

CHAPTER - 4
MUSLIMS IN CHINA

1- Introduction

Islam arrived to China by two commercial routes: the earlier, maritime and the more recent, terrestrial. The Muslim community of China has increased constantly throughout the years by immigration, conversion, and mixed marriages.

With the exception of Eastern Turkestan (Sinkiang-Uighur), which is actually a part of the Turkic rather than the Chinese world, Islam was never able to establish an enduring independent political entity in China. True, under the Mongol regime (1279-1368), the Muslims of China were extremely influential, to the point that many historians considered the Yuan dynasty a Muslim one. This influence did not decline under the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) during which the Muslims became well integrated within the Chinese culture without any loss to their Muslim identity.

The Muslims of China went through a period of atrocious and continuous persecution which lasted about three centuries under the Manchu dynasty (1644-1911). This led in the 19th century to Muslim revolutions and to the establishment of short-lived Muslim states in Yunnan, Khansu and Eastern Turkestan.. All these states were destroyed at an enormous cost of Muslim lives.

Coming to the present century, the Chinese Nationalist Revolution of 1911 was supported by the Muslim masses which were exceedingly

eager to destroy the Manchu regime. From 1911 to 1948, Islam witnessed a true Renaissance in China and the Muslims began to retrieve some of their erstwhile influence. Since the establishment of the Communist regime in 1948, a new type of persecution was perpetrated on Muslims. All contacts between Muslims in different parts of China and the rest of the world ceased. Mosques and Muslim schools were closed, Imāms were killed or imprisoned. The Muslim family structure was assaulted and its members dispersed.

A large majority of the Muslims of China follows the Hanafī school of law. Ninety percent of Muslims are Chinese in almost every sense of the term. Their names are Chinese, their facial features are Chinese and so is their culture. These are often called Huis by the other Chinese. The remaining 10% are Turks and Mongols. Muslims are more numerous in the northern than in the southern provinces.

The Communist regime does not require the religious identification in the census. However, the number of Muslims who are not of Chinese ethnic origin can be assessed from the census on nationalities. For those who are ethnically Chinese, their numbers can be calculated on the basis of the 1936 census. This census indicates the number of Muslims in each province as well as the total Muslim population. The total was assessed then at 47,437,000 persons or 10.5% of the total population. Assuming that this percentage has remained unchanged, we arrive at the figure of 107 million in 1982.

Muslims are in majority in two territories: the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region and the Chinghai Province. Muslims form also near-majorities in two other territories the Ninghsia-Hui (47%) and the Khansu (40%). Muslim percentages are above 10% in 13 other territories. However, territories with high Muslim percentages are subject to intense non-Muslim immigration which tends to dilute their Islamic character.

For the Muslims of China the period 1952-1968 was similar to the Stalinist era in the Soviet Union. Artificial famines were created, Muslim populations were dispersed; mosques were burnt, copies of the Holy Qur'an were torn apart, and Muslim leaders were persecuted and humiliated. It is only recently, that some improvements in the lot of Muslims seem to have taken place. Hopes have increased after the death of Mao-Tse-Tung and the elimination of the "Gang of Four".

The Muslim communities of Hong-Kong, Taiwan and Macao will be considered in Chapter 6, since they live under different circumstances.

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2- Historical Background

Old Chinese sources report that an Arab delegation arrived to China in the year II of the reign of Emperor Yung Way of the Tang dynasty; i.e., in the year 31 A.H. (651 C.E.) during the tenure of Caliph 'Uthmān. Chinese Muslims believe that the members of this

delegation, who were fifteen in number, were the first Muslims to enter China. They believe that they were under Sa'ad Ibn Abī Waqqās, one of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The delegation came to China by sea, landed at Canton, then went by land to the capital Shang-An (today's Sian) where they were well received by the Emperor and permitted to build a mosque. This mosque, believed to be the first in China, exists to this day. There is also a mosque in Canton on the tomb of Sa'd, the head of this delegation. However, this story has not been verified in Arab sources, and it is certain that Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqās died in Medina. This means that the head of the delegation must have been another Sa'd.

Muslim armies reached the borders of China for the first time by land during the time of the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walīd. Al-Hajjāj Ibn Yūsuf Al-Thaqafī, the governor of Iraq at that time sent a Muslim army under the leadership of Qutaybah Ibn Muslim Al-Bahilī to the borders of China. The army left Samarqand (Uzbekistan) in 93 A.H. (711 C.E.) and entered Kashgar (Sinkiang) in 96 A.H. (714 C.E.). The Chinese Emperor then accepted to pay tribute to the Muslims as a sign of allegiance to the Muslim State.

Commercial ties increased greatly between the Muslim State and China. Commerce was carried on first by the sea route, and then when Kashgar became part of the Muslim State, by the land route. Most of the merchants were Muslims, and were generally from Arabia and Persia. Relations between China and the Muslim State during the Umayyad

and Abbasid dynasties remained continuously cordial and embassies and delegations were exchanged. In 138 A.H. (755 C.E.) the Chinese Emperor requested help from the Muslim state to quell the rebellion of An-Lu-Chan. The Caliph complied by sending an army of 4000 Muslim soldiers who defeated the rebels and settled in the land. They married Chinese women and raised Muslim families, thus giving a strong demographic support to the first communities of Muslims in China.

The numbers of Muslim merchants from Arabia and Persia who settled in Canton increased significantly until they formed an important proportion of the city's population. In 141 A.H. (758 C.E.), they rebelled against the Emperor because of heavy taxes, which were then removed. In 145 A.H. (762 C.E.), Muslims once more helped the Emperor quell the rebellion of another rebel, Shei-Chu-Bei.

Canton became the focus of expansion of Muslim communities toward Hang-Chu in the northern shorelines. They built mosques and schools wherever they went. In 259 A.H. (872 C.E.), the Arab traveller Ibn Wahb visited Canton and met the Muslims there as he met the Emperor. However, seven years later, catastrophe befell the Muslims as rebels burnt the city and killed more than 100,000 Muslims. The Tang dynasty did not survive these events and fell in 295 A.H. (907 C.E.).

