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Political Strategies  
of Identity Building  
in Non-Han Empires in China

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## Muslim Memories of Yuan-Ming Transition in Southeast China

Oded Abt

The paper examines hitherto overlooked written sources and oral traditions shedding new light on the relations between the late Yuan regime and the south-eastern coast Muslim elites. Its main aim is to analyze changing narratives of lineages of Muslim descent, concerning the persecution and forced assimilation they went through during the late Yuan and early Ming periods. According to current accepted narratives, the fate of the lineages of Muslim descent was largely determined due to their ancestors' close association with the Yuan Mongol rulers. These narratives have been disseminated since the late fourteenth century through genealogical texts, oral legends, various references within the ancestral worship and symbolic imageries in the family shrines. Focusing on genealogical records of Fujianese lineages of Muslim descent, I address the changing perspectives regarding the Yuan treatment of its Muslim subjects, and analyze their role in Muslim descendants' identity formation from the Ming period down to the present.

This paper is based on a decade-long anthropological and historical research into lineages of descendants of Muslims in the coastal regions of Southeast China and Taiwan, and the mechanisms they apply to shape their own identity. The members of these lineages are not practicing Muslims, but are rather *descendants* of Muslim merchants, who settled in the city of Quanzhou on China's south-eastern coast during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties. Since the fourteenth century, many of these merchants intermarried with local residents and gradually assimilated into the local population. Today, they resemble their Han neighbors in almost every aspect. Many of them, however, still commemorate their foreign origin and, under current political circumstances, some of them even choose to express this identity in ethnic terms, acting to obtain official recognition as members of the Chinese-Muslim (*Hui* 回) minority.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), Islamic faith and ritual observances have been the most crucial criteria for determining affiliation to the Hui minority. Since most Muslims' descendants in the region maintain hardly any religious observances, they have rarely been recognized as Hui. Nevertheless, beginning with the implementation of political reforms in 1979, the government granted Hui status to a few households of Muslim descent in Fujian Province.<sup>1</sup> Recognition was granted based on the

<sup>1</sup> In the Quanzhou area there was a small number of communities of descendants of Muslims that throughout the years continued to perform partial Muslim worship. Therefore, as early as the mid-1950s,

families' continuous evidence of ancestral worship, with such special characteristics as pork-avoidance, as well as on family genealogies proving Muslim ancestry.

Many of the Muslims' descendants recognized as Hui are very pleased with their new official status. Their satisfaction lies not only in the state's recognition of their unique ancestral heritage, but also, and some claim that chiefly, in the privileges granted to minorities in China. As part of the Chinese government's affirmative action policies towards minorities, members of the Hui are entitled to political, economic, and educational benefits and, most desirable of all: the right to have two children, while the rest of China's urban population is limited to one child only.<sup>2</sup> The benefits that the minorities receive obviously constitute an important incentive for accentuating the unique elements of their identity. However, it is important to note that there are several groups, such as the Su 蘇 family from Quanzhou and the Pu 蒲 family from Dongshi 朥石, a town to the south-east of Quanzhou, that are interested in proving their descent from foreign Muslim immigrants even if it does not lead to the attainment of Hui status.

In this paper I examine the effect of current policies on the process of identity formation of Muslims' descendants and on their approach towards their Yuan-era ancestors. I concentrate on the widely prevalent views regarding the circumstances and conditions which led to the assimilation of their ancestors into local society. The commonly accepted narrative, shared by families of descendants of Muslims and several scholars, highlights the Ming take-over as a turning-point – following which their Muslim ancestors, who were closely associated with the foreign Yuan regime, were persecuted, compelled to step down from the central political stage, and dispersed throughout Southeast China.<sup>3</sup>

This paper examines hitherto overlooked written sources and oral traditions shedding new light on the relations between the late Yuan regime and the south-eastern coast Muslim elites. It demonstrates that the circumstances leading to the profound changes in the lives of the Muslims were far more complex than described above, and suggests possible explanations for the formation of the current narrative.

I focus my attention on the Pu lineage of Southeast China, descendants of the famous Song and Yuan official Pu Shougeng 蒲壽庚 (ca. 1230–ca. 1297), who played a crucial political and military role in thirteenth century Fujian, and whose historical influence continues to resonate in Southeast China to this day. Pu Shougeng was a wealthy merchant of either Arab or Persian origin who held key positions in the international port city of Quanzhou (renowned in the west by its Arab name "Zaitun"). During the late Song and those groups were officially recognized as Hui. Alongside those, who adhered to Muslim belief, were some exceptional cases such as that of the Guo 郭 family of Baiqi 白奇 that did not maintain a Muslim lifestyle, but nevertheless received official recognition as Hui from the new Communist government. Recognition was granted based on evidence they presented regarding their descent from Muslim immigrants, who had settled in China over 600 years previously. In the 1980s, they were joined by other lineages of Muslim descent from the Quanzhou vicinity.

2 Gladney 1995, 254–266.

3 The Fujian Guo lineage of Muslim descent also nurtures a family narrative of forced assimilation, in which their early ancestors falsely adopted Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697–781), a Han-Chinese national hero, as their ancestor. Although its authenticity has recently been largely refuted, the tradition remains an important component of their identity, symbolizing their ancestors' persecution after the fall of the Yuan. The Investigation Section of Fujian Province Quanzhou Foreign Maritime Museum 1983, 213–215; Fan K'e 70015.

early Yuan he became one of the most powerful political and military figures in the Southeast coastal provinces of China. Most researchers support the claim that Pu Shougeng's ancestors were merchants who settled around the tenth century in Southeast Asia. During the eleventh century they moved from there to Guangzhou. After a while Pu Shougeng's father, Pu Kaizong 蒲开宗 (dates of life unknown) moved from there to Quanzhou. From then on the family's high social and political position grew constantly.<sup>4</sup> In 1274, after successfully repelling a pirate attack together with his brother Pu Shoucheng 蒲壽成 (dates of life unknown), Pu Shougeng was appointed in charge of maritime affairs and was later granted additional military and administrative authority allowing him control over a substantial naval force. In addition to the local militia and the fleet that were available to him due to his official posts, Pu Shougeng enjoyed the support of several military officers, who were stationed in the city, some of the wealthy Chinese merchants, and the community of foreign merchants, whose influence was growing more powerful during that time.<sup>5</sup>

