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MUSLIM MOBILITY IN SUNG-LIAO-CHIN PERIOD

Haji Yusuf Chang,
University of Chicago,
U.S.A.

C O N T E N T

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I. SUNG PERIOD (960-1276)

1. Political and Economic Background of Sung China

Ancient China was a super land-power, an expansionist state, which, from unknown times to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 219 A.D.) and through the T'ang, made it a national policy to control her neighbors in the Northeast, North, West, and South, in order to maintain enough buffer zones to protect herself, a self-proclaimed Middle Kingdom. Based on the teachings of Confucius, gentry, farmers and soldiers were better respected and were accorded a higher status than merchants and craftsmen. But after T'ang China conquered Korea, Annam, and Central Asia, Chinese rulers began to realize the importance of commerce and industry in her international development.

Before discussing the nature of Muslim mobility in the 10-13th centuries, we should first briefly explain both the political and economic background of Sung China. Muslim mobility during that period was quite different from that of the T'ang, whether in terms of its political, military, or economic aspects. After the decline of the T'ang in the 9th century, thought to have been chiefly caused by nation-wide rebellions and savage destructions by An Lu-shan (d.757) and Huang Ch'ao (d.884), Chinese warlords in China Proper and the nomads in the north and west went on a rampage.

Between the downfall of the T'ang in 907 and the establishment of the Sung in 960, there was a gap of 53 years. During this brief period, there were five short-lived Chinese dynasties and ten petty kingdoms, and until China was unified by the Sung, virtually all contact with the Muslims were lost, particularly with the Arabs in the West.

In the year 960, Chao K'uang-yin, the Commander-in-chief of the royal army of the Later Chou Dynasty (951-959), had gathered his troops at the Ch'en Bridge in Honan province, in preparation for the defensive advance northwards against the Liao invaders. On the third day of the first lunar month, while Chao was still asleep, he was suddenly awakened by his generals and soldiers, forced to don the "Yellow Robe"--a symbol of imperial authority--and was acclaimed the Emperor of China.[1] This was the creation of the Sung Dynasty. Immediately, diplomatic and trade relations were re-established with the Arabs, Persians, and the Central and South Asians, though this time by sea, not by land.

The Sung was divided into two distinct dynasties. The first was the Northern Sung (960-1127), with its capital in K'ai-feng in Honan province. It controlled China Proper, with the Great Wall (40 degrees N. Latitude) as its northern boundary, extending southwards to the border of the Kingdom of Annam (20 degrees N. Latitude); westwards to the Tibetan Kingdom of Tufan (102 degrees E. Longtitude); then sliding down about 20 degrees eastwards to the Chinese coasts in the Eastern and Southern Seas. The latter dynasty, the Southern

Sung (1127-1276), was installed in south China, with its capital in Hang-chou in the province of Che-kiang, after north China--between the Great Wall and the Hui River (33 Degrees N. Latitude)--was annexed by the Chin Empire (1115-1234) in 1127.[2]

The Chinese were unable to recover Manchuria, Mongolia, and Hsiyü (West Territory or the eastern part of Central Asia) during the Sung period. First, the Khitan Tartars from south Manchuria occupied Manchuria and Mongolia, where they built the Liao Dynasty (916-1125). Then in 1038 there emerged a Tangut tribe (Tibetan) in the west, which grabbed a strategic territory between Mongolia on the north and the Central Asian trade route to the west, and established the Kingdom of the West Hsia. But after 189 years, it was destroyed by the Genghis Khan hordes in 1227. The Liao regime lasted longer, a total of 218 years. In 1125 it was replaced by the Tungusic Nüchen tribe from northeastern Manchuria, founder of the Chin dynasty. After 109 years, it was in turn eliminated by the Mongols during the reign of the second Yuan Emperor T'ai-tsung (Ogodei) in 1234.[3]

The continuous struggles between the nomadic peoples from the north of the Great Wall and the agricultural Chinese in the south during those three centuries, had in fact divided China into two uneven halves roughly along the 33 degrees North Latitude. The northern half, ruled by the nomads, comprising of Manchuria, Mongolia, and the Hsi-yü, was about

three times as large as the southern half controlled by the Sung Chinese.[4]

Consequently, the Silk Road, which had been the main communication line between Asia and Europe since Han times, now became completely dominated by the Non-Chinese. The political, military, cultural and commercial relations by land that existed between the Early Abbassids and T'ang Chinese, were cut off. Although such complicated international developments had of course stopped Muslim migrations into China, they did not reduce their activities in the Khitan and Nüchen territories.

