

Research Article

Islam and the Muslims in Kashgar of Xinjiang: Observed by Swedish Missionaries of the Covenant Church

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Abstract

Comparing with the aim of the converting the Turkic Muslims into Christians setting up by a group of the Swedish missionaries in Kashgar region in the period of 1892-1938, the more important contribution has been brought out by them is the large quantity of the historical archives in which has witnessed Islam and the Muslims in the Uighur society. This paper employing the various materials unfolds the feature of Islam and the Muslim society in Southern Xinjiang in three dimensions: the origin of the Swedish Christian mission in Kashgar, Islam in Kashgar reflected by historical records one century ago and the living customs of the Turkic Muslims that time. It summarizes the Islamic characteristics and concludes that the work achieved by the Swedish missionaries could not be forgotten by the people.

Keywords: Islam, Turkic muslims, Swedish missionaries, Kashgar

From the time of the first Swedish missionary arrived in Xinjiang (in the western sources it was termed as "the Eastern Turkistan") in 1892 to the time that the last group of the Swedish missionaries were expelled by Sheng Shicai 盛世才, the local warlord in 1938, during almost half of a century, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (MCCS) established four mission stations in Kashgar region: Kashgar city (1894), Yarkand (today's name Shache 莎车, 1895), Hancheng (today's name Sule 疏勒, 1908), Yangi Heshar (Today's name Yingjisha 英吉沙, 1912). About 68 Swedish missionaries went there to participate in the course of mission, meanwhile built the schools, hospitals, orphanages (house for boys and house for girls), and the printing workshop in the mission stations in which they worked as well as church. A few missionaries and their family members even sacrificed their lives in Kashgar [1].

The mission work of MCCS in Xinjiang was extremely hard and difficult. Just the journey to travel to Xinjiang for 3000 miles needs extraordinary energy and bravery spirit. Life condition in Xinjiang was primitive, weather horrible, people easily afflicted by deceases. The mission work done by these missionaries must have endured the tremendous hardship in physically and mentality, because they faced the most conservative and almost fanatical Islam (termed by late Dr. Gunnar Jarring, the formal ambassador of Sweden to the United Nation, the famous diplomat in the world in the 1960s) [2]. Through the multitude assistance proved to the local Muslims in the social public fields such as medical treatment, education, economics, technology, hygiene and health, the strong efforts coming from the Swedish missionaries made a group of the Uighur Muslims convert into Christianity. Therefore, the mission work of the Swedish missionaries

in Xinjiang has far reached beyond of the religious significance, it is a considerable successful exchange and cooperation in the cultural dimension. Of course, it was full of the hostility and persecution from the Islam extremists and Muslim warlords during that time.

Origin of the Christian Mission in Kashgar of MCCS

In 1878 a small sect split from the Lutheran Church of Swedish Kingdom, it was entitled with Missionary Covenant Church of Sweden, or the Swedish Covenant Church. After it was founded, it proposed a mission strategy focused on Euro-Asian continent, therefore, sent the missionaries to Russia first. The earliest mission was around the area of St. Peterberg, the capital of Russia Empire, it spread to the various minorities lived in Mt. Ular, Caucasus and Iran [3]. At the end of the 1880s, the famous American missionary to China Rev. Hudson Taylor visited Sweden. His series speeches made in Swedish Church stimulated the enthusiasm of the missionaries of MCCS who wanted to go to China. The missionary delegation of MCCS had worked to established the mission and mission stations in Caucasus of Russia and Hubei Region in China for several years. They wanted to set up the new mission stations which could connect between the two regions, so made them related. Hence, missionary N. F. Höijer chose Kashgar as the starting point for the mission in Xinjiang. In 1892 he undertook a short journey to Kashgar with J. Avetaranina, a former Muslim but converted into Christianity in the Ottoman Turkey. After they got to know the feasibility of the mission in Kashgar by the direct observation, Höijer returned to Stockholm to report to the headquarter of MCCS, at same time he left Mr. Avetaranina to continue living and preaching in Kashgar. In 1893 at the conference held by MCCS in Stockholm

passed the plan to establish the new mission station in Xinjiang after the discussion. Following that they decided to send a first group of the missionaries going there. In the summer of 1893, Missionary Lars Erik Hogberg stopped the mission work in Persia and migrated to Kashgar for the preparing the mission station in Kashgar [4].

