ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CH'IN-HAI SALARS

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The Salars are one of the minority peoples of China, and they live mainly at Hsün-hua, south of Sining, in the mountainous district of the Ch'ing-hai Province, on the south bank of the Huang-ho (the Yellow River), and some live at Hua-lung north of the Huang-ho and at Ling-hsia (or Ho-chou) in the Kansu Province. In Chinese sources the Salars are firstly reported in the early eighteenth century (in 1707)¹, but the Tâ 'rikh-i Rashidî of Mirzá Ḥaïdar Dughlât (compiled in 1547) already mentions of the Ho-chou Salars². According to G. N. POTANIN³ and W. W. ROCKHILL⁴, who visited the Salar district to investigate their language and ethnographical features at the end of the nineteenth century, the Ch'ing-hai Salars were reported for the first time as Turkic-speaking Muslims. A number of linguistic materials show that the Ch'ing-hai Salars speak the Salar dialect, one of the Turkic languages⁵. The present-day Ch'ing-hai Salars are Muslims, and have their own mosques, and they are engaged in farming, handicraft and commerce, their total popu-

¹ Kuo Chao-tso and others, Ho-chou-chih, compiled in 1707.
² N. Elias (ed.), A history of the Moghuls of Central Asia, being the Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, Dughlât, an English version, edited with commentary, notes and map, the translation by E. D. Ross, London, 1898, p. 404.
⁴ W. W. Rockhill, Diary of a journey through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892, City of Washington, 1894.
lation (including those of Kansu) being about 31,923. In 1781, originated from religious frictions between the New and Old Sects, the Ch'ing-hai Salars made revolts against the Ch'ing dynasty but were soon suppressed. They also broke up in 1862-74 and in 1895-96, but in vain. In Chinese historical materials the Salars are always reported to have been a ferocious and fighting people. Revolts of the Salars were not only due to religious antagonism among themselves but also to the Ch'ing policy of suppressing minority peoples of the Chinese frontiers. In 1954, by the minority people policy of the Chinese People's Republic, the Salar Autonomous Prefecture has been established for the sake of the Ch'ing-hai Salars.

The ethnic history of the Ch'ing-hai Salars has not yet been made clear owing to lack of written materials that show exactly their origin and lineage, but, linguistic and ethnological materials have recently been considerably accumulated by Western scholars, so it is not so difficult to elucidate the origin of the Ch'ing hai Salars to a great extent. T. SHIBATA, who investigated language of the Salar merchants staying at Peking and Sui-yüan in 1943, pointed out that the Salars could be considered to have migrated from Western Turkistan. P. PELLIOT suggested that the Salar (< Salghur), a part of the Guzz-Turkmens might be ancestors of the Ch'ing-hai Salars, and in the opinion of E. R. TENISHEV the ethnic name of the Salar ~ Salar, a tribe of the Turkmen, has common with the Ch'ing-hai Salars. N. POPPE who studied linguistic materials gathered by G. N. POTANIN came to the following conclusion: "Salar belongs, beyond doubt, to what is generally known as East Turki. East Turki is the common name for the Turkic dialects spoken in East Turkistan. ... On the other hand, Salar differs from East Turki as explored by ROQUETTE and JARRING .... Thus, although Salar differs from the remaining dialects of East Turki, it is only one of its dialects and is not an independent language." But, N. POPPE

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does not accord special attention to the problem of the historical origin of the Ch'ing-hai Salars.

The most important material concerning the origin of the Ch'ing-hai Salars is the emigration legend prevalent among them. W. ROCKHILL recorded a tradition that the Salars had migrated from Samarqand to Hsün-hua in 1370 (the 1st year of Hung-ruu or the 3rd year of the foundation of the Ming dynasty), and G. F. ANDREW also recorded a tale that the Salars had migrated formerly from Samarqand to Hsün-hua. This emigration legend was minutely recorded by E. R. TENISHEV, who calls this legend Salarnigi li-shi (li-shi means “history” in Chinese). The main point of this tale is as follows: Qaraman and Akhman, ancestors of the Salars, started from Samarqand for East as result of political disturbances in Western Turkestan, and by way of Central Asia, emigrated to the Province of Ch'ing-hai in 1370, and settled themselves in the district of Hsün-hua. According to the Hsün-hua-i'ing-chih which seems to contain some portions of the Tsü-pu (Family Chronicle) of the Han Family, Han Pao and Kuan-tsü, aboriginal officials (i'u-tsü) of the Ch’ing-hai Salars were both hereditary governors (daruyaçı) under the Yüan dynasty (1260-1367), and submitted themselves to the Ming dynasty in 1370. It is not sure whether they were daruyaçı under the Yüan dynasty, but the very year of their submission to the Ming in 1370 is clearly indicated here as well as cases of other materials. Though it is not known when this version of the emigration legend was formed, and, moreover, the chronology of the year 1370 is too distinct to believe it without hesitation, yet this legend suggests the probability of western origin of the Ch’ing-hai Salars, because Qaraman still remains a clan name among the Salor tribes of the Turkmen people, and the Salor or Salur has been existing as ethnic names long years among the Turkmen people in Western Turkestan.

