



Qiraat

The Earliest Muslim Communities in China

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Abstract ▶

This article explores the earliest Muslim immigration into China during the Tang and Song dynasties. The background of such immigration, along with various Chinese titles to designate Muslims, their communities, and their leaders demonstrate the earliest forms of recognition of the Muslims by the Chinese people. The article focuses on the studies of the Muslim leaders' duties and their confrontations with the Chinese legal system; to adapt to a new society, a community must undergo acculturation. Finally, the system of Muslim leaders was improved by the succeeding Mongol Yuan dynasty, by which time it became an established tradition that has been passed on by the Hui people until today.

I. Background on Muslim Immigration to China ▶

The making of a Chinese Muslim people, the Hui Hui people (popularly abbreviated as the Hui or the Hui people today), was mainly due to the Mongol Westward Expeditions, which drove large groups of Muslims from Central Asia into China during the twelfth century; without such massive immigration, which was done for military purposes, it is unlikely we would have seen the so-called Hui Hui ethnic group in China today.

However, before these massive immigrations for military purposes, some Arab and Persian merchants had been living in China from the mid-seventh century onward; historians today refer to these people as the “forerunners” of the Hui Hui. The term “Hui Hui forerunners” is used to distinguish them from the main group of “Hui Hui,” who came to China from Central Asia because of the Mongol Expeditions.

The period of the “Hui Hui forerunners” lasted about 500 years from the mid-seventh century to the twelfth century. By the twelfth century, when large-scale immigration came to China, they were quickly absorbed into the main body and became one integrated part of the Hui Hui, a term invented to designate the new ethnic group in the Mongol Empire (since 1206 CE) and the succeeding Yuan dynasty in China (1271–1368 CE), which was also established by the Mongol people.

This article will discuss the earliest Muslim immigrants to China prior to the Mongol Westward Expeditions, the “Hui Hui forerunners.” They came to China mainly for business purposes, and many of them travelled a circuit between Central and Western Asia and China via the overland Silk Road and maritime Silk Road, which are called “One Belt and One Road” today. This period covers the Chinese Tang and Song dynasties, which witnessed the prosperity of the Hui Hui forerunners. Associated with the business activities, cultural communications in many aspects were also established between many regions across the Asian continent, including around the Indian Ocean regions, the South China Sea regions, and China. The

communications were established mainly by the Muslim population, which streamed back and forth across such regions; and in addition to Muslims, there were also Christians, Jews, Manichaeists, and people of other faiths.

The most important business empire that communicated with China was *Dashi*, or “Tazi” in Persian, which was used in Chinese historical documents to refer to the Arab Empire. The *Lingwai daida* (*Notes on the land beyond the passes*) states: “The so-called Tazi was a collective term designating a group of countries.”¹ In fact, “Tazi” here referred to the entire Arab Empire. In 651 CE, the Arabs defeated the Persian Sassanid Empire and established their own Empire across West and Central Asia, which included many kingdoms, khanates, protectorates, and subordinate tributary countries; its easternmost boundary reached present-day Xinjiang province. During the eighth century, Dashi, or the Abbasid Caliphate, became a neighbor of China; the border regions were located in the Talas river basin in the adjacent regions of present-day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition to Dashi, the main sources of immigrants were many kingdoms in present-day Southeast Asia, South Asia, and even as far away as in the regions around the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The book *Lingwai daida*, completed in 1128 CE by Zhou Qufei, who lived during the Song dynasty, was an important classic of geography in its time. The book lists several countries that were included under the term “Dashi”; they are *Ma-li-ba* (today’s Malabar Coast in India); *Ma-jia* (Mecca; today’s Saudi Arabia); *Bai-da* (Bagdad), which was the capital of the Dashi Empire; *Ji-ci-ni* (today’s Ghazni in Afghanistan); and *Mei-lu-gu-dun* (also “Lu-meigu,” also known as “Rūm). Some regard it as today’s Istanbul or, in other words, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, while others regard it as today’s Rome; and yet others as *Wu-si-li* (Mosul, today in northern Iraq).²

(1) Zhou Qufei (Song dynasty), “scroll 3, *Hanghai waiyi* [maritime routes and alien countries],” in *Lingwai daida* (completed in 1178 CE).

(2) The names in brackets in this paragraph are mainly based on Feng Chengjun, *Xiyu Diming* [Geographical Names of the Western Regions] (Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1982).

Large amounts of special local products from the vast region kept flooding into China in exchange for silk, porcelain, and other Chinese products during the Tang and Song dynasties.

The earliest record that the Arab-Chinese diplomatic relationship is in 651 CE. *The Old of the Tang* states, “in the *yichou* day of the eighth month of the second year in the Yonghui reign [of the Tang dynasty], *Dashi-guo* [Arabia] starts to dispatch its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].”³ During the Tang dynasty, the Umayyad Caliphate had dispatched envoys to visit China 17 times between 651 and 747 CE; even after its defeat by the Abbasid Caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate reestablished itself in Spain (756-1130 CE) paid visits to China two more times (in 760 and 772 CE); the succeeding Abbasid Caliphate visited China 16 times between 752 and 798 CE.⁴ During the Song dynasty, envoys of the Abbasid, the Abbasid Caliphate officially visited China 49 times between 968 and 1168 CE; on average, a visit occurred once every four years.⁵

The main Chinese cities where Muslim communities settled were situated along the coastal regions such as Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou; the cities in inner provinces were Chang’an (today’s Xi’an), Luoyang, and Kaifeng. The Muslims who settled in the coastal cities were those who came mainly via the maritime Silk Road, namely, from the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Melaka and the South China Sea and finally to China; those who settled in the cities of the inner provinces were mainly those who came from the

(3) Song Qi et al (Song dynasty), eds., “scroll 4, biographies 4, “Emperor Gaozong” (the upper part),” in *Jiu Tang shu* [*Old Book of the Tang*]; See also “scroll 970, *waichen-bu* [ministry of local officials] 15, *chaogong* [tribute paying], 3,” in *Cefu Yuanguai* [Archival palace as great tortoise oracle].

Note: The Chinese lunar calendar is the 8th Month, 6th Day, the 2nd year of the Yonghui reign; the Hijra calendar is January 2nd, the 31st year; and the Gregorian calendar is September 18th, 651 CE.

(4) Yang Huaizhong, “Tnag dai de fanke” [“The fanke in the Tang dynasty”], in ed., Yang Huaizhong, *Huizu shi lungao* [Collected Articles on Huizu Studies] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 1991), 53–57.