The national policy of Sung Dynasty was, from the beginning of its formation, to shift its political, military, economic, and cultural centers, as well as its population, from the indefensible north to the wealthier, better-developed and defensible south. Shifting to the south surrounded by seas and abundant in rivers, Sung China soon became a naval power strong enough to maintain her independence and prosperity for more than three hundred years. With sufficient naval protection, the foreigners, particularly the Arabs who left China after the destruction of Kuang-chau in 878 by Hwang Ch'ao.[5] now returned to China. This time they felt at home.

2. Response of Abbassid Caliph to Sung Emperor's Call to Reopen Trade Relations

From the beginning, with the permanent loss of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Hsi-yü, Sung China had ceased to be a super-power. In the West, the Later Abbassid Caliphate (945-1258) had also become a royal puppet, first in the hands of the Persian Buyids (945-1055), then the Seljuk Turks (1055-1118), and then the Zangid Turks (1127-1258)[6]; and financially, was almost bled to death in wars ~~with~~ with the Crusaders (1095-1270).

These two empires, constantly subjected to nomadic aggressions from the same directions, were eager to reestablish their friendship as soon as possible, for their political and economic survival. With this intention in mind, the first Sung Emperor, T'ai-tsu (r. 960-976), dispatched a goodwill mission in 966 to recontact countries in the South and West Asia, which had had diplomatic relations with T'ang China. This mission, staffed with more than one hundred officials, was entrusted with numerous imperial messages. The most important message was the one that was delivered to the Abbassid Caliph al-Muti' (r. 946-974).[7] concerning his request to the Caliph to reopen the Sino-Arab sea trade. In response, an Abbassid tributary delegation, bearing valuable gifts and Arabian products, arrived in K'ai-feng, the Sung capital, in 968. Again, in 971, 974, 975, and 976, four more Abbassid embassies visited the T'ai-tsu court.[8] As a result,

the formerly discontinued Sino-Arab political-economic relations were reinstalled, and the once interrupted Sino-Arab sea trade and the tourist business were set in motion again.

During the Sung period, there were 32 foreign countires which dispatched a total of 213 tributary missions to China. Sixty were from Chan-ch'eng (Annan), 35 from "Ta-shih" (Arabia), 28 from San-Fo-ts'i (Palembang, E. Sumatra), and 80 from 29 small kingdoms.[9] Chan-ch'eng and San-fo-ts'i, as well as two other countries--Ceylon and Ku-lin (Malabar Coast), which are not listed as tributary states--were the important transhipping centers, where there were large Arab populations, with all kinds of business establishments maintained for handling maritime commerce between China and the West as early as the T'ang days.[10] We presume that some of these tributary missions sent by 32 countries to Sung China might have been private parties organized by influential Arab merchants who took the oppportunity of representing the petty kingdoms to the Chinese court, with the aim of obtaining favorable treatment from the Chinese government.

The joint efforts by Sung China and Abbassid Caliphate in reopening maritime trade, which brought to them economic prosperity have, in fact, as envisioned by Reschauer, ushered them into "what might be called the first period of great (Asian) oceanic commerce in the history of the world."[11]

3. Joint Chinese-Arab Effort in the Development of Sung Maritime Commerce

A. Sung Monopoly on International Trade

The Sung Government turned international trade into a monopoly. But in fact the import, export, and shipping enterprises were owned and operated by Chinese and Muslim merchants. All transactions between government and merchant, or between the merchants themselves, were carried out on a barter system, simply because at that time there was no bilaterally utilized currency. For export China produced silk, porcelain, lacquer, gold, silver, tea, and occasionally Chinese cash. In return she bought perfumery, pearls, precious stones, coral, ivory, rhinoceros horns, medicine, spices, cloth, steel, birds, horses, and animals from Muslim countries.[12]