During the Tang dynasty, Muslims were prosperous and were respected in China. But, in spite of widespread mixed marriages, they

remained a foreign element, in terms of language, ethnic origin and physical features. However, many emperors accorded them a preferential treatment. This privileged situation increased under the following Siung dynasty. There were 86 delegations from the Muslim state to China between 31 A.H. (651 C.E.) and 604 A.H. (1207 C.E.). There was continuous flow of Muslim immigrants who built entire satellite Muslim cities near the largest Chinese ports. They built mosques & schools and established their own institutions. They nominated their own governors who were usually accepted by the Emperor.

The Muslims of China formed the rich mercantile class with international connections. They were needed for Chinese commerce and were held in good esteem. During the Siung dynasty the newly created post of Director General of the Sea in Canton was always held by a Muslim. During the same period, the Muslim population increased both as a result of immigration through the Kashgar route, and by conversion of local populations, the most spectacular of which was the mass conversion of Hsiung Nu tribes.

Mongols under Chingis Khan invaded China and brought down the Siung dynasty. Kubilay Khan, son of Chingis, established the Yuan dynasty. By that time the Mongol armies conquered most of the Asian parts of the Muslim world and destroyed the Abbassid Caliphate and the Muslim capital Baghdad. But, the side effect was a Pax Mongolica which enclosed parts of the Muslim world and China in one single unit. This situation

encouraged movement of people and ideas which in turn, contributed to mass conversion to Islam, especially among the Mongol overlords. Eventually, Muslims became the leading class in all Mongol states including China. It is around this period that for the first time Persian replaced Arabic as the language of the Chinese Muslim community. Most of the high officials of the army, the government and the administration in the Yuan dynasty were Muslims. The Persian historian Rashid-Dīn Fadlullah reports in the first volume of his "Encyclopedia of Histories" that "in the era of the Mongol state of Kubilay Khan, China was divided in 14 provinces. At the head of each province there was a governor and a vice-governor. Eight of the governors were Muslims and the four vice-governors of the other provinces were Muslims as well." Among the most famous Muslim statesmen of China in that period was Al-Sayyid Al-Ajall Shamsuddīn 'Umar. He was most remembered as governor of Yunnan province between 1278 and 1279 C.E. His son Al-Sayyid Bāyin became the prime minister of the Emperor of China between 1333 and 1340 C.E.

The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battūta visited China during this period. He reports that "each city of China had a Muslim city in which lived only Muslims. In these cities there were mosques and other institutions. Muslims are very respected".

The Mongol (Yuan) dynasty collapsed in 1368 C.E. It was replaced by the Ming dynasty which lasted three centuries until 1644 C.E.

During this period, Muslims reached the zenith of their prosperity and influence. This period is also characterized by an end of Muslim immigration and a marked increase of Chinese conversion to Islam. The effect was a complete change of the characteristics of the Muslim community, from an alien one, in spite of seven centuries of presence, to a completely indigenous community, without any loss in its Islamic identity. The most spectacular result of this indigenization is the replacement of Persian as the lingua franca of the Muslim community by Mandarin Chinese in which an extensive body of Muslim literature came to be developed. Another effect was the spread of Chinese names among Muslims: Muhammad became "Ma", Mustapha became "Mu", Mas'ūd "Si", Dāwūd and Tāhir "Ta", Ḥasan "Ha", Ḥusayn "Hu", Badruddīn, Jalāluddīn, etc., became "Ning"; Najīb and Nāṣir became "Na"; Sālīm, Ṣālīh became "Sha", 'Alī became "Ay", etc. Muslims absorbed also Chinese habits which did not interfere with Islamic teachings. They intermarried with the Chinese converts so extensively that it became impossible to recognize a Muslim Chinese from non-Muslim Chinese.

The Muslim influence during the Ming dynasty was even bigger than in the Mongol dynasty. The first Emperor of the dynasty, Ming Tsai Tsu, and the Empress are thought to have been Muslims. The Emperor's love for Prophet Muḥammad (ṣaa.w.) was well known and quite undisguised. He wrote a poem in praise of the Prōphet (s.a.w.) and sculpted it on marble in the Jāmi' Mosque of the city of Nankin (it exists to this day). Emperor Yung Lu (1405-1432 C.E.) used the Hegira

Calendar as the official calendar of China and sent his Muslim ambassador, Chang Hu, to several Muslim states to establish cordial relations with them. Most of the high officials of the Ming dynasty were also Muslims.

3- Modern Islamic Renaissance in China

The Ming dynasty was brought down by Manchu invaders who established the Ching dynasty. This was a foreign occupation which based itself on "divide and rule". From the beginning, they showed an intense dislike for Muslims and considered them as supporters of the former dynasty. Under the Ching regime from 1644 to 1911 C.E. Muslims were subjected to the worst atrocities. They reacted by rebelling continuously against the regime which resulted in heavy loss of life, influence and property.

The Ching concentrated their anti-Islamic efforts on regions of high Islamic density such as Eastern Turkestan, Khansu and Yunnan. There was then a string of unsuccessful Muslim revolutions: those led by Su Sei-San (1758 C.E.) and by Ma Man-Sein (1768 C.E.) in Khansu; the revolt led by Gingah in Eastern Turkestan (1825-1827 C.E.); the revolt of Sulaymān Dwo-Nasyn in Yunnan (1837-1855 C.E.), and the revolt of Ya'qūb in Shau-Si, in Khansu and Eastern Turkestan (1855-1875 C.E.).

The most important of these revolutions is that of Yunnan during which, the Muslims were able to free the cities of Dali and Yunnan (the capital of the province). They were also able to establish a Muslim state. However, this state was infiltrated and after 18 years of independence it was destroyed from within by civil war. This was followed by widespread mass killings of Muslims which reduced their numbers greatly. The revolution of Ya'qūb in Khansu lasted for 25 years. In the beginning the Muslims seemed to have won the war, but at the end they were destroyed just as in Yunnan.