In early 1276, the Mongols invaded Southern China and occupied the capital Lin'an 臨安 (today Hangzhou). The Song loyalists gathered their forces in Fuzhou where they enthroned the young prince Yi 益 and proclaimed him the new Southern Song Emperor Duanzong 端宗 (r. 1276–1278). By the end of the year, the Mongol troops defeated them in Fuzhou and soon after, in early 1277, started their advance southwards towards Quanzhou. The Song forces were counting on the maritime power of Pu Shougeng and planned to retreat to Quanzhou and reorganize in order to stop the Mongol advance there. Yet to their dismay, Pu Shougeng shifted his allegiance to the Mongols, denying the Song loyalists' entrance to Quanzhou and depriving them of the naval assistance they were so desperately counting on. The Song army led by General Zhang Shijie 張世杰 (1236–1279) put a siege on the city but Pu Shougeng endured for three months awaiting the Mongols' arrival. In the meanwhile, he massacred thousands of Song imperial clansmen and loyalist local elite, as well as a force of imperial troops, who had been transferred to Quanzhou from the Huai River Valley in the previous year. The Mongols occupied the city soon after. This marked the last stage of the struggle against the Mongols. Two years later the Song were finally defeated in Guangdong where the last surviving crown prince, Duanzong's younger brother, apparently drowned.<sup>6</sup> Thus, according to Chinese tradition and official historical sources of later times, Pu Shougeng, the official of foreign descent, was responsible for the fall of Quanzhou, which led to the final collapse of the Song. Modern research work, especially that of Billy K. L. So, demonstrates that Pu Shougeng would not have been able to stand against the local forces of Song loyalists without the support of substantial sections of the local leadership.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the common sentiment, attributing the main responsibility

4 The widely accepted version is the one presented by the Japanese historian Kuwabara Jitsuzo and also approved by Billy K. L. So, Kuwabara 1935, 1–6; So 2000, 108–109. Another view, relying mainly on genealogical entries, maintains that he was a descendant of a renowned Song official from Sichuan named Pu Zongmeng 蒲宗孟, who also originated from Western or Central Asia. See: Luo Xianglin 1959, 11–37. For a brief summary of the different theories see: Li Yukun 2001, 17–19.

5 So 2000, 108, 110–114, 301–305; Kuwabara 1935, 35–38.

6 Chan Hok-iam 1976, 29–37.

7 Based on dynastic histories and local gazetteers, Kuwabara Jitsuzo and Luo Xianglin concluded that Pu Shougeng's military influence covered the entire Fujian circuit and possibly Guangdong. However, Billy K. L. So claims that in reality Pu Shougeng's political influence, though significant, was confined

for the failure of the resistance to Pu Shougeng, bore far-reaching consequences for his descendants.

Pu Shougeng was repaid generously by the new Yuan regime. Between 1279 and 1297 he was appointed to a series of key positions and enjoyed a flourishing career. Among the official posts that were conferred on him were the vice-governor of Fujian Province and the prefect of Quanzhou. Some sources even claim that at that time his military and political influence extended over the entire Southeastern Chinese coastline.<sup>8</sup>

Pu Shougeng's long career and his widespread connections established the status of his whole family. Many of its members held key positions in the regional and national administration also in the following generations, and hence the Pu became one of the most powerful lineages on the South China coast: Pu Shougeng's son served as the vice-governor of Fujian; his grandson was the inspector of maritime affairs and of the administration and mobilization of salt and other products on which there was a state monopoly; one of his sons-in-law was a Quanzhou foreign Muslim who owned a large trade fleet of over eighty vessels.<sup>9</sup> The Pu lineage had already enjoyed high status and influential positions during the late Southern Song. However, during the Song, the Pu's power base relied on the support of local Han elites. During the Yuan, they enjoyed a wider array of options of appointments to official posts.

According to several Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) sources, ninety years after the surrender of Quanzhou, due to Pu Shougeng's dominant role in the Mongol takeover, the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398, r. 1368–1398) persecuted his descendants and banned them from taking part in the imperial exams or serving in any official post, thus deeply affecting the future of their descendants.<sup>10</sup> The *Quannan Zazhi* 泉南雜誌, compiled during the late Ming, quotes the earlier *Song Yuan Tongjian* 宋元通鑑 by Xue Ying 薛應 (1500–1573) as follows:

Our great Emperor Taizu banned the descendants of Pu Shougeng [...] of Quanzhou from serving in any official post as punishment for their forefather's crime of supporting the Yuan takeover of the Song, therefore he fully persecuted them.<sup>11</sup>

to Quanzhou and did not extend beyond the prefectural level, much less the provincial level. So 2000, 303–305; Chaffee 2006, 409; Kuwabara 1935, 35–40; Luo Xianglin 1959, 39–41.

8 The official titles and posts he was bestowed by the Mongols included that of Grand Commander and Military Commissioner of Regulations of Fujian and Guangdong Provinces (*Mingyuan dadu dishi bingma zhaotaoshi* 閩廣大都督府兵馬招討使). Afterwards he was promoted to Assistant Minister of Jiangxi Province (*Jiangxi xingsheng canzhi zhengshi* 江西行省參知政事), and in 1278, he was further promoted to the position of Left Vice-Minister of Fujian Province (*Fujian xing zhong shu sheng zou* 福建行中書省左丞). Kuwabara 1935, 40.

9 Kuwabara 1935, 67–68, 92–96 notes 14–17.

10 The history of Pu Shougeng and his family was studied in detail by several researchers, beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century and down to the present. It is not the aim of this paper to repeat these works and review all the available sources regarding Pu Shougeng and other renowned Pu descendants. Most works were predominantly based on the official historical sources and dealt mainly with the identity, origin, official posts, and biographical data of the first Pu ancestors, who settled in Quanzhou during the Song dynasty. See: Kuwabara 1928, 1935; Luo Xianglin 1959; Pu Faren 1988; Li Yukun 2001.

11 Chen Maoren 仁懋陳, *Quannan zazhi*, *juan 2*. Compiled between 1628 and 1644. See also: He

In the early Qing Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) wrote in his *Ri zhihu* 日知錄:

When Ming Taizu took over China he punished the descendants of late Song Pu Shougeng and Huang Wanshi, banning them from entering officialdom.<sup>12</sup>

Based on such official historical sources, a tradition developed that placed the brunt of the responsibility for the Mongol takeover of Quanzhou and the consequent collapse of the Song resistance on Pu, the alien official who orchestrated the surrender to the Mongols. This in turn is believed to have caused the harsh fate of Pu Shougeng's descendants in the early Ming. As a result, most members of the Pu family were forced to emigrate from Quanzhou to remote rural areas where they adopted the local religions and customs and in some cases even had to conceal their identity.