In 1895 Swedish missionaries established the mission station in Yarkand. Magnus Backlund came to Kashgar for mission in 1896, he was the first Swedish missionary had commanded the Uighur language before his arrival in Kashgar. In the next year Dr. Gosta Raquette came to Kashgar. Raquette also had good command of the Uighur language beside he received the systematic training in the medical science, and therefore he was awarded the medical doctor certification.

The Swedish missionaries were actual residents in Xinjiang during such a period. Having lived there for decades they gained a profound understanding of the living customs and religious beliefs within the traditional local culture. Though most of them were ministers and missionaries, many of them were also medical doctors, linguistics, scholars of folklore, architectures, and botanists; some of them were also capable photographers who took many pictures while living in southern Xinjiang.

During the 1970s and the 1980s, Samuel Franne, a retired Swedish architect and an enthusiastic Christian, spent a long time in Sweden collecting and sorting out packs of these photos taken by missionaries from the Missionary Covenant Church of Sweden (MCCS) during their mission in the Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang). Having completed this work, he handed the whole collection over to the Swedish National Archives, so that they could be properly maintained. The famous Swedish diplomatist, the former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Iran and the United States of America respectively, Dr. Gunnar Jarring, has refereed to this archival treasure as "the Franne Collection" [5]. The collection of historical photographs about Kashgar in Xinjiang and the MCCS missionary history there contains about 9000 images; among them are several hundred portrayals of Islamic life in Kashgar. These are extremely valuable artifacts due to the fact that many written texts and other documents were destroyed during the wars and political turmoil of those very same years; it was the most chaotic period in the history of violence in Xinjiang. Today we will try to reconstruct the history revealed in these silent photos, adding to their witness the published records made of the observations by these Swedish missionaries.

In the early stage of the mission work the Swedish missionaries met the hostility from the Islamic circle. To explain the reason why did the clerics of Islam in Xinjiang so severely oppose the Swedish missionary work we have to describe the basic situation of Islam and the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Islam in Xinjiang Reflected in the Historical Records Noted one Century Ago

During the period spanning from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the early part of Republican China, most of the population in Xinjiang believed in Islam. At least 80 percent of the population were Muslims (the majority being Turkic people). Most of the Muslims were Sunnis, while there were also some Shi'ites among them. Sunni Muslims were dominant within the Islamic life of Xinjiang [6]. At that time

there were more than 2000 mosques throughout the whole province of Xinjiang [7]. Mosques in the rural areas were very simply-built, while those in the towns and cities were decorated very beautifully [8]. Serving as the center of religion, politics and culture in the region, Kashgar was very representative of the city life in Xinjiang of that era.

John Törquist, a Swedish missionary who had worked for the MCCS mission for more than thirty years described the main mosque in Kashgar in following vivid words:

The mosque itself is made up of an open court, something like a park. In front, there is a large pond; wind chimes are hung there, and a row of pillars lead the way [into the court]. The whole park is full of praying people, perfectly arranged in rows. The ground is covered with prayer-mats also arranged in rows, as far as once can see. People are sitting on these mats, side by side as close together as possible. From the platform up in front there are silent instructions, and now the 'foaming sea' is heaving up and down, like wave after wave, very regular and very dignified in their serene way. There are no shouts of command, no conductor's baton... This is an immense crowd of tens of thousands of Kashgar Mohammedans [9].

Minarets were [and are] an integral part of mosque architecture in Xinjiang. This is not often seen in more central parts of China. Marshall Broomhall, who wrote a book entitled *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem*, pointed out: there was no big difference between the appearances of mosque and other temples in other parts of China. However, according to his point of view, the minaret in Xinjiang was an architectural addition influenced by traditions from Central Asia [10]. In addition, in more central parts of China there were mosques specifically for women [11], but Muslim women in Xinjiang at this time prayed in their homes; the mosque generally belonged only to men for their religious activities. From these descriptions we can see that mosques are central to Islamic life in Xinjiang, the nexus of Turkic Muslim society.

