</i>	n.	girls pre-wedding weeping	??

There are also borrowed words in kinship terms (Table Four).

Table Four. Family Relationship Terms in South Minhe County

Relation to Ego	Putonghua	Jingning	Gangou	Tibetan	Guanting Monguor
father	<i>baba</i>	<i>ada, aba</i>	<i>ajia</i>		<i>ada, aba, adi</i>
mother	<i>mama</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>ama</i>		<i>ana</i>
elder brother	<i>gege</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>avu</i>		<i>gaga</i>
younger brother	<i>didi</i>	<i>xiongdi</i>	<i>xiongdi</i>		<i>diao</i>
elder sister	<i>jiejie</i>	<i>ajie</i>	<i>aji</i>		<i>ajia</i>
younger sister	<i>meimei</i>	<i>meizi</i>	<i>meizi</i>		<i>xujindiao</i>
son	<i>erzi</i>	<i>vava</i>	<i>vava</i>		<i>bulai</i>
daughter	<i>nüer</i>	<i>yatou</i>	<i>yatou</i>		<i>aguer</i>

father's father	yeye	aye	diedie	aye
mother's father	waigong; laoye	viye	viye	viyeye, viye
father's mother	nainai	anai	amu	anai nainai
mother's mother	waipo laolao	vinainai	vinainai	vinainai vinini
older sister's husband	jiefu	jiefu	jiefu	jiefu jiehu
younger sister's	meifu	meifu	meifu	mifu mihu
older brother's wife	saozi saosao	xingjie	gajie	shinajia
younger brother's wife	dimei	xiongdixifu	xiongdixifu	diaobieri
grandson	sunzi	sunzi	sunzi	sunzi
granddaughter	sunnü	sunnu	sunnu	sunzi sunnü

Syntax. In syntax, strong evidence can be found for the influence of GS Monguor and Amdo Tibetan on the Jingning dialect. Chinese exhibits SVO (subject-verb-object) word order, in contrast to Tibetan and Monguor which exhibit SOV word order. It is of interest that in the Jingning dialect, the object of a sentence is often inverted before the main verb.

Example One

Putonghua:	Ni	chi	yi	wan	fan.
	you	eat	a	bowl	food
Jingning:	Ni	fan	yi	wan	chi.
	you	food	a	bowl	eat
GS Monguor:	Yiama	yi	wan	di.	
	food	a	bowl	eat	
Amdo Tibetan:	Qi	teba	geng	tong.	
	you	noodles	one bowl	eat	
English:	You eat a bowl of food. (suggestion)				

Example Two

Putonghua:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>zheng</i>	<i>zai</i>	<i>kan</i>	<i>shu.</i>
	He/she	is happening	at	read	book.
Jingning:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>shu</i>	<i>kan</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>lia.</i>
	he/she	book	read	is happening	
GS Monguor:	<i>Gan</i>	<i>shu</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>ser</i>	<i>bang.</i>
	he/she	book	read	is happening	
Amdo Tibetan:	<i>Ki/mi</i>	<i>huichar</i>	<i>dayin</i>	<i>you.</i>	
	he/she	book	reading	is	
English:	He is reading a book.				

The Jingning auxiliary "ha" is used at times after a noun or pronoun and specifies that the noun or pronoun it follows is the direct object (Example Three). Sometimes it is used after a noun or pronoun signifying that the noun or pronoun is an indirect object (Example Four).

Example Three

Putonghua:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>zou</i>	<i>liao</i>	<i>chezi.</i>	
	he/she	draw	go	past	cart	
Jingning:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>chezi</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>zou</i>	<i>liao.</i>
	he/she	cart		draw	go	past
GS Monguor:	<i>Gan</i>	<i>tiaoerge</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>lake</i>	<i>yau</i>	<i>jiang.</i>
	he/she	cart	(as "ha" above)	draw	away	past
Amdo Tibetan:	<i>Ki/mi</i>	<i>khengda</i>	<i>jul</i>	<i>song.</i>		
	he/she	cart pulled by a person	draw	gone		
English:	He drew the cart away.					

Example Four

Putonghua:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>dui</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>shuo.</i>
	he/she	to	me	speak
	(He told me. He tells me.)			
Jingning:	<i>Ta</i>	<i>vo</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>shuo.</i>
	he/she	me		speak
	(He/she told me. He/she tells me.)			

GS Monguor: Gan danda kli ba
 he/she me speak past
 (He/she told me.)

Gan danda kli ji
 he/she me speak past/present
 (He/she told me. He/she tells me.)

Amdo Tibetan: Ki/mi ng la sheljer.
 he/she me to speak
 (He tells me.)

English: He told me.

Administrative systems. Two systems operate. One is government sanctioned and consists of a *cunzhang* 村長 (village head), *shezhang* 社長 (village section heads), and their assistants. These officials are responsible for matters related to official government promulgations.

The second system owes its origins to the *tusi* 土司 system (administrative system in minority areas) which, prior to 1930, endured for centuries. This system is more informal than the above. Leaders, *laozhe* 老者 (elders), are respected old men who officiate during some religious rituals and mitigate village disputes. This system has ceased to exist in much of Minhe County.

Dwellings. Villagers live in adobe compounds surrounded by four adobe walls. A three-bay room thatched with a mixture of straw and earth is the main compound building. This room is where guests are received and is also the living-quarters for the family's senior couple. It is usually built next to a mountain foot and faces east. One smaller room is built at each corner abutting the main room. One room is a kitchen, the other a stable. Other family members live in the kitchen or in rooms that may be built within the compound.

The kitchen has a *kang** (heatable adobe brick bed platform) where children normally sleep. The parents sleep together on the main room *kang*. However, if guests come, the husband sleeps with them on the main *kang* while the mother sleeps with the children. Most Han homes in the Qinghai countryside and Guanting Monguor homes do not have kitchen *kangs* but many Tibetan homes do, suggesting a strong Tibetan influence on Jingning architecture.

Building a family compound. Periodically, members of an extended family may decide to move away from their parents' home. This may be due to the father's death, the father being unable to control his sons living with their wives and children in the same compound, or quarreling brothers. The family then builds a

compound for the couple wishing to move near the original compound. Young village males are asked to assist. It is understood the only pay they will receive is food during the time they work.

The family tells the village *fala* (trance medium, discussed later -- the term may be derived from a similar Tibetan practitioner known as *ngawa* ༎ག་པ་) where they wish to construct the new compound. The *fala* casts two sheep bones and divines the propitiousness of the preferred location. If the chosen location is unlucky but cannot be changed, rituals are held beseeching the gods to alter whatever has caused the site to be unlucky. The *fala* also uses sheep bones to divine the time for beginning construction. The walls (rammed earth) of the compound are constructed first and then those of the main room are built. If a three-bay room cannot be afforded at this time, a small hut may be constructed. The courtyard gate is normally built in the eastern wall and the gate's directional orientation is divined by the *fala*. It is thought that the gate should face a hill or mountain without cliffs and without breaks in its outline. The hill or mountain is seen as an evil-resisting barrier, protecting the family from many evils that are believed to be constantly roaming about and capable of causing great harm. A *zhaobi* 罩壁 (adobe wall section) is also often built directly outside the courtyard gate which has the same function.

After construction of the courtyard wall, the *huayuan* 花圃 (garden) is built if family finances permit. A *bengba* ཐུམ་པ། (jar) is a porcelain pot which holds approximately 2-3 kg of water. It is filled with medicines and grains. Gold and silver may be added. The *bengba* is buried in a hole in the center of the compound. A platform, the *huayuan*, is about one meter high and a half meter wide and long where flowers are grown; it is built on top of this. The *bengba* is believed to protect the family from evils that might slip into the compound.

The custom of burying a *bengba* in a *huayuan* is shared by Tibetans, Monguor, and Han in Minhe County. The Monguor of the nearby Guanting/Sanchuan region see the *huayuan* and its buried *bengba* as being the "heart" of the family and without it, the family cannot flourish.

The Life Cycle

Birthgiving. Villagers believe that without male descendants previous generations will not be cared for after death and the family name will die. Females leave their parents' home, marry into other families, and consider their husband's ancestors their own. Sons remain at home and carry out the all important function of sending paper money and food (by burning sacrifices) to the deceased. If a sonless father dies, he will not receive food and money in the Netherworld and will suffer accordingly. In

Jingning, the first son was historically much valued and kept at home while other sons were sent to the lamasery.