### The Pu Lineage and the Memory of Pu Shougeng

Under the current conditions, the Pu family members are striving to openly commemorate their foreign origin and reinstall Pu Shougeng in the center of the family's consciousness. The common opinion among them is that in the past it was necessary to conceal one's foreign origin to avoid discrimination. Now, when circumstances have changed so much, not only is there no need to hide one's identity, but they also want to bring the knowledge of their unique origin to the wider public.

In Dongshi, there is a Pu family numbering several thousand people. The Dongshi Pus are a branch of the Pu Shougeng lineage, who moved in the early Ming era to a section of the town formerly called Gurong Village (*Gurong cun* 古榕村). Up to the mid-1950s, some of them still resided in Gurong Village. In its center was the family's central ancestral hall. The hall and the burial grounds surrounding it were demolished in 1966. The property on which remnants of the Pu neighborhood were completely erased in 1966. The property on which the hall and houses existed presently belongs to a local elementary school.<sup>13</sup> According to their own family sources, the Dongshi Pus abandoned their Muslim faith centuries ago. Today they do not hold any claims of being Muslim. Unlike other lineages of Muslim descent in the region, they do not demand to be recognized as members of a separate ethnic group. Their primary aim and demand since the mid 1990's has been to reacquire a small portion of the land where the hall was previously situated, in order to rebuild it as a memorial hall that would serve not only the family's rituals but also as a national historical site. During a visit to Dongshi in 2002, family members showed me a detailed architectural plan for a grand memorial hall. Interestingly, along with the traditional Chinese characteristics, the plan also consists of arched windows designed in what they perceive as

Qiaoyuan 何乔远 (1558–1631), *Manshu*, *juan 52*: "Our Emperor Taizu forbade all Pu family members to attend the examinations and attain officialdom" (*Huangchao Taizu jin Pu xing zhe bu de da shu ru shi* 皇朝奉族禁蒲姓者不得讀書入仕).

12 *Ri zhihu*. Huang Wanshi was also a Song official, who surrendered to the Yuan. See: Kuwabara 1935, 99n20. See also: Shao Yuanning 邵元平 (d. 1676), *Yuanshi leibian* 元史類編 (Encyclopedia of Yuan History), *juan 18*.

13 Liu Zhicheng 1983 (1978), 5.

ancient Middle Eastern or Muslim architectural style.<sup>14</sup> The Pu family petitioned to rebuild their hall stressing it would bear not only ritual and symbolic significance for the family, but also serve as a national historical site highlighting their forefathers' contribution to the history of the region: "If it was not for our ancestors, who immigrated here, Quanzhou and the other places in the region that were influenced by the Maritime Silk Route, would not have developed as they did."<sup>15</sup> Their campaign was only partly successful. The local government was concerned that acceding to these claims would result in a series of many similar demands to rebuild other ancestor halls that have been demolished during the past few decades. Instead, in August 2006 they authorized the building of a small pavilion in one of the corners of the school-yard with a "Gurong Pu History Stele" (*Gurong Pu shi bei* 古榕潘史碑) erected in its center. The stele contains a brief family history beginning with the early Song dynasty Muslim ancestors, continuing with Pu Shougeng, through to the time of his great-grandson, who established the sub-branch in Dongshi, and down to the present.

#### Narratives of Forced Assimilation

Pu lineage members present various accounts of their ancestors' strategies for concealing their identity or at least avoiding linkage to Pu Shougeng. These narratives of forced assimilation have been disseminated since the late fourteenth century through genealogical texts, oral legends, various references within ancestral worship, and couplets and inscriptions in the family shrines.

Although the Pu have not been practicing Muslims for a few centuries, like other southeastern lineages of Muslim descent they maintained a secret tradition of abstaining from making pork offerings during ancestral rites – reflecting recognition of their ancestors' Muslim belief.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Jinglang shi, Dongshi zhen, Songshu Pushi jintian tang* 晋江市东石鎮松樹潘氏紀念堂 (Memorial Hall of the Pu family of Songshi, Dongshi Township, Jinglang County) May 2002. Architectural plans for the Pu family's ancestor hall in Dongshi. Fan Ke has written about the new trends of Muslim architecture in Baiqi and Chendai and their significance, in his dissertation: Fan Ke 2001b, 275–329.

<sup>15</sup> Fieldwork, Dongshi, August 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Like the rest of the Han population of Southeast China and Taiwan, members of families of Muslim descent such as the Ding 丁, Guo 郭, Jin 金 and Su 蘇, strictly observe the rules of ancestral worship. In addition though, they observe several unique customs and taboos connected with the offerings they present to the family's ancestors. Many families refrain from offering pork to the ancestors during the ancestral rites. In some cases, the family members themselves abstain from eating pork during the mourning period. Other families tend, in contrast with the prevalent customs of the region, to use only beef or seafood offerings. A few families also maintain a custom of presenting offerings of ancient Quran books. See: Gladney 1987, 1995, 1996, 261–291; Fan Ke 2001b; 2004, 2006; Guo Zhichao 1990; Zhuang Jinghui 1993; Sai Yukari 2001; Pillsbury 1973. It is important to emphasize that these communities are not Muslim at all. Their refraining from offering pork to their ancestors does not derive from religious Muslim beliefs, nor is it based on any divine or moral edicts, but on the principle common to all, who uphold Chinese ancestor worship, prescribing the serving of all the needs and desires of the souls of the departed.

Among several Pu branches in Fujian, Jiangsu, and Hainan Island, I have encountered cases of adopting a different surname in an attempt to avoid the discriminatory policies of the early Ming. Some resumed their original name in subsequent generations, while others continue to retain their adopted names while secretly maintaining family traditions attesting to their ties with the Pu lineage.

The best-known case is that of the founder of the Pu branch in Dongshi. Genealogical evidence reveals that during the early Ming, Pu Benchu 潘本初 (*jinshi* 1397), the great-grandson of Pu Shougeng, was taken as an infant from Quanzhou to his mother's hometown of Dongshi where he remained under the custody of her family. He was officially adopted by them, received his mother's surname Yang 楊, and from then on was called Yang Benchu. Family sources maintain that this step was taken to avoid persecution and the harsh restrictions imposed by the Ming founder on Pu members. As a young man this enabled him to take the examinations and qualify as a student in the imperial academy.<sup>17</sup>

This was recorded by later generations in the Pu Genealogy (*Pu shi zupu* 潘氏族譜) of the Yongchun 永春 branch, which was first compiled during the Kangxi 康熙 period (1662–1722):

The tenth generation, Sir Benchu, *hao* Chengzhai 誠齋, first generation ancestor to have found [the branch of] Dongshi style Chunren 純仁, second son of father Chongmo 崇謨. [He] adopted his mother's surname Yang. He was among the successful candidates of the provincial imperial examination at the Quanzhou prefectural school in 1384<sup>18</sup> and was ranked ninth among the successful *jinshi* candidates in the exam of 1397, and 25th in the second group (*jia*) in the final imperial examination. He was selected for the post of Hanlin Academy Junior Compiler (*bianxiu* 編修). He retired at an old age and moved to his hometown Gurong [...] he brought along his personal attendant Wangfu 王福 and others and found happiness in cultivating the land.<sup>19</sup>

A later edition of the genealogy compiled by the Yongchun town offshoot in 1870, added the following:

During the Ming Dynasty, in the year 1375, the emperor angrily proclaimed: "The Pu were the chief usurpers in the uprising in Quanzhou during the previous dynasty." Thus they were annihilated and no one was spared. Fortunately, a friend surnamed Wang of Anping carried away the few months old baby [Pu Benchu] and fled straight to Dongshi to call on his (the baby's) mother's family surnamed Yang. They brought him up and sent him to study at school. Thus, he became an official and was conferred the title of Hanlin Academy shujishi [those who passed the

<sup>17</sup> Zhuang Weiji and Zhuang Jinghui 1983, 236; Liu Zhicheng 1985; 1983, 105–108.

<sup>18</sup> The original text mentions the seventeenth year of Hongwu as *dingmao* 丁卯. 1384, the seventeenth year of Hongwu is in fact *jiazi* 甲子. *Dingmao* is 1387, the twentieth year of the Hongwu reign period.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Yungang and Jin Dehao 1983, 225–226.

annual civil service examinations with high grades]. Thereafter, he changed his name and surname; [returning to] his surname Pu and name Benchu.<sup>20</sup>

Further evidence for Benchu's adoption into the Yang family and his name change is found in a biography of Yang Yiweng 楊頤翁 (dates of life unknown) from Dongshi in the *Quanzhou Fuzhi* 泉州府志 (Prefectural Gazetteer of Quanzhou, 1763). Yang's biography mentions only one son of his, named Benchu, who passed the exams. That was probably Pu Benchu; no other sons are mentioned.<sup>21</sup>

At the same period, not only were the Pus banned from participating in the exams, but in 1368, seven years prior to Benchu's immigration to Dongshi, his elder brother Pu Taichu 蒲太初 (dates of life unknown) was registered in the military where he was first stationed with the Quanzhou guard and later on sent to Shandong.<sup>22</sup> Michael Szonyi demonstrates how the adoption of, as well as the subsequent return to the original surname in Fujian during the late imperial period served as a strategy to deal with government demands such as the enlistment of households for military service. In the early Ming, large numbers of households in Fujian were registered as soldier-households responsible for furnishing one soldier and supplying provisions to the unit to which this soldier was assigned. If a military registered household failed to meet these obligations its members were liable to severe government sanctions. The military registration and the obligations it entailed were hereditary and remained the concern of the whole lineage also in subsequent generations. Lineages in Fujian employed various strategies to deal with these government demands. These included uxorial marriage, surname change and subsequent return to the original name as attempts to obscure or deny connection with hereditary military obligation.<sup>23</sup> Taichu's fate demonstrates the kind of difficulties, similar to those recorded by Szonyi, that his younger brother's adoption into another family may have eased.

The persecution and the attempts to avoid it are a central theme in the Dongshi Pu's family history, and it is demonstrated to this day in the symbolic imagery of their early ancestor. In 2009 the construction of a new ancestral hall in their contemporary residence was completed. In contrast to the Gurong Pavilion mentioned earlier, the new family ancestral hall is dedicated only to the founder of the Dongshi branch and to the heritage of his immigration and settlement in the region. The walls of the hall are decorated with inscriptions and couplets commemorating Pu Benchu and his host family, emphasizing the forced concealment of his true identity and the hospitality he received from his mother's kin.

An inscription on the inner entrance lintel reads as follows:

The Yang [family of [Gu]rong Village] disseminates virtue

榕楊傳芳

According to family sources this verse was originally inscribed by Pu Benchu on the lintel of the family hall he established when he retired to Gurong village.<sup>24</sup>

Another sentence on one of the pillars explicitly refers to the help that the Yang family gave Pu Benchu.

As for maternal uncles, we cherish with greatest affection [Yang] Yiweng [Pu Benchu's uncle]

漕陽最思頤翁情

The Gurong Pavilion and the newly built ancestral hall represent two different facets of the current Dongshi Pu identity: the public official approach that is aligned with the current ethnic discourse and resurgence of Hui heritage, and the more private and traditional aspect which is in accord with the centuries-old ideology and terminology of lineage discourse. The stele in the pavilion highlights the foreign origin, emphasizing Pu Shougeng, and is decorated with a heading "The Gurong Pu History Tablet" in Chinese and Arabic. This aspect of the family heritage has recently become very important, and the Pu are extremely keen on publicly promoting it. Nonetheless, the family hall represents the other, complementary aspect of the family's narrative, celebrating their more private, Ming-era sinicized ancestors' achievements and emphasizing the high esteem towards the Yang family who enabled these achievements.

This case of the changed name from Pu to Yang has received further attention from researchers due to the association of the family legacy with the famous author Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715). Although during his lifetime no traces of Islam remained in his family, some commentators raise the possibility that his family was an offshoot of Pu Shougeng's lineage. It is said that during the same period of the late fourteenth century when the Dongshi branch was established, Pu Songling's ancestors moved from Fujian to Shandong. The claim of sharing the same ancestors partially relies on a piece of evidence according to which Songling's family had also temporarily changed its name to Yang during the early Ming period, and subsequently resumed the original one.<sup>25</sup>

### Other Cases of Changed Names

The case of Pu Benchu is not isolated. Beginning in the 1920s, researchers reported encounters with branches of the family that had chosen to change their names from Pu to Wu 吳 in order to hide their true identity. Some were told that the choice of Wu was due to its resemblance to the sound of Pu in the Minnan 閩南 (Southern Fujian) dialect. According to accounts given during the 1930s by Pu family members in Dehua 德化, to the northwest of Quanzhou, some family branches still maintain tombstones, on whose front is inscribed "grave of Wu" while on the back it reads "grave of Pu."<sup>26</sup> Contemporary researchers report

<sup>24</sup> This claim appears in the *Pu shi jiazhu* 蒲氏家譜, a newly compiled, untitled manuscript genealogy of the Yongchun Pu family.

<sup>25</sup> One of Pu Songling's ancestors may have been a descendant of Pu Benchu, who migrated to Shandong, still bearing memories of the surname Yang. It is possible that since his elder brother was stationed in the Shandong guard, Benchu's descendants may have joined him there. Luo Xiangjin 1959, 230-233; Liu Zhicheng 1983, 94-113; Bai Chongren 1992, 15-22; Bai Zhen 1992, 47-52.

<sup>26</sup> Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao 1983 (1940), 218; Gladney 1996, 273.

<sup>20</sup> Liu Zhicheng 1985, 57, 1983, 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Quanzhou fuzhi*, 1763.55: 46; Liu Zhicheng 1985, 57-58; 1983, 10-14.

<sup>22</sup> Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao 1983. Originally published in *Yue Hua* 1-3 (1940), 225.

<sup>23</sup> Szonyi 2002, 64-68.

similar cases among descendants of Pu Shougeng in Nanjing and among sub-branches, who migrated to Qinghai and Gansu.<sup>27</sup>

Another case is that of the small Bu 卜 family in Fashi 法石 township on the outskirts of Quanzhou. According to Bu family sources, they also changed their name from Pu to Bu during the Yongle period (1403–1424). Fashi was the hometown of Pu Shougeng, and the Bu believe they are his descendants, who were forced to hide their true origin. They indicate other family traditions related to their early ancestors. Early sources show that Pu Shougeng used to have a flower and incense garden in Fashi. The Bu continue this ancient family occupation of growing flowers. They even have an ancient flower garden, which is their family property. According to them, this is a direct continuation to the ancient family tradition and a testimony to their links with Pu Shougeng.<sup>28</sup> Some researchers debate the authenticity of this claim and say that the Bu may have been the family, which traditionally tended to the garden as workers of the Pus, rather than being descendants of the Pu lineage.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of whether they really are Pu descendants or not, the Bu are using the same discourse of forced assimilation to put forward their claims of membership to a greater lineage.

The Pu members present the adoption into their forefather's maternal line, the name change, and the subsequent return to the original name as outcomes of the unique circumstances their ancestors faced. However, examining these issues within the context of the local historical social and cultural spheres, one may reconsider just how unique it really was. According to Michael Szonyi's findings regarding the customs of uxorial marriage, cross-surname adoption, and the "return to the original surname" (*faying* 復姓) in the late imperial period, these customs were widely practiced at that time in some parts of Fujian.<sup>30</sup> The Ming Hongwu (1368–1398) reign period brought about a sharp change in the status of the Pu lineage and posed them with threatening challenges of a sort, which they had not encountered previously. It forced them to adopt efficient mechanisms for coping with the decline of their social and political standing. However, such mechanisms were also employed for different reasons by other lineages and even by Pu family members in other locations or at later periods, not necessarily connected to Pu Shougeng.

In Hainan Island many who are surnamed Hai 海, Ha 哈, Liu 劉, Gao 高, Mi 米, Jin 金, and Li 李 are in fact descendants of Muslims surnamed Pu. Their ancestors were Muslim merchants, who arrived in Hainan from Southeast Asia during the Song Dynasty. Many of them retain their Muslim faith to this day. There is no certain evidence linking them to the family of Pu Shougeng. However, both Pu families share the same ethnic and religious origin and their ancestors settled, during the same period, in Quanzhou and Hainan respectively. Luo Xianglin claims that during the early Ming many Pu branches adopted new names of larger local lineages for similar reasons of avoiding persecution. The Hainan Pu family records do not point to an imperial ban or restrictions but rather to a lack of security – especially due to the violent attacks by the Li 黎 ethnic group – which were aimed more frequently at small undefended groups such as the Muslims. Since then many

of them dispersed throughout the island, retaining their new names, while some resumed their original name.<sup>31</sup>

The custom of cross-surname adoption among the Pus also occurred in the much later Republican era. Wide-scale banditry and the lack of government law enforcement caused the incursions and harassment of small families by larger families. Under those circumstances, many Pu households branched out of the bigger lineage concentrations and many chose to adopt their mother's surname. Thus, to this day there are many within the Cai 蔡 and Wu 吳 families in the vicinity of Dongshi, who were originally Pu and who still maintain close relations with their Pu relatives. In fact, some of the most active and vociferous family representatives, who are involved in reclaiming ancestral grounds and even claiming Hui identity for the Pus are actually surnamed Cai. These phenomena deserve separate attention and I do not deal with them here. However, it seems to me that the current change of atmosphere, together with the new opportunities, which may become available, are creating renewed interest in their origins, and perhaps will even initiate a *faying* – a return to the original surname.<sup>32</sup>

### Omitting Shougeng from the Genealogy

Another family trait, which the Pu attribute to their special historical circumstances, is the omission of traces of Pu Shougeng from the genealogies as a strategy to avoid attracting unnecessary attention to their family ties with him.

On a visit to Dongshi in 2005, I was shown a copy of the *Nanhai Ganjian Pu shi jiapu* 南海甘簫譜氏家 from Guangdong. The first edition was compiled in 1619 and the last revision was made in 1908. A pedigree chart of the first eight generations includes Shougeng's brother, Pu Shoucheng. Next to him, where Shougeng would have been, there are two blank squares representing an anonymous ancestor.<sup>33</sup> This is quite odd since his renowned brother does appear in the genealogy and more oddly, there are also entries and biographies concerning his direct descendants up to the nineteenth century. I believe it was not a measure taken for real effective disguise, but rather for avoiding extra attention to this undesired link. However, it appears that this measure was also taken in genealogies of other branches in different locations. Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao reported the same in the *Pu shi zupu*. This genealogy includes relatively detailed biographies of the Pu ancestors. Pu Shougeng's father appears in the sixth generation and Pu Shoucheng is mentioned as the seventh-generation ancestor. Surprisingly, there is no entry dedicated to Pu Shougeng. The only mention of the name Shougeng is in his father's biography among the list of his three sons. Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao, who discovered the original genealogy in Dehua in 1939 and were permitted to copy parts of it, commented that in the section dedicated to the seventh generation there was a blank space of one page and not even one word written about Shougeng.<sup>34</sup> That copy was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

31 Luo Xianglin 1959, 165–226; Ma Jianzhao and Du Rui'er 1990, 97–103.

32 Fieldwork in Dongshi 2002, 2009; Liu Zhicheng 1983, 5, 6, 9.

33 This chart was also reproduced in the modern punctuated edition which was published as a volume in the *Zhongguo Huiju congshu* 中国回族古籍丛书: *Nanhai Ganjian Pu shi jiapu* 南海甘簫譜氏家譜. Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1987, 6.

34 Zhang Yuguang & Jin Debao 1983, 224.

27 Liu Zhicheng 1984.

28 Zhang Weiji and Zhang Jinghui 1983, 238.

29 Personal communication with Liu Zhicheng, Quanzhou 2008.  
30 Szonyi 2002, 28, 36, 39–42, 64–68, 234n21, 236n41.



However, in 1982 Liu Zhicheng discovered another copy in Yongchun, which had been handwritten between 1875 and 1908. It contained the same avoidance of mentioning Pu Shougeng while documenting his direct descendants.<sup>35</sup> In 2009, I was presented in Dehua with a copied manuscript of a new genealogy originally composed in the mid-2000s by a family member in Yongchun. I will discuss this compilation later. However, at this point I wish to stress its importance regarding the tremendous change through which the family members' approach evolved, regarding the publicity given to the links with Pu Shougeng. Contrary to the old editions found so far, this edition contains a long, detailed and very well-informed biography of Pu Shougeng.<sup>36</sup>

### Non-Pu Muslim Memories of Yuan-Ming transition

It is only recently that researchers have come across increasing evidence showing that in fact the Pu family's close ties with the Yuan regime had already been dramatically severed in the late Yuan era in a process that climaxed in a violent struggle known as the Ispah Uprising (*Yisibaxi bingluan* 亦思巴西兵亂, 1357–1366).<sup>37</sup> It was waged between the Muslim militia – headed by a Pu in-law – and the Yuan regime backed by local Chinese warlords, and marked the final undermining of the Pu family's status, two years prior to the Ming take-over.

A detailed account of this less familiar narrative can be found in the *Qingyuan Jinshi zupu* 清源金氏族譜 – a genealogy of the Jin 金, another Fujianese lineage of Muslim descent, compiled in 1555. Their founding ancestor Jin Ji 金吉 (appointed to his post in Quanzhou at 1333) played an important role in bringing an end to the violent strife which had ravaged the region for almost a decade. This issue is referred to in several essays throughout the genealogy. The most detailed one is included as an appendix to the genealogy titled *Li shi* 麗史.

This essay is a fascinating historical source that until now has been largely overlooked by scholars. Most Chinese commentators describe it as a romantic historical novel set against the background of events at the end of the Yuan dynasty in Fujian. Its last part recounts the quelling of the Ispah Rebellion by local Chinese forces loyal to the Yuan regime, with the collaboration of General Jin Ji, who served as a Muslim militia commander.<sup>38</sup>

The account of the last days of the Ispah Rebellion, given in the *Li shi*, is preceded by a few passages of background information regarding the foreign leadership of the city. This description includes a lengthy and extremely unflattering account of Pu Shougeng and his brother during the last days of the Song, where they are portrayed as deceitful schemers:

Formerly, numerous foreigners of the western regions (*Xiyuren* 西域人) resided in Quanzhou. During Song times there were Pu Shougeng and [Pu Shoucheng], who received official titles thanks to their suppressing of pirates. Shougeng was Marshal of Pacification (*Zhaofushi* 招撫使), in charge of the customs (*shibo* 市舶) affairs.

35 Liu Zhicheng 1985, 55–59.

36 Unedited manuscript of the Yongchun branch Pu family, genealogy. Undisclosed compiler.

37 Maejima 1973–1974.

38 Guan Guqian 1993, 3–19; Wang Lianmao 1993, 126–136.

Shoucheng was [appointed an office] in Jizhou [in present day Jiangxi], but since he knew that the Song days were numbered he did not attend to his position. In 1276/1277, Yiwan [one of the two last child emperors of the Southern Song], on an imperial tour to the south, stopped over in Quanzhou harbor. Zhang Shijie [a Song general who headed the resistance to the Mongols in the last years of the Dynasty]<sup>39</sup>, raised an army of 3,500 people from among the Huai region people and left them for Shougeng's use. The military men were fierce and intrepid but not good strategists. Shoucheng on the other hand had a plan worked out. When Yiwan's force was approaching the city he instructed Shougeng to shut the gates and refuse to let them in. They killed all the Song royal clansmen in Quanzhou, numbering over thirty people, and left nothing of the entire Huai River army. Together with the Vice Prefect (*Zhou sima* 州司馬), Tian Zhenzi 田真子, he went to Hangzhou to surrender before Suodu 唆都 [the Supreme Commander of the Mongol army in that campaign]<sup>40</sup>. Zhang Shijie returned back to re-take [Quanzhou], but he attacked for ninety days to no avail.<sup>41</sup>

When the Yuan ruled over China, due to his meritorious service they conferred upon Shougeng an official post serving [as the governor] of [the newly established] Pinghai Province (*Pinghai sheng* 平海省) at Quanzhou. Shoucheng also occupied a high government position and at that period their descendants were the most highly placed and eminent officials in the country. The people of Quanzhou were subject to their influence for ninety years. Until the Yuan government declined, armed rebellions started everywhere and the state's orders could not be carried out. [...]<sup>42</sup>

However, the description of the Pu brothers in the novel is only an introduction to a detailed account of the end of the Ispah rebellion, featuring another historical figure: a foreign Muslim of Persian or Arab origin (*Xiyuren*) named Nawuna 那兀納 (d. 1366). He was a notorious militia leader, who took command of the Persian garrison, which ruled Quanzhou during the second phase of the rebellion between 1362 and 1366. His short-lived tyrannical regime caused immense suffering to the city's population, and severely damaged its economy.<sup>43</sup> In the novel Nawuna is presented as an in-law of Pu Shougeng's family.<sup>44</sup>

[...] His [Pu Shougeng's] [son]-in-law, a man of the western regions [called] Nawuna, staged a sudden armed rebellion [...]. Nawuna had already seized control of the city. He committed excessive pillage and rape. He selected women from among the people to serve in his residence as his concubines. He ordered them

39 Chan Hok-ian 1976. \*

40 Suodu was the Mongol commander, who sent reinforcements from Hangzhou to relieve the siege placed by Zhang Shijie on Quanzhou. His arrival caused the retreat of Zhang Shijie south to Guangdong. See the account in *Yuanshi* 118:3141–3161.

41 *Li shi*: 506–51b.

42 *Li shi*: 51a.

43 See Maejima 1973–1974, 55–57.

44 Although it is impossible to verify this through other historical sources, it is known that he indeed married a member of the Quanzhou Pu lineage. So 2000, 305.

to collect kumquats he cast beneath the Su building to satisfy his own amusement.<sup>45</sup> He [...] built there the temple Fanfo Si 番佛寺.<sup>46</sup> He then embellished the temple to the extreme, storing in it treasures that he had stolen from elsewhere. [...] In 1354,<sup>47</sup> he dispatched cavalry to attack Xinghua 興化. The Fuzhou Branch Secretariat (*xing zhongshu sheng* 行中書省) presented a memorial to the emperor of a call to arms of Xunwei saltern (*Xunwei chang* 濼尾場) Assistant Director (*sicheng* 司丞), Chen Xian 陳弦 and Bingzhou saltern (*Bingzhou chang* 炳洲場) Assistant Director Gong Mingan 龔名安 to join forces to quell him [Nawuna].<sup>48</sup>

This account also reveals a different reason for the animosity towards the Pu family, one that did not receive any attention in Pu family sources. Here also lies the real reason for including the novel in the Jin genealogy: towards the end of the text, an account appears of the noble deed of the Jin's earliest ancestor Jin Ji.

When Yi Su [a leading figure in the novel] was seventeen, he joined the Fuzhou military school. He saw there Chen Xian and said to him: "the rebels are in fact only Na and Pu, while all the people are unwillingly forced to join them. During war surely they will be sent to the frontlines. What use will be in the government forces killing them?" [Yi Su] offered to go into town behind the enemy lines. Inside the city, the Commander of Thousand Households (*qianhu* 千戶) Jin Ji, also of Muslim (*Huibai* 回回) origin, was guarding the city's western gate. Yi Su saw him and said: "The military man who would put the Muslim [rebels' leader] to death will be regarded in great esteem. You, illustrious lord, in your capacity as the garrison's commander, can kill Nawuna and then receive the government troops and that will be to your tremendous merit. However, if you wait until the government troops will enter [without your help], and only then greet them, I must humbly convey my fear that in the midst of fighting, it will be difficult to distinguish who is on which side, and you, my lord, may find yourself in a very difficult situation." Jin Ji was startled. He made an agreement with Yi Su and at night he opened the Western gate and secretly allowed Chen Xian's troops to enter the city. Nawuna charged out of the city with his cavalry to counterblock their advance. Yale, holding a large hatchet, courageously charged right into the [enemy's] battle lines, beheaded over a hundred cavalrymen and seized Nawuna's city.<sup>49</sup>

45 Nu'er claims that showering a young couple with a thousand pearls or small fruit is a custom originating in Muslim communities and it exists till this day among Muslims in Quanzhou. See: Nu'er 1982, 42-47.

46 Considerable research regarding the Fanfo Si in Quanzhou has been written. While some think it was a Hindu temple and explain its establishment in the Southeast Asian origin of the Pu clan, others claim *fanyfo si* was a term also used to describe Muslim prayer-houses and *fanyfo* ("foreign Buddha") stands for the Muslim 'Alia'. See Nu'er 1982. See the paper by Shao-yun Yang in this volume for interpretations of *fanyfo*.

47 The year 1354 (*zhicheng jianwu* 至正甲午) mentioned in the text is obviously a mistake since the events dealt with occurred a decade later.

48 *Li shi*, p. 51b. See Maejima 1973-1974, 65.

49 *Li shi*, p. 51b-52a.

Those years of political and military turmoil elicited a great deal of resentment towards the foreigners of Quanzhou, but especially towards those who were considered responsible for the bloody events. One can only imagine that after the final defeat by the Chinese forces the Pu lineage, now linked to Nawuna, suffered from the anger and resentment of the local population. The *Li shi* goes on to recount the harsh persecution that took place in the rebellion's aftermath:

All of the Western people were annihilated, with a number of foreigners with large noses mistakenly killed, while for three days the gates were closed and the executions were carried out. [...] The corpses of the Pus were all stripped naked, their faces to the west. [...] They were all judged according to the 'five mutilating punishments' and then executed with their carcasses thrown into pig troughs. This was in revenge for their murder and rebellion in the Song.<sup>50</sup>

These passages shed new light on the historical context of the imperial edict banning the Pu from any official post. Although the writer mentions Pu Shougeng's betrayal of the Song, it seems more likely that the direct reason for the imperial ban and the persecution of the Pu in the late fourteenth century was not the general animosity towards Yuan supporters or Pu Shougeng's surrender to the Mongols almost a century earlier, but rather the more recent Ispah Uprising and the association of its notorious leadership with the Pu family.

#### Modern Narrative Formation and Ethnic Identification

It is difficult to ascertain exactly when and how the Pu members as well as other commentators adopted the current prevalent narrative. In the present, descent from Pu Shougeng and the persecution they suffered on his account are major components of the Pu lineage legacy. As demonstrated above, current narratives even allude to past attempts of concealing their true identity. However, a glimpse into the earliest record of Pu lineage descendants in the late Republican period reveals the way, in which this narrative was introduced and transformed during the last century.

In December 1939, Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao, two young Muslim clergymen (*ahong* 阿訇) and activists of *The Chinese Muslim Association of Saving the Nation* (*Zhongguo hujiiao jinguo xiehui* 中國回教救國協會),<sup>51</sup> conducted a survey among the Pu lineage members in the town of Dehua. They were the first outsiders to have an opportunity to view their seventeenth century genealogy. They recorded an interview with a member of the Pu, who revealed his family history to them. It is a rare record of what seems to be the earliest introduction of a family narrative that is designed according to modern notions of ethnic Hui identity. The writers describe how one of their interviewees Pu Zhenzong 潘振宗 (dates of life unknown) had only scanty fragments of his family history. They introduced him to the details of his ancestor's high position in the political arena of the Song and Yuan explaining that:

In the past, the Pu were a prominent Muslim family who had made important contributions to the country. At present there are many scholars, worldwide, who

50 *Li shi*, p. 52b. This passage was translated by Chaffee 2008, 122.

51 Huang Qunm 2000, 179-181.

concentrate their efforts in researching Pu Shoungeng's deeds. We believe Pu Shoungeng is among the most honorable Muslim people and we respect and admire him. We have no doubt that you must surely be very proud of the glory and great meritorious exploits of your esteemed ancestor. However, I fail to understand your honorable ancestor was originally a Muslim. Your abandoning of Islam is the equivalent of giving up your ancestor's glory. You have to return to your ancestors' religion and thus make known your ancestor's past meritorious service and so add to the prestige of both the Pu family as well as Islam. [...]

Pu Zhenzong responded: "I know that we, the Pu family, have had a high official in our family, but in fact we do not know, who he was." Then he went on to recall the story of the Dehua graves inscribed with Wu 吳 in front and Pu at the back as evidence for concealing their true identity. The two Hui representatives answered:

That is correct; you were not suppressed due to misdeeds committed by your forefathers. Persecution of that kind frequently occurred during imperial times. Ming Taizu gained his political power through a popular uprising. For the purpose of securing his position he naturally suppressed any family, who had previously held military power, and made them submit to him. At that time not only your [family] suffered persecution, but also the Sun and Liu families met the same fate. Ming Taizu issued edicts banning the descendants of Pu Shoungeng, Liu Mengyan Sun Shengfu, Huang Wanshi and others from entering officialdom. These matters can all be found in historical accounts.<sup>52</sup> In the past, due to political reasons, you were compelled to renounce your religion. Now that you are already aware of this state of affairs – for the sake of your ancestors, for the sake of your glorious history; for the sake of obtaining your right beliefs, for the sake of saving the nation<sup>53</sup> – we hope that you, with your entire clan will all return to your ancestral religion.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

Not much has been written so far about Pu family traditions regarding the assimilation into Chinese society. Most works adopt the current Pu family's own approach and tend to analyze these communities and the traditions related to them in ethnic terms, making direct references to the current P.R.C. policies of ethnic identification. In his research into Hui (Muslim Chinese ethnic minority) identity, Dru Gladney pays much attention to the emerging ethnic discourse in Fujian and its role in promoting and reviving the historical heritage of the Song and Yuan era Muslims in the vicinity of Quanzhou. He addresses the traditions of forced assimilation prevalent among descendants of Muslims in Fujian, including those of the Quanzhou Pu lineage. According to him such legends are the thread that links the Pu through their ancestors to the larger collective of the Hui and also

52 Liu Mengyan, Sun Shengfu and Huang Wanshi were also Song officials, who surrendered to the Yuan. See Kuwabara 1935, 99.

53 The last statement, "for the sake of saving the nation", was mentioned in the context of fighting against the Japanese invasion – the core purpose of the organization which Zhang Yuguang was a representative of, *The Chinese Muslim Association of Saving the Nation*.

54 Zhang Yuguang and Jin Debao 1983, 217–218.

differentiates them from their neighboring Han. It also serves as an explanation for their distinct character as Hui, who "differ from other Hui who maintain Islamic customs". Gladney added that the "common experience of suffering and forced assimilation may have been what galvanized the Hui ethnic consciousness into a single minority".<sup>55</sup>

An explanation, outlined purely in terms of revealing or reviving an authentic ethnic identity, is not sufficient for understanding the current narratives of Muslims' descendants in South East China. As I mentioned earlier, not all descendants of Muslims in the region strive to obtain Hui status. Many are interested in nurturing their ancestral legacy while remaining Han. This is particularly true in the case of the Dongshi Pu lineage, which is not recognized as Hui.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, this approach is inadequate also from a historical perspective. It tends to employ a rather simplistic, ethnicity-based explanation characterized by a monolithic perception of the dynastic cycle, portraying the interests of Mongol rulers and Muslim settlers such as the Pu family grouped together on the one side, against those of the Han Chinese identified with the Song and later with the Ming dynasties. The sources analyzed above indicate that the approaches of both Yuan and Ming towards non-Chinese, were far more composite and were moreover based on local rivalries that were not necessarily related to an ethnic identity or foreign origin. While Fujian Muslims' descendants in general and the Pu in particular portray their ancestors' treatment as ethnically biased, other sources show that in fact the Yuan government dealt individually with different lineages according to different considerations, which were not necessarily ethnic. The same may be said regarding the Ming treatment of its foreign subjects.

This paper demonstrates that the Pu family narratives, though portrayed as ancient and being backed by historical evidence, are in fact dynamic and continuously changing. Seventy years after the interview conducted in Dehua by Zhang Yuguang in 1939, I was able to witness the latest turn in the Pu family's narrative while visiting Dehua in 2009. A senior of the Dehua Pu branch introduced me to a hand-copied manuscript of the *Yongchun Pu shi jiapu* 永春蒲氏家譜 (The Yongchun Pu Family Genealogy), a family genealogy compiled a few years earlier in the neighboring town of Yongchun 永春.<sup>57</sup> This compilation reflects an essentially different approach to the family history than earlier compilations. In this genealogy it is the Pus, who are telling the story which was related by outsiders to their great-grandfather in 1939. The new Yongchun genealogy abandons the old tradition of omitting Pu Shoungeng from the genealogy. In fact the biographical section of the genealogy contains a long and detailed entry of Pu Shoungeng's biography which includes a description of his betrayal of the Song and the persecution inflicted on his

55 Gladney 1996, 273.

56 In a few instances I have encountered family members, who indeed expressed their wish to persuade the government to grant them the same Hui status as their kin living in Quanzhou. The Quanzhou branch members returned to the city and settled in the vicinity of the mosque where they are involved in local Muslim affairs. A few family representatives in Dongshi have been claiming that they should not be deemed the Hui status, which was granted to their sub-branch in Quanzhou. However, most informants in Dongshi showed no interest in obtaining this status. Apparently, this group of Dongshi Pu is not eligible at all for Hui status and in fact has no intention of presenting such an application. Field work, Dongshi 2009.

57 The person, who copied the genealogy, was not prepared to reveal the original compiler and was not certain when exactly it was compiled.

descendants. Moreover, it contains an interesting biography of his great-grandson Pu Benchu, who was saved by adoption into the Yang family in Dongshi. Unlike previous ones, this biography gives the full explanation for the persecution, including a direct reference to Nawuna's family relations with Pu Shougeng and to his (Nawuna's) role in causing the wrath of both the late Yuan rulers and the Ming founder. This genealogy is impressively updated by current research-work on the subject.

It transpires that in the twenty-first century, with the help of historians and the current policy regarding Hui identity, the Pus no longer find it necessary or beneficial to conceal their origin. Now, at a distance of several centuries and in an age when proof of foreign descent is highly desirable, the Pus have no problem admitting, that they not only originate from the Muslim Chinese official Pu Shougeng, but have also family ties with a foreign despot such as Nawuna. The new Yongchun genealogy has been copied and passed on also to the Dehua offshoot and thus is instrumental in disseminating new themes into the family history. The Pu narrative is continuously evolving and resuming new shapes as previously unknown chapters in their history unfold. Steven Harrell and later on Melissa J. Brown have applied the term "narratives of unfolding" to the dynamics of narrative construction and identity formation. Brown has noted that "the relation of the past to the present is crucial to narratives of unfolding. Although ostensibly about the past, they are really about the present. They are attempts to justify, to naturalize, to immortalize the present-day claims of a nation or an ethnic group."<sup>58</sup> Along these lines I have analyzed family narratives of Muslims' descendants demonstrating how – as the present unfolds – the past changes in response to contemporary conditions and identity perceptions.

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