In order to control import and export, the Sung government installed at Kuang-chou, Hang-chou, Ch'üan-chou, and six other seaports, the office of Superintendency of Merchant Shipping, a treasury administration copied[1] from the T'ang. Their functions were to supervise incoming and outgoing ships, to collect custom duties on foreign and domestic goods, to offer warehouses for storage, and to purchase profitable foreign goods for resale. The duties collected ranged from 10% to 60%. Official purchases might consist of 10% of the cargo, or even the entire shipment.[13]

For the purpose of storing and selling foreign goods, particularly perfume, ivory, and medicine, the Sung royal house

established a Hsiang-yao Kou (Royal Bureau of Perfumery and Medicine) in 977, which was a part of the palace administration. A famous governor, Chang Sun, was appointed as its commissioner. In its first year, the bureau made 300,000 strings cash profit, and 500,000 the following year.[14] During the reign of Kao-tsung (r. 1128-1162) of Southern Sung, the revenues made in 1137 from the resale of perfumery and medicine alone reached 2,000,000 strings of cash (equivalent to 2,000,000 ounces silver), being about 10% of the national income.[15] The Emperor was so pleased that he remarked: "The profit from merchant shipping is very great. If it is properly administered, it will yield for the government millions of strings of cash without much difficulty. Is this not better than extorting (money) from the people?"[16]

B. Arab Profit-sharing of International Trade

The Sung monopoly law required that all imported or exported goods, whether owned by Chinese or Muslim, be registered at the Superintendency of Merchant Shipping, at the port in question. After paying off duty and selling whatever the government wanted, the merchant was free to trade with anyone he wished, ship to any foreign country he desired. Or, with a special permit to sell, he could travel from city to city within China. "Such sales and purchases easily yielded one thousand per cent

profit", sometimes even more.[17]

As we know, the most lucrative products were silk from China and perfume from Arabia and South Asia. Among the perfume that the high society of China liked the best was ambergris, a substance found floating in the Indian Ocean. Discharged by the whale, it possesses an unusually strong fragrance.

The Sung government purchased silk from farmers or manufacturers at only 2,000 cash (equivalent to two ounces silver) for a piece about two feet wide and forty feet long. The Muslim merchants bartered for it from the Chinese government, then shipped it to the Middle East or Europe for sale. There, "one pound (of silk) is stated to have been considered equal in value to as much weight in gold."[18] As to the Official selling price of ambergris by the government in Kuang-chou, it was said that "One ounce would bring in 100,000 cash" to the treasury, equivalent to 100 ounces silver.[19]

In 1131 during the reign of Sung Emperor Kao-tsung (r. 1127-1162), an Abbasid ambassador named Abu Ali, came to his court and presented 209 large elephant tusks and 35 large rhinoceros horns, weighing a total of 20,000 catties. In return, the Emperor awarded him 50,000,000 cash (equivalent to 50,000 ounces of silver). History tells us that this Arab diplomat soon resigned his official duty, made his permanent residence in Kuang-chou, engaged in Sino-Arab

trade, and became the leading Arab merchant. In 1137 he was married to a Chinese woman who happened to be the sister of a high Chinese general by the name of Tseng Na. According to history, Tseng Na gave his sister to Abu Ali simply because the Arab was too rich and influential to ignore. Not very long afterwards, Emperor Kao-tsung heard of this news. He immediately sent for the Arab and asked him to expand Chinese sea trade with Muslim countries by making regular trips between Kuang-chou and Baghdad. Merchant Abu Ali accepted the royal offer and started his new venture, whereby he accumulated even more wealth.[20] From that time on the Abu family, well-established in Kuang-chou since the 10th century, continued to grow in wealth and prestige in Southeast China until the end of the Yuan Dynasty.

In early 13th century, a famous Chinese scholar, Yüeh K'e, recorded in his book Ying Shih,[21] his personal observations about thh Abu family in Kuang-chou:

> "Many 'Hai-liao' (Sea Barbarians) lived, scattered around in Kuang-chou. Among them the most prominent was P'u Hsing (Clan), nicknamed 'The White Foreigner'. By birth he was a nobility from Chan-ch'eng (Annam)...Later he took up permanent residence in China and engaged in sea trade...He lived in the city. His home was built and decorated in the most luxurious fashion...I personally saw him spending gold like dust...(At dinner parties), pearls, precious gems and perfume, were scattered all over the place, to show off (his) extravagance...His wealth had no match..."