Just as in other parts of the Islamic world, Islam penetrated into all aspects of life for Turkic Muslims during this period. Paralleling Chinese imperial law, the Islamic law (*Shariah*) was implemented in the judicial administration of Xinjiang. For this purpose every town had a religious court consisted of four Mullahs who were well versed in Islamic law. Such religious judges were nominated by local Chinese authorities. The court's most important task was to supervise people to live a life according to the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'an [12]. This form of life shaped by the Islamic law required that women were not allowed to appear in public if they did not wear a head-dress and veil. If a woman did not follow this regulation, the moral official of the religious court could take legal action against her. When such cases happened before, women who broke this law were lashed by leather whips as punishment. The moral official from the religious court even had the right to enter into a harem, where it was normally not allowed for strange men from outside to go under normal circumstances. On such an occasion when a woman was caught not wearing appropriate clothing in public, the moral official could punish the guilty woman without undergoing any legal procedures. There were also such cases known where these officials wandered around and checked family by family to ensure that Muslims were going to the mosque for their prayer rites [13].

There were many religious manuscripts in Arabic or Persian kept by people in their homes in Xinjiang. Before printing technology was introduced, Muslims learned the Qur'an in Arabic, and Islamic doctrine was passed down in hand-written copies. This showed that Uighur Muslims of that period paid great attention to the Qur'anic studies. Besides the Qur'an, Muslims also studied the biography of the Prophet Muhammad. There were these kind of religious books translated from Arabic and the Persian, however, the Qur'an was considered to be untranslatable [14]. Dr. Raquette and Dr. Jarring, the former was a missionary from the MCCS Mission, the latter was a student but staying in Swedish missionary station in Kashgar for longer than half a year that time, both being Turkic linguistics in the 1920s, saw and collected many religious manuscripts and hand-written copies of other works; they also saw manuscript copies of the Qur'an and other books which had been copied by hand by Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Compared with orthodox beliefs and the restrictive doctrinal practices of the Sunni, the Shi'ites were considerable more tolerant toward other religions. Every year the Shi'ites in Xinjiang would undergo a two week long ceremonial memorial ritual commemorating the tragic death of the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, Caliph Ali. (In fact, this should be the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Hussein, who was martyred -- note from author) [15].

Most Uighur Muslims were able to obey the Five Pillars of Islam and the basic religious obligations. If someone did not follow these religious prohibitions, he probably risked being driven out from his community. If that occurred, no one would come to him or take care him when he was dying, and no one would participate in his funeral service; even a Mullah would not perform any ritual after his passing away [16]. There was a variety of attitudes toward the religious prayer rituals among Muslims in Xinjiang [17]. As far as alms-payment were concerned, the majority of people could pay religious taxes; however, there were some who tried to avoid them. During Ramadan sincere believers would fast, neither eating nor drinking during the daytime. Fasting could also be performed during normal days in order to redress one's sins [18]. At the end of the Ramadan came two days of Islamic holidays and their festivities. Muslims would go to the mosque for prayer in groups. The Aid-Khah Mosque in Kashgar during those days could have more than 80,000 Muslims together participating in prayer rituals during these Islamic festivals. Celebrations of Qurban ("animal slaughter") and the Day for Breaking Fast were so full of activities that people generally did not go to work.

Only a few could afford to go to Mecca for pilgrimage from Xinjiang at that time. Usually a representative was selected from among a big extended family or a clan to go on the Hajj, and then the cost was shared by all members of family or clan. In order to participate in the Hajj some might even declare bankruptcy and sell all their property. If someone was in poor health, he could pay money to employ another to Mecca on his behalf, and so he could be spiritually rewarded [19]. In Yarkand there were several hundred people going to Mecca for pilgrimage every year [20]. There were some cases where husbands went to Mecca with their wives, but for those who had no money the only choice was going to a *mazar* (tomb for Sufi saint)

in the nearby countryside as an act of pilgrimage. The Mazar Apak located in a suburb of Kashgar attracted many visitors for this kind of pilgrimage. Many people wanted to be buried beside the mazar after they passed away. However, only the rich could offer to buy a piece of land in the graveyard [21]. At one point the missionaries saw somewhere between 7000 to 8000 people gathered around a mazar. People regarded the Sufi saint as an intermediary between the Lord and the people. Ordinary people eagerly looked for such opportunities to be linked up to divine mercies [22].

All boys underwent the circumcision ritual. It was usually done by someone in the barbershop. Sometime, parents brought their child to the missionary hospital to do the circumcision ritual [23]. Many Muslims in Xinjiang were believers in predestination, and so were fatalistic in their attitudes. Such a phenomenon was seen everywhere. According to ordinary Muslims, their fate in being poor or experiencing suffering could not be changed [24]. Allah created the rich and the poor. Life for the poor was always poor. To change the fate or reduce the suffering was to break the will of Allah [25]. Many hospital patients therefore rejected any medical help, because of their belief in predestination [26]. Such a fatalistic philosophy had a remarkable influence over the culture of Muslims in Xinjiang.

A missionary held that the religious sentiment of the Muslims in Xinjiang was very depressed and cowed. The good and helpful elements in the Qur'an had been missed or misunderstood. He commented [27]:

... A heathen could hold on to some of his abominations handed down from earlier generations, transplanted into Islamic soil [once he or she became a Muslim]. Neither in Catholicism, nor in Judaism, nor even in paganism is one likely to find any parallels to the cult of shrines and numerous superstitions, fortune-telling and witchcraft, rain-doctors and talismans as found in Islam [in Xinjiang]. One could go one step further by saying that the heathen are invited and enticed by Muslims into accepting their religion, and so are then free to lower themselves even deeper into the mire of vice than they were able to do while being simply heathens.

Xinjiang during these years had strong Islamic mysticism in the form of Sufism. It appeared in the form of wandering dervishes. Xinjiang had many such Sufi orders in its history [28]. They acted like beggars and asked for donations from the people [29]. They often held rituals beside a *mazar*. Some members came from families where generations of dervishes had been present. Sufi orders were composed of several hundred dervishes [30]. In their rituals, Sufis sang Yasawai's *hikmet* (the prayer song praising God and the Prophet Muhammad). A Sufi leader or an *Ishan* (Persian for "he" or "they") rallied his devoted disciples around him; he sat near the *mihrab* (the niche in the mosque), with his disciples surrounding him. Then they sang the songs; after they sang, they chanted the beautiful names of Lord. They danced, whirled and jumped, so that some of them fell down losing consciousness as their bodies were shaken by overwhelming ecstasies. They may sit with folded legs or spread them out, shaking and falling down when they fainted. Afterwards they stood up again. Having completed their dancing, they recited a chapter from the Qur'an, and then began their prayer rituals. Some rituals organized by other

Sufi orders were different from this. For instance, an *Ishan* and his disciples could sit in a circle silently without moving, they lowered their heads for one hour, but some other *Ishan* in another order stood and faced upward silently for an hour. When they finished this form of meditation, they danced and chanted poetry. *Shaikhs* (the religious “elder”) and those learned in *hadith* (the sacred traditions of the Prophet) honestly believed that these people saw the Lord. The main doctrine of the *Ishan* sects was to unite with the Lord. If someone among them passed away, they believed he was united with God. They said that “We are united with Lord just as a rain drop is united with a flowing river.” [31] Scholars in orthodox Islam opposed those who claimed they had seen God; they thought that Allah had neither image nor body, and so was invisible.

There were Sufi mystics such as those found among the Dervish and Qalandar groups in southern Xinjiang. They were also organized into orders, under their leaders who were referred to as *Pir* (Persian, “the elder”). It was difficult to distinguish the members of a real order from those who pretended to be members; their clothes, speech and behavior were almost exactly the same as normal beggars [32]. Grenard noticed that the dances practiced by dervishes were very special: they consisted of fast steps and dramatic movements; when they danced they also sang exciting songs, praising the Prophet Muhammad. Sometimes they sighed with restrained breath: “Ah, Lord! By the will of Allah!” [33] According to regulations, while they sang songs they would also shake iron sticks decorated with iron rings. They held up the sticks and whirled fast and faster until they became exhausted. Sometimes, women also danced like this [34]. The Great Mullah in Kashgar, Muhammad Ali, wrote: The real dervishes live in caves rather than living in the city. They are called pure believers or practitioners. They never beg anything from anyone. They feel satisfied and are happy in life [35]. But such dervishes were very few. Those who begged for money and gifts in dishonest ways were false dervishes; they seemed to dance, singing songs and praising the Prophet, but their real purpose was to gain money and wealth from others [36].

A popular Sufi ritual was to take part in *mazar* worship. For example, the Uighurs in Yarkand worshipped the *Mazar* of Seven Saints; even today many people like to visit this *mazar*. People thought that these *mazars* were sacred; the water from the well of a *mazar* was claimed to heal diseases; weeping at a *mazar*, a woman could overcome fertility and so later have baby. Even among the Hui Muslims (Tungan) there was this phenomenon of making pilgrimages to a *mazar* [37]. The greater *mazars* had regulated dates for visitations, which could last for a long period of time. During the designated periods for *mazar* worship there was also special entertainment including wrestling, horse races for rounding up sheep, cock-fighting and Mukham music concerts. Therefore, during such occasions the *mazar* pilgrimages resembled something like a tour; it clearly strengthened social communications, enhancing trade. At all these *mazar* events people normally expected to worship there regularly or at least sometimes.

Usually the *mazar* pilgrimage took place before the sowing season or after the harvest season. Such *mazar* pilgrimages may be also a remnant from traditional collective entertainments held among the nomadic or farming peoples before Islam was introduced

into Xinjiang. This shared form of worship, involving a common psychological need and common spiritual mind, was the kind of spiritual support which make the *mazar* pilgrimages very significant. Many Muslims regarded the *mazars* as a kind of little Mecca in their own area. People would pray, appeal for help, and repent in front of the *mazar* of a saint or near the saint’s holy grave. In Kashgar the Buwy (female Sufi) Mariam Ritual was very influential among women. With the custom women held that they must answer the questions with the names of Buwy Mariam, Buwy Fatima and Buwy Khadich as they were asked by the angels in heaven. The latter two names were the daughter and wife of the Prophet Muhammad respectively. But the former was related with the mother of Jesus Christ, Mariya. Before the Uighurs in Xinjiang accepted Islam, the Christian Nestorian church had also spread there for a certain time. In this light, female Sufi worshipping “Buwy Mariam” perhaps were revealing traces of an adaptation of certain aspects of Nestorian culture by Islamic mysticism in their historical development [38].

Living Customs of Muslims in Xinjiang that Time

Traditional Islamic customs were not so variant in the oases of Xinjiang, However the types and frequency of folk religious customs varied greatly. Uighurs practiced numerous popular religious customs in order to cultivate a strong and unique identity in their religion, culture and ethnicity. Beside the main orthodox Islamic rituals, these popular practices their lifestyle penetrated into all aspects of the Uighur rituals. Popular folk customs had very much to do with beliefs in the existence of *jinn* (Arabic, “evil and/or spiritual forces”). In the rural areas of Uighur villages, it was common to find them carrying a small pocket (including a piece of paper with a verse of the Qur’an written out and sewed into a leather or cloth ball) hanging down with colored threads on a branch of tree. It was called *qonchaq*, a talisman used to drive away evil spirits. The Mullah told sick patients or those whose bodies were in pain to hang the *qonchaq* in the tree in order to overcome their physical problems. Uighur Muslims believed that misfortunate was caused by the souls of those who died young due to the evil influences of the *jinn*. Most orthodox religious scholars were opposed to these exorcising practices, including not only *qonchaq*, but also *tomar* and *koz monchaq*. The purpose of those objects was to avoid harm caused by “the evil eye”. *Tomar* was a small triangular leather pouch in which was a piece of paper with a *du’ai* (Arabic, “prayer word”) was wrapped; *koz monchaq* was a small black plastic ball the size of the pit of a cherry, colored with white spots over its whole surface. Children wore it as a necklace and woman sewed it onto clothes in order to deflect negative influences from “the evil eye”.

Generally speaking, people in Xinjiang during this period believed ghosts or *jinn* existed; Uighur people believed that the *jinn* could take the form of human beings in order to deceive their human targets. Sometimes, the soul of a man was attacked by a ghost [39]. For these reasons Uighurs were accustomed to use fire to expel the *jinn* from places which they haunted. In the rites of passage related to births, wedding ceremonies and funerals fire was used precisely for this purpose.

In the rituals for a newborn child during their celebration at reaching one year of age, the religious leader would use a burning

stick, waving it over the baby to purify the air and to overcome the influence of “the evil eye”. For the same purpose some Uighur families put an unsheathed knife at the side of baby crib to frighten away evil spirits. In marriage ceremonies, when the bride was led to the bridegroom’s family from her parents’ home, a fire was made along the *outré* between the homes. The carriage including the bride would drive over the fire wherever they came across it. In some other marriage ceremonies the horse carriage used by the bride would circle around the fire seven times, [as in the rituals performed around the Ka’aba in Mecca]. The number “seven” was sacred for Muslims. At the threshold of the bridegroom’s home a fire was made on the cup of an extended iron-spoon; when the bride arrived, she must jump over the fire and enter the home of bridegroom. All of these customs were exorcistic rites observed by the MCCS missionaries.

In rites of passage among Uighur people in Xinjiang many popular religious elements were obviously integrated into ceremonies related to birth and death. During the Uighur burial services, a pot with Qur’anic texts on paper and herbal medicine was put over or beside the grave; the content of the pot was then burned, serving as an offering to comfort the soul of the deceased. If a medicine was ineffective in healing a patient, it was then put into the pot and incinerated before the patient passed away. This reflected the wishes of the family members who wanted the patient to be healed. If the patient died, then they wished the deceased to have a strong body in the next world, and hoped to make the soul of the deceased to be in good health. After a baby was born, its placenta was buried inside the earthen wall of the house by its parents, and they would not tell the grown child where it was. Uighurs living in Turpan believed that if the placenta was thrown away causally or was buried in the earth, the eyes of baby would tend to look downward. Otherwise, if it was buried in a high position in the wall, the baby’s eyes would tend to look upward. Therefore, the baby’s afterbirth materials should be kept in the earthen wall at the same level at which an adult would normally focus their eyes. Because of very dry environment in Turpan, the placenta would not decay. The placenta was called *hamra* in Uighur, which means “to accompany”, since it was regarded as a powerful “partner” for a person’s whole life [40].

There were many Hui Muslims (Tungan) in Xinjiang, but their numbers were much less than the Turkic Muslims (about 150,000 at that time). They were stricter in following religious practices according to Qur’anic teachings and the Islamic law when compared with the practices of Turkic Muslims. The Swedish missionaries considered Hui Muslims to be braver and more competitive in politics and military power; they were also quite disciplined. During the 1920s Kashgar was ruled by a Hui Muslim who was also the military commander of the region. Under his rule, a thief’s hand was chopped off according to the rule in the Qur’an if he was caught stealing, or a foot was cut off for other crimes [41].

In 1933 an important event took place in southern Xinjiang when the Turkic Muslims proclaimed the establishment of “The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic”. The basic policies of this republic were against Chinese rule and the atheism of the Russian Soviets [42]. The national flag consisted of a white background with a crescent and abstracted Qur’anic verses [43]. The Qur’an was the basis for the civil and religious legal system in this Islamic republic. To implement the

teachings of the Qur’an Muslims were restricted in following only its literal meaning; as a consequence, its ideology was draped with fanaticism. Thieves were hung from trees as the proper form of capital punishment [44]. If woman came out on a street or at a *mazar* of a saint without wearing a headscarf, she would be taken home and beaten as punishment. “If they did not listen to such advice, then their skin should feel the whip’s leather [45].” Some women were executed as a result of such harsh penal laws [46].

The so-called “new Islam” strove under the Islamic banner to promote Turkic Muslims to take up arms to overthrow the ruling Han Chinese, and by this means to establish an Islamic state ruled by Turkic Muslims themselves. It was a state based on the Islamic law and the Qur’an. Since Xinjiang was annexed into the territory of China by the Qing imperial government, the Turkic Muslims always cherished this wish, aiming to set up a theocratic state ruled by Allah’s will within those vast stretches of land. Georg Roberntz stressed the importance of the rebellion or “The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic” as it was referred to by Muslim leaders, because it highlighted the importance of the national right of existence for Turkic Muslims [47]. So, Muslims in the region organized their own military forces and armies. However, this “Eastern Turkistan Islamic Republic” was destroyed by the military force of another Muslim people, the Hui or Tungan. In politics, due to the factor that Muslims were divided by various ethnicities, cultural and religious sects, which with different political interests and aims, Kashgar in the 1930s reflected the political reality that internal fighting, civil riots and the capricious political situation frequently hindered their cooperation.

In the period from the 1920s to the 1930s, the central government in Nanjing had not united China. Subsequently, the whole country was split into the warlords’ factions, while also having to deal with the Red Army led by Mao Zedong. As a consequence, the central government had no power to control Xinjiang because it was so remote geographically and separated from the rest of China by great Gobi Desert. Eventually, Xinjiang gained a political status of being semi-independent realm. During that period China had fallen into military segregation by the warlords, and Xinjiang was no exception. There were several military forces very actively in Xinjiang: besides the provincial forces led by the provincial government and the army from northeastern China, there were the White Russian Army, another army led by Zhang Peiyuan 张培元 in Yili 伊犁, a Tungan army led by Ma Zhongying 马仲英, the Kirgiz Army led by Osman and several Uighur armies led by Hoja Niyaz, Rolebos and the Bugra Khan brothers in different areas. The latter three military forces were basically organized by Muslims believing in Islam. Muslim military forces united by religious faith, ethnicity, military and social structures became highly mobilized military organizations with strong Islamic characteristics. They were led by Muslim warlords and had strong impact upon politics and societies within Xinjiang. This was a typical reflection in the period of the warlord segregation and political divisions dominated throughout China.

A Short Summary

The religion of Islam and its believers among the Turkic Muslims in Kashgar region in the early part of the Republic recorded by the

Swedish missionaries is a type of variety rooted in the different sections (Sunni and Shi'a), different ethnicity, different locations and different professions, for instance, farming in oasis, commerciality in city, town and nomadism in mountain. The features of Islam also are shaped diversely by such as Sufi mysticism, folk practices, Shamanism and other religious elements impacted by Buddhism, Nestorius, Taoism and Christianity. However, in spite of this diversity in Islamic practice, there is a core part in the traditional religious structure maintained for thousand years on the basis of mosque, clerics, community, madrasah (college) education, *mazar* and *Sharia* law court which are adhered to the fundamental doctrine in Islam: The Five Pillars, namely, the Quranic chanting, prayer, fast, alms-payment and pilgrimage to Mecca. Therefore, Islam in Kashgar region seems always shifted between the orthodoxy and impiety, between the central and periphery, between the impaction from the outside and through the inside. So the historical sources narrated by the Swedish Missionaries from MCCS in the period of the end of the Qing Dynasty and the early part of the Republic give us the valuable facts to witness the reality concerning the nature of Islam and the Muslim society in Kashgar region.

The great achievement in mission and charity work made by the Swedish missionaries cannot be erased easily from the hearts of the Uighur Muslim mass in Xinjiang. The seeds still sow in this once fertile land. They would give the buds, grow, boom and harvest some day in future. This history of the relationship between Christianity and Islam in society of Kashgar, Xinjiang should be a mirror and the useful lesson for the relation between the two great world religions today. Meanwhile it should illustrate to the people in the world that in that so hard time and in a so remote frontier region there was a group of the Christian ministers with sincerely and purely hearts spreading good news to the Muslims and planted the love from Lord to the hearts of local people. They were selfless and bravery, some of them paid their life price and died in the strange land, they should be remembered in history for ever although the memory to their work seems to have been almost obliterated by the atheistic education and materialization trend recently.

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