(5) Bai Shouyi, “Song shi Dashi shangren zai Zhongguo de huodong” [The Dashi businessmen’s activities during the Song dynasty,] in *Zhongguo Yisilan shi gangyao cankao ziliao* [The referential data for the outline of Chinese Islamic history] (Shanghai: tongwen shuju, 1948), 147.

overland Silk Road, namely, from West Asia through Central Asia to present-day Xinjiang and finally to China's heartland.

According to the famous Hui scholar, Bai Shouyi, apart from the aforementioned two routes, there were another two routes that combined sea and overland travel; the first went from Dashi to An Nam (the present-day southern part of Vietnam) by sea and then to China's Yunnan province by land, and, the second way went from Dashi to Sindu (India) by sea and then to Yunnan by land. These two routes, however, were only used by a limited number of travellers.⁶ The author of this article surmises that those who entered Yunnan would have eventually left for the coastal cities.

Why was the Sino-Arab commerce so prosperous? There were many factors, but the most important reasons include, first, the fact that the two empires were huge in territory, rich in resources and products, and powerful in political and military forces, so both were confident and oriented toward the outside world. Second, the two empires became neighbors due to their expansion in the same region, namely, Central Asia; and after that time, they became increasingly familiar with each other. And third, the traditional Silk Road had been an economic source for the Tang dynasty; since the Song dynasty onward, Chinese economic power gradually moved to South China for climatic and political reasons, hence, the maritime Silk Road was quickly developed and many coastal harbors were established. The scholar Tansen Sen writes, "to oversee the coastal trade, a Bureau of Maritime Commerce was established at Guangzhou in 971, followed by offices at Hangzhou in 989, Mingzhou in 999, Quanzhou in 1087, and Mizhou in 1088."⁷ At the same time, the Arab Empire remained an intermediary and beneficiary between the East and Europe; Zhou Qufei who lived during the Song dynasty stated that "among all the alien countries who

(6) Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo Huijiao xiaos shi* [A brief history of Huijiao in China]. Originally published in 1944; Reprinted in Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo Yisilan shi cunqao* [Draft on the history of Chinese Islam], (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 1983), 1–44.

(7) Tansen Sen, "Administration of Maritime Trade during the Tang and Song Dynasties," *China Report* (Southwest University, 1996): 256.

possesses the richest kinds of, and the most treasurable value of, goods, no other country may surpass Dashi.”⁸ Accordingly, Muslims from Dashi probably comprised the largest foreign population in China.

II. Designating Alien people in China: from “Hu” to “Fan” ►

Chinese historical documents used “Hu” to designate alien people; this word was mainly used during the Tang dynasty, but also in the Song and other succeeding dynasties. “Hu” originally referred to a minority in the Mongol Plateau, but later it came to refer to any alien people. During the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), Muslims and other foreign groups were labeled with this word; examples include, the *hu-ke* (foreign guest or alien person), *hu-shang* or *shang-hu* (alien businessman or foreign merchants), and *gu-hu* (a business foreigner). The *Tang Shu* (*The Book of Tang*) states,

In the early year of the Zhide reign [756–758 CE], [Deng Jingshan] was promoted to the Military Commissioner in charge of Qing-Qi [in today’s Shandong province], later he was transferred to Prefecture Commander of Huai-nan. His administrative manner was simple and strict, which was known in the court. In the fourth year when he stayed in this position, Liu Huizhan rebelled. [Deng] commanded the Ping-lu Vice Commissioner, Tian Shengong, to suppress the rebellion. But when Tian reached Yangzhou [city], he plundered the properties of the local people, and [those who refused were] forced to submit. Several thousand of *shang-hu* Arabs and Persians died.⁹

Here, “*shang-hu* Arabs and Persians” refers to Arab and Persian merchants. They were foreign people who had no Chinese nationality in modern sense. The shops they opened were called *hu-dian*, or foreigners’ shops.

(8) Zhou Qufei (Song dynasty), “scroll 3, *Hanghai waiyi* [maritime routes and alien countries],” in *Lingwai daida*.

(9) Song Qi et al (Song dynasty) eds., “scroll 110, “biography of Deng Jingshan,” in *Jiu Tang Shu* [Old book of Tang] (completed in 945 CE).

This example was a tragedy for foreigners; however this level of violence was rare. A popular literary book that has collected many legendary stories of the Tang dynasty, the *Taiping Guangji* (*The extensive record during the Taiping reign*) includes many stories concerning the activities of the foreigners in China.¹⁰ The majority of them came from West Asia, Central Asia, and the present-day Southeast Asian countries. All of them were called “Hu” people; for example, “Hu men,” “Hu businessmen,” or “Hu monks” and so on. The “Hu figures” are not all Muslims, but five stories concern the Arab and Persian merchants, who are definitely Muslims. These are some of the characteristics of the stories: first, the characters are merchants, and second, the relationship between them and the Chinese is very friendly.¹¹ Since literary creations depict social realities, these stories convey the openness and prosperity of Chinese society at the time, and the conditions of the “Hu merchants,” who lived well in China.

A famous historian in the Song dynasty, Sima Guang states, in *Zi zhi tong jian* (*Comprehensive mirror for aid in government*), that during the Tang dynasty, “the *hu-ke* [foreign guests or people] lived in Chang’an [today’s Xi’an], some of whom had been living [there] for more than 40 years, and all had their wives and sons here. They made their profits from mortgages on their land and properties and enjoyed peaceful lives here; nobody was ready to return to their homelands.”¹² This portrays some aspects of their lives.

The term “fan” became increasingly used, although it did not entirely substitute the term “Hu,” to designate alien people during the succeeding Song dynasty. The original meaning of the word *fan* in the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC)

(10) Li Fang et al (Song dynasty), eds., *Taiping Guangji* [The extensive record in the Taiping reign] (completed in 978).

(11) Wan Lei, “Five Legendary Stories: The Earliest Records of Hu-ren [Barbarians from the West Regions] in Henan.” In the China National Hui-ological Society, ed., *China Hui Studies*, 3 (2017) (Zhengzhou: March 2017): 38-41.

(12) Sima Guang (Song dynasty), ed., “scroll 232, *Tang ji* [Records on the Tang dynasty], *Zhenyuan san nian* (The 3rd year of the Zhenyuan reign [787 CE]),” in *Zi zhi tongjian* [Comprehensive mirror for aid in government].

referred to the regions and the peoples beyond the *Jiu-zhou* (ancient Nine Prefectures) of China. Later on, the word took on the meaning of “alien” or “foreign.” Accordingly, all countries beyond China, near or far, were called *fan-guo* (foreign countries). When Chinese first used the word, undoubtedly, it was a bit dismissive or prejudicial; however, as it was used more frequently, the prejudicial meaning gradually faded out.

The alien people during this stage were called *fan-ke* (foreign guests or people), *fan-min* (alien people), and *fan-ren* (alien person or persons). When some of the alien people had children in China, they were called *tu-sheng-fan-ke*, or “native-born alien people.” The merchants were mainly men; some of them brought their families from their native lands and some married local Chinese women and had their children in China who became the *tu-sheng-fan-ke*.

The *Tang huiyao* (*Institutions of the Tang dynasty*) records that “on June 16th [according to the Chinese lunar calendar] of the second year in the Zhenguan reign [628 CE], the emperor ordered that the *fan-shang* [alien merchants] should not be permitted to bring their Chinese concubines back to their native countries.”¹³ This decree provides evidence for the intermarriage of foreign merchants with Chinese women. Such historical evidence depicts the social conditions of the foreigners at the time.

A Muslim community was called *fan-fang* (alien people’s district or community) or *fan-xiang* (alien people’s lane). Zhu Yu, who lived during the Song and Yuan dynasties, states in his book, *Pingzhou ke tan* (*Pingzhou table talk*), that “the *fan-fang* in Guangzhou are the districts where the alien people from various countries live.”¹⁴ The term *fan-xiang* appears in the book of Chen Shan, who lived during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279 CE), which discusses flowers and all kinds of fragrances, states in his book, *Men shi xin yu*

(13) Wang Tuan (Song dynasty), ed., “scroll 100, *za lu* [miscellanies],” in *Tang huiyao* [Institutions of the Tang dynasty] (submitted to the emperor in 961 CE).

(14) Zhu Yu (Song and Yuan dynasties), “scroll 2, Guangzhou *fan-fang* (the *fan-fang* in Guangzhou),” in *Pingzhou ke tan* [Pingzhou table talks] (printed in 1102 CE).

(*Casual new talks*), that one can get real ambergris from the *fan-xiang* (alien people's lane).¹⁵

The place where foreigners lived normally was an independent lane or street or a district inside a city. These were called *fan-fang*, meaning alien people's lane, street, or district.



The *Huai-sheng-si* (Remembrance of the Prophet's Mosque) at present-day Guangzhou, Guangdong province. This mosque is one of the earliest mosques built in China. According to Bai Shouyi, the mosque was built no later than the Song dynasty (960–1127 CE). The minaret was previously a navigational light-tower, which was built earlier than the mosque.



The Masjid al-Ashab in Quanzhou (Left), Fujian province originally occupied 2,500 square meters. This mosque was built in the second year of the Xiangfu reign of the Northern Song dynasty (1009 CE); its magnificence shows the prosperity of the large Muslim population at the time

(15) Chen Shan (d. 1160s), "scroll 4, "Lun nan zhong huahui" [On the Flowers in the South], in *Men shi xin yu* [Casual New Talks].



The present-day Phoenix Mosque in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. According to the inscription on a stony stele kept in the mosque [the stele was erected in the ninth year of the Kangxi reign, namely, 1670 CE], “the mosque was built during the Tang dynasty, destroyed during the last period of the Song dynasty [1265–1279 CE], and was re-established in the *Xin-si* year of the Yuan dynasty [1281 CE].”

The Hui researcher Ma Qicheng argues that the earliest *fan-fang* came into being in Guangzhou no later than the 830s CE; this is based on his research on the *fan-fang*.¹⁶ Naturally, when *fan-fang* were established (and such “alien people’s communities” were all Muslim communities), some men became community chiefs or leaders for Muslim affairs.

Besides the dominant usages of “Hu” and “Fan” during the Tang and Song dynasties, there are other words that were also used by contemporary sketch writers or essay writers to designate alien people. Some of these words unavoidably connote discriminatory meanings; but these words were not widely used as “Hu” and “Fan,” and will not be explored here.

Chinese historical documents have recorded that from the mid-seventh century onward, the forerunners of today’s Hui people started to settle in China; their communities were quickly being established. A considerable amount of research has been published on these communities and their histories. Here are two examples to underscore the large population of these alien people and the prosperity of their communities during these eras. The first example is the

(16) Ma Qicheng, “Lue shu Yisialn jiao zai Zhongguo de zao qi chuanbo” [The early expansion of Islam in China], in Gansu Minzu Institute, ed., *Islam in China* (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 1982), 176–198.

Huang Chao Rebellion, in which Canton [Guangzhou] was occupied by the rebellious troops, and 120,000 foreign people were massacred. The majority of the victims were Muslims, others were Christians and Jews. This occurred in the sixth year of the Qianfu reign (of Emperor Xizong in the Tang dynasty), namely, in 879 CE. This record can be found in Sulayman's *Ancient Account of India and China*.¹⁷ A second example, the Masjid al-Ashab in Quanzhou, Fujian province originally occupied 2,500 square meters. This mosque was built in the second year of the Xiangfu reign of the Northern Song dynasty (1009 CE); being able to construct such a magnificent mosque shows the prosperity of large Muslim population at the time. Moreover, public Muslim cemeteries that have survived also provide strong evidence for their prosperity.¹⁸ When communities developed, public cemeteries and even educational institutions were also established.

The term "community" is a modern term. In China, Hui people referred to their communities as "fang," or "lane" or "district" in English, denoting a group of Hui people who lived together in a neighbourhood in a comparatively independent place around a mosque as their center, such as a village in countryside, a street or district inside a city. Of course, the word *fan* meaning "alien people" has been given up for centuries. Today, a Hui "fang" is established depending on historical reasons, normally people from the same clan (with same surname), or from the same Islamic denomination, or from the same region of origin. Some recent Hui researchers simply use the term "Jamati" to distinguish it from a Han Chinese "community."¹⁹ However, such a term is not used among Hui people but rather is limited to some academic circles.

(17) Sulayman Altajar et al., comps., trans., Eusebius Renaudot, *Ancient Account of India and China* (London: printed for S. Harding, 1733), 41–42. It states:

"There are Persons fully acquainted with the affairs of China, who assure us, that besides the Chinese, who are massacred upon this occasion, there perished in Hundred and Twenty Thousand Mohanmedans, Jews, Christians, and Parsees, who were there on Account of Traffic."

(18) Chen Dasheng, ed., *The Islamic Inscriptions in Quanzhou* (Yinchuan and Fuzhou: Ningxia renmin/ Fujian renmin, 1984). This book is a collection of the Islamic inscriptions of Quanzhou, which was originally written in Chinese, Arabic and Persian.

(19) Ma Qiang, "chapter 2," in *Liudong de jinshen shequ* [The fluid spiritual communities] (Beijing: Beijing social sciences press, 2012).

III. Chinese Titles for Muslim Chiefs ▶

This and the following subtopics concern the titles and duties of Muslim leaders in Chinese, which are important case studies for researching the early Muslim communities.

Although we may ascertain that the Muslim Chiefs appeared in the Tang dynasty, the exact time is hard to determine. In the Tang dynasty, Li Zhao recorded in his book,

The sea ships are all foreign ships. Every year they come to Guangzhou and Anyi [Vietnamese cities]. Among them, *Shi-zi-guo* [Simhala, today's Sri Lanka] has the biggest ships. The ladders climbing to a ship are several *zhang* [equaled 2.67 meters during the Tang dynasty], and the ships were crammed with all sorts of products. When the ships arrive, they have to report to the local officials; consequently, the whole city will become noisy. The *fan-zhang* is the master; he should register his goods at the Shipping Office of the City and should pay the taxes for the goods. Rare birds and beasts are prohibited [for transportation]. If he cheats the officials, he will be jailed. As their ships come by sea, they breed white pigeons for sending messages; if their ships sink, the white pigeons may be used to send messages [to the people on land].²⁰

Clearly, the *fan-zhang* (番長) here was a “master” in charge of business to China. Apart from the *fan-zhang*, there were several other names for Muslim chiefs or leaders, but the designation seems confusing; it may refer to any important Muslim personages.

One term *du-fan-zhang* (都番長). The word “du” in Chinese means an area of “ten prefectures,” which covers quite a large region. But it does not mean that

(20) See Li Zhao (early 9th century), *Tang guo shi bu* [Supplement on Tang history], lower scroll. See also Wang Dang (Song dynasty), *Tang yu lin* [Sketches of the Tang dynasty] (completed in ca. 12th century). In scroll 10 of Wang's book, it has a similar record with slight difference from that by Li Zhao; perhaps Wang edited his book using Li as a reference.

a Muslim Chief definitely controlled ten prefectures; rather, it means that he held an important position. For example, in the city of Guangzhou at the time, there was a Muslim Chief who was called *du-fan-zhang*. The *Tang Huiyao* (*Institutions of the Tang Dynasty*) states,

In the June of the first year of the Tianyou reign, [the Emperor authorized that] the tributary envoy from *Fo-qi-guo* [Samboja Kingdom], the *du-fan-zhang* Pu-he-li [Abu Hassan] as Ningyuan General [Pacifying-Far Regions General] in Fujian-dao [namely, in Fuzhou].”

This story happened in 904 CE; “Samboja Kingdom in which Abu Hassan came from was a kingdom in the Greater Sunda Islands, belonging to Indonesia today.”²¹ As Abu Hassan was a distinguished envoy, this Chinese book simply called him *du-fan-zhang*, also meaning Muslim Chief; he was, originally, an envoy, who of course held a distinguished position in his kingdom.

A second name for Muslim Chief besides *fan-zhang* was *fan-qiu* (番酋). “Qiu” in Chinese means “chieftain” or “emir” Liu Xun who lived during the late period of the Tang dynasty and described ‘Persian dates’, mentioned the *fan-qiu* in his *Lingbiao lu yi* (*Records on exotic southern regions of the Wuling Mountains*):

One may see a kind of tree in Guangzhou City which has no branches around the stem and grows as high as thirty to forty *chi* [1 *chi* was equal to 30.7 cm during the Tang dynasty]. . . . The dates are similar to the green dates in Central and Northern China but smaller. The color of the dates is green but later they grow yellow; by this time all the leaves fall, and you may see the dates in groups, with each group having 20 to 30 dates. I have

(21) Liu Bao, “Tang houqi dongnan dushi Hu-ren shishi kaoshu” [Studies on foreigners in southeast cities of the late Tang dynasty] (M.A. dissertation, Jinan University, 2015), 23–24.

Li Bao argues that *Fo-qi* is the abbreviation of *San-fo-qi*, which referred to Samboja Kingdom. In terms of the personage’s name, *Pu-he-li* is a mistake for *Pu-he-su*, as “li” and “su” are similar in writing; this is according to the pronunciation translation, so Abu Hassan should be the original name. This is a Muslim name.

been to a *fan-qiu*'s household and tasted such dates that were brought from their native land. The color of the dates is like [brown] sugar and the flesh soft. One may toast them with fire or steam them with water for eating.²²

Here we know *fan-qiu* was another way to designate Muslim chief, but we are not sure of his position, whether he was a business leader, a diplomatic representative to China, or an influential person among China's Muslim communities.

Many historical documents used the term *fan-qiu* to designate leaders of foreign Islamic countries, especially during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE). For instance, during the Ming dynasty, Yan Congjian states, in his *Shuyu zhouzi lu* (*Information about exotic countries*),

At the time, when [Muslims] in Turfan [in today's Xinjiang] rebelled, it was the Hui Hui who fomented the rebellion. Sometimes Turfan submitted to pay tribute to the court and sometimes it rebelled; such a relation had lasted for seven to eight years so that there was no peace kept. Many officials suggested to the Emperor that the Hui Hui were mischief-makers. Later, Imperial Secretary Wang Qiong [was dispatched to] comfort the region, the *fan-qiu* kept paying tribute to the court and the Hui people did the same, until what it is like today."²³

Here, *fan-qiu* refers to the Uyghur administrative leader.

Another example is that of Ma Huan in the Ming dynasty, who was an assistant to General Zheng He during his voyages to many countries around the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. He preferred to use the term *fan-qiu* for Muslim chiefs of foreign countries.²⁴

(22) Liu Xun (Tang dynasty), *Lingbiao lu yi* [Records on exotic southern regions of the Wuling Mountains] (ca. 888–904 CE).

(23) Yang Congjian (Ming dynasty), "scroll 11," in *Shuyu zhouzi lu* [Information about exotic countries] (printed in 1574 CE).

(24) Ma Huan, *Ying Ya Sheng Lan* [The overall survey of the ocean's shores] (completed in 1451 CE).

A third name for Muslim chief was *fan-guan*, meaning “Muslim official.” The official *Song shi* (*The history of the Song*) states,

In the sixth year of the Shaoxing Era [1136 CE], Prefect of Quanzhou, Lian Nanfu, submitted his letter to the Emperor that in all the cities, the leaders of shipping business who may call for more shipping businesses [from foreign countries] accumulating to 50,000 *guan* [the currency of the time] should be appointed to an official position. A *fan-guan* from Tazi, Luoxin [probably the translation of “Rashid”], sold frankincense which was worthy of 300,000 *min* [another name for *guan*], so a shipping chief, Cai Jingfang, drew the *fan-guan* over to his own side.²⁵

Here, the *fan-guan* shares the meaning of *fan-zhang*, meaning an important Muslim official in charge of shipping affairs.

A fourth name for a Muslim Chief was *du-fan-shou* (都番首), with “*shou*” meaning “head”; the term thus meaning “Muslim Head.” the term meaning “Muslim Head.” I will cite *The History of the Song* again:

In the sixth year [of the Xining reign] (1073 CE), the *du-fan-shou* Putuopolic, a Maintaining Submission Commentate, submitted a letter to the Emperor that he had ordered his son, Ma-wu, to offer tributes to the court and should ask His Majesty for the position of becoming a general to succeed the father’s position. The Emperor gave his decree that Mawu be appointed the Maintaining Submission Commentate, [but a general’s position was not offered.]²⁶

In this paragraph, the *du-fan-shou* possessed his position in a country of Tazi; he may have been a real sultan; while “Maintaining Submission Commentate” was the title that was bestowed by the Chinese emperor.

(25) Tuo Tuo et al (Yuan dynasty), “scroll 185, *shihuo* (finance and economy), the lower subscroll,” in *Song shi* [History of the Song] (compiled in 1343 CE).

(26) Tuo Tuo et al (Yuan dynasty), “scroll 490, *lie zhuan* [collected biographies] 249, *waiguo, liu: Dashi* [foreign countries, 6: Tazi],” in *Song shi*.

The different titles for Muslim Chiefs demonstrated the ambiguous attitudes held by Chinese towards their new “guests”; doubtless to say, every aspect of the Muslim merchants was novel to Chinese people. Thus, the titles for addressing the Muslim leaders during this period seems confusing, and no fixed equivalent terms were confirmed. Various Chinese names are used to designate a Muslim Chief during the Tang and Song dynasties. This demonstrates the initial stage of recognition of the Muslims by the Chinese people.

Relevant sources not only prove the ambiguousness of the titles, and they also provide rich information about the life styles of the earliest Muslim immigrants to China. Their business activities were, at the same time, also a form of cultural intercommunication, too, between the Islamic world and China.

IV. Duties of Muslim Community Chiefs ▶

In the *Ancient Account of India and China*, one of the narrators, Sulayman, states that at Canfu [Guangzhou], “there is a Mohammedan appointed Judge over those of his Religion, by the Authority of the Emperor of China; and that he is the judge of all the Mohammedans whom resort to these parts.”²⁷ He continued to observe that the merchants from present-day Iraq who lived in Guangzhou were satisfied with his conduct and administration because his judgments were based on the *Koran* and were according to the *Mohammedan Jurisprudence*. The scholars Yang Huaizhong and Yu Zhengui believe that the mosque Sulayman witnessed was the Huaisheng (Prophet’s Remembrance) Mosque at Guangzhou.²⁸

The “appointed judge” here was a Muslim chief for foreign Muslim communities in China. Apart from religious duties, he served as a judge to solve disputes and to settle conflicts among the merchants; moreover, as he was appointed

(27) Sulayman Altajar et al., comps., trans., Eusebius Renaudot, *Ancient Account of India and China* (London: printed for S. Harding, 1733), 7–8.

(28) Yang Huaizhong and Yu Zhengui, *Yisilan yu Zhongguo wenhua* [Islam and Chinese Culture] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 1995), 54.

by “the Emperor of China,” he played the role as an official for the Chinese administration.

One can easily surmise that initially, the appearance of a Muslim Chief in the settlers’ communities was spontaneous; a potential candidate for the position must be rich in property and influential among his fellows and be respectful in conducting his religious behaviors. Such a Chief should also be able to communicate with the local administrators, particularly with the *shi-bo-si* (the maritime trade supervisorate), in the interests of his countrymen. Consequently, this strategy of self-regulation was quickly employed by the Chinese administrations.

According to a well-known Japanese researcher on Hui studies, Kuwahara Jitsuzo, the Muslim Chief was first elected by his community before the formal appointment by the Chinese government.²⁹ The office a Muslim Chief held was called the *fan-zhang-si* (Muslim Chief’s bureau) or the *fan-min-suo* (foreigners’ institution).

In terms of the *fan-zhang-si*, or the Muslim Chief’s office, *The History of the Song* states,

During the Xining reign [1068–1077 CE], the envoy [from Tazi], Xin-ya-tuo-luo, required that he act as the commissioner in charge of the *Fan-zhang-si* (Muslim Chief’s bureau), [and the Emperor] gave an imperial decree that the administration of Guangzhou should make the decision [on this requirement]. The envoy also donated property to build the city walls of Guangzhou, but this was refused.”³⁰

Available research suggests that Xin-ya-tuo-luo’s support for building the Guangzhou city walls was also for the interests of the Muslim communities

(29) Kuwahara Jitsuzo (Japan), trans., Chen Yuqing, *Pu Shougeng kao* [*Studies on Pu Shougeng*] (Shanghai: zhonghua shuju, 1929), 58 n.6.

(30) Tuo Tuo et al (Yuan dynasty), “scroll 490, *lie zhuan* [individual biographies] 249; *waiguo, liu: Dashi* (foreign countries, 6: Tazi),” in *Song shi*.

as the walls to be rebuilt were located in the western part of the city, where the Tazi people lived.³¹

In terms of the *fan-min-suo*, the *Canton Annals of the Daoguang Era* mentions Xin-ya-tuo-luo, too, saying that “he was sonless, but after his death, a *fan-fang* was established [with his former support]. The person who administered the *fan-min* in Hainan island also established a *fan-min-suo*.”³² Nonetheless, this writer cannot certify whether such a *fan-min-suo* was identical with the *fan-zhang-si*, or was a subbranch of the *fan-zhang-si*; but this was definitely an institution in charge of the *fan-min*.

Concerning the duties of a Muslim Chief, the first of his important tasks was to settle the disputes among his fellow Muslims, as recorded in the *Ancient Account of India and China*. If he was not able to settle the issues in a peaceful way, he had the right to punish those who committed crimes. A contemporary writer of the Song dynasty, Zhu Yu, states in his book, the *Pingzhou table talk*, that

If a *fan-ren* [alien person] committed a crime, the Emperor authorized that the Guangzhou Administration should investigate first and upon the truth, should send him to the Muslim Chief’s Bureau for punishment. The criminal will be bundled to a wooden ladder and be whipped with a cane and beaten with a club from his head to his feet; for cane-whipping, three times, and for heavy rod-beating, one time. The *fan-ren* do not have the habit wearing trousers because they like sitting on the ground; so a [*fan-ren*] criminal would suffer a lot for in the beating of his hips but would not be afraid of them whipping his back. If the crime is more serious, the Guangzhou Administration

(31) Fujita Toyohachi (Japan), “Song dai shibosi ji shibosi tiaoli” [The maritime trade supervisorate and its regulations], in *Zhongguo Nanhaig gudai jiaotong kao* [Studies on the ancient transportation in the South China Sea] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), 261.

(32) Ruan Yuanxiu et al (Qing dynasty), eds., “scroll 330, *lie zhuan* [individual biographies] 63, *ling man*; *wai fan fu* [mountainous barbarians and attachment for alien people],” in *Daoguang Guangzhou Tongzhi* [Canton annals of the Daoguang reign], (printed in 1882), 714.

would issue the sentence [instead of the punishment by the Muslim Leader's Bureau].³³

The authority of the Muslim Chief is similar to “extraterritoriality” in a modern sense. The Tang dynasty carried out the policy of the “controlling of foreigners by foreigners.” The *Tanglü shuyi* (*Interpretations of the laws of the Tang dynasty*) states that “all the uncultivated alien people, if they themselves offends one another, the punishments shall be conducted according to their own traditions [to punish themselves]; if they and Chinese offend one another, the punishments shall be conducted according to laws.”³⁴ The Song dynasty conducted the policy of mollification, generally continuing the policy of the Tang dynasty; at the same time, the economic hubs shifted from North China to South China during the Song dynasty, and overseas transportations became one of the important financial pillars of the Empire. That is why the imperial policies toward foreign business persons were tolerant.

A second task of a Muslim Chief was to assume the responsibilities of a religious leader and an Islamic teacher. Kuwahara Jitsuzo states that a so-called Muslim Chief was not only a Qadi [meaning “judge”], but also a Sheikh in charge of religious affairs.³⁵ In fact, such a Muslim Chief could not possibly keep his good reputation in playing the role of Qadi (judge).

Sheikh is an Arabic word (شيخ) for Islamic leaders or imams. In China, such a person plays the role of *ahong* (a Persian word meaning “imam”) in a Muslim community. *The Ancient Account of India and China* states that “upon Festivals Days he [the Muslim Chief] performs public services.”³⁶ He not only guided his Muslim fellows to pray and conduct other religious duties, but also taught his

(33) Zhu Yu (Song and Yuan dynasties), “scroll 2,” in *Pingzhou ke tan* [Pingzhou table talks] (printed in 1102 CE).

(34) Zhangsun Wuji et al (Tang dynasty), eds., “scroll 6, regarding uncultivated people offending one another,” in *Tanglü shuyi* [Interpretations of the laws of the Tang dynasty] (issued in 653 CE).

(35) Kuwahara Jitsuzo (Japan); trans., Chen Yuqing, *Pu Shougeng Kao* [Studies on Pu Shougeng], 58 n.6.

(36) Sulayman Altajar et al., comps., trans., Eusebius Renaudot, *Ancient Account of India and China* (London: Printed for S. Harding, 1733), 7–8.

fellows how to maintain their traditions. Ahongs in China still play such a part among Hui Muslim communities. In doing so, he became a teacher in charge of educating the Muslim masses; such people play a central role in Islamic education.

The first stage of the Hui education is called the Mosque's education, that is, the imams teach Muslim people in mosques. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the *tu-sheng-fan-ke*, or "native-born alien people" became more common. Although they lived within their communities, they could not possibly avoid contacting with the Chinese and non-Islamic societies. In this way, education seemed urgent to preserve their Muslim-ness. Nevertheless, they seldom conducted missionary work to the Han Chinese. A distinguished modern scholar on Hui studies, Chen Yuan, concludes that the fact that the Hui Muslims kept Islam as their own religion and respected Confucianism enabled them to develop their ethnic identity independently within Chinese society during the Imperial era in China, never having met any challenge purposely assimilated them into being Han Chinese.³⁷

During the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), "between the Daguan (1107–1110) and Zhenghe (1111–1117) reigns, the Empire enjoyed peace and prosperity and all the neighboring countries relied on the Empire. [The alien people of] Guangzhou and the southern part of Quanzhou requested to establish their educational institutions."³⁸ Doubtless to say, the Muslim Chiefs made many such requests.

A third task for a Muslim Chief was to attract more shipping business for the Chinese government. The example in this article quoted *The History of the*

(37) A well-known Hui scholar, Bai Shouyi, argues that there might be some Han Chinese who converted to Islam when they were employed by Muslim merchants, but to what extent this may occurred remains a question to modern researchers. See Bai Shouyi, *The Brief History of China's Huijiao* (1943); reprinted in *The manuscripts of Islam in China* (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin, 1982), 10.

Chen Yuan's conclusion can be seen in Yuan Jun, ed., "Hui Hui jiao jinru Zhongguo de yuanliu" [The origin of Mohammedanism in China], *Journal of the institute of Sinology of the national University of Peking*, 1, no. 6 (1927); Republished, *Dongfang zazhi* [Oriental Magazine], 25, no. 1 (Shanghai: Jan. 10, 1928): 113-124.

(38) Cai Di (Southern Song dynasty), "scroll 2," in *Tieweishan Congtan* [Collective Writings on the Tieweishan Mountains] (printed in ca. 1126 CE).

Song when discussing the title *fan-guan*, so readers know that the court had regulations to reward those who were able to invite “big businessmen” in 1136. A contemporary writer of the Song dynasty, Zhu Yu, states in his book, the *Pingzhou Table Talk*, that “the people from many foreign countries assembled to live in the same district, a Muslim Chief was appointed in charge of the public affairs among the Muslim communities [*fan-fang*]. One of his tasks was to invite [foreigners] to pay tribute to China.” Here, to “pay tribute” was a normal term that Chinese writers used; this was an expression of self-importance that China, as the “middle kingdom,” possessed the privilege of accepting tributes from all countries, even if they were simply for commercial purposes and did not have the slightest relevance to politics.

Zhu Yu continues that when a Muslim Chief worked in his office, “he should behave like Chinese officials in his attire with robe and shoes and hold his ritual board.”³⁹ In this way, a Muslim Chief became one of the Chinese administrative officials.

To be like the Chinese was not enough and to maintain “alien identities” always meant being something different than the locals. Balance and peace is always accompanied by compromise.

The *Canton Annals of the Daoguang Era* also records that “during the Song dynasty, [the Muslim] merchants were extraordinarily rich, they wore silk clothes and golden and silver decorations, and their daily tools were golden and silvery, too. [Once an alien merchant] bullied the locals, the Military Commissioner [who took charge of and put in order in the region] could independently punish him in a severe way; once a local joined the alien people, he would be executed without pardon.”⁴⁰ One can see the gap here between the foreigners and the local Chinese.

(39) A ritual board is a long arc plate to be held by an official when he is present at the court. This is originally for the convenience to record a decree on it; gradually, it became a tradition for officials at all levels to hold one, showing that he was in a position offered by the emperor.

(40) Ruan Yuanxiu, ed., *Daoguang Guangzhou Tongzhi* [*Canton annals of the Daoguang era*], scroll 330, *lie zhuan* [individual biographies] 63, *ling man*; *wai fan fu* [63, mountain barbarians; attachment for alien people, 5] (printed in 1882), 713.

V. Challenges to “Extraterritoriality” and Beyond ▶

“Extraterritoriality” was not always workable. The process of the social and legal forces that challenged such a special right in fact involved a process of acculturation for the Muslims who immigrated to China.

Here is a typical example that may be regarded as reflective of the changes in the privileges of the so-called “extraterritoriality.” The *History of the Song Dynasty* records the contest between Chinese officials and the Muslim Chiefs:

In the beginning year of the Chongning Era [of the Song dynasty] [1102–1106 CE], Huanzhi. . . went to Guangzhou. A *fan-ke* has killed his servant. The *shi-bo-si* [Overseas Shipping Bureau] is to send the *fan-ke* to the Muslim Chief for punishing him with club-beating; this is according to the established way. Wang Haunzhi does not permit and argues that this case should follow [the Chinese] laws.⁴¹

Another case comes from the sketch book of a writer, Lou Yue, who also lived in the Song dynasty, but later than the time of the previous instance:

During the Xiaozong reign of the Song dynasty [1127–1194], in the city of Quanzhou, the *fan-shang* [alien businessmen] lived together with local people. According to the old way, if a *fan-shang* brought about conflict with a local but not to the degree of serious damages such as fractures or injuries, the *fan-shang* should be punished within their own way, that is, to pay the victim with an ox. At the time, Wang Dayou was the Prefect of Quanzhou, he notified the local people, asking, “how can we Chinese use the law of a foreign country? Just bring him to me and I will punish him according to [our] laws. [Since then,] the *fan-ke* became fearful.”⁴²

(41) Tuo Tuo et al (Yuan dynasty), *Song Shi*, scroll 347, “*lie zhuan* [individual biographies] 106; *Wan Han zhi di Huanzhi* [Wang Han’s brother Huanzhi].”

(42) Lou Yue (1137-1213), *Gong kui ji* (Collected writings in the Gongkui chamber), scroll 88, “*Wang gong Xinghzuang*” [introduction to Lord Wang Dayou]; reprinted in *Collective Works of Louyue*, vol. 91 (Hangzhou: zhengjia guji, 2010), 1615–1616.

A third instance comes from the official book, *The History of the Song*. In this case, the challenge against the Muslim Chief did not come from the Chinese side; instead, it came from the Muslims themselves. The story occurred in the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 CE), but no exact time is given: When Zhang Yunzhi acted as the fiscal commissioner of Guangdong province, a foreigner committed a crime; but he knew that the punishment by the Muslim chief would be more serious, so he appealed for the judgment by relevant Chinese law.⁴³ — —The two-sentence narration did not give additional information, but it seemed that Zhang Yunzhi permitted his pledge.

The local Chinese administrative officials, Wang Huanzhi, Wang Dayou and Zhang Yunzhi challenged the “extraterritoriality” of the alien people and succeeded in doing so. They are representative of many others who made the same endeavor but who might not be known to today’s readers. These were not only practical personal victories, but also symbolic victories of maintaining Chinese cultural dominance over an Islamic sphere of influence within China, and symbolic of the adjustment and adaptation undertaken by the Muslim minorities in order to survive in Chinese society.

The Muslims who settled in China were not only deprived of their “extraterritoriality,” but also were confronted with other challenges or difficulties, which can be regarded as the elements that accelerated the progress of their “acculturation” or “sinicization”— —that they should follow the Chinese manner at least on the surface.

During the winter of the first year of the Kaicheng reign [836–840 CE] in the Tang dynasty, Lu Jun acted as the Prefect of Guangzhou and issued a rule,

At the times, the local people [of Guangzhou] lived as neighbors with the alien barbarian people, and they had been related with intermarriages. [Local] officials sometimes interfere with such affairs, but they [the

(43) Tuo Tuo et al (Yuan dynasty), “scroll 303, *lie zhuan* [individual biographies] 62: biography of Zhang Yunzhi,” in *Song Shi*.

natives and alien people] attracted each other with benefits and thus they disobeyed the officials. Until Lu Jun came and established the laws, whereupon they had to separate and discontinue the intermarriages. The alien people could not buy properties [downtown], and their dwelling borders were clear so that they could not trouble the locals.⁴⁴

This regulation was definitely discriminatory; but foreigners could clearly see that they were different than the local Chinese and had many rules to follow, at least for the time being. Many Tang laws were inherited by the succeeding Song dynasty. The separation policy between the local Chinese and the foreigners was continuously carried out in the Song dynasty.

Here is an instance recorded by Zhu Xi, a well-known neo-Confucian scholar in the Song dynasty, about a story related to a contemporary official and the alien people. This official was called “Lord Fu” by Zhu Xi; his full name was Fu Zide. Lord Fu solved a thorny problem for which he became famous for: an alien businessman was to build a tall building (mosque) in front of the Confucian Temple in Quanzhou and many educated people opposed this and they complained about the alien businessman to the administration (the administration and the court were one institution during Imperial China.) However, this businessman relied on his wealth and had bribed many officials so that the case was turned away at all levels of administration. The case was finally transferred to Lord Fu, who found an excuse to settle it immediately—the excuse was that the alien businessman belonged to those who were “uncultivated people [and thus] are not permitted to live downtown.”⁴⁵—this is actually a law inherited from the Tang dynasty, as practiced by Lu Jun.

Historical documents have showed that such a policy and practice had not always been feasible. An instance from the historical record in the succeeding Song

(44) Song Qi et al (Later Jin dynasty), eds. “scroll 177, individual biography 127: biography of Lu Jun,” in *Jiu Tang shu* [*Old book of the Tang*] (completed in 945 CE).

(45) Zhu Xi, “Hui’an xiansheng Zhu wengong wenji [Literary collections of Zhu Xi], scroll 98,” “Fu gong xingzhuang” [introduction to Lord Fu], in *Zhuzi quanshu* [Complete book of Zhu Xi], vol. 25 (Shanghai: Shanghai classics and Anhui education publishing houses, 2002), 4543.

dynasty shows that Lu Jun's policy came to an end. This record is concerned with a city located in the south of Guangzhou, just a few dozen kilometers away:

In Panyu, the alien barbarians lived as neighbors with the local people . . . The barbarians' manner is to worship Spirit [Allah] and they appreciate cleanness. Every day, they pray for happiness. They built their hall [mosque] for prayers, which is like the Chinese Buddhist temple, but there stands no Buddha figure inside it. . . .⁴⁶

Here readers find that the foreigners and the local Chinese lived as neighbors again. In fact, it is hard to get rid of the interrelationship between these two groups as many social activities involved their mutual participation.

Muslims accumulated wealth through maritime business, which was mainly due to the open policies by the prosperous Tang and Song dynasties; they were, however, confronted with various challenges from traditional Chinese society, which had strong legal and moral inheritances. The first step was to adapt the new environment before their privileges could be protected and their faith could be passed on.

The Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) ended the five-century-long Muslim leader system, thus terminating the unification of administration for secular affairs and religious affairs for Muslim communities during the Tang and Song dynasties; the new dynasty, governed by a minority, separated the duties undertaken by one person into two roles. The new system was called the Qadi system, and it involved appointing a Qadi (judge) and Sheikh, respectively in charge of their secular and religious affairs:

In all the Chinese provinces, there is a town for Mohammedan countries, and in this they reside. They also have cells, colleges, and mosques, and are made by the Kings of China. . . This Sin Kilan [Today's Guangzhou] is one of their greatest and best formed cities. . . In a certain part of this province is a town in which Mohammedans reside. It has a market,

(46) Yue Ke (1183–1234 CE), "scroll 11: Panyu hailiao" [The overseas barbarians in Panyu], in *Ying Shi* [History written on the bed-fronted table].

a mosque, and a cell for the poor. Here is also a Judge and a Sheikh El Islam: nor is there any doubt that there must be, in all the towns of China, Mohammedan merchants who have a judge and a Sheikh El Islam, to whom their matters are referred.⁴⁷

The Qadi system had far-reaching significance. It was practiced in all the dynasties afterward up until today; it may have had various different names but the nature of this arrangement remained essentially unchanged, that is, the separation of the management religion and secular affairs.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the “two persons” were the *ahong* (a Persian word meaning imam) and *xianglao*; however, *xianglao* is a group of men, normally made up of distinguished Muslim personages of a Hui Muslim *fang* or community. They were the *de facto* Sheikh and Qadi during the Yuan dynasty. When dynastic China came to an end and the Republic of China was founded (1911–1949), it was the *ahong* and the board of an Islamic committee who conducted religious and secular affairs separately.

Today, the two aspects are undertaken by the *ahong* and the so-called “Mosque management committee,” which was established during the People’s Republic. The evolutionary history is apparent by which we can trace the original Qadi system during the Yuan dynasty; the Qadi system of the Yuan came from the Muslim chief system during the Tang and Song dynasties when the forerunners of the Hui Muslims settled in China.

(47) Ibn Batuta, trans., Samuel Lee, *The Travels of Ibn Batuta* (London: 1829), 213.

Summary ▶

Through my exploration on the topic of the titles and duties of the Muslim Chiefs during the Tang and Song dynasties, I would like to highlight several important points. These are as follows:

First, the earliest Muslim communities in China appeared at around the 830s. This was due to the frequent commercial exchanges between the two great empires in the world at the time, the Arab Empire and Chinese Empire during the Tang and Song dynasties, through the overland and maritime Silk Roads connecting the different parts of the Eurasian continent as well as and the Indian Ocean and South China Seas. The earliest communities were established in some of the main coastal Chinese cities.

Second, the commercial exchanges between West Asian countries and China benefited from the open and tolerant policies of China's Tang and Song dynasties and the strong tradition of the Arab commercial tradition. Moreover, the shift of economic power from North China to the South, particularly during the Song dynasty, spurred the development of the maritime businesses with many foreign countries along China's coastal cities.

Third, Muslim leaders came into being when Muslim communities were established. There appeared various titles to designate them with Chinese expressions during the Tang and Song dynasties. The various and unconfirmed titles demonstrated the initial ambiguity in attitude held by Chinese towards the newcomers.

Fourth, the mechanism of creating a Muslim Chief was perpetuated by traditions from their native lands inside the Muslim communities, which was an autonomously run mechanism; consequently, Chinese administrations employed this procedure and established institutions whereby Muslim leaders were chosen as go-betweens between Chinese administrations and Muslim societies.

Fifth, the main duties of a Muslim Chief were to solve disputes and settle conflicts among the Muslims themselves as a judge, to invite more shipping

merchants to China on behalf of local Chinese administrations, and to play the role of a Sheikh who helped oversee the religious rites and maintain Muslim traditions within the community.

Six, when serving as a judge, a Muslim leader possessed the power to punish those who committed errors and crimes against another Muslim. The punishments for Muslim offenders followed their traditional ways and were done by Muslim chiefs; and to some extent, the practice is equivalent to “extraterritoriality” in a modern sense.

Seven, some of the local Chinese officials challenged the extraterritorial privileges of Muslim leaders and insisted on carrying out Chinese laws for alien peoples, too, as time passed; moreover, their insistence challenged the special interests of the Muslim chief and his Muslim fellows. Muslims had to adjust some of their old ways so as to adapt to the new environment they found themselves in. This was, in fact, beneficial as a strategy to enable them to permanently join Chinese society.”

Eight, the succeeding Mongol Yuan dynasty took the Muslim chief system, which combined the judge’s and imam’s roles together, and established its own dynastical Qadi system, which separated a Muslim leader’s religious authority and secular powers. Such a separation became a legacy maintained by the following dynasties for several centuries until today.

In conclusion, this writer wishes to stress that, according to anthropological theories, acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that results in meetings between cultures; it is a change of one’s own culture through the dominance of one culture over another culture, which is completed through either military or political conquest. On the other hand, assimilation means that an ethnic group entirely gives up its culture and tradition and is accepted by the dominant ethnic group. Therefore one can conclude the Hui Muslim minority in China has been acculturated, but not assimilated; they remained a single independent group of people, who may trace their history to the Tang and Song dynasties.

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