It is taboo for pregnant women to demean children for being ugly and to think about unclean things such as frogs and scorpions. If they break this taboo, children may be born with deformities.

At the time of delivery, a village midwife is called. After birth, the child is given a liquid made from brown sugar and licorice root which is thought to warm the child's stomach, allowing it to digest what it will later be fed. If musk is available, some is given to the child to resist disease.

The woman remains in confinement for one month after the birth. She does not leave the room and is visited only by those of the immediate family.

Tasheng 踏生 ("Step on Birth"). Ten days after the mother gives birth, the mother-in-law finds a person matching the child's gender and invites him or her to enter the room. The person so invited is not told the reason for the invitation. The invited person should be honest, kind, and intelligent. It is believed that the child's personality will resemble that of the first person from outside the family who enters the room. For one month, the child remains in seclusion, especially from those who have come from far away. It is thought such exposure may make the child ill.

Naming and celebrating the child's first month. On the 30th day after a child's birth, Baimanyue 擺滿月 (30th Day Celebration) is held. Relatives and neighbors (mostly female) call and extend congratulations. The celebration of the birth of a first son is particularly lavish with all guests being banqueted.

The child's ajiu 阿舅 (maternal uncle), as the child's most important relative, is given particular attention at the banquet. He represents the mother's family and is given such presents as a bolt of cloth expressing gratitude to the wife's family. Wives are regarded as a gift from their parents' family and in giving birth the wife has fulfilled one of her paramount responsibilities, and thus, her parents' family should be thanked.

The paternal grandfather or the father names the child. Names may be given according to the "clan book" (book recording paternal lineage). In such cases, one of the two characters of the possible name is given to all boys of the same generation of the same clan. Later, other clan members, upon hearing the boy's name, know immediately what generation he belongs to and treat him accordingly. Given the paramount importance of generation,

this name serves a useful function. The second given name is chosen so that the sound matches the surname and generation name and it should also be a lucky name.

Other families might not give a generation name-tag. Some might give names recording the age of the boys paternal grandfather. For example, if a boy child is born when his grandfather is 68, he might be called "Sixty-eight."

Girls are generally named by their paternal grandfathers who chose a name that they think best. Generation tag-names are never given to girls.

Some families might give their children the names of animals. A boy might be called "Cat" and a girl "Sister of a Dog." Children are named after animals because it is thought it is easier for animals to live than humans and an animal name will help insure the child grows to adulthood. Naming children with animal names is also common among Tibetans. When evil spirits are looking for children to kill or make ill and come upon a child named after an animal they are unable to recognize the child as such and pass on.

At times when a child falls ill, the *fala* may diagnose the source as being a wrong name and rename the child. The new name chosen by the *fala* is usually a Tibetan name.

Marriage. Parents begin preparing for a child's marriage when the child is a teenager. Such preparation requires a minimum of three years. Preparation for a son means accumulating at least 2,000 rmb, which is much more than for a daughter. Nevertheless, numerous gifts of embroidered articles must be prepared by the bride's side for the groom's family. The family gaining a bride receives another member, strengthening its workforce, whereas the bride's family loses. Villagers thus feel that the groom's family should bear the major wedding expenses.

Most males marry in their early 20s while girls marry at 18 or 19 (the marriage law, stipulating the legal age of marriage to be 22 for boys and 20 for girls, is loosely enforced). About two years before reaching marriageable age, a boy's parents entrust his marriage to a close relative who searches for a suitable mate. Personal appearance, degree of education, and financial condition are important. Once the matchmaker finds a prospective partner, he (matchmakers are usually male) informs the young man's family. The father of the prospective groom and his (father's) brothers then discuss the proposed wedding. If they approve the match, the young man and his father take gifts of bread and tea bricks to the girl's home. This visit allows both the boy and his father actually to see the girl. The girl's family understands the significance of the visit and later, if they do not agree, they return the gifts. If they agree, the

gifts are not returned. If the boy's side later does not agree, the gifts are also not returned.

If general agreement is reached, i.e., both sides are ready to proceed with the engagement, *Songdingjiu* 送定酒 ("Sending Engagement Liquor") is observed at a date negotiated by the matchmaker. On the appointed day, the boy and his father (or paternal uncle representing the boy's father) go to the girl's home with two bottles of liquor and other gifts including a bolt of cloth specifically for the girl. The two fathers then discuss further wedding arrangements. However, the main focus is on the brideprice which in 1991 was about 800 rmb.

The date for the next ritual, *Songdajiu* 送大酒 ("Sending Big Liquor"), is also negotiated. On the day of *Songdajiu*, the girl's relatives come with a small gift. The boy, his uncle, and matchmaker also attend, bringing the brideprice and other articles they have agreed to provide. Articles brought by the boy's side are exhibited for all to see. All guests are banqueted and informed of the date of the wedding and invited to attend. The girl's family's "face" is at stake on this occasion. The more lavish the banquet and the gifts, the more the family will be respected.

Wedding ceremony. The *fala* chooses the date for the wedding ceremony. The day before, guests are again invited. The bride weeps and sings thanks to her family for having reared her. Unmarried girls join the bride in her sorrowful laments.

The groom and matchmaker arrive at the bride's home with a large piece of pork in the afternoon. By coming, the groom expresses his appreciation to the bride's family for giving the girl to his family. The matchmaker negotiates any difficulty that unexpectedly may have arisen. The groom and matchmaker are banqueted along with other guests. The groom periodically pays his respect to the bride's important relatives. When relatives and neighbors of the bride's family sing congratulations, the groom kowtows to them and to the bride's parents.

As evening approaches, two or three young men, representing the groom, come to the bride's home to escort her to the groom's home. When they arrive, the courtyard gate is blocked by young unmarried village girls. The bridgetakers must offer money wrapped in red paper before they can gain entry. Once inside, they sit in the main room where they are served tea and fried bread.

While the bridgetakers eat and drink, village girls abuse them in song and the bridgetakers periodically give the girls needles and small amounts of money to appease them. The bridgetakers then begin the next ritual. They kneel in the middle of the main room and, in song, praise gods worshipped by the bride's family. They must sing in a low tone and high pitch. This

lasts approximately one hour. During their singing, they are not interrupted by outside noises. When those present feel that they have sung long enough, the bridgetakers are invited to stand and then sing antiphonally with villagers.

After a time of singing in the main room, they step out to the porch, into the courtyard, and around the *huayuan*. Each step is accompanied by a stanza of *daola* (Monguor: "song" and particularly "wedding song"). Neighbors may suddenly ask a question in song and the bridgetakers are expected to answer in kind. This performance in the yard is called *Guanwufang* 觀見 五方 ("Watch in the Five Directions"). Its purpose is to worship all gods venerated by the family. When this rite concludes, the bridgetakers are escorted to the bride's uncles' homes where they are served food and liquor. They will remain there until the bride departs for the groom's home.

Around two to three o'clock in the early morning, the bridgetakers and the bride begin the ritual of leaving for the groom's home. The bride is carried from her room by one of her brothers. As she is carried out of the compound, she tosses a bundle of chopsticks behind her. If the ends of the chopsticks point to the courtyard gate, it portends she is taking the family's luck with her. If the ends point elsewhere, it portends that the luck of the family is retained. The bride is then escorted to the groom's home by a retinue of relatives and the bridgetakers.

Throughout the time those from the groom's home stay at the bride's home, they must observe two taboos. They must not say the word *cai* 財 (wealth) because, by saying this word, they may take the wealth of the girl's family away. They also may not touch the courtyard gateframe (our informants could not explain why).

When the bride reaches the groom's home, women rush out singing *daola* and escort the bride into the bridal chamber while men of the groom's home escort the bride's retinue inside. After singing congratulations to the groom's family, the bride's retinue is seated and served a preliminary meal. Once all guests have assembled, the bride's dowry is exhibited in the courtyard and guests are again seated for the start of the formal wedding banquet.

Seating is carefully arranged with the matchmaker occupying the seat of greatest honor, against the wall, facing the door of the main room. During the course of the feast, many *daola* are sung. The matchmaker's important position is again emphasized by being the first to sing.

Eight bowls of pork (per table) and other dishes are served. Liquor is an integral part of Gangou (non-Hui) culture. At banquets, the more liquor that is consumed the happier the guests

are thought to be. Finger guessing games are played. In this game, two people point a combination of fingers of one hand (each combination having a certain numerical value) at each other and at the same time shouting a particular number. Losers drink a predetermined number of cups of liquor as punishment. These games become increasingly raucous as time passes and inebriation increases. To insure that all guests are happy, the bride and groom visit each table, bow to each guest individually, and present liquor. Those sitting at the same table with the guest being so honored also present a cup of liquor to the guest being addressed by the newlyweds.