Thus, the nineteenth century has been in China a century of continuous Muslim rebellion against oppression. It can be summarized in the words of the well-known Chinese Imām Ibrāhīm Shiong: "The history of the Muslim struggle for life during more than three centuries of oppression and despotism is the best proof of their (Muslims') unity and their fantastic will to stand up to any one who dares to threaten their belief and their Islamic way of life for whatever length of time this has been done".

No wonder then that Muslims were among the staunchest supporters of the Republican Revolution of 1911. The first president of the republic Dr. Sun Yat Sen, responded by freeing the Muslims from all persecution. He declared that the Chinese were a nation of five equal components: the Han (Bouddhist Chinese); the Hui (Muslim Chinese); the Ming (Mongol); the Man (Manchu); and the Tsang (Tibetans).

The three centuries of Manchu persecution left, however, the Muslims poorer, reduced in number, and cut off from the rest of the Muslim world. Although their Islamic adherence was strong, their Islamic practice required much to be improved. After 1911, the Chinese Muslims re-established contacts with the Muslims of the world, made efforts at organization and education and brought back the Muslim masses to the orthodox line. Most prominent was the establishment in 1913 of the "Progressive Chinese Muslim Organization" in Peking headed by Al-Hadj Ahound Wang Haonan whose activity concentrated on spreading Islamic education, teaching of the Arabic language and building of mosques and schools. In 1938, a new Pan-Chinese Muslim Organization was established under the chairmanship of a Muslim general in the army. The latter organized a Muslim militia to defend their country against Japanese invasion. The same organization translated the meaning of the Qur'an into the Chinese language, and sent hundreds of young students to Turkish and Egyptian universities for Islamic studies. In 1926, the "Chinese Muslim Cultural Organization" was established in Changhai. It was headed by Al-Hadj Jalaluddeen Hat-Hshing. The role of the organization was to arrange for the establishment of Qur'anic studies (tafsīr) and Hadīth of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). The organization started a great number of schools and libraries and gave scholarships to many students.

Culturally, there took place a genuine Muslim renaissance in China in the period 1911-1948. During this period the Muslims built

more than 1000 primary schools and scores of secondary ones. They succeeded in introducing Arabic and Islamic studies in Chinese universities such as Peking University, the Central University, Tchung San University, etc... They produced a large amount of Islamic literature in the Chinese language through such Islamic magazines as: Chinese Islamic Studies Magazine; the Islamic Gazette; the Journal; the Light of Islam; Sunset; the Muslim Youth; Al-Islāh; Humanity; Tu-Chee Magazine; Bang-Tou Magazine, the Borders; Al-Awqāf, etc.

Politically, the Muslims made a spectacular comeback. A great many of them joined the Nationalist Revolution and fought with great courage. They responded to the call of Dr. Sun Yat Sen when he said in one of his famous speeches: "The Muslims have strong revolutionary aims. They resisted against oppression in the bygone centuries. For this reason we request them to join our revolutionary movement. The Chinese National Movement would not succeed without the help of the Muslims, and the job of vanquishing colonialism would not be done without a complete unity in efforts between the Chinese and the Muslim Ummah".

By 1946, there was more than 100 Muslim deputies in the Chinese parliament. The governors of Muslim majority areas were all Muslim: Eastern Turkestan; Tsinghai and Ningsia; and Khansu. There were many Muslim ministers in the government such as Mr. Ma Fu Sian, and General Omar Bay who was Minister of Defence after World War II.

Muslims joined the army in great numbers and many of them, such as generals Husayn Bufan Ma, Bushin Ma and Jee-Yuan Ma, became prominent.

Efforts at organizing all Muslims of China under one single umbrella were started by the Muslims of Mongolia, who in 1938, sponsored the formation of the "League of the Five Ma".

4- Numerical Strength and National Distribution

The number of Muslims in China was not known with any accuracy in the 19th century. It was actually estimated between 5 million and 60 million. But it is certain that their number decreased during that century because of continuous warfare and persecution. This is attested by the statements of many European eye-witnesses. They mentioned the existence of a large number of mosques and schools in towns and cities out of proportion with the number of Muslims as well as the fact that entire regions in Khansu and Yunnan were cleared of their Muslim populations. The nearest estimate to the probable reality is the one given by Broomhall. Broomhall based his estimates on a survey he made by questioning 200 Muslim Chinese from different parts of China. Table 4.1 reports his results.

Table 4.1: Number of Muslims in China as estimated by Broomhall for 1850 C.E.

Province	Number of Muslims
Eastern Turkestan	2,400,000
Khansu	3,000,000
Hopeh and Peking	1,000,000
Shan-Si	1,000,000
Yunnan	1,000,000
Manchuria	200,000
Shan-Toung	200,000
Honan	200,000
Kiang-Su	250,000
Sichuan	250,000
Other regions	141,000
Total	9,641,000

The Broomhall estimates give an idea of where the Muslims are concentrated, but the figures given are certainly lower than reality. The number of Muslims was most probably around 20 millions by 1850. The situation has been clarified by the 1936 census in which people were required to mention their religious affiliation. The results of this census are given in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. - Muslims in China as given by the 1936 official census.

