



A chat among imams
after prayer service.
Meng Z

Kashgar's Aidkah Mosque

LONG SHAN

KASHGAR near China's far western border (known as Kashi by the Han Chinese) was a natural place for a city to grow up. It was the meeting place of the two routes of the Old Silk Road — going north and south of China's Taklimakan Desert. From there the road took off westward over the Pamir passes to Central Asia and beyond. Caravan routes and traders from India and Central Western Asia meeting and passing through made it a flourishing city as early as the second century B.C.

Today, with 140,000 people, it is the biggest city in southern Xinjiang. Now it is an almost entirely Moslem city and its center is the Aidkah Mosque, the most widely attended one in Xinjiang. Ninety percent of Kashgar's inhabitants are of the Uygur nationality.

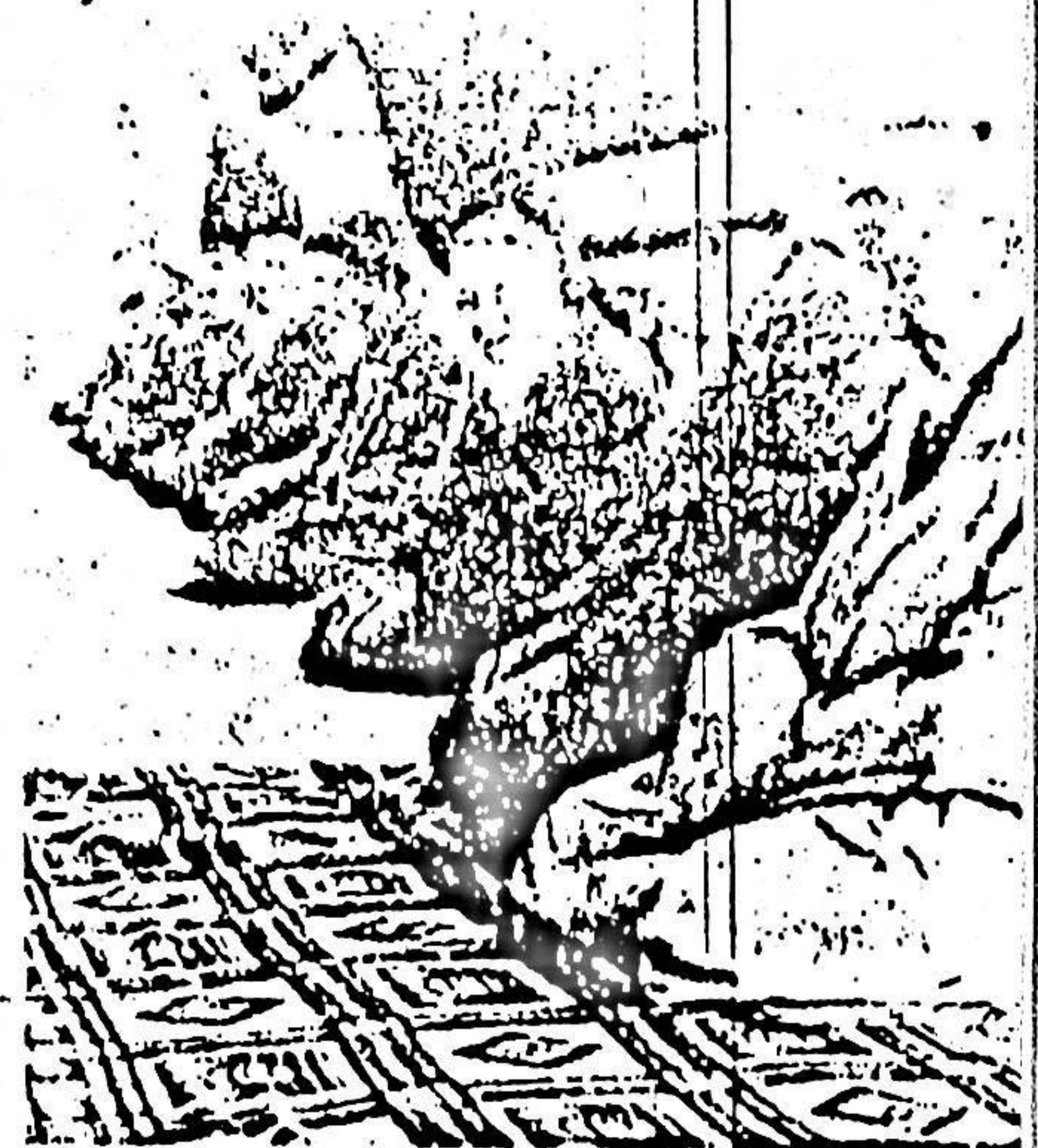
Not long after the birth of the Islamic religion on the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, it was brought