There is another episode about the affluence of the Arabs in Ch'üan-chou, quoted by a modern Chinese scholar, Wu Wen-liang, in his work Ch'üan-chou Religious Stones:[22]

> "In 1210, during the reign of Sung Emperor Ning-tsung (r.1194-1224) the deteriorated city walls of Ch'üan-chou were finally rennovated with the financial support of the Arabs living there."

To rebuild the walls of an old city like Ch'üan-chou was certainly no easy task. It probably cost hundreds of thousands of ounces of silver. It was so expensive that even the Chinese government alone could not afford to pay for it, but was obliged to seek contributions from the rich Arabs.

To further illustrate the opulence of the Ch'üan-chou Arabs, here is another quotation, this time from the Kuei-Hsin Tsa-chih[23] by Chou Mi of the 13th century:

> "There was a prominent 'Nan-fan Hui-hui' (Arab Muslim) merchant named Fu-lien (al-Bahrain), who was a son-in-law of the Abu family. He was so rich that he owned 80 sea-trade ships. He died in 1293, survived by only one daughter. His properties were confiscated by the Chinese government (which discovered in his home) 130 piculs of pearls (about 17000 lbs.) and other goods of equal value."

How could al-Bahrain accumulate such wealth? Translated into current monetary value (based on the 1983 New York pearl market) his pearl inventory alone would be worth 200 million U.S. dollars.

We do not believe that the Arab merchants were millionaires before coming to China. Most likely they attained their fortune after having engaged in sea-trade; for example, bartering their perfumery for silk. Sung

emperor Kao-tsung was very pleased with the revenues China made from the perfumery transaction, but such revenues were used by the emperor for national defense. But the multi-million strings of cash, the tons of silver--all sea trade profits the Arabs shared almost equally with the Chinese government--were not used by the Arabs for Chinese national defense. They were, instead, spent to elevate the living standards of the Muslims themselves. They maintained huge fleets of ships, built palace-like mansions, horded perfume, silk, gold, silver, and other valuable goods. Their wealth could challenge that of an Arab Sultan or a Chinese prince.

4. P'u Shou-keng: His Role in Sung-Yuan Dynastical Change and Chinese Islam

A. The Political Background Behind Sung-Yuan Dynastical Change

Because in south China there existed defensible sea lines, navigatable rivers, well-established inland traffics, fertile lands, rich natural resources, a large population and well-trained officials, in addition to an unprecedently prosperous international sea trade developed by Sung rulers in cooperation with Abbassid Caliphs and Muslim merchants, the Sung Empire, though militarily weak, survived for 316 years. She lasted longer than any of the powerful nomadic Liao, West Hsia, Chin, or later, the Yuan dynasties. Perhaps, due to the huge profits and revenues made from foreign trade, the Sung government was able to build a strong economy, as well as a strong navy as defense against the northern nomads who were unbeatable on horse but vulnerable on ship. Lacking any one of these factors, the Sung Empire might still have survived, but not without the financial gains from foreign trade.

After having conquered the Kingdom of West Hsia in 1227, the Chin Empire in 1234, and Yunnan and Tibetan tribes in 1253, the Mongolian forces under Khublai Khan stepped up their campaign to conquer Sung China. From the north, the west, and the south, the Mongols rained down on the Chinese, and by 1276, had captured the Sung capital Hang-chou, and removed the teen-age Sung Emperor Kung-ti (r. 1275-1276) and the dowager-queen to Yen-king (modern Peking), once the defeated emperor had surrendered his royal credentials and declared the disintegration of the Sung Dynasty.

Just before the downfall of Hang-chou, two brothers of Kung-ti, Prince Chao Shih and Prince Chao Ping were escorted by a few faithfuls in their escape to Fu-chou. Upon arrival at that city, Prince Shih was immediately acclaimed as Sung Emperor Tuan-tsung (r. 1276-1278). But during his stay there, due to his youth and inexperience, all the royal affairs were handled by his prime minister Ch'en I-chung, an opportunist. Probably, advised by Ch'en, the young emperor wanted to escape to Annam, but for unknown reasons his wish did not materialize. At that moment, the Mongol forces were advancing towards the eastern parts of Fu-kien and Kuang-tung provinces, encircling Fu-chou for his capture. The few faithfuls, under the leadership of Chang Shih-chieh, Minister of Military Affairs, (with the exception of Ch'en I-chung who had already left for Annam) realizing the great danger the new emperor was in, immediately took him to sea and sailed for Ch'uan chou. There, the Minister Chang Shih-chieh hoped to obtain help from a man called P'u Shou-keng.[25] And the meeting was to prove a turning point in the life of P'u. But just who was this P'u Shou-keng? Why did Chang so urgently seek him? What was the result of their fateful meeting? All this and more will be answered in the ensuing pages.