Toward the banquet's end, the matchmaker and the bride's and groom's maternal uncles are given gifts. Later, the bride's retinue leave, singing *daola*. Before they are allowed to exit the courtyard, however, they are required to drink another three cups of liquor. Before leaving, guests mount their horses, ride away, and then return twice.

After the guests have departed, the married couple visit the groom's ancestral graveyard where recumbent ancestors are informed of the wedding by the newlyweds who kowtow and burn paper money and incense.

On the third day, the new couple pays a short visit to the bride's parents' home where the bride is now treated as a guest.

In toto, the wedding seems to closely follow the Guanting/Sanchuan Monguor wedding (Hu and Stuart 1992; Ma 1991), much more so than at least the Minhe Han wedding observed in Xiachuankou 下川口 in the northern part of the county. Informants in Jingning who have attended Monguor weddings made the point that Jingning weddings are actually Monguor weddings.

A striking feature of the Mongour wedding in Guanting/Sanchuan is the amount of singing. Singing is not a part of most Han weddings in Minhe County. However, there are some differences. For example, the Monguor groom does not visit the bride just prior to the wedding banquet at his home and the food and the way it is served is substantially different. In Jingning, eight dishes are served during the course of the wedding banquet. In Guanting/Sanchuan the important food is not served until the very end of the meal which is ten dishes of cooked pork. We do not know enough about Tibetan weddings in Minhe County, where there is also much singing, to be able to compare them with the Jingning wedding.

Death. As with most non-Islamic people in Qinghai, it is believed that the souls of the deceased wander about, invisible to the living, but at times manage to communicate with the living. Death is an end only in the sense of being the conclusion of one cycle of existence.

An account of a near-death experience provides further insight into the villagers' concept of death and the afterlife.

A man seemed to die and was "dead" for two days. Oddly, he then "came back to life." Upon regaining consciousness, he reported that he had been told by a guard at the gate to the castle of the Netherworld that he was not the person Yama 閻王 (Lord of the Netherworld) had summoned. Attracted by the splendor of the castle, he worried that he was losing an opportunity and asked the guard when he would die so that he might enter the castle. The guard replied that he would have to wait and specified a certain number of years and then at that time, he would be escorted to the castle by a white tiger.

Funerals. Funerals may be divided into three categories: lama funerals, "natural" death funerals, and unnatural death funerals. It is considered natural for a person to die when aged and with surviving children and grandchildren. "Unnatural" refers to those who have died at an early age.

The ajiu. After a death, the deceased's ajiu is informed -- a procedure called *qingxianglao* 請相老 ("invite maternal uncle"). When he reaches the home where the deceased lies, he is met at the courtyard gate by a host of wailing and prostrating relatives. He inspects the corpse to see if foul play caused the death. If he finds evidence to support this, he may punish the family. He is also free to criticize, especially in the case of the death of an aged parent whom he feels the family has not treated with proper filiation.

Lama funerals. Dead lamas are dressed in their finest raiment, tied in a squatting position, placed in a covered wooden sedan, then taken to a valley behind the lamasery and cremated. All lamas attend and read scriptures during cremation. The deceased's siblings and children also attend, as well as some villagers.

Natural death funeral. The corpse is washed and dressed after the ajiu has inspected it. Two or three lamas are then invited to *nian* 念 ("chant") *Yeijing* 夜經 ("Night Scriptures"). The following day, neighbors and relatives come to mourn, bringing bread and paper money. While kneeling and kowtowing before the main room in which the corpse has been placed on a wooden board, they burn paper money. Afterwards, they are served fried bread and tea.

Invited lamas continue chanting. On the morning of the third day, more lamas are invited to chant. The corpse is encoffined and carried by young male adults to the graveyard where the location and directional orientation of the grave have been determined by knowledgeable elders. Immediately after the coffin is brought out of the compound a fire is set ablaze at the

courtyard gate. Neighbors set fires in front of their courtyard gates along the route to the graveyard which prevent the deceased from returning home or entering neighbors' homes. When the coffin reaches the grave, it is carried clockwise three times around the grave then lowered into the hole. The deceased's eldest son kneels before the open grave and neighbors who have come to help pass three shovelfuls of dirt above his head which are then tossed into the grave. Others who have assembled begin filling the grave while sons and nephews of the deceased wail and rush back home, leaving neighbors to fill the grave.

Unnatural death funerals. Those who die in accidents, with no sons, and pregnant women are classified as "unnatural deaths." Villagers believe that every person has a natural life mapped out by Yama which includes living to an advanced age, marrying, and having male children. Those who were not able to achieve this have died unnaturally--the only exception being lamas. The souls of those dead in accidents have been wronged and it is likely that they will retaliate against those who wronged them (were responsible for their death). Those with no sons will become hungry ghosts because no one will send them paper money which they need to buy food and clothing in the Netherworld. They roam about, stealing sacrifices intended for other spirits. Our informants could not explain why the ghosts of pregnant women were dangerous. Nevertheless, all such corpses are cremated. Such cremations are carried out without ceremony. The corpse is placed on top of a crude stove dug in a hillside with firewood used as fuel. There are no post-cremation rituals.

Jingning funeral ceremonies, with the use of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, more closely follow the Guanting/Sanchuan Monguor rituals (Stuart and Hu 1992) than that of many Minhe Han.

Religion

Villagers believe that misfortune is caused by evil-intentioned ghosts or displeased gods. The former category includes maligned or ignored ancestors who become wandering ghosts. Gods may be angered by being ignored and not having been offered sacrifices. Gods rule the universe and man. Every aspect of life is in the hands of a deity who should never be ignored. The village is ruled by the village god, each family is controlled by a family god, and a Kitchen Goddess oversees the kitchen. The nature of the gods is that of humans: they resent being ignored, they mete out punishment when they witness improper behaviour, they can be flattered with pleasing words and gifts of sacrifices, they can forgive when supplicants confess transgressions and beg for forgiveness. In sum, gods are conceived of as kindly-disposed older relatives who have the power to help as well as punish. When it is divined that ill luck is the result of a god's displeasure, villagers are quick to beg forgiveness and offer sacrifices.

Evil ghosts are treated differently. Violence is often employed to drive them away. For example, years ago a villager about 40-years-old visited an ill person in a neighboring village. It was explained to him that the person had been possessed by a ghost who had not received any offerings for a long while. The medic accepted this explanation because it is believed that the deceased must be given regular offerings of food and money, otherwise they will not be able to eat and buy what they need in the Netherworld. The medic felt he was unable to help the victim and started back to Jingning to find a *fala* who could deal with this situation. But on the way back he was possessed by the ghost and by the time he reached his home was gravely ill and died shortly thereafter. Before he was buried, one of his daughters went mad and declared that she was the deceased man's grandmother and demanded offerings because she had not received any for a long time.

After declaring this, the mad daughter went to a valley near the village where she met a man and greeted him by name. The *fala* that had been consulted said it was impossible for the medic's mother to recognize the man in the valley because the man had come to live in the area many years after the medic's mother had died. Therefore, the *fala* concluded, the girl must be possessed by a wandering ghost. The *fala* beat the girl (to drive the ghost away) and the spirit possessing her at last acknowledged (speaking through the girl) that it was from a neighboring village. It begged the *fala* to forgive it and said that it would leave and never disturb the village again. After the spirit departed, the girl seemed normal and professed knowing nothing since the death of her father.

If the *fala* had concluded that the girl was possessed by the grandmothers disgruntled spirit, he likely would have prescribed offerings of oil lamps, food, and paper money. However, once the girl was diagnosed as being possessed by an evil wandering spirit, she was treated violently.

A striking feature of village religion is the combination of various religious traditions. Shamanistic elements and Lamaism are closely intertwined to insure the village's security.

Lamaism. All village lamaistic activities centers on Kadikawa Lamasery. Enclosed by high adobe walls, the lamasery occupies approximately 20 *mu*. The two main lamasery buildings are the hall of Tsongkapa and the hall of Guandi 關帝 [Guan Yu 關羽, legendary general during the Three Kingdoms (220-280AD) and later venerated throughout much of China]. Lamas live within the compound in private quarters.