to Kashgar by Moslem traders. Earlier, to this meeting-place of cultures, over the Silk Road, had come Buddhism in the first century B.C., Confucianism from the center of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.), and other religions. At first Islam was only one of several, among which Buddhism was the leading one. When this oft-disputed area came under the rule of the Moslem Samanid dynasty (875-999) centered at Bokhara just to the west, Islam grew in influence. By the 10th century it was well established, and by the 15th had become the main religion of the people, bringing Kashgar into closer contact with the Moslem world.

AT this time, in 1442, the Aidkah mosque was built. It can accommodate 20,000 people for prayers. The tall rectangular gate, flanked by two slim minarets from which the call for pray is given, dominates the great square before it, which is the site of a lively bazaar. Construction is in true Islamic style. Just behind the gate is

the great white domed main hall. The mosque sits in a quiet, parklike walled garden covering one hectare, with pine and poplar-lined paths and a pool.

On the west side is the principal



Prayer time at the mosque
Xu Xiangjun

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The Aidkah Mosque in the center of Kashgar in far western Xinjiang. Meng Zi

structure of the mosque, the prayer hall, 160 meters long. The roof is supported by 140 carved green wooden pillars, and inset in the white ceiling are panels painted with beautiful designs. They — and the entire mosque — were freshly painted and refurbished not long ago, after it opened again following the "cultural revolution." The mosque was closed for several years and suffered considerable damage. Only two out of 90 mosques in the city and 600 out of 5,000 in the prefecture were able to continue religious functions.

NOW that the policies on religious freedom are again being adhered to, not only have old mosques resumed activities, but new ones have been built — 4,000 of them in the prefecture. The government helped with the cost-of-repairs. About 1,000 people attend each of Aidkah's five-times-a-day prayers, and as many as 10,000 the Friday services.

On religious holidays such as Corban and Lesser Bairam, the old mosque is a scene of festivity, with Uygur musicians blowing their *suona* horns and beating their tambourines atop the gate and a crowd in the tens of thousands singing and dancing till dusk.

The chief imam of Aidkah Mosque, 83-year-old Kasim Kalaji, is vice-chairman of the Xinjiang Islamic Association. A number of Kashgar's religious figures have been elected delegates to national or local people's congresses, or were chosen by the people's political consultative conferences to join these bodies. All religious personages who were persecuted on false charges have been cleared and are back at work.

CONTACTS with Moslems elsewhere in the world have been restored and broadened. Now many people from abroad come to the mosque every year. A few years ago Kasim

Kalaji was visited at his home by a big delegation with members from a dozen Asian countries. They asked a lot of questions about religion in China and seemed satisfied with his answers. Some wrote articles on the visit after they returned. More Chinese Moslems are going abroad for pilgrimage and study. In 1983 over 1,000 Moslems from Xinjiang, including 100 from Kashgar alone, made the traditional pilgrimage to Mecca or to other parts of the Arabic countries.