Territory	Muslim Population
Eastern Turkestan	3,351,000
Kuang-Si	287,000
Ningshia	453,000
Tibet	100,000
Inner Mongolia	2,359,000
Chinghai	786,000
Khansu	2,511,000
Manchuria	5,534,000
Shantung	3,890,000
Shansi	2,129,000
Hopei & Peking	4,395,000
Shensi	1,530,000
Honan	6,095,000
Hupei	1,587,000
Szechwan	2,615,000
Yunnan	2,508,000
Kweichow	519,000
Hunan	1,321,000
Canton	558,000
Kiangsi	280,000
Fukien	7,000
Taiwan	10,000
Chekiang	357,000
Anhwei	2,289,000
Kiangsu	1,963,000
Total Muslim Population	47,437,000
Total Population of China	452,460,000
Muslim Percentage	10.5%

The Communist regime made a census in 1953 in China. But this regime did not give any importance to the religious affiliation of the populations. In the same manner as in the USSR, it recognized the principle of nationalities in the outlying regions. The regime recognized six Muslim "nationalities" in the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region; two in the Khansu Province, and one in the Chinghai.

The census of 1953 estimated the number of Muslims to be 10,000,000. This figure is completely unrealistic in view of the less biased census of 19 years earlier. Muslims could not have been reduced from 47,437,000 in 1936 to 10,000,000 persons in 1953, while the population of China as a whole increased from 452,460,000 to 573,269,000 during the same period, i.e., by 26.7%. To estimate the true number of Muslims in 1953, let us first explain the figure presented by the 1953 census.

The Muslims of China can be divided into three main national groups: 1) The Turcs: Uighur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Tatars and those who are Muslims among the Salars, Hichus; etc... the Uighur forming the core of the Muslim population of Eastern Turkestan; 2) The Chinese Muslims, often called Huis by non-Muslims; and 3) others who are Tajik (Persian-speaking Muslims) and minority Muslim representation among the Lolos, Mongols, Sihia, Tibetans, Taosan, etc... Actually, the Turcs form about 10% of the total number of Muslims, whereas the Chinese Muslims form about 85% of the Muslims population. The result of the 1953 census by nationality and the official estimates of 1978 are given in Table 4.3.

It seems that the Communist regime of 1953 took into account only those Muslims who live in the autonomous regions. They seem to have ignored the mass of Chinese Muslims living in the different provinces. Another possibility is that while "Hui" is considered as nationality by the Chinese non-Muslims, it is not considered so by the Muslims themselves who consider themselves Chinese by nationality and Muslim by religion. In fact, a similar situation exists in Yugoslavia where only Bosnians consider themselves as "Muslim" by nationality; and others would declare themselves "Albanian" or "Macedonian", or "Turk" or even "Croatian" or "Serbian" without, for that matter, feeling any less allegiance to Islam. Consider, for the sake of argument, the number of Muslims in the autonomous regions given in 1936 and the estimated figures for 1953. This last figure is reached by estimating an increase of 40% of the Muslim population in the 1936-1953 period in the autonomous regions.

Table 4.3: Number of Muslims in China as given by the 1953 census and official estimates of 1978

National Group	1953	1978
Uighur	3,640,000	5,480,000
Huis	3,560,000	6,500,000
Kazakh	470,000	800,000
Others	2,330,000	4,000,000
Total	10,000,000	16,780,000

Table 4.4: Number of Muslims in the autonomous regions

Autonomous Region	Muslims in 1936	Total population in 1953	Estimated Muslim population in 1953	Muslim % in 1953
Sinkiang-Uighur	3,351,000	4,874,000	4,420,000	90.7
Ninghsia-Khansu	1,239,000	12,928,000	1,740,000	13.5
Tibet	100,000	1,273,000	140,000	11.0
Kwangsi-Chuang	287,000	19,561,000	400,000	2.0
Inner Mongolia	2,359,000	6,100,000	3,300,000	54.0
Total	7,331,000	44,736,000	10,000,000	-

Now it becomes possible to deduce the approximate number of Muslims in the whole of China based on figures published by the government in 1968. We will base our calculation on the conservative assumption that the percentage of the Muslim population remained constant between the years 1936 and 1968. However, it is almost certain, at least among non-ethnic Chinese Muslims that the rate of increase has been higher than the national average as assessed by Table 4.4. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the Muslim population in China based on the figures mentioned in Table 4.5.

The table shows that there were 77 million Muslims in China in 1968. However, Muslims were in majority only in two territories: Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region and the Chinghai Province. These are neighboring territories with a total surface area of 2,367,800 km², or 25% of the

total area of China. However, most of this territory is desert area and its total Muslim population does not exceed 7 million people, or about 9.1% of the total Muslim population of China. In addition, Muslims form more than 25% of the total population of three more territories: Ninghsia-Hui Autonomous Region, Khansu Province, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These three territories have a Muslim population of 8,600,000 people out of a total of 28 million persons. About 54,200,000 Muslims live in territories where they form more than 10% of the population but less than 50%; i.e. 70.4% of the Muslim population. These territories are concentrated in the northern part of China. About 20.5% of the Muslims live in areas where they form less than 10% of the population; i.e., about 15.8 million in South-West China. The Honan Province has the highest number of Muslims with respect to any single province and is as such the core of the Muslim community of China. In the light of the above, it would be safe to estimate the Muslim population of China in 1982 to be at least 107 million out of a total population of 1,019 million.

5- Geographical Distribution and Political Organization

It seems obvious from the above that the land route had a more lasting effect of Muslim influence than the sea route of immigration. Indeed, one can go all the way from Peking to Mecca by land and he would be moving all the time, without any break, through areas of high Muslim density. In fact, one can cross Asia from Khansu to Mecca across Chinghai, Eastern Turkestan, and the Soviet Union without leaving Muslim majority areas.

