

## ISLAM IN KANSU

Mohammedanism in Kansu is a living and largely organized force. With the exception of a few "*hsien*" such as Fukiang in which there are practically none, Moslems are found everywhere. There are a number of large communities. Although it is not always possible for a foreigner to distinguish Moslems at first sight from Chinese, there is certainly a "typical Moslem face" which could hardly be mistaken. The number of Moslems has been overestimated in the past on account of the ubiquity of the Moslem food vendor, and because a "Moslem always makes his presence felt" more than the usual Chinese.

In the following article Kansu has, for the sake of clarity, been considered as divided into eight districts. The division is not altogether arbitrary. In Lanchow there are Moslems from all parts of the province, and of all sects, but apart from the city, the district has nothing in the way of a Moslem population. A narrow section of Kansu running north and south through Chingyuan, Lanchow and Fukiang would include that part of the province in which Moslems are fewest. This section divides the province into the two main geographical divisions of Islam in Kansu. It must not be supposed that this division is in any way absolute, but it is generally true. Hochow is the most important centre in the province, but its influence extends more directly through the western section. The religious influence of Chang Chia Ch'uan permeates to every part of Kansu, but from it and Kuyuan, as the residences of Ma Shan-ren, proceed the forces that unite Islam in Eastern Kansu into a unity that is almost complete at these centres.

The power of Islam appears under two aspects: political and religious. Here, again, the division is

far from absolute, but it is apparent in the ruling forces. Until recently the political-military head was Ma An-liang. Resident at Hochow, his power was felt throughout the province and his name known far beyond its borders. He died in November, 1919, and now his power is dissipated among his sons and relatives. Whether one of these will come to his father's place or not, the future must reveal. But there are other leading Moslems of official (military) standing. Probably the greatest is Ma Fuh Hsiang of Hochow, now chief military official of the Ningsia district, and that part of Mongolia north and northeast of Kansu. This man will probably become well-known beyond Kansu in the future. Another, inferior and vastly different, is Ma Ch'i. His name has become notorious in connection with lootings by his soldiers at Kweitch and recently at Labrang. These two are at present the best known Moslem officials.

Of the religious leaders, by far, the most influential is Ma "Shan Ren." Of Kansu origin, his family was exiled to Yunnan, but he returned a number of years ago to become a petty pope over Eastern Kansu, extending his influence to some Moslems in every part of the province, and beyond, to far Western Sinkiang and to Yunnan, etc. When he travels, adherents of his sect *kow tow* to him as he passes along the road, and others from more distant places make special journeys to obtain his blessing. His power may be realized by the fact that when a serious dispute was recently in progress between old and new sects, he was especially invited by the Tuchun to use his influence to restore peace. A quiet old man, with the appearance of an ascetic, he has a large store of knowledge covering a wide variety of subjects. He has residences in Chang Chia Ch'uan, Kuyuan and also in Hochow. The title "Shan Ren" is now his in some quarters. The religious powers in each parish is vested in the Ahungs, who also exercise a civil power, real though unofficial.

Owing to the meagre amount of information received by the Kansu Moslem Committee in reply to the ques-

tionnaire sent out at the beginning of the year, no trustworthy statistics can be given. It seems evident, however that three and one-half million is far too high a number. This and even higher figures have been mostly given by travellers and itinerating missionaries, who have been misled by the number of Moslem eating shops, of Moslem muleteers, merchants, etc., and these are met with along the main roads, to an extraordinary degree. Probably 2,000,000 is a high estimate and 1,000,000 a low one. The following statistics are by no means exact, but are based on a certain amount of information. They should be considered as estimates only:

Lanchow district .....	50,000	
N. W. " .....	20,000	
Sining " .....	200,000	high estimate
Hochow (Chinese) .....	100,000	
" (Salars) .....	70,000	
" (Tunghsiang <i>Hui Hui</i> ) .....	150,000	
S. C. & M. A. district .....	50,000	
S. C. I. M. " .....	250,000	high estimate
S. A. M. " .....	300,000	(high but the
Ningsia " .....	200,000	district is large)
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	1,390,000	

Of Moslem officials, the majority hold military positions. There are a large number of Moslem soldiers. Salars and Tunghsiang *Hui-Hui* are specially given to "eating rations." There are a number of Moslem merchants who deal with Sinkiang and Tibet, also with Peking, Tientsin, and Shanghai. In certain districts (viz. Shining in certain parts, Hochow, Chang Chia Ch'uan, Ningsia, Kuyuan) there are Moslem farmers as well as Mohammedans of all trades; but the occupations in which Moslems generally predominate are those of raftsmen, butchers, (not pork butchers of course) muleteers, milkmen, horsedealers and furriers, and highway robbers might be added.

There are very few Moslems who have a good knowledge of *both* Arabic and Chinese. In most cases a pupil chooses between "reading the Scriptures" (Arabic) and learning Chinese. There are a number of Mohammedans who are "*hsin ts' ai*," and some who

have attained to higher literary degrees. There are in all parts some Moslems who can read Chinese.

As no missionary in the province has as yet a proficient knowledge of Arabic, it is difficult to judge of the real knowledge of that language the *Ahungs* have. Suffice it to say that most *Ahungs* of any standing at all are able to read and more or less understand the New Testament as well as the Koran, and many are able to read and understand Arabic tracts. They are almost without exception interested in theology, from their student days onward. Indeed this appears to be true of a number of the laity too. In talking of things religious the Moslem is distinguished from the Chinese by his refusal to agree to doctrines that he has been taught to look upon as heretical, unless he has something to gain by so doing, as e. g., treatment for some illness. But he is usually quite willing to listen to a reasonable explanation of those Christian doctrines to which he has preconceived objections. The stumbling block to his "belief unto salvation" is rather the power of his religious system than his theology. This power lies in the general opinion of his co-religionists and above all in the *Ahung*. Social ostracism and excommunication must be faced by the sinner, the backslider or the believer in Christ, but it is only on the last that either is likely to come.

In all parts of the province, there are students trained to be *Ahungs*. The training school is in the mosque, and the "*Kai-hsioh Ahung*" is responsible. He is usually resident at the mosque, visiting his wife in his own home at regular intervals. There are other *Ahungs* in connection with each mosque, as the "*San tao*" "*hsiang tao*," etc. But the tendency, especially in Hochow under Ma Aan-liang, has been to make the whole responsibility rest upon the "*Kai hsioh Ahung*."

Most Moslem children attend a mosque for a short time, and learn the Arabic alphabet. Some of those who give promise, go on to the "*Kha t'ing*" and then "*Tsa hsioh*" and then the Koran (or else straight to the Koran). Those who are destined to become *Ahungs*

read through the Koran parrot-fashion, and then learn to "expound" it. In the course of study for *Ahungs*, there are also twelve works on Arabic grammar, Koran, exegesis, etc., and besides those there are "innumerable 'Kitabs.'" "

The support of the "*K'ai hsioh Ahung*" and the students (*Maula*) of each mosque appears to be provided by the parish and when an *Ahung* or *Maula* has officiated at a funeral, marriage, or the like, a present is given.

Some *Ahungs* have a considerable knowledge of Arabic as a written language, and some know something of Persian and Turkish. But there are also a few who can do little beyond "reading" the required Scriptures at the various ceremonies. But this must not be taken to mean that the *Ahungs* and laymen are not thorough Moslems. It is surprising to find what a comparatively large knowledge of things Islamic most Mohammedans have; names of "Prophets" and numerous Arabic and Persian terms are in general use among the unlettered laity ("*Kao mu*," "*ha han*").

The sects of Kansu are the three: the Old, the New and the "New New." The "New New" sect, rising in T'aochow (old city) was attacked with a view to extermination by Ma An-liang in 1914, but some leaders escaped, and the sect still exists in Western Kansu. The present leader, known as Ersa (i. e. Jesus!) is in prison in Lanchow.

Within the last few months (since the death of Ma An-liang) there has been considerable discussion between the *old* and *new* sects (which may result in more openness to the Gospel, though with the danger of political motives). This dissension seems to have been suppressed for the time.

Besides the sects there are numerous "*Men Huan*," (saints) notably four "great" ones. These were founded by various earnest *Ahungs* on their return from Mecca, with a view to reformation. Such leaders have become more or less canonized and their tombs have become places for worship. The enlightened deny that the

saints are worshipped but the layman seems to understand nothing of theological distinction.

The attitude of Kansu Moslems to the Gospel is still largely undefined. There has been much friendliness shown in various parts. And there has also been considerable opposition. A change will surely come when they are brought face to face with the Gospel in a definite way, but what that change will bring forth, remains to be seen.

A considerable number of Arabic Scriptures have been sold or given away, notably in the Sining district, and such suitable Christian literature as is available has been used to a limited extent. Messrs. H. F. Ridley (Sining) G. Hunter (Tuhwafu) W. Christie (Titao) D. A. G. Harding (Tsinchow) and G. Findlay Andrew (Lanchow) and others have given active attention to the subject of Islam in Kansu in the past. At present there is a Kansu Moslem Committee and three missionaries are studying Arabic. One of them, Dr. G. E. King, has done a considerable amount of medical work among Moslems. The other two are junior missionaries whose aim it is to give whole time to work among Moslems. It may be possible for one missionary to learn the language of the *Salars* at a future date, and perhaps for another to learn that of the *Tunghsiang Hui-Hui*.

Besides the fact that until now those interested in work among Moslems have been kept too busy in other work to give more than a very unsatisfactory amount of time to Christian work among Moslems, there are three distinct difficulties to be faced by the worker among Moslems in Kansu.

First, that of distance. The large communities of Moslems are situated far apart. Thus from the Moslem district north of Sining to Hochow would be about five days' journey, Hochow to Taochow (if one is willing to face the difficulties and certain degree of danger of crossing country inhabited by Tibetans) three or four days; Hochow to Lanchow, two and a half days; Lanchow to Kuyuan, say eight days. Lanchow-Ningsia, twelve days; Lanchow to Changchia

Ch'uan, eight days. Add to this the fact that only in Sining, Hochow, and Ningsia are there mission stations. Travel must be by cart or on horseback. In each of the centres named there is ample scope for settled missionary work entirely among Moslems. But if all the Moslems are to be reached there will always need to be itineration from these centers, when they are established.

Race hatred is the second difficulty. The bitter feeling that exists between Chinese and Moslems is considerably softened by the lapse of years since the Mohammedan rebellion, but is still so strong that it is difficult for anyone who has not lived in Kansu to realize what it means. The Chinese and Moslem communities are so separate that it is possible to live in the midst of the former and know little about the latter save that they are "thieves" and villains! The ideal for the missionary to Moslems would be to live among the Moslems, have a Moslem servant, and live in a "clean" way (eat no pork, use no lard, buy everything, especially meat, from Moslems).

Lastly, there is the power of Mohammedanism. This has already been mentioned.

We now give a more detailed survey by districts: Lanchow including Kaoshan, Chingyuan, P'ingfan, Sha Ni, Chin, Anting *hsiens*. Mission at work:—C. I. M. at Lanchow.

In Lanchow city there are "several thousand" families of Moslems, and estimates of the population vary from 5,000, to 25,000 persons. There are communities in the South, East, "New" (also on the East, West, and "Golden City" (North of Yellow River) suburbs, and one inside the city: thirteen parishes in all. "Old," "New" and "New New" sects are represented, as are also various "*Men huan*," and there are several "*Kung peh*" near the city. As it is the capital city of the province, Hanchow has always a large floating population of Moslems from all quarters, on business of all kinds;—officials, *Ahungs*, merchants raftsmen, muleteers, etc. There are men among them from various parts of

Kansu, especially from Hochow, from Shensi, and other provinces of China proper and from Sinkiang. There are always a few Turki merchants, and occasionally Indians, Russian Moslems, etc. The resident population has its representatives in most occupations.

In Lanchow there is a "*Kuoh Min Hsioh Hsiao*" in the "New" suburb, and a "*Kao Teng*" in the south suburb, run by Moslems for Moslems. In these schools the Government curriculum is taught. Moslems in Lanchow are not united on the subject of education, and there is a considerable amount of criticism of these schools in some quarters. But the educational standard appears to be quite up to that of the Government schools, and in discipline they rank with the best schools in the city.

In religion there appear to be as various degrees of earnestness as in nominal Christianity. The month of fasting (*Ramadan*) is observed fairly strictly.

Owing to the size of Lanchow and to fact that Moslems live in defined communities, Christian work among them is impossible without definite effort. There are, however, usually a few Moslems present during preaching in the street chapel, and sometimes at Sunday services. There is a special ward for Moslems in the Borden Memorial Hospital, in which there are usually a few patients, but very few of them are local men. Arabic Scriptures are occasionally bought and some tracts have been distributed at various times.

In the Lanchow district there are few Moslems besides foodshop keepers, inn keepers, etc., along the main roads. But there are a few communities as, e. g. on the hills south of Lanchow; a place west of Anting, etc.

Northwestern District including N. P'ingfan, Kanchow, Suchow, Ansi, Liangchow, etc., *hsiens*. Mission at work:—C. I. M. at Liangchow.

There are not a large number of Moslems in this area. A Moslem military official from Hochow recently appointed to Liangchow has been followed by a number of Moslems. There are said to be Moslems in Kanchow, and some in Ansi. Most of the towns in



this district are the main road to Central Asia, so there are constantly Moslem merchants ("Chinese" and Turki, etc.) passing through, and therefore Moslem inns for their convenience. Very little information is available from this area.

Sining, including Sining, Tat'ing, Dangar, Kuerteh, Nienpeh *hsiens*. Mission: C. I. M. at Sining. There are a considerable number of Moslems throughout this district, and there are two fairly large communities, viz. in the East and suburb of Sining and in Tat'ung *hsien*. There are a number of Moslem farmers and some villages are completely Moslem.

The principal military official of this part of the province—Ma Ch'a—is a Moslem from Hochow, with the inevitable result that there are numerous petty officials and Ahungs from his home district, who hold minor positions by his appointment, much to the annoyance of local people including Mohammedans.

Islam in this district has in some ways the appearance of a growing force. Several new mosques have been erected lately. There are a number of Moslems in Sining who are able to read Chinese, but very few in the country. No special steps seem to be taken by Moslems in the direction of improving the standard of Chinese education. Although there is some open and a good deal of underground opposition to the Gospel, it appears to be easier to sell Arabic Gospels in this district than in any other part of Kansu, with the possible exception of Ningsia.

Hochow including Tao Ho (i. e. Hochow, Hsunhwa, Ningting. Missions: C. and M. A. and C. I. M. in Hochow. This is the district of Kansu in which a large percentage of Moslems extends over the largest area. It is in many ways the most important Moslem centre. If Chang Chia Ch'uan is, as has been said, "The Mecca of Kansu," then Hochow is the "Metropolis of Islam" in Kansu, for its Moslems are more, and of more various sects and even races. Principally they are of three kinds—Chinese Moslems, Salars, and Tunghsiang *Hui Hui*.

Hochow City. The city still shows scars of the Mohammedan rebellion. Until recently no Moslem was allowed to live within the walls, but now there are a few food-shop keepers, etc. The Chinese community apart from a few proselytes and women married to Moslems, seems to have been uninfluenced by the proximity and Mohammedanism; in fact, idolatry appears to have an almost exceptionally strong hold.

The south and "Small" west suburbs (the only ones) are almost entirely populated by Moslems. In the suburbs business flourishes to a far greater extent than within the city walls. Moslem merchants there have merchandise from all parts of China for sale. In the suburbs it is exceptional to meet many Chinese, and trade of all kinds is mostly in Moslem hands. There are Moslem officials the principal being the relatives of the late Ma An-liang, and a certain La "*Ta ren*" who is a "*Chu-ren*." There are quite a number of Moslems who are able to read Chinese and a school to teach the government curriculum has been opened in the suburb.

Outside the city, to the west, there are several saints' tombs, some of which are beautifully built, amidst tree-bordered approaches, ornate passage-ways, and court-yards, in large grounds. These tombs are erected to the memory of leading men of the various "*men-huan*," and are closely connected with certain religious ceremonies.

There are now fourteen mosques in the suburbs, in some of which *Ahungs* are trained who go to hold positions as such in other new parts of Kansu, and in Shensi and Szechuan.

It is impossible at the present juncture to make any full statement regarding the religious conditions prevailing in this district. There are the New, Old, and "New New" sects; four great *men-huan* and numerous small ones. Since the death of Ma An-liang in November, 1918, there have been considerable disagreements between Old and New Sects, "New New" being anathema to both. A proclamation put out by the Tuchun of Kansu has forbidden further dispute, but

what the future holds without a Ma An-liang remains to be seen.

The attitude of the people to the Gospel varies. In some cases they appear friendly, but in others prove themselves to be as bigoted as any Moslems in the province. Desultory work has been done by Christian missionaries during the past twenty-six years, but there has been no specialized work for Moslems.

The Hochow District contains a large Moslem population. The east, south and west country is chiefly inhabited by Moslems, but the "Northern Plateau" is Chinese.

Hsunhwa, the centre of the district occupied by the Salars, is two and a half days' journey (200 li) from Hochow. It is on the south of the Yellow River. On this side of the River there are the eight "Kung" (districts) where the pure Salars live. These are descendants of immigrants from Samarkand, and their own language is still Turki except where odd Chinese words have taken the place of some forgotten Turki one, (e. g. never seeing a cart in their mountain district, the Turki word has fallen out of use, and the Salars call cart—*Cha tsi*). Little information is available from this district beyond the fact that these people are Moslems.

On the north bank of the Yellow River at this part, there is a very mixed population: Chinese, Tibetans, Salars, etc. There are a number (perhaps twelve) of "*Wai Wu Kung*" of Salars there. Of them, some speak Chinese as their native tongue, some Tibetan, some Salar, and some speak all these languages.

The Salars are ranked with the Tunghsiang *Hui-Hui* as the worst thieves, liars, scoundrels, everything bad, that the province produces. There are a number of Salar soldiers in Sining, Hochow, Ningsia, etc.

Tunghsiang *Hui-Hui*. These are Moslems of Ugrian Stock (same as the Aborigines of Kansu) converted to Islam at an early date. They inhabit the mountainous district east of Hochow and west of the Pao River. Like the Salars, they are notably wild. They include

soldiers and robbers who go to most parts of Kansu. In their own homes they make frequent use of knives and such crude fire arms as they have. They are divided into thirty-six "hui." The number of mosques throughout their country must be considerable, for every village has its own. In case of small hamlets, it appears that each has its own place of worship, but on Friday several unite for the principal service.

The "Hochow Tunghsiang" is noted for its felt, poultry and eggs and *hoh tsi* (a woolen cloth something like coarse serge).

There seems to be very little of education among the Tunghsiang *Hui-Hui*. In religions they appear bigoted; but the recent disputes between old and new sects have effected them, so that they are probably more open to the Gospel than ever before, though some would be likely to profess interest for political motives, were work commenced among them. But where is the preacher. No missionary has yet learned their language. Most of the men can speak Chinese, but not so the women. Their language is that of the aborigines.

South Christian Missionary Alliance District including Titao, Kung Chang, Paochow, Minchow, Kiaichow, Wenhsien, etc. Mission: C. M. A.

There are small communities of Moslems, each with its mosques, in most of the towns of this district (e. g. Minchow 400 families (*in toto*) Kiaichow 2500 families and smaller towns to "a few" or "a few tens"), but the only place in which there is a large Moslem population is *T'ao Chow* old city (not *Lintan hsien*), in which two-thirds of the population is Moslem. Here there are a number of Mohammedan merchants who trade with Tibetans coming from the interior of the North-east province of Tibet. There are also Moslems in the district. Very little special work has been possible among them, owing to the pressure of work among Chinese and Tibetans, and to the separateness of the Moslem communities.

South China Inland Mission District including Tsin-

chow (T'ienshui) Fukiang, T'ungwei, Ch'ing Shui, Liang Tang, Huei, Ch'eng, Siho, Li, etc., *hsiens*. Missions: China Inland Mission at Fukiang and Tsinchow.

The centre of the Mohammedanism of this district is Chang Chia Ch'uan, religiously one of the most important centres in Kansu. Ma "Shan Ren" has a home there and his influence sways the district and spreads through all the provinces and to places in Sinkiang and Yunnan. Practically all the Moslems in this district belong to the Ma "Shan Ren's" sect. Throughout the country thirty li south, east and west, and we have no information as to how far north, the population is entirely Moslem with the exception of a few handicraft workers. There are said to be eighty mosques in the Chang Chia Chu'an district. There are some *Ahungs* there who have a considerable knowledge of Arabic together with some Persian and Turkish. There are some of the merchant class who know Chinese character, but the *Ahungs* usually study Arabic only.

Scandinavian Alliance Mission (C. I. M.) District including all the east of Kansu—viz. east of Ling Tai, Tsungsin, Hwating, Chwanglang, Chingning, Haicheng, Plyinguan, Hwa Ma Ch'ih. Mission: S. A. M.

We have very little information regarding Islam in this district. In the K'ing Yang Fu district there are no Moslems except a few food-sellers. But through the rest of the area there are communities—some pretty large ones. From the Moslem point of view, this is a continuation of the Chang Chia Ch'uan district. Ma Shan Ren has a residence in Kuyuan, which is said to be a strongly Moslem district. Other places in which there appear to be large communities are Pingliang, Hwating, Haicheng, part of Pingyuan district. In the past Moslems have shown themselves friendly in relation to the missionaries. There is one ex-Moslem Christian in the district.

Ningsia District including Ningsia, Ningsuo, P'inglo, Paofeng, Lingchow, Chinchu, Chungwei.

In the Chungwei hsien north of the Yellow River at any rate there are practically no Moslems, but

throughout the rest of this district they are numerous. In the immediate environs of Ningsia there are three mosques and about fifty families. Through the rest of the area, the mosques are mostly away from the cities and unlike many parts of Kansu, the Moslem population is largely a rural one. Christian work would need to reach them by means of the markets held in the towns and large villages.

Ma Fuh hsiang, of Hochow, is the principal official in the district, so there are a number of Moslem military officials and soldiers and some *Ahungs* from Hochow in most places. As General Ma is an enthusiast on education, there is hope that there will be a number of Moslems able to read Chinese within a few years. He has now ordered that every mosque-parish open a school in which Chinese is taught, and has spent some thousands of *taels* on opening such schools. The standard of training of *Ahungs* is rather high in this district. There are a number of men of undoubted ability among them.

Especially in the Ling Wu (Ling Chow) and Chin Chi districts, there are a number of saints' tombs (*king peh.*) These are mere tombs (some 20 ft. in diameter tapering up 30-50 ft.) not buildings like those in Hochow. In most cases there is a door opening into the tomb on the south side.

Practically no specialized work has been done for these Moslems. Recent experience has proved that they are exceptionally friendly in relation to missionaries, but, as throughout Kansu, there has been too little Christian work to test their friendliness or rouse much opposition.

M. E. BOTHAM.

*Hochow, Kansu.*