The city area outside the mosque is a complex of small lanes and streets lined with workshops of many kinds. In some the craftsmanship has been handed down for generations. Stalls and shops sell traditional goods of the Uygurs such as the beautiful hand-embroidered Uygur caps, the sturdy leather boots they favor and their special musical instruments. And also their baked filled buns, stretched noodles and roast mutton skewers. The streets are generally teeming with people, the Uygur girls in their bright-colored big-patterned dresses, and some of the older women in brown gauze veils. □



A seller in the bazaar before the mosque. Xu Xiangjun

"Certain" Tianjin units fail to combat "unhealthy trends" A report of a 2nd December 'Tianjin Ribao' commentary on Party rectification broadcast by Tianjin radio (2330 gmt 1 Dec 84) said that in handling problems of bureaucratism, which had caused major political and economic losses, and instances of the abuse of power for private purposes, some success had been achieved. However, the commentary said in conclusion: "Although a certain degree of success has been achieved in Tianjin in investigating and dealing with the two unhealthy trends, it is also necessary to realise that, for various reasons, certain units have not yet paid enough attention to this work or acted with enough energy. They have investigated cases without handling them, or else have investigated and dealt with them without blocking the loopholes. This is wrong. These units must change this situation as quickly as possible and get a serious and responsible grasp of investigating and dealing with major and important cases."

Reports on Religion

Daoist ceremony held in Peking The birthday of the Daoist deity, Suiguan, which falls on the 15th day of the 10th month by the lunar calendar, was celebrated in Peking on 7th December at the White Cloud Temple, the chief temple of the Quanzhen sect of Daoism. (Xinhua in English 1049 gmt 7 Dec 84)

Videotape of Daoist rites and music China's first videotape recording of Daoist rites and music was produced recently in Shanghai jointly by the Shanghai Daoist Association and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. (Xinhua in English 1431 gmt 7 Dec 84)

Construction of Muslim seminary begins in Xinjiang Construction began this week on a seminary to train Muslim clergy in Urumqi. It will cover 15,000 sq.m. Its main building - floorspace 4,500 sq.m. - will contain classrooms, a bath-house and a mosque. (Xinhua in English 1056 gmt 7 Dec 84)

Qinghai builds Islamic cold store The province's first Islamic cold store was completed on 20th November. The store can hold 5,190 t of food. (Xining, Qinghai provincial service 1100 gmt 7 Dec 84)

Movements of Central Leaders

Hu Qiaomu and Hu Qili visiting Shenzhen (Excerpts) Hu Qiaomu, member of the CCP Central Committee Political Bureau, and Hu Qili, member of the CCP Central Committee Secretariat, arrived in Shenzhen on 4th December for an inspection. . . At Shenzhen University, Hu Qili listened to a report given by vice-president Luo Zhengqi on the school's teaching principles, methods and management, and also on a series of reform measures being carried out. He then expressed support for this institute's spirit in boldly exploring ways to reform China's higher education and also for its current reform methods. He held exploratory talks with Zhang Wei, Luo Zhengqi and other responsible persons of the institute on questions of expenditure in reforms of higher education, training talented people at many different levels, and gearing the university to society. (Hongkong 'Wen Wei Po' 7 Dec 84)

Deng Yingchao in Shenzhen (Excerpts) National CPPCC Chairman Deng Yingchao began an inspection of Shenzhen today [8th December] . . . Including this visit of Deng Yingchao, at a rough estimate more than 10 responsible central comrades have inspected Shenzhen this year, including Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Wang Zhen, Yang Sangkun, Hu Qiaomu, Hu Qili, Wu Xueqian, Gu Mu, Li Peng and Ji Pengfei. . . (Hongkong, 'Wen Wei Po' 8 Dec 84)

Other Reports

Peking cadres to receive training on democracy and law (Text) Leading cadres at various levels in China's capital will attend training courses in groups on democracy and



The Kizil Grottoes, China's westernmost grotto complex, stretch for 3.2 kilometers along this cliff in western Xinjiang.

Sun Suxian

Murals of the Kizil Grottoes

XIN WEN

WHEN Buddhism came to China from India over the Old Silk Road, bringing the custom of carving cliffside grottoes of Buddhist art, it found a favorable stopping place in the oasis Kingdom of Kucha (Qiuci or Chiu-tzu) at the foot of the Tianshan Mountains on the road's northern route. There at a place named Kizil monks began a grotto complex. It lies about halfway between Urumqi and Kashi in Xinjiang in China's far west, and 70 kilometers from the town of Baicheng. The grottoes were

begun late in the 2nd century and some are older than the better-known Mogao grottoes at the Dunhuang oasis farther east, which date from 366.