The lamasery dates to 608 AD. It was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and rebuilt in 1982. The temple is renowned locally for a self-portrait [known locally as *tanka*

which derives from the Tibetan *thangka* ཨ་མ་མེད་ཀྱི་ལྷ་མོ།] of Tsongkapa (1357 - 1419), a famous Tibetan lama who was the founder of the Yellow Hat sect. A local Tibetan [locally known as Qiao Guoshi and in the Records of Minhe County (1983, vol. 6, 69-73)] known as Canghuanerrusang] travelled to Tibet where he met Tsongkapa who by that time had achieved great renown. Tsongkapa often thought of his mother and, longing to see her, prepared a self-portrait by cutting a finger and using the ensuing blood to paint his own portrait. He then gave the portrait to the so-called local Tibetan with the instruction that it should be presented to his mother. Because the portrait was drawn with Tsongkapa's blood, it had the power to talk to Tsongkapa's mother for three days. Knowing this, the local Tibetan made a copy of the portrait and, when he reached the site of the present Taer 土答爾 (Gumbum རྒྱལ་ལྷ་མོ།) Lamasery where Tsongkapa's mother lived, he gave the copy to her. When it was opened, the copy called out "Ama" 阿媽 (Mother) three times but failed to say more. He then took the original self-portrait to the present Kadikawa Lamasery where the main hall was refurbished to house it.

The local Tibetan was an official during the Yuan 元 Dynasty (1271- 1368) and was later exiled to this area. With the advent of the Ming 明 (1368-1614) Dynasty, he gained control over the region with the title of *tusi* and his descendants ruled the area for hundreds of years. Village accounts also say that he was the one who brought Guanyu to the village.

The account of the miraculous self-portrait spread throughout the region and in the early 1990s, many Han, Monguor, and Tibetans continued to assemble on the 14th and 15th of the first moon (described later). Those desiring to visit Tibet may be advised to first visit Kadikawa.

The temple had 18 lamas in 1990, most of whom were about 30 years old. In its heyday, the temple was reputed to have 1,000 lamas and several branch lamaseries.

Lama activities. Lama activities include chanting at funerals, performances on the 14th and 15th of the first moon, exorcising evil, and temple chanting.

Funeral chanting. Local inhabitants believe that the temple *tanka* imbues Kadikawa lamas with greater power than other lamas and thus their services are frequently requested. Kadikawa lamas are often invited to chant at funerals in other villages while lamas from other temples are never invited to chant in Jingning. After a death, the family invites two or three lamas to chant on the first and second nights after the death. On the third day, more lamas are invited. The specific number depends on the family's finances. Some families may invite all temple lamas to a funeral while others may invite only eight lamas. Some poor families may invite only two or three lamas on the third day of

death. Every other seven day period after the burial, lamas are invited to chant while the family burns incense and oil lamps for the dead.

Chanting is seen as important for both the deceased and his family. It permits the deceased to reach the Netherworld more easily and, once there, enjoy a better existence. The more lamas that chant, the more powerful is the chanting and the more likely the deceased is to be soon reincarnated as a human rather than an animal. Additionally, villagers constantly compete with each other and the funeral is a time to display filial piety and family wealth. This is particularly true of better-off households. Conversely, if chanting is not done, the deceased may experience difficulties and, in revenge, visit illness and disaster on the family. Those who cannot afford eight lamas are harshly criticized by villagers. Any misfortune subsequently befalling them is explained by saying that they did not invite enough lamas. The deceased is said to be angry because he has not been sent money (by the regular burning of paper symbolizing money), and has returned to harm the family. This concept is shared by Han, Monguor, and Tibetans in this area.

Guanjing 觀經 ("Observe the Scriptures"). On the 14th and 15th of the first moon, a rite is held by lamas near the lamasery. Though the rite was originally intended to venerate Buddhas, it now is more of a ritual concluding Spring Festival and symbolizing hopes for a good autumn harvest. Buddhist devotees and those seeking entertainment poured into the village from Gansu, Sichuan 四川, and Tibet in years past. In the early 1990s, however, only neighboring villagers attended. Wearing masks of horses, sheep, and cattle, lamas perform Tiaoqian 跳欠 (Religious Dance) accompanied by drums, gongs, and suona horns.

During the two days of the festival, a portrait of Tathāgata 如來 (The Buddha), painted on a square piece of cloth, is hung on the lamasery wall. Those gathered pay particular attention to the cloth. If the cloth swells, it is believed that the autumn harvest will be good. Those assembled offer alms before the portrait, hoping that Tathāgata's belly will swell with the offerings. Once the cloth billows out (from a breeze) this is quickly joyfully retold.

Lamas daily life. During the year, the lamas work in their own agricultural fields. If a lama's assigned land is part of his family's, he works with them and also participates in other family activities. A lama's income derives mostly from his land and from funeral chanting. In the early morning and late evening, when free from farmwork, lamas study alone in their lamasery living quarters or collectively in the hall of Tsongkapa.

Exorcising evil. Lamas may work with the village *fala* to

drive evils away, although this is often done by the *fala* alone. They do so only for the village welfare and never for a family within a household compound.

On hilltops in the village vicinity are earthen piles called *tuo* (we have no further explanation for this word). When grain ripens in summer, the *fala* and village lamas are summoned by village elders. Carrying scriptures they set out around the village and visit all *tuo*. When reaching a *tuo*, scriptures are chanted. The ritual is concluded by the *fala* burying a black bowl near the pile. At night, young men are entrusted with the task of burying a dog near the most important *tuo*. Chanting and the burial of the dog strengthens *tuo* power which resists evils from entering the village and particularly hailstorms in summer which can devastate crops.

The burial of dogs to strengthen protective mounds was discussed by Schram (1957, 98-100). A white dog seemed to symbolize a white tiger which was the "dread and terror of evil spirits." Perhaps the rites performed in Jingning are simplified rites of what was done in the early 20th century.

Fifty years ago, lamas did not participate in this ritual. Instead, the ritual was carried out by a practitioner known as *bengbuzi* འཇམ་བུ་ཕུ་མེད། who practiced a form of Tibetan religion predating Buddhism, i.e., Bon. When the local *bengbuzi* was not replaced, the lamas began participating as we have described. *Bengbuzi* were rare in Minhe County in 1991, confined to remote areas.

Becoming a lama. Prior to liberation, families generally sent all but one son to the lamasery to be lamas. Families could not afford the marriage expenses for several sons which entailed not only costly wedding rituals but also construction of a separate family compound for the newlyweds. Additionally, lamas were not subject to military conscription. At present, there are opportunities for young people including advanced education, working outside the area in urban construction, and gold mining. Therefore, few males are interested in being lamas.

In the past an old lama tutored one or more of his nephews. This may have originated from the fact that no lamasery property could be taken from the lamasery. When a nephew inherited his uncle's property, nothing was lost to the family. Today, novices study with an old lama for a time and after a number of years, when they are judged capable in funeral chanting and other rituals, practice as full-fledged lamas. If the young man decides he wishes to resume the life of a layman, this is easily accomplished.

Those who have no close relatives in the lamasery are supported by their families who help them construct a building in

which to live. This is similar to building such a compound for a married son. When a compound is completed, relatives offer congratulations. Lamas maintain contact with their families and participate in weddings and funerals. Being a lama in the early 1990s was seen primarily as a means to earn a livelihood.

Fala

The Silangye 四郎爺 (Fourth Grandfather) Temple is the only village temple. First built in 1914 (Anonymous 1983, vol. 6, 62) it is situated on a hill top at the base of which is Kadekawa Lamasery. The present structure was constructed in the early 1980s. It has one hall and occupies two *mu*. A three-bay room by the hall serves as the temple caretaker's home. He is also the village *fala*.

Silangye sits in the hall center in the position of greatest importance. *Tuzhu* 土主 (Earth God) and *Shanshen* 山神 (Mountain God) are also present. Silangye is the *fala*'s god, i.e., the god that possesses the *fala* when he goes into trance.