B. P'u Shou-keng (1214-1291): His Life and Career

P'u as a Chinese surname had been adopted by many Arabs living in China during the 10 to 13th centuries, with names such as Abu-Malik or Abu-al-Qasim. Chinese surnames are, with a few exceptions, monosyllabic. So it was more convenient for an Arab to introduce himself to a Chinese as simply Mr. P'u, instead of, say, Abu-Malik.

Most of the Arab merchants in Kuang-chou during T'ang-sung times were wealthy, and many prefixed their surnames with the word "Abu", meaning "father of". This is why the 12th century Chinese scholar Yueh K'e wrote:[26]

> "There were many sea-foreigners scattered about in Kuang-chou. Among the most prominent one was the 'P'u clan'..."

From historical records we can learn that the majority of the Abbassid tributary or envoys sent by Southeast Asian Muslim states to Sung China were headed by Arab dignitaries. While holding diplomatic status, they engaged in international trade. Many of them had homes or properties in Kuang-chou or other Chinese cities. When trade was more profitable they would give up their diplomatic posts, work for business, and often settled down in such cities where they enjoyed extraterritorial privileges and a better life than they could back in their own homeland.

Now, the question is this: Who was the earliest ancestor of the wealthy P'u clan in Kuang-chou?

When the present writer was in Taiyuanfu, Shan-si province, from 1935-1938, his teacher Ibrahim Ma Chün (d. 1941) wrote a book The Secret History of Chinese Muslims, containing a lot of valuable information on Chinese Muslims that cannot be found in any traditional writings. Ibrahim Ma, an Arab descendent himself, whose family tree can be traced back to Caliph Abu-Bakr (r.632-634), was a great Chinese and Islamic scholar, the chief judge of Shan-hsi province, and died a martyr during China's anti-Japanese war (1945-1948). According to the writer's recollections, these were his words:[27]

> "The P'u clan in Kuang-chou were descendents of Abu Ali who came to Sung China from Arabia and settled down in Kuang-chou. P'u Shou-keng was his descendent. Pai Yen (Ibn Ya'gub), the first Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief of all Mongolian forces under Khublai Khan, was Sayyed, an Arab from Bahrain (Pa-lin). The P'u family and our Ma family had one common ancestry traced back to Caliph Abu Bakr... Sayyed Pai Yen and Sayyed Edjill Chams-den Omar were cousins, because Pai's mother was Edjill's aunt, and Edjill's mother was Pai Yen's aunt...We are all Arabs...Not only us, but the first Ming Emperor Chu Yuan-chang, his queen Ma Hou, and most of his important aides, such as Prince Hsü Ta, Prince Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, Prince Hu Ta-hai, Prince Li Wen-chung and Prince Mu Ying and many others, were also Arabs...My ancester who served as Minister of War under Ming Emperor Hsien-tsung (r. 1465-1487) was Ma Wen-sheng. He moved to Shan-si province and butilt the mosque in T'ai-yuan-fu, being the reason why our Ma clan settled down in Shan-si..."

Ibrahim Ma's information on Abu Ali coincides with what was written in Chau Ju-kua:[28]

> "In the second year of the period T'ai-ping hing-kuo (977), this country (Borneo) sent as envoys Abu Ali and others, to present as tribute to our court, camphor, tortoise-shell, ivory and sandal-wood...Their envoys were lodged at the royal guest house, and were sent back with honour."

Again in 13th century, another Chinese scholar, Cheng So-nan, wrote in his book Hsin Shih:[29]

"P'u Shou-keng's ancestors were Nan-fan-jen (Arabs), whose wealths were unmatched by (Chinese) in Kuang-tung and Kuang-hsi provinces."