By the 4th century Kucha had grown into a Buddhist kingdom with many large magnificent monasteries, and a royal palace decorated like a temple. Buddhism reached its zenith in Xinjiang in the 7th century, and endured there for over a thousand years until the 13th century, when Islam became the dominant religion.

Jataka Story Murals

The two most distinctive features of the Kizil murals are their depic-

tion of the Indian jataka stories about previous incarnations of Sukyamuni the Buddha, and the influence of Western art which they reveal. To date 70 jataka stories have been identified at Kizil, many more than at any of China's other great grotto complexes.

A striking example is the jataka mural in Grotto 69, about the Rhesus Monkey King saving a group of monkeys. The story, which covers 200 pages in a Buddhist sutra book, is artistically condensed in a single picture. There we see a group of monkeys fleeing in panic to the edge of a deep gorge, for a hunter is about to shoot an arrow at them. The monkey king, with his fore and hind limbs clutching at the trees on either side of the gorge, uses his body as a "bridge" to save their lives. We see him, though exhausted, looking back with anxiety at one small weak monkey which has failed to keep up.

Outstanding for its jataka murals is Grotto 17, which is reached by climbing up to a walkway suspended at the height of a ten-story building. Almost the entire wall space, and the ceiling and lintels of niches are covered with bright-colored murals in both the spacious front room, which was used for worship, and the smaller rear one. Thirty-eight jataka stories told in rhomb-shaped murals on the ceiling contain many human figures and animals, against backgrounds of mountains, rivers, trees, rocks and birds.

Scene on the Road

A striking one features the Persian merchant who wrapped his arms in butter-soaked felt and set fire to them to illuminate the road. Two bearded porters leading camels of a trade caravan and wearing Central Asian pointed caps, leather boots and collarless long gowns buttoned down the front, are shown moving forward joyfully, cheered to see the light ahead. The painting suggests the close relationship between the trade caravans and the Buddhist monks on the Silk Road. The merchants and porters wanted the monks to pray for their safe passage and several monks from China traveled with the caravans to India for further education

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in Buddhism, as did Indian monks who came to China to teach it. The monks also depended on the merchants' goods and alms for subsistence.

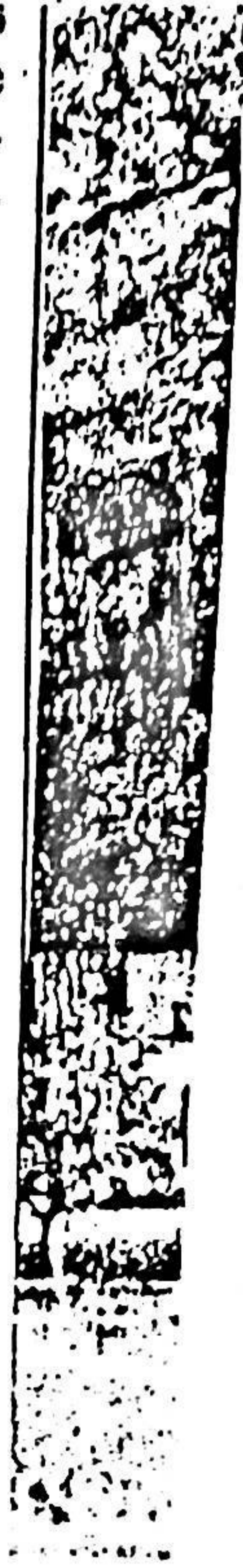
Painting Technique

East meets West in art at Kizil. For creating a three-dimensional effect of, say, a convex surface, the technique is used of applying color in concentric layers starting with the darkest on the outer edge and gradually getting lighter. Its use is attributed to the influence of classic art emphasizing human body structure and of the Greek aesthetic standards for the body, which were transmitted to China through India. But the figures are outlined with black lines of even width, as is done on traditional Chinese painting and often referred to as the "iron wire" outline. Particularly noted for its use are the upsaras or flying celestial beings on the domed ceiling of the rear room of New Grotto No. 1. While the figures are done with shading to create an impression of roundness, the feet are sharply outlined with strong, vigorous lines.