According to villagers, Silangye is a Buddhist god and during the early 15th century, the Yongle 永樂 Prince of the Ming Dynasty was a pious Buddhist devotee. He wrote to Tsongkapa asking that he come to Beijing 北京 to instruct him in the scriptures. But Tsongkapa was busy in founding the Yellow Sect so he sent one of his students to instruct the prince. Tsongkapa's pupil arrived in Beijing and after some time of instruction, the Yongle Prince decided to go to Tibet to study with Tsongkapa. The pupil and the prince then set out for Tibet. When they reached the site of the present Honghua 紅花 (Red Flower) Temple in Minhe County, Tsongkapa's pupil discerned in a dream that Tsongkapa was dying. Wishing to bid farewell to his master, he told his companions that he was exhausted and would sleep a long while. He put up a tent and gave instructions not to be disturbed. Seven days passed and he had not stirred. Worried, his retinue decided that he should be awakened, otherwise he might starve to death. They entered the tent and attempted to rouse him. But his soul was out of his body and attempts to waken him caused his death. If they had waited longer, his soul might have returned from Tibet and he might have lived.

When it was clear that he was dead, it was decided to erect a temple to his memory. Later, when Tsongkapa's self-portrait was brought to the temple, an image of the Yongle Prince's teacher was brought to the village as Tsongkapa's guardian god.

Other accounts in Qinghai contend that after the prince's teacher died, the prince continued on toward Tibet. When he reached the present Ledu 樂都 County (adjoining Minhe County), he died and a temple compound resembling a miniature of Beijing financed by the Ming court was erected at the site where he died.

Becoming a fala. Historically, when an old *fala* died, his son or nephew became a *fala* after having studied with the old *fala*. When the apprentice *fala* was thought to have mastered the necessary skills, *Kaikou* 開口 ("Open Mouth") was held. Only after this ritual, as the name suggests, could the apprentice *fala* speak while possessed and divine.

The present village *fala*'s father was a *fala* who died many years ago. After the father's death, it was impossible for the son to become a *fala* in the face of government restriction. Early in the 1980s, when governmental religious policies relaxed, the son decided to become a *fala* and was known to be adept in the skills of a *fala*. At that time, there was another village *fala* who was too old to practice much. Village residents and those living near the village urged the younger man to become a full-fledged *fala*. However, the old *fala* disagreed, feeling a younger *fala* was a threat, and refused to participate in *Kaikou* for the younger man.

Angered, village elders decided to hold *Kaikou* anyway. The ritual was held at the lamasery in 1981 with all villagers assembled. When the ritual began, the younger man went into trance and jumped about the lamasery yard. He seemed in great pain and extremely anxious. After some time elapsed, the younger man grabbed a bottle of liquor and a cup and rushed out of the lamasery grounds. All assembled were at a loss to explain why. However, outside the lamasery grounds, the old *fala* was approaching, also in trance, possessed by *Silangye*. Villagers explained that he was unable to resist *Silangye*'s desire for the younger man to become a *fala* and *Silangye* had forced him to the lamasery. At the gate, the old *fala* also began jumping and dancing. After some minutes, the old *fala* stabbed the younger man through the nose with a metal spike. With blood dripping from the younger man's nose, *Silangye* began to speak through the younger man, expressing his delight in having a new medium. Afterwards, the younger man began to practice as a *fala*. The older *fala* died in 1990.

Public performances. The *fala* performs publicly in *Hui* 會 ("Meeting") which is held on the ninth day of the ninth moon and in *Cangfoye* 藏佛爺 ("Hide Buddha"). *Hui* expresses the villagers' gratitude to the gods for having had a harvest and for protection against calamities. Each family donates two large steamed bread buns to the temple as an offering. With oil lamps burning and drums pounding, the *fala* dances in the village temple in trance. *Silangye* speaks through him, expressing his pleasure with the offerings and promising to protect the village from calamities for the coming year. At this time, two young men or teenage boys don colorful women's clothing and dance and jump about with the *fala*. They represent the villagers and delight *Silangye* by dancing and singing. In addition, invited *fashi* 法師 (discussed later) from other villages perform. *Hui* lasts for four or five

hours and concludes with one steamed bread bun being given to each family.

Cangfoye. Held once every three years in spring or early summer when villagers are free from fieldwork, this ritual tests whether or not the Silangye image still has power to divine and also tests the *fala* to see if he remains Silangye's true medium. The specific date is decided by village elders.

The night prior to the day of the test, Silangye's image is stuffed with frogs, magpies, spiders, bats, sparrows, and house swallows. These symbolize internal organs and renew and strengthen the god's vitality. The image is then hidden under cover of darkness. The next day, the sedan in which Silangye is normally seated in the temple is taken out of the temple by four male villagers. In trance, the *fala* leads the sedan and an entourage of villagers and begins searching for the hidden image. The four men who carry the sedan are also thought to be possessed by Silangye and later are unable to recall what they did. Through his mediums, Silangye then directs the procession to the place where his image has been secreted. Locating the image verifies Silangye's power and the *fala*'s authenticity.

Fala's normal duties. The *fala* is responsible for expelling evils troubling individual village households (bad luck, illness, death of animals); divining propitious dates and times for weddings; and divining propitious locations for new households.

When the first author first entered the village, he found the *fala* in trance. Two men from a remote Gansu village were in the temple and had reported that their village had been beset with all manner of calamities after a recent earthquake in the area during which a hill near the village had collapsed. They had visited many places and had sought the help of many gods but these efforts had not ended the village's string of misfortunes. They had heard of Silangye and were making a last attempt to seek his aid to end their village's misery.

Kneeling before Silangye and holding sticks of incense, they besought his help. Dressed in a long blue robe and holding iron spikes with a red piece of cloth tied to one end, the *fala* went into trance. After a time of jumping about, he drew a map on the dirt floor. He murmured something that no one understood except for an old lama who squatted by him. The lama then handed the *fala* sheep ankle bones which the *fala* cast. After studying the result, he again murmured incoherently. When the old lama seemed to understand everything the *fala* had to say, the *fala* jumped and took a number of deep breaths, came out of trance, removed his robe, and retired to his room. The task of interpreting what the *fala* had said then rested with the lama who then explained that with the collapse of the hill, an all-important *bengba* had been destroyed so the village was at the mercy of evils now free to

enter the village with impunity. The *fala* also said that two young males and two mules of the distressed village had recently died. The two men from Gansu were amazed because this was true. The lama then said that Silangye, speaking through the *fala*, had offered a remedy: The village's five *bengba* were to be renewed by the village *fala* and two or three lamas from Kadikawa. Five pots, some precious medicines, and a white sheep were to be readied. The sheep was to be slaughtered on the day the renewal was accomplished. The date for the renewal was then agreed upon and the villagers gave four yuan 元 for the *fala*; some incense sticks and two bottles of plant oil to Silangye; and two yuan to the lama for his interpretation.

When a villager is ill, the *fala* is invited regardless of the nature of the illness. Accidents are punishments meted out by the gods for transgressions and the *fala* is needed as much as in the case when the cause of the actual discomfort is unclear (and thus probably caused by disgruntled evils or gods). The *fala* can discern the true reason for the gods unhappiness or identify the evil spirit responsible for the discomfort. Once the gods are appeased or ghosts expelled, the sufferer may recover.

When called to a home to rid the home of evil responsible for illness, the *fala* goes into trance and after divining with the sheep ankle bones offers an interpretation of what is causing the illness and what needs to be done. After his divination, he is commonly given a tea brick and some sugar. The household also promises to give Silangye oil lamps and incense sticks if the ill person recovers. If the person is seriously ill, the family may promise Silangye a sheep. If the ill person recovers, a sheep is slaughtered and the head placed on a square table in the home's main room.

Weddings. Weddings are only held after determining a propitious date. The *fala* chooses such dates in the family's home by consulting *Huangli* 黃曆 (almanac listing suitable and unsuitable days and hours for such activities as trips in various directions, construction work, etc.)

Manie 嘛呢 | women. Old women who frequently chant are called *manie* and believe that human beings often unknowingly commit sins which are carefully recorded by Yama. After death, such sins must be atoned for. Chanting persuades mankind to do good deeds and also is a way to lessen what must eventually be paid for this life's sins. Moralistic tales are the content of what is chanted. Since the *manie* women are all illiterate, what is chanted is memorized. On the first and 15th of each moon, *manie* women assemble in the home of one of their number and chant. As they chant, incense sticks and oil lamps are lit. During Spring Festival and on such important occasions as the eighth of the fourth moon (Sākyamuni's birthday), they chant in the lamasery yard and village temple. This chanting delights the gods and

disposes them to help the villagers. Before summer harvest, they chant in the village temple and near the *tuo*, beseeching the gods' protection against hail and drought.

Fashi. The only public performance of these practitioners is on the ninth of the ninth month. At present no *fashi* live in the village. *Fashi* from neighboring villages are invited to perform.