Table 4.5. - Estimated Muslim populations in the different territories of China (T:Autonomous Region; M: Municipality; P: Province) for 1968

Territory	Status	Capital	Total population	Muslim population	Muslim percentage
Sinkiang-Uighur	T	Urumchi	8,000,000	5,700,000	71.2
Chinghai	P	Sining	2,000,000	1,300,000	65.0
Ningshia-Hui	T	Yinchuan	2,300,000	800,000	35.2
Khansu	P	Lanchow	12,700,000	4,000,000	31.6
Inner Mongolia	T	Huhehot	13,000,000	3,800,000	29.2
Tibet	T	Lhasa	1,000,000	200,000	20.0
Honan	P	Chengchow	50,000,000	9,900,000	19.8
Yunnan	P	Kuming	23,000,000	4,100,000	17.8
Shausi	P	Taiyuan	20,000,000	3,500,000	17.5
Hopei	P	Shihchiachuang	43,000,000	5,700,000	13.2
Lianing	P	Shenyang)			
Kirin	P	Changchun)	73,000,000	9,000,000	12.3
Heilungkiang	P	Harbin)			
Shensi	P	Sian	27,000,000	2,500,000	11.9
Shantung	P	Tsinan	57,000,000	6,300,000	11.0
Anhwei	P	Hofei	35,000,000	3,700,000	10.6
Peking	M	-	7,000,000	700,000	10.0
Kiangsu	P	Nanking	47,000,000	3,200,000	6.8
Hupei	P	Wuhan	38,000,000	2,600,000	6.8
Szechuan	P	Chengtu	70,000,000	4,200,000	6.0
Hunan	P	Changsha	38,000,000	2,100,000	5.5
Kweichow	P	Kweiyang	20,000,000	800,000	4.0
Shanghai	M	-	10,000,000	300,000	3.0
Canton	P	Canton	43,000,000	900,000	2.1
Kuangsi - Chuang	T	Nanning	24,000,000	500,000	2.1
Kiangsi	P	Nanchang	25,000,000	500,000	2.0
Chekiang	P	Hangchow	31,000,000	500,000	1.9
Fukien	P	Fuchow	18,000,000	100,000	0.5
Total	-	-	732,000,000	77,000,000	10.5

However, the last two centuries have seen a dilution and dispersion of the Muslim population in China. Indeed Khansu Province had an extremely important place in the Muslim history of China. Muslims were in majority there before the revolutions of the 19th century. Furthermore, the territories that have been grouped by the Communist regime into the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia had a Muslim majority during the Nationalist Regime. Non-Muslim Chinese immigration to these areas was so intense that the Muslim majority changed into a minority. In Yunnan Province, Muslims were also in majority in the nineteenth century. After the fall of the Muslim state there, great number of Muslims left the province, others were mercilessly killed by the Manchu regime and due to the immigration of non-Muslims into the area, the Muslim majority has been reduced to a minority of less than 20% of the total population.

Thus, we can say that roughly one tenth of the Muslim population of China lives in the North-West Region in areas where they are in majority. Another tenth of the Muslims lives in other areas of the North-West and the North regions where they form more than a quarter, but less than one half of the population. Three fifths of the Muslim population lives in the provinces of the North, the North-East, the South-West and the Central-South where they form more than one tenth of the population but less than one quarter. The last fifth lives in areas where they form less than one tenth of the population, and this is mostly in the eastern regions.

There seems to have been a deliberate effort under the Communist regime to dilute the Muslim majorities. Indeed, more than two million non-Muslim Chinese have been settled between 1950 and 1960 in Eastern Turkestan, Ninghsia-Hui, and Inner Mongolia; and several more millions have been settled after 1960. The effect of these efforts might soon lead to an end to any Muslim-majority area in China.

In January 1975 the Fourth National People's Congress approved a new Constitution under which China is considered to be a "Socialist State of the dictatorship of the proletariat". There are three types of administrative units: autonomous regions, provinces and municipalities directly administered by the government. There are 22 provinces, three municipalities (Peking, Shanghai, and Tientsin) and five autonomous regions: Inner Mongolia, Sinkiang-Uighur, Kwangsi-Chuang, Ninghsia-Hui, and Tibet. Each autonomous region is established for a given nationality. Two of these territories have been established for Muslim nationalities, the Sinkiang for the Uighur and Ninghsia for the Hui. There are also a large number of Muslims who are Mongol as well as some Muslims among the Tibetans. These territories, however, have no more autonomy than their parallel ones in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, they imply a degree of recognition of the national separateness of a given minority. There is also one province with Muslim majority, the Chinghai.

Consequently, the situation of Muslims in China is different from that of the Soviet Union since most of the Muslims

of China share with the majority the culture (language) and national affiliation, whereas in the Soviet Union there are no Russian Muslims.

6- The Situation of Muslims after the Maoist Revolution

It was seen that Muslims regained some of their freedom after the Chinese Nationalist Revolution of 1911. For this reason they were the best supporters, in general, of the Nationalist Government. Most of the Muslims fought from the beginning against the Communist Party since they knew very well what happened to their brothers in the neighboring USSR. The Muslims were more determined in their support to the Nationalists, especially after the Communist Party of China expressed in its constitution of 1931 "the freedom to fight religion".

However, because of their intense nationalism, the Nationalist Government antagonized those Muslims who are not members of the Chinese nationality, especially in the western parts of the empire. Muslims felt also discriminated against in the areas of the South where they were few in numbers. Thus, many Muslims joined the forces of Mao-Tse-Tung and were organized in separate regiments even before 1949.

The Maoist period could be divided into three sub-periods as far as the attitude of the regime towards the Muslims was considered. The first period is from the establishment of the People's Republic on September 21, 1949 to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in

1966. The second period is that of the Cultural Revolution and covers the years 1966-1969. Finally, there is the third period which extends from 1969 to the death of Mao-Tse-Tung in 1976.

At the beginning of the first period, Muslims tried to resist. They revolted in Eastern Turkestan in 1949 under the leadership of Yul Pars Khan, Othman Batour and Kalin Khan. They revolted also in Khansu in 1952 under Ma Hin Tao and Yang Gee Youn.