If we wish to understand Islam in southeast China, we must first know Islam in Kuang-chou. If we want to understand Islam in Kuang-chou, we must first know the history of how and when the Mosque of Holy Remembrance and the Light Pagoda (Minaret) were built. When we know the history of the famous Kuang-chou mosque and minaret, we will then know why the Abu Ali clan was the main force behind the Muslim activities in Kuang-chou during the 10-13th centuries. The Abus were the Arabs who built the Kuang-chou mosque and the minaret during the 9-10th centuries.[3]

In the 11th century, P'u Tsung-Meng (1032-1098), a descendent of Abu Ali in the 4th generation, who was a scholar and statesman, moved his family from Kuang-chou to Lang-chou in Ssu-ch'uan province. After he passed the royal Chin-shih (Ph.D.) examination, he was appointed by Sung Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067-1085) as Palace Editor, Grand Secretary and Vice Minister. In Chinese literature, he was a close friend of the leading Sung scholar and statesman, Su Shih, or Su Tung-p'o (1036-1101). In politics, he was a comrade of the reformist Prime Minister Wang An-shih (1021-1086), and he was an opponent to the conservative statesman and historian, Ssu-ma Kuang (1019-1086). Although he was thoroughly educated and molded in Confucianist culture, he remained a devout Muslim. Just to mention one instance of his religious devotion, it is recorded in Sung History:[31]

"...He took abulations every day, such as minor face-washing, major face-washing; minor foot-washing, major foot-washing; minor abulation and major abulation;...An abulation requires five hu (bushel) of water..."

He must indeed have taken abulation and said his prayers regularly for a Chinese historian to take note.

P'u Shou-keng's father, P'u Shih-pin, was born in Ssu-ch'uan province, a descendent of P'u Tsung-meng in the 6th generation. After having passed a high civil examination, he was chosen as the magistrate of Chin-kiang in Ch'uan-chou. Therefore he moved from Ssu-ch'uan to Ch'uan-chou with his family around 1230.[32] There young Shou-keng grew up and was educated.

P'u Shih-pin had two other sons. Shou-sheng was the eldest, a scholar and the prefect of P'u-chou County in Shan-si province. The second son, Shou-ch'eng, was also an outstanding scholar and the prefect of Mei-chou in Kuang-tung province. Both of them were good civil officials with brilliant records.[33] Shou-keng was the youngest, a highly intelligent and ambitious person, talented in financial, political and military affairs, a man born with administrative abilities.

By the age of 30, Shou-keng was already involved in Sino-Arab sea trade, the family business. Being an Arab, and

with his family's influence, he did so well that he soon became the leader of the Muslim and merchant community in Ch'uan chou. Possibly because of his wealth and skilfull leadership, the Sung government made him the Superintendent of Merchant Shipping in Ch'uan-chou, which post he held for 30 years (1245-1276), until his next important assignation as the Military Pacification Commissioner of Fu-kien and Tung-chien, commanding all the Sung naval forces in these areas.[34] With these two powerful positions in addition to his sea trade enterprises, Shou-keng became the greatest authority in southeast China - financially, militarily, and politically, just before the downfall of the Sung Dynasty.

C. The 2nd Month of 1276 Confidential Message from Sayyed Pai Yen to P'u Shou-keng

Twelve seventy-six was the fatal year for Sung. More than 95% of China had been conquered by the Mongols, except Fu-kien and Kuang-tung coastal territories, of which P'u Shou-keng was the caretaker. He was so important to Sung that the declining royal house Chao hoped to keep him under control and use his wealth and forces to form their last resistance against the Mongols, or help them flee to Southeast Asia for future survival. On the other hand, Yuan Emperor Khublai Khan would not let Shou-keng slip from his fingers and decided to win over his loyalty. Khublai Khan won the game because his Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief, Pai Yen, happened to be a Sayyed from Bahrain. Because both were Arabs, they knew each other very well.