Fashi are trance mediums and perform while in trance. They reputedly treat illness as do *fala*. The only difference between the two practitioners is that the former always wear women's clothing when performing (for which we have no explanation) and because they venerate Tibetan gods, they are said to speak Tibetan when possessed rather than the local Han dialect.

Benbuzi. Forty to fifty years ago there was a practicing *benbuzi* in a neighboring village but at the time of this study, he had not practiced for many years. Villagers dimly remember such practitioners performing rites near the village *tuo* to strengthen them.

Fire worship. On the 15th of the first lunar month, young village male adults take burning torches and climb to the highest mountain top west of the village where the torches are thrust in the ground. On their way home, young men attempt to seize someone who is alone and take him back home. Once the "kidnapped" man is in their home, they serve him with boiled dough balls. The more he eats, the happier the family is. The "kidnapped" man is thus forced to eat a great deal. This translates into those going alone to the summit exercising a great deal of caution in fear of being "kidnapped." The only explanation for this ritual villagers offered was that the fire helps insure the village's safety for the coming year.

Ancestor worship. Each village clan has a shared graveyard and collectively venerates ancestors. On Spring Festival's eve and on the Day of Pure Brightness, clansmen assemble in the graveyard and present offerings and beseech the ancestors to protect them during the coming year. On other important occasions, such as harvest thanksgivings, ancestors are offered sacrifices in thanks for their protection.

Wobo. Though the name for this is derived from the Mongolian *wobo*, the shape of the Jingning *wobo* more closely resembles that of a Tibetan *lapzi* ལཔ་ཅེ།. It is a mound capped by a square wooden frame in which are inserted sticks resembling swords and spears. The *wobo* helps repel evils from the village vicinity.

Bengkang རྒྱལ་ཁྲུང་། (literally: "one hundred thousand room"/room of many Buddha pictures). These are earthen-and-brick square platforms about one meter long, wide, and tall containing a *benba*. The village has several. They also help resist evil.

They are occasionally strengthened by burning incense.

Conclusion concerning religion. Shamanistic elements and lamaism intertwine to keep the village and villagers in peace and security. Shamanism dominates in the village temple whereas the lamasery is the main arena for Tibetan Buddhism. These two religious traditions often overlap with respective practitioners working together, lamas strengthening the *fala's* power. One explanation for this cooperation lies in the origin of Silangye, god of the village, who possesses the *fala*. He is worshipped in both the temple and in the lamasery where he serves as a guardian deity to Tsongkapa.

Daoism, manifested in family gods such as the Kitchen Goddess, the God of Fortune, and the God of Wealth, and the way in which a family compound is built may well have been brought to the village when inland Han migrated to this area.

Tibetan religion is also evident in earthen mounds on hills surrounding the village. Until approximately 40 years ago, *two* rituals were conducted by *benbuzi*. The *bengkang* and *benba* are also derived from Tibetans. The taking of torches to mountains is still observed in Beishan 北山 (North Mountain) Xiang^{township} which was once controlled by a Tibetan *tusi*, is far away from Gangou, and may have Tibetan roots, although a very similar ritual is observed at the same time in the Guanting/Sanchuan Monguor region.

The future, as suggested by what has happened in less remote places of Minhe County, will surely see a disintegration of most of these traditions. With access to education, radio, television, the printed media, and work opportunities outside the village, villagers' belief in all that we have described is rapidly crumbling. This trend was summed up by an old villager who said, "Today, many fewer people are possessed by evil spirits than in the past."

Conclusions

The non-Islamic Gangou people residing in Jingning Village speak a Han dialect much influenced by nearby Monguor and Tibetans. Religion has been greatly affected by Tibetan Buddhism, evident in the fact that historically, many Gangou males were lamas and in the important role Kakedawa Temple continues to play in village life. Wedding customs are strongly affected by neighboring Monguor.

The Gangou people raise important questions as to the meaning of "Han" and indeed, to ethnic classification in China. Within Qinghai there are communities of Tibetan-speaking Hui, Monguor-speaking Hui, Han-dialect speaking Hui, Han-dialect speaking Mongolians, Tibetan-speaking Mongolians, Han-dialect

speaking Tibetans, Monguor-speaking Tibetans, Han-dialect speaking Monguor, etc. The ethnic tab worn by a particular individual seems related to: (1) An individual's language and culture as in communities where dominant culture is cohesively minority, as is the case in the Sanchuan/Guanting Monguor region. (2) The ethnicity desired. If the desired official ethnicity is non-Han, this seems possible to prove in Gangou, given the frequency of inter-ethnic marriage. However, some individuals want to have their cake and eat it too, i.e., officially claim minority status so as to enjoy attendant benefits but otherwise claim that they are Han on the basis of some paternal ancestors having come from inner China centuries before and the assumption that Han are superior to non-Han.

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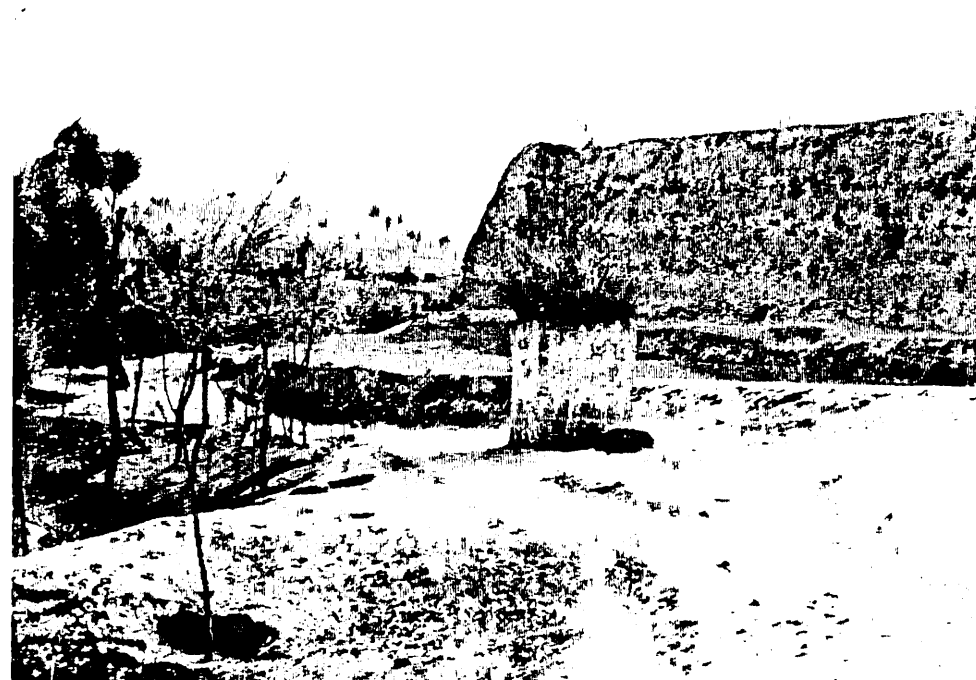
1. Jingning Village