The first period was characterized by a lenient attitude toward Islam compounded with a definite trend towards its atrophy and controlling its religious hierarchy. The leaders of the old "Chinese Muslim Association" moved to Taiwan. The other Muslim organizations were disbanded one after the other. The cultural and religious freedoms of the Muslim community were limited. However, the oppression during this period was not continuous. Two important Muslim organizations were established in 1953 in Peking: the "China Muslims Organization" and the "Hui Cultural Association", grouping together all the Muslims of China. The president of the latter was no less than the president of the Provincial Government of Sin-Kiang himself. The first was led by distinguished Chinese Muslim leaders who were respected all over the Muslim world. It produced a large quantity of Muslim literature for Chinese Muslims. The leader was Haji Burhan Shahidi assisted by two deputies Ahung (Imām) Sha Meng-pi and Ahung Tan Tung. Ahung Ma Chien, a graduate of Al-Azhar University was also prominent. A Central Institute of Nationalities was established to "protect"

Islamic culture among other minority cultures. Mosques remained open and well attended. Wakf property was not touched. In Sin-Kiang it was even tax-exempted since 1952. Special schools for Muslims were functioning in Peking and elsewhere, famous among them being the Islamic College. In 1954, the Muslim religion was declared protected after 70,000 Muslims sent telegrams requesting such a protection. As for the Central Committee of the Government, it had two Muslim members out of a total of 56 (they should have been 6 if their proportion in the population were to be respected). Three quarters of the members of the Sin-Kiang Government were Muslims. Pilgrimage to Mecca was however stopped from 1949 to 1953 and then stopped again in 1958, and remains so to this date (1982). In 1950, Islamic law was abolished, and the Qādis were dispensed with. In 1955, the Institute of Islamic Theology was established to prepare Imāms. The position of the Communist Party was that "it was necessary for the Muslims themselves to carry on their own revolutionary organizations with a base in the Muslim masses".

By 1957, a full-blast campaign against Islam was started. Most of the mosques were closed, the call for prayers (Adhan) and public prayers were forbidden. Islamic teachings were much suppressed and the Imams imprisoned. Propaganda against Islam was stepped up. By 1958, an organized effort was made to settle non-Muslims in Muslim majority areas, especially in Eastern Turkestan, Khansu and Inner Mongolia. The economic life of the Muslims was also disrupted and famines threatened Muslim territories. Most of the Muslim

schools were also closed and were replaced in 1964 by the "College of Minority Nationalities" and the "Chinese Islamic Institute" in order to put Islamic education under stricter control and even suppression.

During the Cultural Revolution the situation of Muslims deteriorated further reaching the lowest ebb in modern history. Mosques were burnt, Imāms were killed, Islamic literature was thrown away, Islamic leaders were persecuted and insulted, Muslim families were dispersed, etc. This led to violent protest on the part of Muslims. There were Muslim riots in Peking in February 1967, protesting the imprisonment of one of their leaders. Their slogan was "Muslims of the world unite". They rebelled elsewhere as well, especially in Eastern Turkestan. This resistance was brutally suppressed, causing considerable damage to Muslim life.

The situation, however, relaxed somewhat after 1969. The closed mosques, however, were not reopened. Even in Peking out of scores of mosques only Tungzu Mosque remained open as a piece of exhibition to be shown to foreign dignitaries. The mosque was hardly ever used by Chinese Muslims, out of fear of persecution.

7- Growth of Muslim Institutions

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China there were 42,000 mosques coupled with Islamic schools. These mosques existed all across the country wherever Muslims were present. A city like Kashgar, the Muslim metropolis of Eastern Turkestan, had 400 mosques.

The capital, Peking, then had 49 mosques. There were also 27 mosques in Nankin, 14 mosques in Shanghai, 11 in Tching-tou, 11 in Hankow, 10 in Tien-Tsin, 8 in Urumchi and 4 in the city of Canton.

There were also tens of thousands of Imāms active in educating the people. These are called Ahungs, and there were many women-Imāms among them as well. The Imāms were trained in four great centers of Islamic learning at the level of the Azhar University of Cairo. The first was in Eastern Turkestan, in the city of Kashgar which acted as the center of spreading of Islamic culture to the whole of China. The second was in Ho-Tcheou in the Khansu where students came from all across China to study Islamic sciences. The third, the High Studies Institute, was in Peking; and the fourth in the city of Houai-King in the Province of Honan which had the highest number of Muslims among the Chinese provinces.

Finally, since the nineteenth century a considerable amount of Islamic literature was produced by the Muslims in the Chinese language. Among the early Muslim writers in Chinese, one should mention Liu Chih who wrote in 1724 a treatise about the Life of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Liu Chih called upon the Muslims to follow the Prophet's exemplary life if they wanted to be better Muslims. Other Muslim writers in Chinese such as Wang Tai-yu (died in 1660) and Yusuf Ma Chu (died in 1711) wrote dozens of books about the Islamic faith and philosophy.

Interest in the Arabic language and its teaching to the children started in the nineteenth century. Ma Te-hsin (died in 1874) the Great Imām and Muslim leader of Yunnan who led its 1856-1872 Rebellion and independence movement wrote in Chinese about Muslim law, philosophy and history, as well as about Arabic grammar and rhetoric. He was also a prolific writer in the Arabic language which he has mastered. Imām Ma Te-hsin was also the first to attempt the translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān into Chinese, but he died before finishing the work. The latter was finished by the political leader of the Muslim Rebellion of Yunnan, Tu Wen-hsiu, and published before the turn of the century. During the beginning of this century primers were written for the education of Muslim children and teen-agers in Chinese. Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, a Chinese Muslim could become a full-fledged 'ālim and Imām within his own language.

All this changed during the People's Republic; especially during the Cultural Revolution. Practically all mosques have been closed, demolished, or turned into clubs, warehouses, cinemas, barracks, etc. The rare exceptions were a lone Mosque in Kashgar and the famous Tungzu Mosque of Peking. These were mostly opened for foreign dignitaries. Religious instruction and all religious meetings and worship were greatly curtailed. Most Muslim schools have been closed down or their curricula changed to include Communist

indoctrination. Muslim religious leaders were tortured and humiliated. Anti-Islamic posters were hung in most Muslim districts and cities, and religious books were confiscated and often burned on the public squares.