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12 V. Drimba is of opinion that the Salar dialect is not related to the Oghuz-Qipchaq dialect, but to East Turki or the Chaghatai language, and he partly agrees with N. Poppe. See, V. Drimba, “Sur a classification de la langue salare”, Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher, Band 40, Heft 3–4 (1968), pp. 200–213.


15 E. R. Tenishev, Salarskie teksty, str. 119–125

According to Chinese source materials of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ch'ing-hai Salars consisted of the Inner Kung (Nei-kung) and the Outer Five Kung (Wai-wu-kung): the Inner kung were originally divided into twelve kung and the Outer Five Kung were composed of five kung. The meaning of the term kung (usually pronounced gung) is not yet made clear, but it is doubtful whether the term kung may mean “colony” or “agricultural works” in Chinese as generally regarded. In my opinion the term kung may be identified with arabic word “guom”, namely “tribe”. Kung is a special term showing the tribal unit of the Ch’ing-hai Salars. In the followings we enumerate the names of the Twelve Kung belonging to the Inner Kung and of the Outer Kung by Ch’ing materials, such as the Ho-chou-chih, the Lan-chou chi-liüeh and the Hsün-hua-t'ing-chih.

The Nei-kung consisted of the parts, that is to say, the Western Section or Upper Six Kung and the Eastern Section or Lower Six Kung. The Upper Six Kung situated east of Hsün-hua consisted of Chie-tzu (or Kai-tzu) Kung, Tsao-t'an Kung, Ch'a-chia Kung, Su-chih Kung, Pieh-chieh Kung, Ch'a-hanta-ssü Kung; the Lower Six Kung situated west of Hsün-hua consisted of Ch'ing-shui Kung, Ta-su-ku Kung, Chang-ha Kung, Yaman (or Nai-man) Kung and Hsieh-ch'ang Kung. Kai-tzu Kung was center of them. The Wai-wu-kung consisted of Ts'a-pa Kung, Kan-tou (or Gan-dou) Kung, Ch'unke-Kung, Ka-er-kang Kung and Nan-su-tuo Kung. After the suppression of the Salar rebellion of 1781, the above-mentioned twelve kung were reduced to eight kung (the so-called Sa-la p'a-kung). The Nei-kung was located to the south bank of the Yellow River, while the Wai-wu-kung was settled to the north bank of the River. They were all six thousands families. The fact that the Ch'ing-hai Salars consisted of the Inner and Outer Kung deserves special attention, because the Salor (or Salur) tribe of the Khwarazm region are reported to have been divided into the Inner Salor

17 Yang Ying-chü, Hsi-ning-fu hsien-chih, compiled in 1747; Kung Ching-han, Hsün-hua-t'ing-chih, manuscript of 1844; A-kei and others, Ch'in-ting Lan-chou-chi-liüeh, compiled in 1782; Tso Ts'ung-t'ang, Tso Wen hsüang kung tsou-kao, published in 1890.
18 P. Pelliot, Ibid.
19 Chou Chen-hao pointed out that kung would mean “race” or “tribe” (Chou Chen-hao, Ch'ing-hai, Shanghai, 1928).
20 J. Trippner, Ibid.
21 Lan-chou-chi-liüeh, chapter VI.
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(Ichki-Salar) and the Outer Salor (Tashay-Salar). W. ROCKHILL reports that the Ch’ing-hai Salars consisted of Salar ges (Upper Salar) and Salar mes (Lower Salar), which coincides with Chinese materials concerning the Upper and Lower kung. The fact that the Upper Kung Salars consisted of Han family (or the Han clan) and the Lower Kung Salars consisted of Ma-family is worth noticing. These facts suggest that the Khwarazmian Salors and Ch’ing-hai Salars have dual organization of tribal structure in common. Judging from the facts that the Salar dialect is presumably reckoned as a dialect of the Turkmen or Chaghataian language, and that the Ch’ing-hai Salars have a tradition of their western origin (namely, migration from Samarkand), it may be quite probable that some of the Turkmen-Salors have migrated from Central Asia to North-west China in the latter half of the fourteenth century under the Mongolian Empire, if the date of their appearance in Ch’ing-hai in 1370 could be authentic.

As is the case of the Sarigh Uyghurs distributed in the mountainous districts of Kanchou, it is no wonder that the Salars have continued to exist over several centuries as an isolated groups of Turkic stock in the borderlands of North-west China: they have been able to survive about six hundreds years, because they were located in the mountainous districts of Ch’ing-hai, North-west China.


23 W. W. Rockhill, Ibid., p. 80.

24 Hsün-hua-ch’ing-chih, and J. Trippner, Ibid.

25 T. Suguichi, “On the ethnic history of the Sarigh Uyghurs” (To be published in Oriental Studies presented to Professor Dr. T. Yamamoto).

26 This paper is supplement to the present author’s articles contributed to Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta, vol. III (in preparation).