According to Ibrahim Ma Chün, Pai Yen (Ibn Yargub) was also a descendent of our Prophet Muhammed. Soon after Pai Yen's forces captured Hang-chou and removed the Sung Emperor Kung-ti and his

mother to Yen-king in the 2nd month of 1276, he dispatched two secret agents, Pu Po (an Arab) and Chou Ch'ing (a Chinese), with his confidential message to meet Shou-keng that month.[35] Obviously, he was asking the latter to come over to his side, in order to save Ch'uan-chou city and its entire population from total destruction, and to bring the Sung-Yuan dynastical war to an end. What Shou-ken's answer was, historians do not know. But obviously, Shou-keng was faced with a terrible dilemma. Whether to side with the dying Sung, or to entrust his future to Sayyed Pai Yen's Mongol ruling house, that must have been the most difficult decision in his entire political life. It appears that he kept a wait-and-see attitude for no longer than nine months, then the fatal hour struck.

D. The Meeting of Chang Shih-chieh and P'u Shou-keng

According to Sung History, the young emperor wished to enter Ch'uan-chou. He met P'u Shou-keng, who asked him to stay. We do not believe, however, that that was the case. Because Emperor Tuan-tsung was a teenager, he did not understand politics and was under the complete guardianship of Chang Shih-chieh. Therefore, it was the minister that planned to meet P'u Shou-keng to see if something could be worked out so as to save the lineage of the Sung royal house from extinction. Herebelow is what was said in Sung History about this tragic meeting:[36]

"(Emperor) Shih wished to enter Ch'uan-chou. Pacification Commissioner P'u Shou-keng (was thought) to have different ambitions. He had been the Superintendent of Merchant Shipping, monopolizing the profits from foreign shipping, for 30 years. When Shih's ships arrived at Ch'uan-chou, Shou-keng paid a visit (to Shih), asking (the latter) to stay. Chang Shih-chieh would not agree. Someone advised Shih-chieh to detain Shou-keng so that (they) could take control of his sea-going ships. But Chang Shih-chieh did not agree, and released (Shou-keng). Right after, because of a shortage of (royal) ships, the (royal force) captured his (Shou-keng's) ships and confiscated all his wealth. Enraged, Shou-keng ordered (his soldiers) to put to death (in the 11th month of 1276) ~~[illegible]~~ members of the royal family, some high officials, and the Huai (area) soldiers who happened to be in Ch'uan-chou...and then P'u Shou-keng and the Ch'uan-chou Prefect, T'ien Chen-tzu, went over to the (Mongols) the following month..."

It is clear that Chang Shih-chieh, who had just escorted the teenage ruler in his escape from Fu-chou to Ch'uan-chou, realized that it was no longer safe to tarry there either. Presumably, they might have planned to sail for Annam, a country not readily accessible to the Mongols, and which had been suggested earlier by Ch'en I-chung to the young emperor. It seems logical that, with that hope in mind, Chang (and not Emperor Shih) asked Shou-keng to help them by turning over his naval force, and providing his financial assistance. It seems logical too, to assume that Shou-keng would ask for some time before giving his answer. At that time some other loyalists suggested to Chang taking Shou-keng as hostage to fulfill their schemes. But undoubtedly, Shou-keng would not have come to the meeting alone. Perhaps he had ordered his

troops to take certain precautionary measures, which were then discovered by Chang's intelligence agents, who in turn stopped Chang from taking Shou-keng as hostage. At the end of the futile meeting, Chang was forced to release Shou-keng.

Now the military situation became so tense, Chang and Emperor Shih had to depart hastily from Ch'uan-chou, before the Mongols closed in on them. Whereupon Chang made the wrong move in ordering his soldiers to capture many of Shou-keng's ships and looting his possessions. Under such hostile provocation, Shou-keng was left with no choice but to lash back in self-defense. After a brief but bitter and bloody battle, with heavy casualties on both sides, Shou-keng won. With what remained of their decimated troops, the young emperor and Chang Shih-chieh fled on ship to Kuangtung--and to their fatal end at sea.

True, the bloodshed and material destructions were terrible, but it would have been even more devastating had the Mongol troops joined in and fought a different war, a war in which Shou-keng battled on the Sung royalist side.