8- The Case of Eastern Turkestan

Eastern Turkestan, or Sin-Kiang (i.e. New Dominion) as called by the Chinese, is an autonomous region within the Popular Republic of China. This territory has an area of 1,646,800 km² and a population of 12,500,000 in 1982. Historically, Eastern Turkestan enclosed a much larger area. Actually, this territory is no more than a Muslim state converted into a Chinese colony. Its true inhabitants are mostly Turkish, who speak several Turkish dialects, especially Uighur written in Arabic script. They are all Muslims of the Hanafi school.

Muslim armies opened Kashgar for Islām in the year 96 A.H. (714 C.E.) under the leadership of Qutaybah Ibn Muslim as seen before. Since then Eastern Turkestan became a Muslim province with Kashgar as capital. The Arabic language and Islamic culture became widespread in the country which produced in the Abbasid times such distinguished scholars as Sadīduddīn Kashgarī and Mahmūd Kashgarī.

In the year 466 A.H. (1073 C.E.) Turkish tribes invaded Northern Turkestan and were followed in the 13th century by the Mongol armies of Chingis Khan, whose capital was Karakorum (Black Sands) in Eastern Turkestan. Eastern Turkestan became an independent state under Islamized Mongols and Turcs until the seventeenth century when it was invaded by China's Manchu rulers.

In 1289 A.H. (1872 C.E.) a revolution was successfully carried out against the Manchus, leading to the independence of the country under King Ya'qūb-Beg. This independence lasted only four years. The country was invaded again by China in 1293 A.H. (1876 C.E.) which converted it in 1301 AH (1884 CE) into a Chinese province.

This state of affairs did not change with the fall of the Manchu dynasty and the establishment of the nationalist state. In 1350 A.H. (1931 C.E.), a new revolution took place led by Khoja Niyaz Hajji which succeeded in liberating the country. The Russians, however, were not in favour of establishing a Muslim Turkish state to the East of their Muslim Turkish colonies. They helped the Chinese in destroying the new state. Eventually, the Muslims overcame the combined forces and declared the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan on November 12, 1932. Mr. Khoja Niyaz Hajji was elected first president and Mawlana Thābit prime minister. On December 27, 1933, a Russian army invaded the young Republic supported by the air force and succeeded in defeating the forces of the Islamic Republic in July 1934. A campaign

of massacres against the Muslim population followed which led to the death of hundreds of thousands of Muslims, including Hajji Khoja Niyaz, Mawlana Thābit and all the Muslim leaders.

Muslims revolted against this Russian colonization in 1933 and established ^{a republic} under the leadership of Ilyās Khān and Sultān Sharīf Tayji; then in 1937, they revolted again under the leadership of Abdullah Al-Niyaz; and once again in 1940 under the leadership of Uthman Batur. The latter succeeded in defeating the Russians and establishing an independent Muslim state which lasted until 1943. In that year, the Nationalist Government of China took over the country. They were followed in 1949 by the People's Republic which continues to rule over the region to this day.

Persecution of Muslims by the People's Republic in Eastern Turkestan started in 1950. They carried out land reforms concurrently with mass execution of local noblemen and religious leaders. However, persecution was not carried out further after this event until 1958.

In 1958, the regime carried out total collectivization followed by mass detention of innocent people in labor camps. The aim was to obtain free labor for the "Great Leap Forward" program. This had a disastrous effect on the economy of the region, which was further aggravated by mismanagement. The result was a famine which took the lives of millions in Muslim areas, such as the southern part of Eastern Turkestan and the neighboring provinces of Khansu and Szechwan.

During the "Cultural Revolution", in 1966, the regime openly declared its intention to destroy Islam in China. In Eastern Turkestan - as elsewhere - Red Guards committed acts of unprecedented vandalism by burning the Holy Qur'ān and other Islamic religious books, by damaging the mosques, and assaulting the Imāms. As an example, Imām Muḥammad Amīn of the village of Kypek in the Kuldja district, organized a mass prayer for rainfall (Istisqā) in the arid year of 1968. Contrary to the official weather forecast, the rain fell. As a result, Imām Muḥammad was executed in 1969 for "counter-revolutionary activities". Most of the mosques were closed in this period, and thousands of refugees fled the country.

In 1953, 90.7% of the population were Muslims out of a total of 4,420,000 people. There were only 454,000 non-Muslims, mostly Chinese settled after 1949. Indeed, before 1949 the non-Muslim population was numerically negligible. After 1953, the regime started a program of de-Islamization of Eastern Turkestan by bringing great numbers of Chinese settlers to the Region. In 1968, the population was eight million, of whom 5,700,000 (71.2%) were Muslims and the remaining 2,300,000 non-Muslim Chinese settlers. In 1982, the total population could be estimated at 12.5 million with only 9,000,000 Muslims; i.e., the Muslim percentage remained almost stabilized, mostly because of a high Muslim natural growth rate.

The events in Eastern Turkestan during the last half century led to an outflow of refugees. Indeed in 1949, 40,000 Muslim Kazakhs fled to the Indian sub-continent and most of them perished on the way. During the communisation effort that created an artificial famine in 1959-62, another 200,000 Muslim Kazakhs and Uighurs fled to the Soviet Union. From 1976 some Tatar families were allowed to emigrate to Hong-Kong and then to Australia, where they settled in a thriving Muslim community in Adelaide. In 1982, the Eastern Turkestan diaspora could be estimated at 250,000 persons, of whom 220,000 are in the Soviet Union, 10,000 in Saudi Arabia, 10,000 in Turkey, 2,000 in Pakistan, 1,000 in Afghanistan and the remaining are in India, Egypt and European countries. Most of these refugees took up the nationalities of their host countries. Prominent among them is 'Isa Yusuf Alp-Tekin who was the last Secretary General of the coalition government of Eastern Turkestan under the Chinese Nationalist Regime (1947-49). He lives in Istanbul and keeps the memory of Eastern Turkestan alive in the minds of the Muslims all over the world.