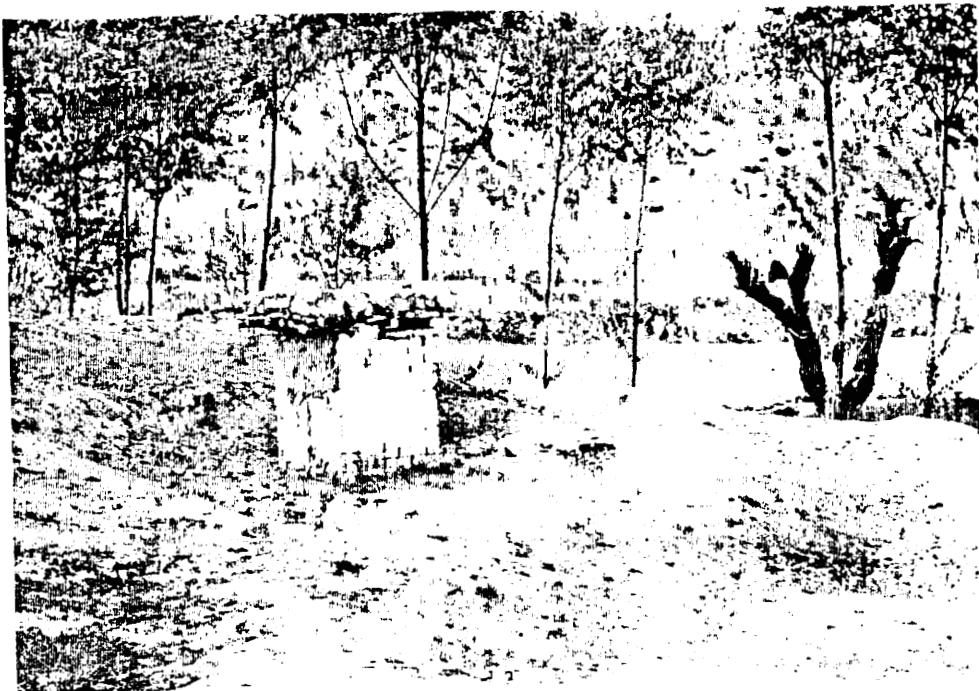
2. *Zhaobi* in front of courtyard gate



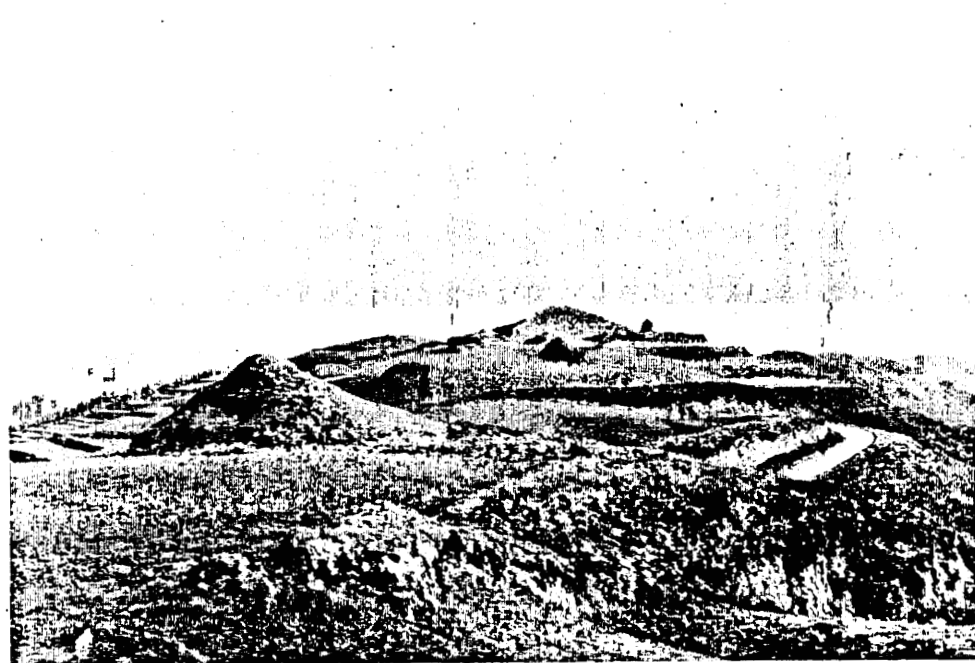
3. Courtyard: main room and *huayuan*



4. *Wobo*



5. *Benkang*



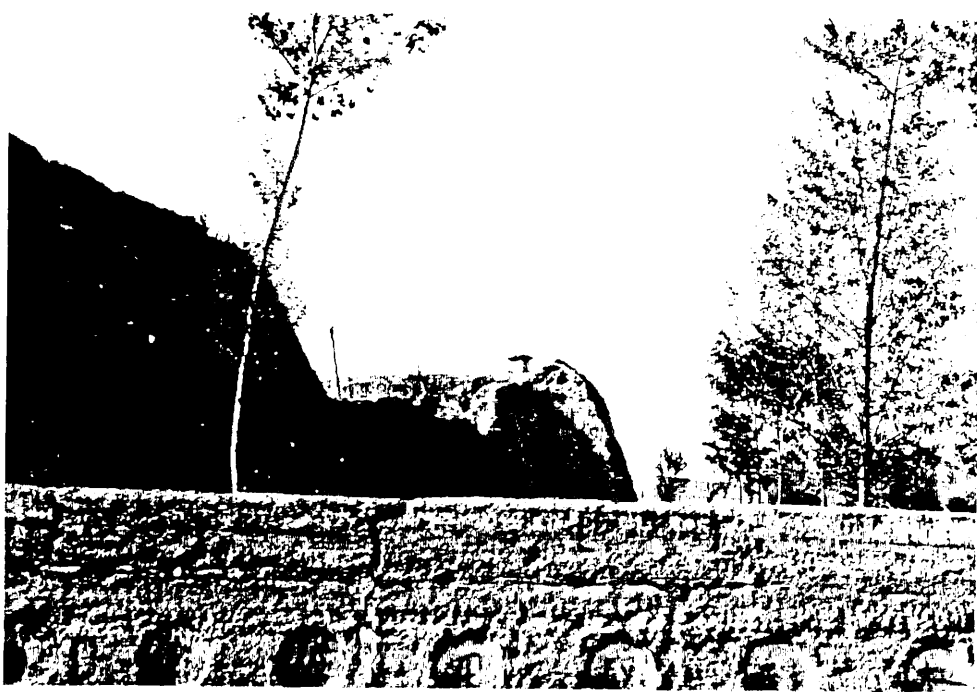
6. *Tuo*



7. Graveyard



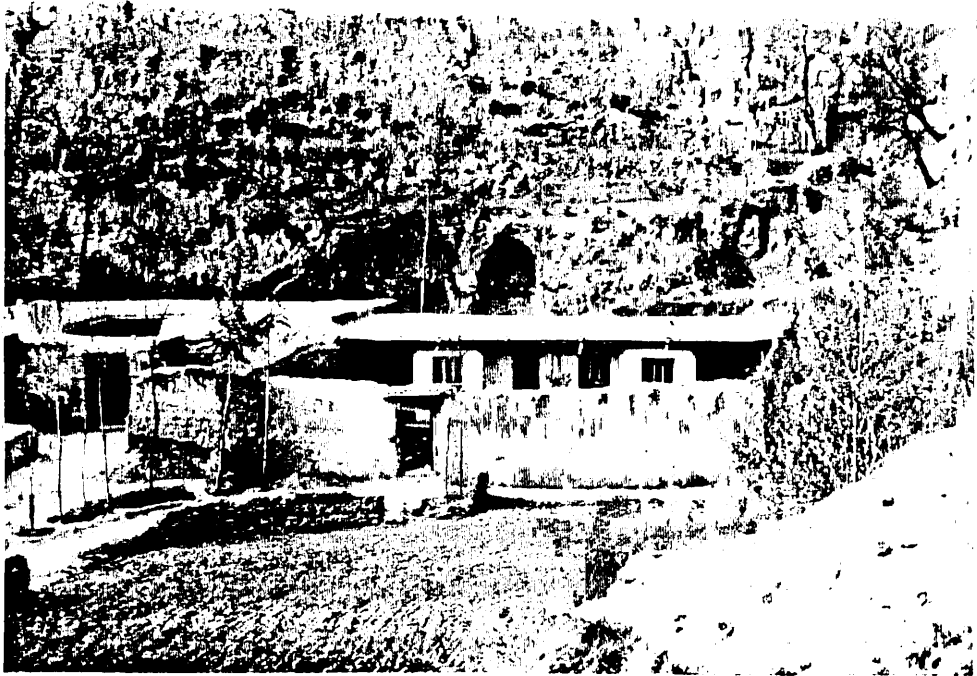
8. Entrance to Kadikawa Temple and old castle wall



