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MOSLEMS AND ISLAM ON THE CHINESE MAINLAND No 4878

The Chinese call them the Hui tribe, and their land south of Sinkiang province the Hui region. These are Chinese Moslems.

In the seventh century A.D., Islam became known to the Chinese through contacts with Persian and Arab merchants. It propagated in China during the T'ang dynasty (618-907), the Five Dynasties (907-960) and the Sung dynasty (960-1127) and became associated with the Hui people.

Some scholars identify all Chinese Moslems as Huis. Others regard only the Chinese Moslems who speak Turkish dialects and who live in Sinkiang as Huis. Moslems who live outside of Sinkiang and who speak Chinese dialects are not regarded as Huis. Still others say the Hui tribe includes all believers of Islam who speak either Chinese or Turkish dialects. The latter would include the six races of Uighur, Khazak, Kirghiz, Uzbek and Tartar out of the 14 inhabiting in Sinkiang.

Moslems speaking Turkish dialects are mainly descendents of the Uighur racial stock. They are considered pure descendents of the Hsiung Nu Tartars and the Turks. Most Moslems speaking Chinese dialects are the offspring of the Han people. Their ancestors were converted into Moslems by the Arab merchants who settled permanently in China. While more and more Chinese became disciples of Islam, the Arab merchants themselves were gradually assimilated by the Chinese.

According to the statistics published by the government in 1944 and the figure released by the Chinese Muslim Association in 1958, there are more than 44 million Moslems in China. These people

are described by Article 135 of the Constitution of the Republic of China as "citizens practicing special living habits."

The principal ancestors of the Hui tribe are the Turks. Some belong to the Caucasian race of Central Asia. Originally the Turks were a nomadic people living in the Shensi and Kansu provinces in Western China. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581), the Turks in China were divided into Western Turks and Eastern Turks. A branch of the Western Turks moved to western Asia and southern Europe to become the original inhabitants of present-day Turkey.

After they seized the mainland in 1949, the Chinese Communists arbitrarily separated Islam believers from the Huis. They asserted that the Hui tribe was formed during the Yuan dynasty (1280-1368) by the following people: 1. the people of Central Asia, Persia and Arabia who were forced to move eastward by Mongolian troops, including masons, soldiers, merchants, scholars and nobilities; 2. the aborigines within the boundaries of China and the Persians and arabs who had been living in China since the T'ang dynasty; 3. the Hans, Mongols, and Uighurs who were merged with the Moslems through marriage, political, economic and religious bonds and finally became Huis; and 4. the Turks who came to China from Central Asia during the Yuan dynasty. However, the Chinese Communists insist that the main source of the Huis was not the Turks who originally lived in China and its neighboring areas. ("People's Daily," February 22, 1960). Their purpose is to rebuff the request of the Hui tribe for "national self-determination."

The Chinese Communists use political principles to count the population of the minority peoples. According to a list of minority races published by the Communist "Kuang Min Daily" on August 31,

1958, there were 3,559,300 Moslems on the Chinese mainland in that year and 3,943,355 in 1961. They are mostly scattered in Ninghsia province and in lesser numbers in Kansu, Honan, Hopei, Chinghai, Shantung, Yunnan, Anhwei, Liaoning, Kwangsi, Kweichow and Sinkiang provinces.

The vernacular and written language of the Moslems (the Huis) is Chinese but their scriptures are in Islamic script. Islam provides a strict routine in daily life. Moslem men may marry women of Chinese descent but Moslem women are forbidden to wed men of other races. This practice helped expand the Moslem population in the early days of their settlement in China. Moslem men practice polygamy and can have four wives. Moslem women manage family affairs and carry out daily household chores. They are forbidden to have any contacts with strangers and sing or dance at home. They must wear veils over their faces and must not talk to men when walking on the streets.

Most Chinese Moslems are farmers and merchants. They must worship five times a day and must participate in group worship every seven days at the mosques. In 1944, there were 42,371 mosques in China. Since the middle of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the Moslems established a "diocese" and a "bishop" system throughout the provinces where Moslems inhabited. As early as 1933, the Chinese Communists occupied the eastern part of Ninghsia province and established a Moslem autonomous region on the borders of Shansi, Kansu and Ninghsia provinces and organized a Moslem army in northern China. These were the earliest contacts between the Chinese Communists and Moslems. ("Kuang Min Daily," page 3, September 14, 1956)

On October 1, 1949, the Chinese Communists proclaimed themselves a regime and founded a so-called "Chinese Islam Association" as a united front headquarters. In January, 1950, the Chinese Communists re-divided the administrative areas of Moslems through the establishment of autonomous regions, thus splitting the traditional areas of the Moslems. Autonomous regions were subdivided into states, counties and villages. As of March, 1956, the Communists had established three Moslem autonomous states (two in Kansu and one in Sinkiang) and eight autonomous Moslem counties (three in Kansu, two in Chinghai, two in Hopei and one in Sinkiang). In addition, an autonomous county was established in Kweichow for the Moslems, the Weilingyi and the Miao tribes there. ("Kuang Min Daily," page 3, September 14, 1956)

In October, 1953, the Chinese Communists established a special district called the "Hsi Hai Ku Yuan Moslem Autonomous Region" in eastern Kansu. Later, this was merged into the Ninghsia Moslem Autonomous Region. In October, 1954, the region was extended to include some neighboring areas and was renamed the "Kuyuan Moslem Autonomous State."

In 1954, the Chinese Communists established another Moslem autonomous region in Ninghsia province, the "Wuchung (formerly called Yinchuan) Moslem Autonomous State."