We could imagine the disaster of a war fought between the powerful Mongol hordes and the disorganized, uncooperating Sung-P'u troops. Had this tragic war really taken place, the result would have been the total demolition of the Ch'uan-chou city, the complete extermination of the Shou-keng clan, and the senseless slaughter of thousands of Chinese and Muslim soldiers, and hundreds of thousands of civilians. Had Shou-keng wanted to save his own life and

wealth, he could have loaded his entire family, his Muslim soldiers and merchants, and all his belongings on his fleet, and left for Annam, where Muslims were more welcome than the Chinese. But he was asked--by the people, his family, and friends--to stay in Chuan-chou and to not side with the Sung. Otherwise, they would undoubtedly have been sacrificed under the Mongol sword. So Shou-keng decided not to leave Ch'uan-chou but to stay with his people and fight it out. And so he went over to Pai Yen in order to prevent the tragic war. By so doing, Ch'uan-chou city was saved, and an innumerable number of people were saved. For this Shou-keng earned the name of traitor in history.

It is the contention of the present writer that P'u Shou-keng's defection to the Mongols was not for his own life, but for humanity. His defection was entirely different from that of Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, the highest Ming Military Governor of Northeast China during the reign of Ming Emperor Ssu-tung (r. 1628-1644). It was his responsibility to direct the war against the Manchu invaders. When he was captured by the enemy in 1642, he defected. Hung's defection was for his life and for glory. Soon he became the informer to the Ch'ing ruler, who appointed him the governor-general of five provinces in southwest China. His sole responsibility was to eliminate the last Ming Prince Kuei.[37] He forgot completely the prestige and power the last Ming Emperor had bestowed on him. There is

no doubt that Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou was a traitor. But what of P'u Shou-keng? He cannot be deemed a traitor. Would the jury of world opinion then forgive him, in light of his unselfish devotion and humanitarian accomplishments?

E. P'u Shou-keng and Chinese Muslims

We can learn through history that the P'u clan was very religious and very wealthy. Both the famous Kuang-chou and Ch'uan-chou mosques were built by this family. Many of their sons were high officials serving in Sung-Yuan governments. Some were well-known for their incorruptible uprightness, humanitarianism, and their talent in Chinese literature.

As a politician, P'u Shou-keng saved Ch'uan-chou from destruction and helped the Mongols to end their China campaign. As a humanitarian, he saved hundreds of thousands of lives, Chinese, Muslim, Christian, and Jew, in Fu-kien and Kuang-tung. His cooperation with Pai Yen, Khublai Khan's Prime Minister, paved the way for hundreds of thousands of Muslims to migrate into China, and to have plenty of opportunity to establish foundations in all walks of life during the Yuan period.

Besides P'u Shou-keng and Pai Yen, there was another high Muslim official of the same period worthy of mention: the famous Prince of Hsien-yang, Sayyid Edjill Chams-den Omar, also a descendent of the Holy Prophet Muhammed in the 31st generation. He was the governor of Yun-nan province and the founder of Islam in Southwest China, also during the reign of Khublai Khan. All

these Arab nobles together played a very important role in the formation of Yuan policy towards the Muslims, which was very favorable to Muslim migration, Muslim distribution, Muslim profession, and the Muslim religious and social life in China during the entire Yuan period. Sayyed Ajall Omar's contributions were concentrated in Southwest, P'u Shou-keng's contributions were centered in Southeast, and Sayyed Prime Minister Pai Yen's influence was in the central government and North China as well. Without these three Arabs, the entire picture of life for the Muslims and the development of Islam in Yuan China would have been vastly different.

II. LIAO-CHIN PERIOD (916-1234)

1. Liao Period: Liao-Abbassid Friendly Relations

The Liao Dynasty (916-1125) was established by the Khitans in the vast territory covering Manchuria, Mongolia and the northern part of China Proper. It lasted 209 years before being replaced by Chin. As a consequence of the Khitan control of the Silk Road, the land traffic between the Sung Chinese and the Abbassids was completely cut off. But relations between the Khitans and the Arabs were quite cordial.

Liao History says that an Abbassid ambassador arrived at the court of Emperor T'ai-tsu (r. 916-926) in 924, with messages and tributes.[38] But its motive is not known. It was not until the year 1020 that the second Abbassid mission came to Liao, sent by Caliph al-Qadir (r. 991-1031) to the court of Emperor

Sheng-tsung (r. 982-1031). This time they bore gifts of elephants and valuable Arabian products, and the request for the hand of a Liao princess in a royal marriage to one of the Caliph's sons, