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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
Department of East Asian Studies

**THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN CHINA**

**GUANGZHOU *FANFANG* DURING THE TANG-SONG ERA**

by  
Meng Wei

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts

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## Introduction

Islam is a religion noted by its powerful concern for Muslim community which is known as the *umma*<sup>1</sup>. The Hijra took place in 622 C.E., with which the *umma* began. From that moment on, the *umma* has been in its ever-expanding development beyond Arabia. The *umma* in China during the Tang-Song era (618-1279 C.E.) located within the *fanfang* 蕃 (番) 坊. The *fan*<sup>2</sup> denotes undifferentiated multitude of non-Han others and the *fang* means unit(s) of residential area. The *fanfang* thus refers to foreign quarter(s) that once accommodated numerous *fanke* 蕃客<sup>3</sup> (non-Han sojourners or settlers). The *fanke* in the Tang and Song periods mainly stayed in metropolitan areas, not only at southeastern coastal ports but also in northwestern capital cities. However, in Chang'an, Luoyang, and throughout northern China, there were no recognizable *fanfang* due to “the large size, geographic spread, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Umma* is an ancient Arabic religious communal term. An important synonym of *umma* is *jama'at* (transliterated into Chinese as *zhemati* 哲瑪提), which is nowadays used in several places including China where Muslims constitute minority. Given that the temporal setting of this study is the Tang-Song era, here adopts *umma* as the equivalent for community. For extensive discussion on the usage of *umma* and *jama'at*, see Ma Qiang, *Liudong de jingshen shequ*, pp. 8-22. For general introduction on Islam and worldwide Muslim communities, see Denny, *Islam and the Muslim community*, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> The *fan* and also *hu* 胡 are the most common designations for non-Han others in the Tang-Song documents. *Hu* is often used to refer to peoples from Inner Asia, mainly of Turkic origin. For thorough analysis of the terms *fan* and *hu*, see Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, pp. 1-51.

<sup>3</sup> While Muslims constituted the majority of the *fanke*, there were still followers of other religions (Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, Christianity, and Judaism) living in the *fanfang*. Note that although the Persians were conquered by the Arabs in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, not until about two centuries later did most Persians convert to Islam.

heterogeneity of the non-Han population”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, this study aims to present the history of the *fanfang* in Guangzhou, a major southeastern seaport, during the Tang-Song era.

### **Significance of Study**

Although the Guangzhou *fanfang* constituted a quite limited segment of Chinese society, it is well worth studying. First of all, the study of the Guangzhou *fanfang* allows a reconsideration of the periodization of the history of Islam in China. Previous scholars tried to pinpoint a specific date<sup>5</sup> to answer the question: When was Islam introduced to China? The most widely accepted argument was brought up by Chen Yuan<sup>6</sup>, who argued that the year of 651 C.E. when *Dashi* 大食 first sent envoys to China and presented tribute<sup>7</sup> unfolded Islam’s millenary history in China. Nonetheless, this type of periodization suffers from a lack of historicity. Bai Shouyi also pointed out that the coming of *Dashi* envoys is one thing; the entry of Islam into China is another.<sup>8</sup> The entry of Islam into China was neither the result of diplomatic visits nor missionary activities. Rather, it was a social phenomenon brought about by large migration of Muslims from West Asia to China. One can conclude the presence

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<sup>4</sup> Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussion on various arguments concerning this issue, see Qin Huibin, *Yisilanjiao zhi*, pp. 11-21.

<sup>6</sup> See his “Huihuijiao ru Zhongguo shilue”.

<sup>7</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, *juan* 198, p. 5315. Starting from the Tang period, the term *Dashi* was used to refer to Arabs or Arabia in Chinese documents. The Umayyad dynasty (661-750) and Abbasid dynasty (750-1258) of the Arab Empire were respectively recorded as *baiyi Dashi* 白衣大食 and *heiyi Dashi* 黑衣大食. In the early period of the Tang, *Dashi* was used to call the Caliphate regime in Arabia. Gradually it was not used not merely to identify Arabs but encompassed Muslims at large.

<sup>8</sup> Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo huihui minzu shi*, p. 173.

of Islam in China only after it manifested itself in an *umma* of its observant Muslims. This approach is more accurate because Islam is a complete way of life which recognizes no sharp cleavage between religious and secular aspects. As a living reality, it embraces devotional-ritual practices and emphasizes on the performance of basic beliefs and attitudes. The *fanfang*, within which the *umma* was embedded, not only epitomized but also nurtured Islam in China. Therefore, in contrast with how previous scholarship typically tackled this question, this study proposes that the establishment of the Guangzhou *fanfang* marked the beginning of Islam's presence in China. Secondly, by virtue of a comparison between the *jimizhou* 羈縻州<sup>9</sup> ("loose-rein" prefectures) and the *fanfang*, this study seeks to reveal the distinguishing characteristics of the *fanfang* and gives our best glimpses of the rich multi-cultural and multi-ethnic *mélange*. It also sheds some light on the imperial strategies imposed on non-Han others, both adjacent and remote.

Thirdly, most histories of contact between different societies surrounding the Indian Ocean begin in 1498 when Vasco Da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. This study adds a good case challenging such pattern of European colonization<sup>10</sup> by examining the dynamic interactions between China and the Islamic World<sup>11</sup>, two

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<sup>9</sup> The Western Han dynasty (207 BCE-25 CE) established a system of *shuguo* 屬國 (dependent states) along the frontiers to serve as a buffer between the empire proper and the lands of the barbarian in line with a policy often characterized in the Chinese sources as *jimi* (loose-rein). See Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> This earlier Eurocentric approach merely emphasized a swift shift to European dominance, with which scholarship on the modern European expansion is breaking up.

<sup>11</sup> This study employs monolithic geographic delineations that accurately reflect the two societies'

societies at roughly equal levels of development, from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. It also enriches our understanding of the Maritime Silk Road in its ramifications such as religion and trade. The *fanfang* often functioned as nodes of “trade diaspora”<sup>12</sup>, illustrating how trade served as an alternate model of Islam’s spread besides shields and swords. Although earlier scholars did pioneering work on the contacts between China and the Islamic world, from which I have benefited, there has been little systematic and detailed research on the early history of Islam in China, especially the *fanfang*. This study thus attempts to dig in this field as deep as the scant sources permit.

## Sources

This study juxtaposes Chinese and Arabic<sup>13</sup> textual sources, and mitigates their exiguity by paying close attention to archeological discoveries. There are some differences in nature and quantity among the extant documents from China and the Islamic world. By the time of the Tang, there was already a long-established literary tradition in China. Due to the spread of woodblock printing in the Song and consequently abundant book production, more Chinese books survive in their complete forms. Therefore, this study draws upon a variety of surviving Chinese

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mutual perceptions during the Tang-Song era.

<sup>12</sup> For the definition of this term, see Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 1984. See also Chaffee, “Diasporic Identities,” pp. 395-419.

<sup>13</sup> There have been partial and occasionally complete translations of the Arabic works into English and Chinese. Due to my limited language proficiency on Arabic, I have largely relied on the translations. See the bibliography section of this thesis for a list of the Arabic works and their translations.



written materials, such as official dynastic histories (mostly based on official documents and compiled in subsequent dynasties) and private writings from the Tang-Song corpus. In the Islamic world, on the other hand, the Quran took shape only in the seventh century, leading to the standardization of written Arabic and forming the basis for the Arabic writing system. The transfer of Chinese paper-making to the Islamic world was only after the Battle of Talas in 751.<sup>14</sup> The first paper mill in the Islamic world was founded in Baghdad between 794 and 795. Thereafter, paper replaced fragile papyrus and expensive parchment as the main writing material. The Abbasid dynasty (750-1258) thus entered a period of remarkable literary vitality and began to cover extensively about China. However, the hand-copying had served as the main means for duplicating manuscripts until the introduction of printing in the nineteenth century. The Arabic works regarding China are mostly geographic and travel accounts, providing an important parallel to the Chinese sources from the same period. While piecing together the scattered records throughout the historical documents, this study unavoidably encounters the problem of exiguous evidences. Archaeological finds such as ceramics and shipwrecks along the coastline linking China and the Islamic world thus serve as direct evidences of the volume of the maritime trade, also as corroborating evidences navigate us clear of anachronistic mistakes and prompting us and to confirm or reconsider our assumptions.

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<sup>14</sup> An Arabic account dating to the early eleventh century confirms this transfer. See *The book of curious and entertaining information*, p. 140.

## 1 Sino-Islamic Contacts before the Mongol Rule

Prior to the rise of Islam, China and the Sasanian Persia (226-651), designated as *Bosi* 波斯 in Chinese records, had traded along the overland Silk Road for several centuries. *Al-Sin*, the Arabic term meaning China, originated from the Persian term *Cin*, which in turn derived from the name of the first Chinese empire, the Qin (221-210 BCE).<sup>15</sup> The Sasanian Persians were unrivaled in controlling both sides of the Persian Gulf and hence dominated the maritime trade. They even had military colonies in Bahrayn, ‘Uman, and the Yemen around 570.<sup>16</sup> Chinese historical records witnessed 34 cases of Persian tributary envoys from 455 to 771 and more than 40 cases of *Dashi* envoys from 651 to 798. The Umayyad dynasty (661-750) sent envoys to China eighteen times, the Abbasid dynasty twenty times.<sup>17</sup> The earliest extant Chinese documentation about *Dashi* is an account by the Korean monk Huichao<sup>18</sup> 慧超 (Hyecho in Korean) who traveled from China to India and Central Asia. A brief sentence about the Arab invasion of Persia in 651 in his account indicates that the Chinese knew about the event. However, the overthrow of the Sasanian dynasty did not challenge the dominating role the Persian played in maritime trade. The influence

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<sup>15</sup> Bosworth, C.E. et al, “al-Sin,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. s.v.

<sup>16</sup> C.f. Chang Yung-Ho, “The Development of Chinese Islam during the T’ang and Song Dynasties (618-1276 A.D.)”, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> See the chart of embassies from the Sasanids and the Arabs based on Chinese official histories in Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China: A Short History to 1800*, p. 16 & 31. Also see Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo minzu huihui shi*; Jiang Chun & Guo Yingde, *Zhong a guanxi shi*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>18</sup> Huichao 慧超, *Wang wu Tianzhu guo zhuan jian shi 往五天竺國傳箋釋* (A record of the pilgrimage to the five regions of India, with annotations and footnotes), ed. Zhang Yi. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000.

of the Arabs on overseas activities remained marginal throughout the Umayyad dynasty.

During the reign of the Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (754-775), the Abbasid dynasty founded a new capital on the west bank of the Tigris in 762.<sup>19</sup> Baghdad, at an intersection of trade routes, gave a new impetus to the maritime trade between China and the Islamic world. Rapidly escalating trade with China provides a corollary to the shipwrecks along the maritime routes linking the two societies. For instance, a well-preserved early-ninth-century shipwreck, the Belitung Wreck<sup>20</sup> 黑石號, was found in 1998, one nautical mile off the Indonesian Island of Belitung between Sumatra and Borneo, well to the south of the Malacca Strait.



Figure 1: The Location of the Belitung Wreck on Google Map

<sup>19</sup> Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> For detailed analysis of the shipwreck, see Flecker, “A 9th-Century Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesian Waters” (2000), “A 9th-Century Arab or Indian shipwreck in Indonesian Waters: Addendum” (2008), and also his book *The Archaeological Excavation of the 10th Century: Intan Shipwreck* (2002). See also Guy, John S. “The Belitung (*Tang*) Cargo and Early Asian Ceramic Trade”, pp. 13-27.

This sunken dhow made from planks that were sewn together offers a glimpse of the type of vessel used by Muslim merchants to ship ceramics at that time. The entire artifact collection, some surviving 60,000 pieces, contains mostly of Chinese ceramics from the kilns of Changsha in Hunan province. Flecker demonstrates that this sunken dhow is the first clear archaeological evidence to support historical records which imply that Arabs traded directly with China as early as the ninth century, rather than via a Southeast Asian entrepot. In the ninth century, Arabic accounts appear in large numbers which demonstrate that Arabs had a good knowledge of China and testify to the Arab's dominance of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean.

While maritime trade tended to continue even during times of strife, overland trade through Central Asia was often interrupted because of political instability. The period of the Tang expansion coincided with the Arab conquests in Central Asia. Both China and *Dashi* launched expansions to Central Asia, culminating in their dramatic military conflicts. Starting from the 630s, the armies of the Tang Empire conquered and took tribute from Chinese Turkistan (roughly present-day Xinjiang). In the early seventh century, the troops of the Islamic caliphates also rapidly reached Central Asia after defeating the Sasanian Persia in 651. Naturally, in 751 the armies of these two expansionist powers collided at Talas (modern-day Dzhambul, Kazakhstan) in Central Asia,<sup>21</sup> during which the Abbasid troops defeated the Tang armies and a large number of prisoners of war were brought to the capital of the Islamic world. This

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<sup>21</sup> *Xin Tangshu*, "Gao Xianzhi liezhuan" 高仙芝列傳 (the biography of Gao Xianzhi). *juan*, 135, p. 4576.

battle is of great significance in the history of contact between the two societies because the prisoners including a big amount of craftsmen brought with themselves the art of paper-making.

One of the captives was Du Huan 杜環, who sailed back to Guangzhou in 762 via the sea route after a ten-year stay in the Islamic world. He recorded his experiences in his book, *Jingxingji* 經行記 (Travel Record)<sup>22</sup>, which was almost completely lost. A few precious extracts, about 1511 words, survived as quotations within *Tongdian* 通典 (The Encyclopedic History of Institutions) under volume 192 and 193, compiled in 801 by his uncle, Du You 杜佑 (735-812).<sup>23</sup> This is the earliest surviving first-hand account in Chinese about the Islamic world only a century after the rise of Islam, which demonstrates remarkably accurate and rich knowledge about the Islamic world. It predates the ninth and the tenth centuries when the Shari'a (Arabic, "way", the Islamic principles and laws) and the Sunna (Arabic, "habitual practice", the body of traditional Islamic custom and practice) was codified.

In the long run, the battle did not lead to the interruption of contacts between China and the Islamic world. It was followed by the continuing peaceful commercial relationship attested by the continuous official delegations during the Abbasid

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<sup>22</sup> Du Huan, *Jingxing ji jianzhu* 經行記箋註 (The Travel Record, with annotations and footnotes), ed. Zhang Yichun, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> It is the first Chinese institutional history and encyclopedic text that had considerable influence on later works. See Endymion, *Chinese Hisotry: a Manual*, pp. 525-6.

dynasty.<sup>24</sup> The Tang government even asked the Abbasid caliphate to send troops to the emperor's aid when the devastating An Lushan Rebellion broke out in 755.<sup>25</sup> From then on, China had little overland contact with the Islamic world because this rebellion marked the end of Chinese control over Central Asia and the overland trade routes. The powerful nomadic states such as the kingdom of *Tubo* 吐蕃 (modern-day Tibet) arose to power in Central Asia as a result, blocking the Silk Road through Central Asia.<sup>26</sup> The lucrative overland routes, once the main passageway linking the two societies, declined.

Meanwhile, archaeological discoveries reveal that the maritime trade between China and the Islamic world dramatically increased from the mid-eighth century onward. The excavations of Chinese ceramics in the Persian Gulf and on the shores of the Arabian Sea in the last four decades testify to that Muslim traders imported ceramics from China continuously during the Tang-Song period.<sup>27</sup> The cargo of the above mentioned Belitung Wreck represents the first evidence of large-scale ceramic commodity trade from China. Another sunken vessel excavated below the estuary of the Pearl River also contained large quantities of Tang-dynasty ceramics.<sup>28</sup> Vessels from the Islamic world had sailed all the way directly to China until the devastating

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<sup>24</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 198, p. 5316; *Xin Tangshu*, juan 6, p. 166.

<sup>26</sup> For discussion on the relationship among the three regmies, Tang, *Tubo* and *Dashi*, See Wang Xiaofu, *Tang, Tubo, Dashi zhengzhi guanxi shi*, 1995.

<sup>27</sup> Tampoe, *Maritime Trade between China and the West*, 1989; Rougeulle, Axelle. "Medieval Trade Networks in the Western Indian Ocean (8-14<sup>th</sup> cent.)", 1994; Whitehouse, David. "Abbasid Maritime Trade," pp. 62-70.

<sup>28</sup> Wu Chunming, *Huan Zhongguo hai chenchuan*, pp. 179-188.

massacre of foreigners including Muslims in Guangzhou during the Huang Chao rebellion (875-884). The rebellion struck a heavy blow to Muslim trade in Guangzhou and vessels began to meet instead in Southeast Asia. The Intan Wreck<sup>29</sup> clearly demonstrates the important role of an entrepot port in Sumatra, probably at or near Palembang, the seat of the powerful Srivijaya Empire. The wreck was located some 40 nautical miles off the coast of Sumatra, nearly half way between Bangka and Jakarta. Carbon dating augmented ceramic and coin analysis to confirm a tenth century date. Its excavation yielded a remarkable array of treasures and artifacts. “There are ceramics, silver ingots, mirrors, and ironware from China; tin ingots and currency from the Malay Peninsula; fine-paste-ware kendis and bottles from Thailand; and glass and amphorae from the Middle East...”<sup>30</sup> This extremely diverse cargo not only provides graphic evidence of great craftsmanship and advanced technology but also vividly displays the cross-cultural interactions and aggressive commercial trade between the lands of the Indian Ocean and the China Seas.

After the military setback in Central Asia and the two major rebellions, the central authority of the Tang dynasty was heavily undermined, whose counterpart, the Abbasid dynasty was also faced with its own dilemmas<sup>31</sup>. Following the downfall of the Tang dynasty, China entered a period of chaos and disunity which lasted about a

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Flecker, “Treasure From the Java Sea: the 10th Century Intan Shipwreck.” In *Heritage Asia Magazine*, 2.2 (2004 –2005). See also Guy, John S. “The *Intan* shipwreck: a 10th century cargo in South-east Asian waters”.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Flecker, *The archaeological excavation of the 10th Century: Intan shipwreck*, p. 100.

<sup>31</sup> Chang Yung-Ho. “The Development of Chinese Islam during the T’ang and Song Dynasties (618-1276 A.D.)”, p.40.

century. Guangzhou fell into the control of the Nan Han regime which was overrun by the Song in 971. Under these circumstances the Sino-Islamic trade suffered serious decline. It was not until the Song dynasty that trade between the two sides flourished again. Maritime routes played an even more important role in Chinese trade with the Islamic world in the Song period than in the Tang. Although the Song ends the long period of political fragmentation, its territory seriously shrank. The Southern Song capital even had to transfer from Kaifeng in the north to Hangzhou in the south after the Jurchen conquest of the northern part of China in 1127. Therefore, it was very difficult for the Song merchants to access and take use of the overland routes. The exhausting wars against such aggressive neighboring states as Liao, Xia and Jin tended to deplete the revenues. They preyed upon the Chinese with great effectiveness and hence the Song had to pay these co-existing regimes annual tributes consuming enormous revenues. The Song had been weakened financially and sought to walk out of the exacerbated financial plight by securing and increasing the revenue derived from its maritime trade. The Song actively promoted the maritime commercial activities and encouraged the merchants to return to trade. The maritime trade thus became one of the most important sources of the Song revenues.<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of Song, there were some commodities restricted from private

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<sup>32</sup> This is illustrated by a chart composed by Bai Shouyi on the percentage of maritime trade income to the total revenues of the Song. Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo huihui minzu shi*, p. 295. See also John W. Chaffee, "The Impact of the Song: Imperial Clan on the Overseas Trade of Quanzhou," In *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000-1400*, pp. 13-46.



trading.<sup>33</sup> In 966, the Song sent envoys to *Dashi*.<sup>34</sup> From 924 to 1207, 55 cases of *Dashi* envoys were recorded in Chinese documents.<sup>35</sup> In 987, the Song sent envoys out to foreign countries to invite tributes.<sup>36</sup> A revival from a period of depression was the apparent result of the Song government's efforts in boosting maritime. During the Song, the maritime trade did not confine to Guangzhou which remained one of the most important seaports, but also extended to such newly rising seaports as Quanzhou, Yangzhou and Mingzhou. During the reign of Emperor Renzong (r. 1023-1063) in the Song, the traders were heavily inflicted by the kingdom of *Xixia* 西夏. Emperor Renzong even issued an imperial edict in 1023 to encourage the envoys come to the Song via the sea route.<sup>37</sup> An imperial edict by Emperor Gaozong in 1137 claimed that “the profit of *shibo* is the richest. If we take proper measures to manage it, the profits would amount to millions. Isn't it a better way than just taxing the people”<sup>38</sup>.

Several privately published works in the Song dynasty also offer us concrete evidences of the importance of the Sino-Islamic maritime trade. Zhou Qufei (1135-1189) wrote *Lingwai dai da* 嶺外代答 (Notes from the Land beyond the Passes) in 1178 on the basis of notes he took during his service as a governmental official in Guangxi, whose two chapters exclusively deal with foreign countries

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<sup>33</sup> *Songshi*, juan 186, p. 4560.

<sup>34</sup> *Song shi*, juan 490, p. 14118. “僧行勤遊西域，因賜其王書，以詔懷之”。

<sup>35</sup> See Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo huihui minzu shi*. Zhang Junyan, *Guadai zhongguo yu xiyabeifeng de haishang wanglai*, p. 39; Jiang Chun & Guo Yingde, *Zhong a guanxi shi*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>36</sup> *Songshi*, juan 186, p. 14122. “遣內侍八人，賚敕金帛，分四綱，各往海南諸蕃國勾招進奉”。

<sup>37</sup> *Song shi*, juan 490, “*Dashi* zhuan.”

<sup>38</sup> *Songshi*, juan 186, p. 4558. “市舶之利最厚，若措置合宜，所得動以百萬計，豈不勝取之於民”。

including the Islamic world. He recorded that “among foreign countries the richest one with many valuable goods is the country of the Arabs.”<sup>39</sup> He never traveled outside of China and hence his informants were possibly merchants and interpreters engaged in foreign trade. Zhou demonstrates a precise Chinese understanding of the Islamic world, which broke into multiple centers following the weakening of the Abbasid dynasty. Zhao Rushi’s (1170-1228) *Zhufan zhi* 諸蕃志 (Records of Foreign Peoples), heavily influenced by Zhou Qufei’s work, was written almost fifty years later in 1225. Zhao, who worked as the Overseas Trade Superintendent at the port of Quanzhou in Fujian during the Southern Song. His records testify to the active engagement of Chinese merchants in maritime trade. Zhao’s account reveals that Chinese knowledge of the Islamic world had expanded in terms of the number of countries listed and the detail about them. The vague *Dashi* of the Tang had become the site of more than twenty very specific political entities by the thirteenth century.

The territorial division and political disintegration with no guarantee of security stimulated the rise of sea routes as an alternative and maritime trade began to surpass overland trade in both volume and significance. Meanwhile, the rising of Chinese ceramics to one of the most important trade goods necessitated maritime transportation, which was made possible by Arabs and Persians’ developed shipbuilding industry and advanced seafaring techniques<sup>40</sup>, along with which the

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<sup>39</sup> *Lingwai daida jiaozhu*, p. 126.

<sup>40</sup> For the development of sailing techniques and shipbuilding technology, see Joseph Needham, “Nautical Technology,” pp. 379-699. Also see Al Hosani, Naeema Mohamed. “Arab Wayfinding

growth of mutual geographic knowledge in China and the Islamic World. Therefore, the contact between China and the Islamic world entered a new stage with the rise of the maritime routes. Like Du Huan, who returned to China by ship, more and more people began to travel between China and the Islamic world by sea.

## 2 The Maritime Silk Road Linking China and the Islamic World

As Hourani noted half a century ago, the sea route from the Pearl River to the Persian Gulf was the most heavily traveled one, the longest in regular use by mankind before European expansion in the 16th century.<sup>41</sup> The earliest extant document from either China or the Islamic world describing it is “The Route Connecting to the Foreign Regions from Guangzhou” 廣州通海夷道<sup>42</sup> by Jia Dan 賈耽 (729-805). His account reflects updated information about the Islamic world’s navigational routes, trade goods, history and cultural customs. It demonstrates a new systematic geography far more accurate than Du Huan’s. According to Jia Dan’s biography in the *Xin Tang shu*<sup>43</sup>, although interested in geography since childhood, he never traveled to foreign regions. He served as a Minister of State Ceremonial, during when he

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on Land and at Sea: An Historical Comparison of Traditional Navigation Techniques.” M.A. Thesis, The University of Kansas, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 61.

<sup>42</sup> It is one of the six routes connecting China with foreign regions originally recorded in his lost work *Huanghua sida ji* 皇華四達記 (The Record of the Imperial Glory Reaching Four Directions). Only a few passages survive by virtue of their inclusion in the geography section of the *Xin Tangshu*. See Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Tangshu*, *juan* 43, pp. 1146, 1153-4. For an English translation of it, see Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai Trade*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> *Xin Tangshu*, *juan* 48, p. 1506.

collected information in preparation for geographic writing.

Jia Dan portrays the Arabian Sea route as two separate itineraries: one from the South Indian coast to al-Ubullah (Apologus) on the Persian Gulf; the other from the East African coast to al-Ubullah, which appears for the first time in extant Chinese sources. The meeting point for these itineraries was Al-Ubullah, one of the chief ports for seagoing vessels on their way to the east. Jia Dan's description of this part of the route was obviously based on real knowledge, whose informants were those who had actually sailed on the route. The growing accuracy of depictions clearly reflects a transfer of geographic and cartographic knowledge. Though Jia Dan's information was entirely secondhand, his report was fairly accurate and confirmed half a century later by an anonymous account preserved in the first volume of an ancient Arabic manuscript entitled *Silsilat al-Tawarikh* (The chain of histories) compiled by Abu Zayd al-Siraf sometime after 886<sup>44</sup>. This anonymous account, "Akhbar al-Sin wa'al-Hind" (Accounts of China and India), was completed in 851, the first surviving direct account based on testimony by those who had visited China.<sup>45</sup>

The first Arabic account that has used *al-Sin* for China is the *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-mamalik* (The *Book of Routes and Realms*) by Ibn Khurdadhbih (d. 912) of Persian origin, who served caliph al-Mu'tamid (869-892) as the Director of Posts and

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<sup>44</sup> Chang Yung-Ho. "The Development of Chinese Islam during the T'ang and Song Dynasties (618-1276 A.D.)", p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed description of this sea route, see Ahamd, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China*, pp. 38-40; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, pp. 70-72.

Intelligence in Baghdad. His work provides practical information about administrative divisions, main trade ports and routes from Baghdad to various places. The sea route to China is one of the most detailed sections in the entire book. The route starts in Basra, a flourishing port in the Persian Gulf, and continues through the parts of Oman, Aden on the Arabian coast, to the Indian coast, Ceylon, Cambodia, Malaysia all the way to the harbor of Khanfu, present-day Canton.<sup>46</sup> This route basically agrees with those described in “The Route Connecting to the Foreign Regions from Guangzhou” and “Akhbar al-Sin wa’al-Hind”. It is recorded that it took about 90 days down the wind travelling between Guangzhou and Baghdad. The archaeological findings mentioned above not only testify that the Islamic world was an important consumer of Chinese ceramics but also enriches the available objects of testimony for the route described by these three accounts.

Guangzhou experienced not only frequent contacts with the outside world, but also convenient connections with inland China. In 716, Emperor Xuanzong ordered Zhang Jiuling to open up the Dayuling pathway,<sup>47</sup> which not only facilitated the flow of goods between Guangzhou and the inland but also activated the trade at Guangzhou. Being a pivot of inland transportation and ocean travel, Guangzhou reached its unprecedented prosperity and saw a substantial influx of Arab and Persian Muslims merchants who had accumulated experience, skills and necessary information about

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<sup>46</sup> L. Hambis, “Khanfu,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 1024.

<sup>47</sup> Zhang Jiuling 張九齡. “Kai dayuling lu ji” 開大庾嶺路記 (Record on the opening up of the Dayuling pathway). In *Quan Tang wen*, juan 291, p. 2950.

maritime traffic. Along with the growing mutual familiarity are the introduction of Islam and the first Muslim settlement in China.

### 3 The Making of the Guangzhou *fanfang*

This section explores under what circumstances the Guangzhou *fanfang* came into existence. The rarely interrupted flow of goods of commodities and technologies contributed to a substantial transfer of travelers. Though many *fanke* went back to their homelands after trade or temporarily delayed in Guangzhou due to the influence of the monsoon winds<sup>48</sup>, fires, plundering and damage to the ships during the voyage, a portion of them managed to stay and remain in China for long periods. Those who settled down in China, called *zhu Tang* 住唐, married local people, bought fields and built houses.<sup>49</sup> It is extremely difficult to obtain accurate or reliable statistics about how many Muslims there were in Guangzhou. “Biography of Li Mian” in *Jiu Tang shu* accounts that when he was first appointed as the Viceroy of Lingnan in 769, only four or five Arab shippers used to come to Guangzhou each year. Due to his probity, efficient administration and favorable policy, the number amounted to more than 4000.<sup>50</sup> Approaching the end of the Tang rule, Huang Chao<sup>51</sup> led a major revolt

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<sup>48</sup> According to *Pingzhou ketan*, every summer, ships took advantage of the south wind to go to China and every winter they waited for the north wind to sail back home. Therefore, they had to stay at least half a year in China and if they missed the north wind of this year, they had to wait until the next one.

<sup>49</sup> “Lu Jun zhuan” 盧鈞傳 (Biography of Lu Jun). In *Xin Tang shu*, *juan* 182, p. 5367. Lu Jun was appointed as the Viceroy of Lingnan in 836 C.E.

<sup>50</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, *juan* 131, p. 3635. “大歷四年，除廣州刺史，兼嶺南節度觀察使。……前後西

which spread through China for nine years and Guangzhou was also involved. Both Chinese and Arabic documents recorded that Huang Chao and the other rebels captured Guangzhou in 879 and slaughtered 120, 000 foreigners. “The inhabitants opposed him [Huang Chao] and he besieged them for a while, that taking place in the year 624 A.H. (September 13, 877-September 2, 878), until he triumphed over the city and he put all the inhabitants to the sword. And men experienced in their affairs have mentioned that he killed 120,000 Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians who lived in this city as merchants in it, apart from those killed among the Chinese inhabitants”.<sup>52</sup> The Chinese government used to keep a relatively accurate census of the population as the basis for tax and hence even taking exaggeration into account, these figures emphatically indicates the scale of sea commerce and a great number of *fanke* including a substantial number of Muslims who lived in China under the Tang rule.

During the Song, due to the rise of the sea routes and the Song government’s active encouragement of maritime trade, the number of *fanke* increased greatly evident by the large-scale cemeteries and the emergence of mosques. *Nanhai bai yong* 南海百咏 by Fang Xinru 方信孺 records that “the hundreds of *fan*-tombs locate ten *li* to the

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域舶泛海至者，歲才四五。勉性廉潔，舶來都不檢括。故末年至者四千余人”。

<sup>51</sup> For more details about the Huang Chao rebellion, see Howard S. Levy, *Biography of Huang Chao*, pp. 8-45. Also see *Quan Tang wen*, *juan 75*.

<sup>52</sup> Here follows Levy’s translation. See his *Biography of Huang Chao*, pp. 115-116. Compare Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts*, 32-33; Mu Genlai et al. trans. *Zhongguo Yindu Jianwenlu*, p. 19.

west of the city, all heading west.”<sup>53</sup> Although it is unclear that whether Huaisheng Si (Mosque commemorating the Prophet) in Guangzhou was of Tang origin or Song, it serves as an important indicator for the existence and prosperity of Muslim community in Guangzhou during the Tang-Song era.<sup>54</sup> In addition to the growing new arrivals, there were more and more descendants of the already arrived Muslims called native-born *fanke* 土生蕃客 or the fifth-generation *fanke* 五世蕃客.

Due to the large and increasing population and rich tax revenues, the Chinese government paid much attention to the *fanke* and designated a substantive area to accommodate them, regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or racial diversities. It was political expediency that finally gave shape to the *fanfang*. The Chinese government took initiative to gather all the traders at one place so as to provide convenience for commerce. The *fanfang* in turn provided the *fanke* with a favorable and convenient settlement, serving as a social constraint to sustain their society. A foreign religion or minority is inevitably faced with the acculturative pressure of the majority. Thus a separate community with its geographic demarcation was necessary to serve as self-protective cultural borders for perpetuating its own cultural landscape and keeping its own traditions alive. Although there were envoys, soldiers, and refugees, it was merchants who constituted the main body of *fanke*. Due to that the relationship between the Chinese and the Muslims was basically commercial, the

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<sup>53</sup> C.f. Yang Huaizhong, *Huizu shi lungao*, p. 114. “蕃人塚，在城西十裏，累累數千，皆南首西向”。

<sup>54</sup> See Qiu Shusen, *Zhongguo huizu shi*, p. 74.



Muslims were hardly into influence and missionary work on Chinese populace. Because Islam emphasizes on the performance and practice, it was recognized by the Chinese more as secular norms than religious beliefs. Moreover, as a diasporic trading community, the *fanfang* with its fragile inner structure cannot form a threatening power to Chinese government. It was not perceived as a potential challenge to the status quo. This is illustrated by the fact that during the anti-religious campaign in 848, while Buddhism and other religions were seriously depressed or prevented, Islam, on the other hand, was not on the list of this smash.

Being politically minute yet economically significant, the *fanfang*, under control of the *shiboshi* 市舶使 (Overseas Trade Commissioner) and local authorities, was established mainly in order to secure the profits from the overseas trade. The Guangzhou *fanfang* appeared no later than 835.<sup>55</sup> The first occurrence of the term *fanfang* was in the book *Touhuanglu*<sup>56</sup> by Fang Qianli (827-835), an official who was demoted and thereby lived in Guangzhou during the Taihe reign of the Tang dynasty (827-835).

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<sup>55</sup> According to *Song gaoseng zhuan*, Li Qingxin argues that the Guangzhou *fanfang* appeared in 732 at the latest. See his “On Foreign Trade of Guangzhou in Tang Dynasty,” p. 21.

<sup>56</sup> The original book is lost but a few excerpts concerning the *fanfang* can be found in Gu Yanwu’s *Tianxia jinguo libing shu*, *juan* 104, e.g. “頃年在廣州蕃坊，獻食多用糖蜜腦麪，有魚俎，雖甘香而腥臭自若也。”

#### 4 State-Sanctioned Non-Han Communities:

##### A Comparison between *jimizhou* and *fanfang*

Both *jimizhou* and *fanfang* were administrative zones established for non-Han peoples, most often in response to particular submissions or migrations of them. The *jimizhou* territory was constantly in flux and ill defined. “Although the Tang state attempted to demarcate *jimizhou* territorially along the commandery-county model, they more naturally tended to organize around peoples rather than places.”<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the boundaries of the *fanfang* were much less ambiguous and became more regularized in the Song when the *fanke* became much more concentrated in particular areas.<sup>58</sup> Lu Jun 卢钧 took the position of the Viceroy of Lingnan in 836 and saw that *fan* was mixed with *han* and intermarried.<sup>59</sup> In order to obviate the conflicts between *fan* and *han*, Lu enacted regulations to force Chinese and foreigners to live in separate quarters, and forbid intermarriage.<sup>60</sup> The Guangzhou *fanfang* during the Tang-Song era located in the western suburb of modern Guangzhou city, roughly south of Zhongshan Road, east of Renmin Road, north of Dade Road and west of Jiefang Road.<sup>61</sup>

The Chinese state reserved the right to appoint the heads of both *jimizhou* and *fanfang*,

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<sup>57</sup> Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, p. 123.

<sup>58</sup> Fan Bangjin, “Tangdai fanfang kaolue”, pp. 149-154.

<sup>59</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, juan 182, p. 5367, “蕃獠與華人錯居，相婚嫁”.

<sup>60</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, juan 177, p. 4591.

<sup>61</sup> Huang Qichen. *Guangdong haishang sichou zhi lu*, p. 209.

but in different ways and with different meanings. The *jimizhou* seemed being part of the regular administration of the central government, but most of them were relatively autonomous regions under the rule of tribal chieftains with such symbols of legitimacy as bestowed honorific titles and hereditary substantive offices. Supervising Han officials were assigned to many *jimizhou*, but it was non-Han heads that the local rule was normally devolved to.

In the case of the *fanfang*, it was not only a residential area but also a governmental agency and hence *fanzhang* 蕃长 (head of the *fanfang*) was not only a religious leader but also a government officer. The *fanzhang*, a legitimate community authority endorsed by the state, however, was not hereditary. The *fanzhang* was first nominated from venerable and influential *fanke* candidates by the *fanke* themselves and then the result of the election was reported to the Tang court for approval. *Fanzhang* came officially appointed only through the permission by the emperor or the local officer consigned by him. Sometimes, “in order to solve the dispute (about *fanzhang*) between Muslims in Guangzhou, the Chinese emperor simply chose one of them.”<sup>62</sup> The *fanzhang* was offered a certain official title by the government<sup>63</sup> and hence the *fanzhang* enjoyed the same treatment as other officials. He also had to wear

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<sup>62</sup> Zhang Xinglang, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*, vol. 2, p. 293. “為欲裁決廣府回教徒間之爭議 由支那皇帝簡選一回教徒”.

<sup>63</sup> *Tang huiyao*, *juan* 100, p. 155. “天元年（904）六月，授福建道三佛齊國人朝進奉使都蕃長蒲訶栗為寧遠將軍”.

official Chinese attire<sup>64</sup>, bowing to the customs of the host country. The *fanfang* during the Tang dynasty was at the beginning phase so no detailed records exist about the duties of *fanzhang*. From the second volume of *Pingzhou ketan* 萍洲可談 (Talks from *Pingzhou*) compiled in 1110 by Zhu Yu, one learns that in the Guangzhou *fanfang*, the *fanzhang* presided over all kinds of daily affairs of the foreign quarter and served as official middlemen between the foreign merchants and the government. His duties included not only the administration of the *fanke* “管勾蕃坊公事” such as organizing trade and mediating conflicts but also assisting the government in encouraging foreign traders to come to China and present tribute “專切招邀蕃商入貢”. Pu Ximi 蒲希密, an Arab shipper, was invited by the Guangzhou *fanzhang* in 933.<sup>65</sup>

Although the boundaries of the *fanfang* were more defined than *jimizhou*, the inner structure built up within the *fanfang* was more flexible and its members constantly mobile. Before coming under the umbrella of the *jimizhou*, non-Han peoples already had relatively solid structure perpetuated by local socioeconomic systems with long traditions. This institutionalized hierarchy led to hereditary succession of leaders. They retained their tribal leadership and organization. The backgrounds of Muslims coming to China were diverse with limited blood-related relationship among themselves, that is to say, they mainly came as individuals, rarely the whole community. Also, they entered China in different time periods. Thus, as a diasporic

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<sup>64</sup> *Pingzhou ketan*, *juan* 2, p. 19, “巾袍履笏如華人”.

<sup>65</sup> *Song shi*, “Dashi Zhuan”, *juan*. 490, p. 14119.

trading community with ease of geographic mobility, the inner hierarchy was relatively fragile which can be illustrated by the procedures of the nomination of the *fanzhang*.

Chinese governments did not implement special laws on the residents of *jimizhou*, who were governed according to their local customs. However, they were expected to keep the peace, serve as a buffer between the empire proper and the lands of the non-Han peoples, and, in some cases, sent troops to the Tang imperial army to serve in their own units on specific campaigns.<sup>66</sup> The situation in the *fanfang* exhibits some similarities and also differences. Islam places fundamental emphasis on law and the regulation of community life. The following snippet testifies that the Quran and the Sunna, the Shari'a codified by the religious scholars, as well as the Chinese statutes comprise a complex code regulating individual and communal life at different levels. They worked together to form for good order and discipline within the *umma*.

“Akhbar al-Sin wa al-Hind” records that:

The merchant Sulaimen al-Tajir relates that Khanfu (Guangzhou in Arabic) is the gathering place of the merchants. Due to the residency of many Muslim merchants in Khanfu, there is a Muslim entrusted by the ruler of China with arbitration over the Muslims who travels to and stay in this region. This is according to the instruction of the King of China. On festival days, he leads the Muslims in prayer; he delivers a sermon (*khutba*) and prays for the Sultan. Indeed, the Iraqi merchants do not contest the authority of his judgment, his implementation of law, as well as what is found in the book of God (Quran), the most High and Almighty, and the regulation of Islam (Sunna).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Yu Zhengui, *Zhongguo lidai zhengquan yu Yisilan jiao*, pp. 19-25.

<sup>67</sup> Maqbul Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts*, pp. 37-38. Compare Chang Yung-Ho. “The Development of Chinese Islam during the T'ang and Song Dynasties (618-1276 A.D.)”, p. 38. For the Chinese translation, see Zhang Xinglang, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*, vol. 2, p. 201. See

In the *fanfang* the purview of Islamic authority and regulation had its limitations. Muslims were also subject to Chinese statutes. The first legal provision laying out legal standards for the treatment of foreigners within China's borders is as follows:

When the conviction of law merely involves *huawai* 化外 (unconverted) people of the same country, the judgment will be made in accordance with the customary law of the said country. But when the conviction involves people from different countries, say, *Gaoli* 高麗 (Silla) and *Baiji* 百濟 (Paekche), the matter and punishment are decided according to the Tang statute.<sup>68</sup>

The Song statutes followed the Tang's at large but with a few variations. According to the *Pingzhou ke tan*, foreign defendants were first sent to the Guangzhou government to verify their deeds. There were five levels of punishment: *chi* 笞 (beating with light bamboo), *zhang* 杖 (beating with heavy bamboo), *tu* 徒 (imprisonment), *liu* 流 (banishment) and *si* 死 (death). Such higher levels of punishments as *tu*, *liu*, and *si* were decided by the government. The less serious punishments were left to the *fanzhang*. The Song government sought to approach these conflicts carefully, involving local Muslim leaders in adjudicating disputes and granting *fanzhang* limited judicial autonomy, but when dealing with serious infringement of the law, the result was often the intervention of the local government. In addition, the legal texts, while using a range of terms to designate non-Han, often refer to them as *huawai*, that is, beyond the reach of the civilizing influence of the Chinese political and cultural order. Muslims remained sojourners in China rather than Chinese subjects. However,

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also Mu Genlai et al. trans. *Zhongguo Yindu jianwenlu*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Tang lü shuyi*, *juan* 6, p. 133. Compare Leslie, "Living with the Chinese: the Muslim Experience in China, T'ang to Ming", p. 176.

although the *fanfang* enjoyed complete religious tolerance and a certain amount of judicial power, it was not granted extraterritoriality<sup>69</sup>, just a measure of autonomous rights. The sovereignty of China was left unchallenged. As we have seen from the procedure of the appointment of the *fanzhang*, the considerable power of the *fanzhang* over his people was virtually bestowed by the government.

Chinese governments registered populations in order to maintain security and build a foundation for extracting resources through taxes, corvée labor, and military service. In regulating registration, the population registers of the *jimizhou* dwellers were not transmitted to the Ministry of Revenue but routinely put under a separate category established for non-Han peoples.<sup>70</sup> The administrative apparatuses that dealt with the registration for the commanderies of China proper usually did not handle direct taxation on *jimizhou* dwellers.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to the subjects in regular commanderies, *jimizhou* inhabitants did not have the same obligations as those imposed on commoners—taxes and corvée labor. Although a significant number of non-Han soldiers were recruited from the *jimizhou* by Chinese armies, they often served as auxiliaries under the direct command of their tribal chiefs and were not forced into regular army units. They even often did not perform involuntary military service. Indeed, exemption from these obligations was frequently a political

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<sup>69</sup> For more discussion of the extraterritoriality of the *fanfang*, see Qiu Shusen, “Tang-Song ‘fanfang’ yu ‘zhiwaifaquan’”. See also Leslie, “Living with the Chinese: the Muslim Experience in China, Tang to Ming”, pp.175-179.

<sup>70</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, *juan* 43, p. 1119.

<sup>71</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, *juan* 43, p. 1119.

necessity in arranging for the submission of non-Han peoples.<sup>72</sup> Rather than integrating them into the regular administration, the Chinese state kept the *jimizhou* at a distance taking “loose-rein” measures.

*Fanfang*, on the other hand, could not be exempted from tax obligations. As the frequency of commercial intercourse increased, the government implemented very close surveillance over the movements of merchants. Though the internal life of the *fanfang* was seemingly untouched by the external influences, it was virtually subject to the control of the government, especially economically and commercially. The exotic extraordinary commodities such as spices and fragrances caught the eyes of the imperial family. Xuanzong emperor in the Tang Dynasty once “burned the pearls, jades and brocades in front of the palace”<sup>73</sup> to show his resolution to be thrifty. However, he heard from a foreigner that there were many pearls and jewels from the southern sea in 716 and then ordered Yang Fanchen to procure them.<sup>74</sup> Besides satisfying the imperial family’s need for luxury items, overseas trade via Guangzhou was an important avenue of increasing revenue by taxation. When the Huang Chao rebellion army occupied Guangzhou in 879, Yu Qiong exclaimed that “the southern sea contains the profits of maritime trade, offering pearls and jewels annually. Now the wicked thieves took it. The national treasury will be vanishing gradually”<sup>75</sup> It is

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<sup>72</sup> Abramson, *Ethnic identity in Tang China*, p. 126.

<sup>73</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, *juan* 211, p. 6702.

<sup>74</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, *juan* 211, p. 6718. “有胡人上言海南多珠翠奇寶，可往營致，因有市舶之利”  
“命監察御史楊範臣與胡人偕往求之。”

<sup>75</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, *juan* 178, p. 4633.



easy to recognize that the opportunity for tax revenue was the primary role overseas trade played in Guangzhou. Consequently, the post of the *shiboshi* was established to manage the overseas trade and strengthen the grip on Guangzhou.<sup>76</sup>

The type of personnel staffed for the *shiboshi* post varied in different periods: court official, eunuch, court official again and *jianjun* 監軍. It is a controversial issue about when Tang government first set up the *shiboshi* in Guangzhou. Here I adopted a conservative argument according to the earliest document<sup>77</sup> concerning the Guangzhou *shiboshi*, that is, no later than the second year of Kaiyuan (715). And hence the first recorded *shiboshi* is Zhou Qingli 周慶立 who was a high-ranking general officer of Imperial Guards. During the Kaiyuan period (713-741) of Emperor Xuanzong, the power of eunuchs not only ballooned in the central government but also expanded to the local governments. Thereby after Zhou Qingli's term of office, court officials were replaced by eunuchs as *shiboshi*. *Zizhi tongjian* reads that “Tang set up the *shiboshi* in Guangzhou in order to obtain profits from foreign merchants and ships. Sometimes eunuchs were appointed.”<sup>78</sup> Available historical materials mentions one Wei<sup>79</sup> 韦某 as the first eunuch who took over the position of Guangzhou *shiboshi* in the tenth year of Kaiyuan (723). Eunuchs got held of the

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<sup>76</sup> For extensive analysis on the *shiboshi*, see Ning Zhixin, “Shilun Tangdai shiboshi de zhineng jiqi renzhi tedian”; Li Hu, “Tangdai de shiboshi yu shibo guanli”; Li Qingxin, “Tangdai shiboshi ruogan wenti de zai sikao”.

<sup>77</sup> *Cefu yuan gui*, *juan* 101, p. 1200. “開元二年十二月，右威衛中郎將周慶立為嶺南市舶使，與波斯僧廣造奇巧，將以進內。監選使、殿中侍禦史柳澤上書諫，帝嘉納之”。

<sup>78</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, *juan* 223, p. 7157. “唐置市舶使於廣州，以收商舶之利，時以宦者為之”。

<sup>79</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, *juan* 371, p. 3766.

position until the fourteenth year of Zhenyuan (798) when Wang Qianxiu 王虔休, Viceroy of Lingnan 嶺南節度使, doubled as the *shiboshi*. Thereafter Ma Zong 馬總, viceroy of Lingnan, doubled as the *shiboshi* in 813 and one Ma 馬某, Vice Military Commissioner of Lingnan 嶺南經略副使, in 814. During the Kaicheng period (836-840), the position was passed over to the control of *jianjun*<sup>80</sup>, becoming an important and relatively fixed way to appoint *shiboshi*.

There is no doubt that before the establishment of the Guangzhou *Shiboshi*, local authorities in Guangzhou took charge of the overseas trade. After the Guangzhou *shiboshi* was established, local authorities still played a controlling role in its management whose influence was more continuous and regular than *shiboshi*. When the *shiboshi*, often a temporary assignment, was not sent by the central government, local authorities would hold the full power. At the beginning of the establishment of the *shiboshi*, the main mission of the position was to purchase luxuries for the imperial family and hence its grip on overseas trade was very loose. The duties of the position increased along with the growing demand for the profits from foreign ships and merchants. During their joint management, the powers of *shiboshi* and local authorities were not identical, but alternating. However, no matter which one was strong and which one was weak, they both represented the interests of Chinese governments in essence, securing the profit from maritime trade.

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<sup>80</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, *juan* 177, pp. 4591-4592. “性仁恕，為政廉潔，請監軍領市舶使，已一不干預”。

After the foreign ships arrived in Guangzhou, they were first examined by the local government and then the foreign merchants would be treated to a welcome reception after the inspection.<sup>81</sup> There were three core components of the landing procedures: *bojiao* 舶腳 (or 下碇稅) , *shoushi* 收市, and *jinfeng* 進奉.<sup>82</sup> The *bojiao* is anchorage-tariff<sup>83</sup>. Chinese historical materials provide no clear records about the rate of taxation. But the Arabic documents fill in this lack: the rate was as high as 30%:

When the sailors arrived in Guangzhou from the sea, the Chinese officials held their goods, stored them in warehouses, and guaranteed responsibility up to six months until the last merchant has arrived. Then they take a third of each commodity, and give the rest to the merchants. The ruler takes what they need on the basis of the maximum price, pays it quickly, and does not treat (the visitors) unjustly.<sup>84</sup>

This was to maintain the fairness of the trade and also to stabilize the prices by the abundance of the goods. Zhang Xinglang argues that 30% was so high that it may have been exorbitant taxation by Chinese officials.<sup>85</sup> The extracting administration may lead to the two riots of *fanke* in Guangzhou, respectively 684 C.E.<sup>86</sup> and 758 C.E.<sup>87</sup> The *shoushi* is the governmental monopoly of precious and rare commodities shipped in. The *jinfeng* is the tribute sent to the emperor expecting rich gifts bestowed back. Only after these three collection processes, the foreign merchants could freely

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<sup>81</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, juan 563, p. 5703. “始有閱貨之宴，犀珠磊落，賄及仆隸，公皆能罷之” by Han Yu 韩愈 in his “正議大夫尚書左正孔公墓誌銘”.

<sup>82</sup> Qiu Shusen, *Zhonggou huixu shi*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, juan 563, p. 5703. “蕃舶之至泊步，有下碇之稅” by Han Yu in his “正議大夫尚書左正孔公墓誌銘”.

<sup>84</sup> Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts*, p. 46. Compare Chang Yung-Ho, “The Development of Chinese Islam during the T’ang and Song Dynasties (618-1276 A.D.)”, p. 34; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 72; Zhang Xinglang, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*, p. 201; Mu Genlai, *Zhongguo Yindu jianwenlu*, p. 15 & 21.

<sup>85</sup> Zhang Xinglang, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*, p. 205.

<sup>86</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, juan 203, p. 6420.

<sup>87</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, juan 10, p. 253.

trade with local people. One thing needs to be noted is that in the actual operating, the traders were faced more than these three tax items. For example, a transaction tax started in 750 with the rate of 2%.<sup>88</sup> In 783, in order to guarantee coverage of the military expenses against *fanzhen* (military governorship), the rate was enhanced to 5%.<sup>89</sup> Emperor Wenzong (r. 827-839) issued an imperial decree in 834, pointing out that the foreign ships and merchants had been over-taxed for many years. He ordered that “except for the *bojiao*, *shoushi*, and *jinfeng*, no additional taxes should be imposed on them”<sup>90</sup>. It reveals that on the one hand, the Tang government paid much attention to the management of overseas trade, on the other hand, the officials had created a hard time on foreign traders.

There were other two important reforms of the daily management of foreign ships. The “tribute” maintained the most important mission of the *shiboshi* until the reform by Wang Qianxiu 王虔休 during the reign of Emperor Dezong<sup>91</sup>. He took the position in 798, constructed official archives and built an official building which provided fixed offices for the *shiboshi*. Only after his reform, the *shiboshi* began to perform its function independently and truly took part in the management of overseas

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<sup>88</sup> *Tang hui yao*, *juan* 66, p. 1154.

<sup>89</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, *juan* 52, p. 1353.

<sup>90</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, *juan* 563, p. 785. “南海蕃舶，本以慕化而來，固在接以恩仁，使其感悅。如聞比年長吏，多務征求，怨嗟之聲，達於殊俗。況聯方實勤儉，豈愛遐深，深慮遠人未安，率稅猶重。思有矜恤，以示綏懷。其嶺南、福建、揚州蕃客，宜委節度觀察使，常加存問。除舶腳、收市、進奉外，任其來往通流，自為交易，不得重加率稅”。 See also *Cefu yuangui*, *juan* 170.

<sup>91</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, *juan* 515, p. 5235. “除供進備物之外，並任蕃商列肆而市” by Wang Qianxiu 王虔休 in his “進嶺南王館市舶使院圖表”.

trade.<sup>92</sup> But only until the *jianjun* staffing in the post of *shiboshi*, its power on overseas trade was adequately exerted and the model of the joint management of the *shiboshi* and local authorities truly crystallized.

Kong Kui 孔戣, Viceroy of Lingnan, implemented another important reform in 817. In order to prohibit officials' taking bribery, he abolished the welcome reception for foreign merchants which was distorted into an opportunity when the foreign merchants could bribe the officials.<sup>93</sup> Also, he greatly amended the old inheritance laws which decided that when a foreign merchant died, his assets could be expropriated by the government if after three months no relatives had come to claim them. The time limit was canceled so that the inheritance would be returned anytime as long as any relative made a claim.<sup>94</sup> In the Song dynasty, the *shibosi* 市舶司 (the Office of the Overseas Trade Superintendent) was set up in Guangzhou in 977, designed to oversee and supervise the increased maritime trade and levy duties on commodities. The establishment of the *shibosi* put an end to the control of local authorities on maritime trade. While in the Tang, the post of *shiboshi* was set up only in Guangzhou, the Song witnessed the office of *shibosi* established in several other southeastern seaports by imperial command responding to the increased maritime trade.

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<sup>92</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, 515: 5253. Wang Qianxiu 王虔休, “進嶺南王館市舶使院圖表”.

<sup>93</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, juan 163, p. 5009.

<sup>94</sup> *Quan Tang wen*, juan 563, p. 5703.

Through the above comparison between *jimizhou* and *fanfang*, these two state-sanctioned ethnic boundary mechanisms, in the political, legal, and economic realms, we can see the relationship between Chinese state and the *jimizhou* is one of suzerain and vassal. Its establishment follows the imperial strategy of frontier security and order. No attempt was made to institute direct rule and the state promoted the policy of keeping the non-Han at a distance using “loose-rein” methods rather than integrating them to the local administration. As for the *fanfang*, political concerns were minimal; it was the commercial trade and profit that caught the state’s attention. The state thereby actively imposed tight control on this region by establishing the post of the *shiboshi* in the Tang and the office *shibosi* in the Song.

The *fanfang* was a unique organization based on politics, economy and religion. The government facilitated the persistence of ethnic boundaries of the *fanfang* by actively establishing or passively permitting self-governing. The *fanfang*, in turn, perpetuated the *umma*’s distinctive cultural landscape and maintained the Islamic way of life more or less intact. For example, *Pingzhou ketan* records some information about the dietary practices and recreational activities of *fanke*. Islam prescribes certain dietary restrictions which were observed in *fanfang*. The eating habits assisted in their survival as a separate community, in particular the abstention from the consumption of pork, an important part of the Chinese diet. “Eating pork is forbidden which is just like cutting one’s own flesh and eating oneself.” “Until now, *fanke* do not eat any of the six domestic animals not slaughtered by their own hands.

As for fish and turtle, they eat both, no matter whether alive or dead”<sup>95</sup> Molasses, dates, and areca were their favorite food. Muslims played chess<sup>96</sup> and raised birds<sup>97</sup> as leisure activities.

Although there was no acculturation or assimilation desired by the Chinese governments, the *fanke*, evolving from temporary residents to permanent settlers, made their efforts to adapt to Chinese social norms. Learning Chinese language and culture was not only a must for their life and business in China, but also the chief vehicle to attain civil office. Some of them were even eager to assert Han identities through the manufacturing of genealogies. Though there left no records for *fanxue* 蕃學 (foreign educational facilities) during the Tang dynasty, there were a few *fanke* who were proficient in Chinese culture. Li Yansheng 李彥升, a native of *Dashi*, passed the imperial examination and won the *jinshi* degree in 848. Cai Tao 蔡條 in the Northern Song dynasty wrote in the second volume of his book *Tieweishan congtan* 鐵圍山叢談<sup>98</sup> that “during the period of Daguan and Zhenghe (1107 - 1117), the society was harmonious and the *yi* began to learn Chinese culture. Guangzhou and Quanzhou requested to build *fanxue* there”. *Zhongwu jiwen* 中吳

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<sup>95</sup> *Pingzhou ketan*, *juan 2*, p. 33. “廣州蕃坊……蕃人衣裝與華異，飲食與華同。或雲其先波巡嘗事瞿曇氏，受戒勿食豬肉。至今蕃人但不食豬肉而已。……至今蕃人非手刃六畜則不食。若魚鱉則不問生死皆食。”

<sup>96</sup> *Pingzhou ketan*, *juan 2*, p. 40. “廣州番坊見番人賭象棋，並無車馬之制。只以象牙犀角沈檀香數塊於棋局上兩兩相移，亦自有節度勝敗。予以戲事，未嘗問也。”

<sup>97</sup> *Pingzhou ketan*, *juan 2*, p. 43. “余在廣州，購得白鸚鵡。譯者盛稱其能言。試聽之。能番語耳，嘲 正似鳥聲。可惜枉費教習。一笑而還之。”

<sup>98</sup> *Tieweishan congtan*, *juan 2*, p. 27. “大觀政和年間，天下大治，四夷響風，廣州泉州請建蕃學”。

紀聞 by Gong Mingzhi 龔明之 in Southern Song accounts that “When Cheng Shimeng was in charge of Guangzhou, he built a lot of schools...The children of *fanke* all wanted to study.”<sup>99</sup> This illustrates that *fanke* inhabited the cultural sphere they were born into and nurtured by.

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<sup>99</sup> *Zhongwu jiwen*, p. 220. “程師孟知廣州,大修學校。日引諸生講解,負笈而來者相踵。諸番子弟,皆願入學”。



## Conclusion

This study examines the dynamic interactions between China and the Islamic World before the Mongol rule. During the Tang and Song periods, the Islamic world was China's most important trading partner. The Chinese sought spices and fragrances and obtained knowledge of advanced astronomy, mathematics, and medicine from the Islamic world. In turn, Arab and Persian Muslims purchased Chinese silks and porcelains, and also adopted various technological inventions pioneered by the Chinese such as the art of paper-making and the compass. Along with the rarely interrupted flow of commodities and technologies was a substantial migration of Muslims from West Asia to China. A big amount of them settled down in China and were accommodated in the Guangzhou *fanfang*. This study exhibits trade as an alternate model of Islam's spread and development besides conquering new territories. By virtue of peaceful commercial activities, Islam was implanted into Chinese society through the Guangzhou *fanfang*.

This study also poses a radical reassessment of former thinking which attributes a single year or a specific event to the beginning of the presence of Islam in China. It demonstrates that it is problematic to claim the advent of Islam in China from Muslims' sporadic and temporary appearance. Islam is a living reality, whose beliefs and practices are integrated into the fabric of personal and communal life. This study thus reveals the special path of the entry of Islam into China—manifesting itself in a

sizable *umma* of its observant Muslims. The Guangzhou *fanfang*, within which the *umma* was embedded, was not only the epitome of Islam in China but also its cradle.

The vitality of the Guangzhou *fanfang* was sustained by the Maritime Silk Road. It is via this well-known waterway that Muslims continuously and increasingly came to trade with China. On the one hand, the territorial division and political disintegration during the Tang-Song era frequently blocked the overland routes. On the other hand, the Chinese state, especially the Song, was eager to encourage and strengthen its control on maritime trade. The desire of Chinese ceramics in the Islamic world stimulated the rise of sea routes and maritime trade began to surpass overland trade in both volume and significance. The growing geographical knowledge facilitated the exploration of the Maritime Silk Road linking China and the Islamic world, which in turn inspired further mutual contacts. Both textual and archaeological sources testify to this heavily travelled route as well as frequent and large-scale sailing of seagoing vessels with trade goods. Being a node of both inland and overseas transportation, Guangzhou was the main avenue where the Sino-Islamic trade realized. The Guangzhou *fanfang*, the legacy of exchange between these two societies at roughly equal levels of development, constituted a vital part of the Chinese commercial landscape and played an important role in the trade network of maritime Asia.

Via the comparison between the *fanfang* and the *jimizhou*, this study reveals the distinguishing characteristics of the *fanfang*. As a trade diasporic community, the

relatively fragile inner structure of the *fanfang* made it politically insignificant yet economically important to the Chinese authorities, which perpetuated the ever-development of the *fanfang*. Unchallenging the sovereignty of China, the *fanfang* enjoyed complete religious tolerance and a certain amount of judicial power. The *fanfang* is a relatively autonomous community with official recognition and sponsorship and the *fanzhang* combined religious, administrative, and economic functions. However, considered as *huawai ren*, the Muslims remained foreigners sojourning in China during the Tang and Song dynasties. They were Muslims in China rather than Chinese Muslims.

The imperial strategy mainly focused on securing maritime trade profits and encouraging trade activities. The maritime trade became one of the most important sources of the Song revenues. In order to achieve these goals, the Chinese state, on the one hand, established inspectorates to oversee and supervise maritime trade; on the other hand, offered abstracting treatment to Muslim merchants, such as political courtesy, economic favor, as well as beliefs and customs respected. These benefits were consolidated by laws. Has been blended with Chinese regulations, the *fanfang* had its own distinctive elements. The government took the initiative to demarcate the space for the *fanfang* in order to facilitate the maritime trade. The *fanfang*, in turn, perpetuated the *umma*'s distinctive cultural landscape and maintained the Islamic way of life more or less intact. This mode is characterized by Leslie as "cultural autonomy

but obedience to the local authorities and central government.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Leslie, “Living with the Chinese: the Muslim Experience in China, T’ang to Ming”, p. 176.

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