After 1956, the Chinese Communists continued to establish new autonomous regions for Moslems and readjust the old ones. As of 1970, a total of 12 Moslem autonomous counties were established. Creation of these regions was to tighten the Communist control of the minority peoples. In May, 1953, the Chinese Communists established the "Chingyuan Moslem Autonomous Region" which marked

the start of their national autonomy control policy on the Chinese mainland.

After establishment of autonomous regions under the 1954 "constitution," the regional people's congress functioned as the local administrative organ and region 's people's committee as local executive organ.

The Chinese Communist guideline for socialist revolution stipulates that economic reform includes land reform and socialist reform. The former was aimed at abolishing private ownership and re-distributing productive means. The latter was aimed at expropriating private property through "cooperation in production" and "collective farming and management." The final objective was to establish "people's communes" so the state could control all productive means and productive power.

After they passed their land reform regulations in 1952, the Chinese Communists started a land reform program in the "Kuyuan Moslem Autonomous State" and encouraged poor farmers to struggle against the landlords and seize their land. However, the program met with strong resistance and could not be carried out. In 1953, the Chinese Communists encouraged Moslems to join in productive cooperatives and established many such cooperatives in the Kansu and Ninghsia provinces. Similar agricultural cooperatives were set up in Kwangsi, Hopei and Shantung provinces and local Moslem farmers were forced to join in. ("Kuang Min Daily," 1956, September 14' October 19, 1956' and April 17, 1957)

In autumn of 1958, the commune system was implemented. Every village was changed into a commune to collectivize production. At the same time, militia organizations were established in every

commune.

During the implementation of a social and economic reform before the establishment of Moslem autonomous regions in Ninghsia province, the Chinese Communists carried out a purge campaign against the traditional Moslem leaders there. Starting in the latter half of 1957, the Reds launched an overall rectification and anti-rightist movement on the mainland and at the same time tried to deal a blow to the traditional unity of the Moslems through criticism of local nationalism. Their purpose was to establish socialism among Moslem societies.

Moslems on the Chinese mainland number over 40,000,000. The Chinese Communist political philosophy and religious concept are contrary to those of the Moslems. At the beginning of Chinese Communist occupation of the mainland, they organized a "Chinese Moslem Cultural Association" and a "Chinese Islam Association" as united front organizations against the Moslems. They criticized religion, maintaining that religion is "the laborers' spiritual yoke and hinders the Party's socialist reconstruction" and "a bondage hindering the development of the laborers' Communist ideology." They further claimed: "Religion itself is reactionary. It distributes passive and anti-social sentiments, propagates selfish ideas. It is superstitious, ignorant and against technological and cultural revolution. It opposes economic buildup and causes dissention." The Chinese Communists pointed out that the Communist world outlook and the world outlook of various religions are contrary and that all religions are anti-materialistic and contrary to historical materialism. They insisted that all Communist workers must be loyal followers of atheism.

Around 1958, the Chinese Communists had purged several Moslem leaders in the anti-rightist campaign, including Ma Chen-wu, chief of the "Kuyuan Moslem Autonomous State," and Ma Sung-ting, deputy chief of the "Chinese Islam Association" and "Chinese Moslem Cultural Association" and deputy superintendent of the Chinese Islam College. They were accused of being "politically ambitious persons of anti-Communist inclination wearing religious garbes."

Since the "cultural revolution" of 1966, cadres of each Moslem autonomous region and members of the "Islam Association," including J'u Ke-ping, Yang Ching-jen, Ma Yu-k'uei and Pao Erh-han, have all been struggled against or purged and the association was forced to terminate its activities. At present, all Moslem autonomous regions and organizations are under the control of military cadres of Chinese descent. This indicates that the Chinese Communists have moved from the stage of using religion to the stage of destroying religion.

In 1966, Mao Tse-tung launched the "cultural revolution" and purged Liu Shao-chi. In September of the same year, many "Red Guards" rushed into the Ninghsia area to launch a campaign called "getting rid of the old and establishing the new." The "Red Guards" met with local resistance but after January 1967, the "Revolutionary Rebels" faction and the local power-holders openly struggled against each other. The chairman of the autonomous region's people's committee Yang Ching-jen and vice chairman Ma Yu-k'uei were forced to mobilize the local forces and the Moslems to fight against the "Red Guards." In 1968, the Chinese Communists sent a cavalry division from the Lanchow Military Region into Ninghsia to suppress the Moslem troops. They denounced Yang Ching-jen and

Md Tu-k'uai and some 1,000 others as "agents of China's Khrushchev in Ninghsia" and "capitalist-roaders within the Party."

The Chinese Communists established a preparatory group for the Ninghsia Moslem Autonomous Region's revolutionary committee in January 1968. However, all members of the group except one deputy chief who served previously as vice chairman of the Ninghsia Moslem Autonomous Region were Chinese military cadres.

On April 10, 1968, the birth of the Ninghsia Moslem Autonomous Region's revolutionary committee was announced. The committee was in charge of both administrative and executive duties. After the establishment of the committee, however, the Chinese Communists immediately carried out the campaign of "party rectification and rebuilding," "purification of class ranks" and "one strike three antis" in Ninghsia to purge the dissidents. After two years of ruthless purge, the Ninghsia Moslem Autonomous Region Party committee was finally established on August 15, 1971. The committee had 53 members, 10 alternate members and a standing committee with 1 members. Except one deputy secretary who was a Moslem, all the core members and secretaries of the committee were Chinese military and political cadres.

The above shows that the ultimate purpose of the Chinese Communists is to tighten their control over the Moslems in China and destroy their religious faith.

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