The shades of opaque red, yellow ochre, vermilion and white, paints made from mineral substances, give the murals depth of color. Dark green is widely used, heightening the cool feeling of the grottoes.

Starting early, painting at the grottoes went on for a thousand years and more. Thus they present a panorama of customs and manners roughly from the 3rd to the 13th centuries. This can be seen in the auxiliary figures of the jataka stories and in a number of murals showing scenes of everyday life, including farm work, handicrafts production such as pottery, and folk musicians.

So far 300 of the grottoes that honeycomb the cliff at Kizil have been identified and assigned numbers. It is a large complex with several kinds of grottoes for different functions: for worshipping the images, for meditating, for teaching about the sutras. Some were burial places for the ashes of the dead, and others served as living quarters for the monks or food storage rooms. Such a complete grotto complex is rare in the world. □



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BBC - April 9, 85

Xinjiang meeting stresses planned parenthood for minorities (Excerpts) A regional conference on planned parenthood which concluded today [5th April] pointed out that in the future, it is necessary to further perfect the planned parenthood policy for Hans and, under the premise of ensuring steady growth in minority-nationality population, ensure that minority nationalities also practise planned parenthood. . .

The meeting pointed out: For minority nationalities to practise planned parenthood is beneficial not only for production, work and study, but also for improving the quality of the population and promoting the four modernisations. It is of importance for reducing and proceeding to eliminate the inequalities of minority nationalities in economics and

culture, which are legacies of history and strengthening nationality unity. The meeting demanded that the region further strengthen leadership over planned parenthood work, do a good job in planned parenthood propaganda and education, put the organisational structure on a sound basis, strengthen the specialised force, step up scientific research and provide comprehensive services, to ensure the healthy development of planned parenthood work in the region. Regional CCP Committee Secretary Janabil attended the meeting and made a speech. (Urumqi, Xinjiang regional service 1300 gmt 5 Apr 85)

Xinjiang Leader Stresses Ideological Work for Students

Urumqi, Xinjiang regional service 1300 gmt 5 Apr 85

Excerpts from report:

According to 'Xinjiang Ribao', Regional CCP Committee Secretary Janabil stressed at a regional forum on ideological and political work in institutes of higher education: Reforms in education in these schools must not weaken ideological and political work. The Party Organisations at all levels in the schools must pay particular attention to conducting education in communist ideology for university students and train them into young people with ideals, morality, culture and discipline. . . ((Passage omitted))

Janabil said: The institutes of higher education in our region have strengthened ideological and political work during Party rectification and have also achieved a certain amount of success in education reform. However a number of leading cadres and teachers are neglecting ideological and political work, holding that academic teaching is a hard task and ideological and political work is a soft one; they only pay attention to academic education and neglect education in morality. The practice of randomly issuing bonuses and diplomas has appeared in many schools and some teachers act as guest teachers elsewhere to an excessive degree, thus affecting teaching in the schools. Hence ideological and political work in the schools can only be strengthened, not weakened. The school Party committees must put doing a good job in ideological and political work for students in an important place on their agenda. . .

Some schools periodically report to the students on the situation in education reforms. Some Party committee secretaries and deans go among the students to listen to their views. These are very good methods. The schools must create a democratic atmosphere and ensure that the students have an outlet for their opinions, that they are heard and that their correct views are accepted.

On the question of some students, unhappy with studying in college, wanting to leave and engage in business, Janabil said: At present we must conduct education in communist ideals for the university students. In their future studies and research, only by applying the strength of ideals themselves can they avoid wavering and retreat in the face of difficulties and setbacks. . .