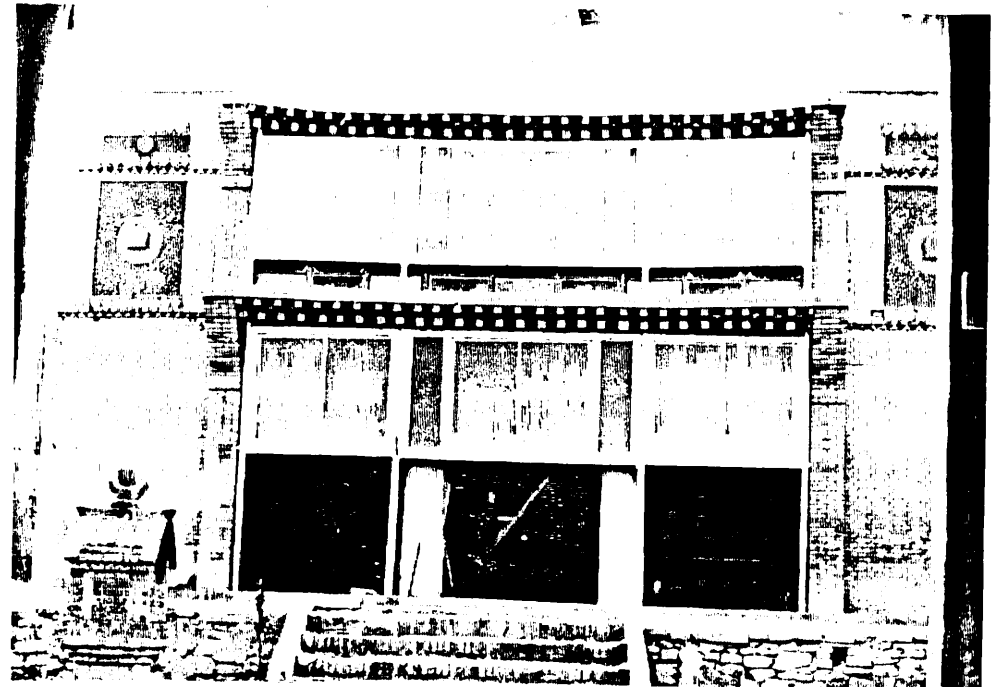
9. Old castle wall



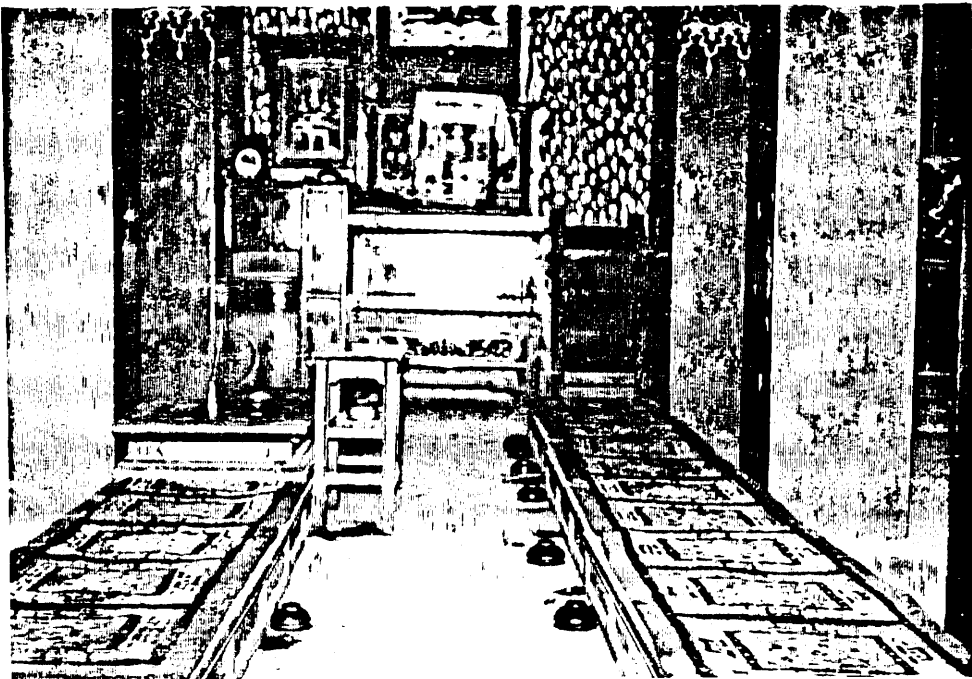
10. Gateway of the main temple hall



11. Lama quarters within old castle enclosure



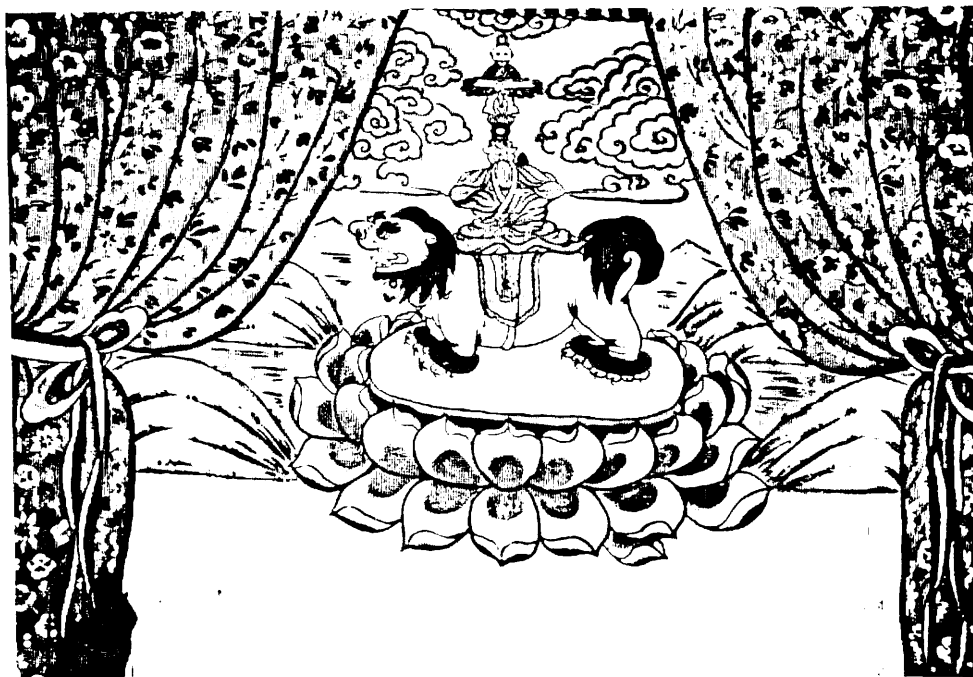
12. Front view of temple



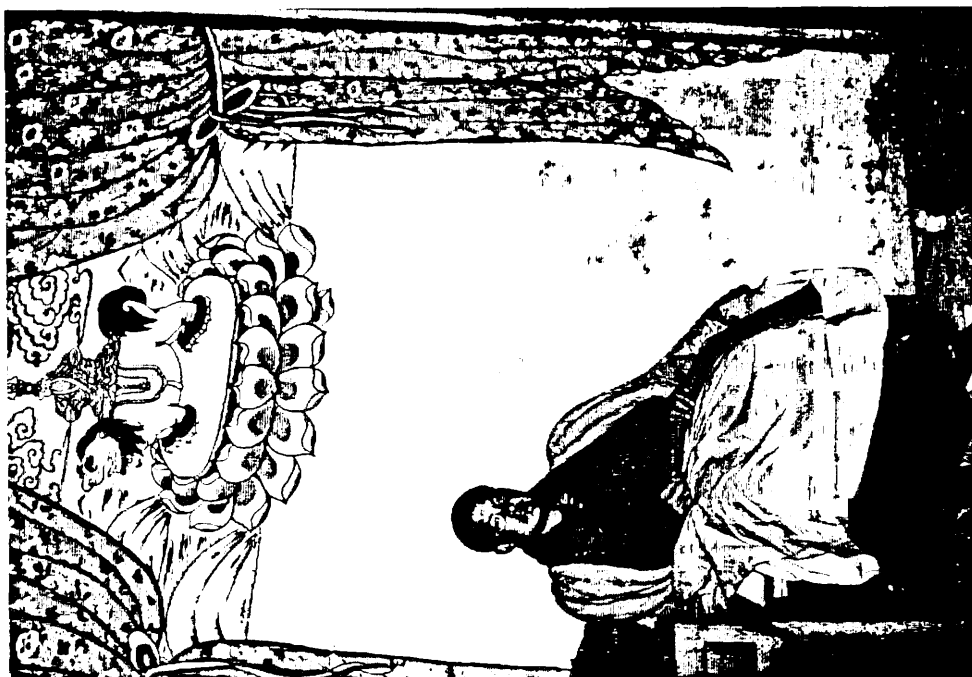
13. Main temple hall



14. Wall paintings in temple



15. Main temple hall painting



16. Lama in charge of lamasery discipline



17. Lama chanting



18. Lama just returned from rain-beseeching ritual



19. Scriptures just returned to temple from rain-beseeching ritual



20. Tsongkapa's self-portrait



21. Tsongkapa's self-portrait



22. Tsongkapa's self-portrait



24. Painting in Guandi temple



23. Guanyu's image in Guandi temple within the same old castle enclosure as Kadikawa temple

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