9- The Situation of Muslims in the Post-Mao Period

The presence under a special category of sixteen religious leaders at the Fifth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference marked an important departure from the anti-religious policy adopted since the Cultural Revolution. The meeting was

opened on February 26, 1978 in Peking and grouped 2,800 deputies who arrived from all parts of China to approve a new constitution and new nominations for the high offices of the state. This meeting was held under the symbol of "unity refound" and for the first time many religious leaders appeared in public since the excesses of the Cultural Revolution .

In fact since early 1977, the Chinese news media changed their tune toward religion especially among minority groups, most of them being Muslim. Since Muslims of non-Chinese nationality lived in strategically located areas along the borders with the USSR, Peking seemed determined to win their confidence by allowing the re-emergence of Muslim national associations. Indeed, a group of Hong Kong Muslims toured China in October 1977. They visited mosques in Hangchow, Shanghai and Peking where still the only open mosque seems to have been the Tungtzu Mosque. The Hong Kong Muslims met Imāms and were the guests of the resuscitated Chinese Muslim Association. They came back to Hong Kong to report a relatively satisfactory picture of the Muslim community in China. During the same year several mosques were reopened for service. For instance, in Kunming (Yunnan) four mosques were reopened in June 1977.

In fact, M. Hsu Teh-Cheng, the vice-president of the former National Committee of the Consultative Conference which was reconvened for a meeting on February 24 and 25, 1978, presented the key speech

of the February 24 session. He accused the "Gang of Four" to "have fomented divisions among nationalities" and undermined the policy of the regime, especially in "the matter of religion". "The consequences", he added, "were serious".

More recently, it was announced that postgraduate students are to be admitted to the newly established Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. There are to be ten institutes, including an Institute of World Religions where students will study Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity.

In November 1978, Peking's Tungszu Mosque held the largest ever 'Id-ul-Adhā prayers since the founding of the People's Republic. Besides foreign Muslims, a large number of the Chinese Muslims took part in the prayers. The Chinese congregation consisted of people of all ages including young teen-agers. The prayer was led by the Imām of the Mosque, Imām Ṣālih An Shih-Wei, member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Also present at the prayer were Haji Muhammad Chang Chein and other leading members of the Chinese Muslim Association. The Chinese authorities said that "as in previous years" they had done everything necessary to provide the Muslims with "whole living and unblemished male sheep" for sacrifice. For the first time in the People's Republic, the prayers were filmed by the Chinese television.

In Eastern Turkestan (Sin-Kiang), the Provincial Revolutionary Committee held a gala party on November 12, 1978 to celebrate 'Id-ul-Adhā. Representatives of all Muslim nationalities of the region (Uighur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Tatar, Tajik and Huis, etc..) were invited on the occasion to exchange greetings as Muslims.

Interviewed by the Agence France Presse in 1979, Imām Ma Congling of Kunming said that the Bureau of Religious Affairs in Yunnan Province had recently decided to allocate funds to publish copies of the Holy Qur'ān in Arabic. He indicated that the work could begin as soon as the religious committee for Muslims in Kunming began operating again. The committee was disbanded in 1970 at the same time that the city's mosques were closed. The Imām said that a Qur'ānic school would open "at some time". Such a school would be the first to reopen in the People's Republic of China.

10- Conclusions

The Muslim community of China started almost with the very advent of Islam. The community passed through vicissitudes of fortune during the following centuries, from position of great prestige and power in the entire country to periods of intense persecution and suppression. During the Cultural Revolution they passed through the worst period of their history. Today there are hopes of great improvement. But are these hopes well-founded?

If one looks at the Muslim community of China (excluding the case of Eastern Turkestan which is no more than a Muslim land conquered by a non-Muslim power) one notices the following unique characteristics of the Chinese Muslim minority. First of all this is a minority in the true sense of the term created by immigration and mass conversion of Chinese people to form a group of people sharing with others the Chinese culture but in the same time adapting it fully to the Islamic ideals. The existence of this Chinese Muslim minority was not the result of the conquest by China of a Muslim land whose population was reduced to the status of a minority within the empire. In this it differs completely from the Muslim community of the Soviet Union which is entirely the result of colonization of Muslim states after their conquest by a non-Muslim power. Second, the Chinese Muslim community is characterized by its continuity. Muslims were in China as an organized religious community continuously from the first century of Islam and without any break, and without ever establishing a Muslim state. Few other Muslim minorities could claim the same longevity. Third, the persistent identification of Muslim Chinese with China. The rare exception of wars of secession in the nineteenth century were only the results of extreme persecution of the Manchu dynasty which left the Muslims no other choice but to fight back for survival.

After a lapse of renaissance of 38 years during the Nationalist establishment, Muslims passed by difficult situations during the People's Republic. It seems, however, that the community kept all the necessary

conditions for survival: strong Islamic allegiance in the families; existence of Islamic tradition (if not literature due to its mass burning during the Cultural Revolution) in the Chinese language; survival (albeit weakened and reduced) of Islamic institutions, etc. The events after the death of Mao-Tse-Tung give good reasons for hope of great improvements.

One more situation which would certainly induce improvements for both the Muslims of the Soviet Union and those of China is the Sino-Chinese rivalry. The borders between both the countries pass through Muslim lands and, therefore, it becomes imperative for each one of these states to win the allegiance of Muslim populations by respecting their Islamic identity.

Finally, the Muslims of China would be happy within the People's Republic of China if they are given their religious freedom and if they are allowed to thrive as a Muslim community with its institutions & its cultural autonomy. They will certainly respond by more allegiance to their country China. Even Eastern Turkestan could be satisfied if its autonomy as a Muslim Turkic state is respected within the Chinese state. Once the Muslim community of China is satisfied, both China and the Muslim world would benefit from the friendship created by common bonds rather than suspicion created by persecution of members of the Muslim Ummah.

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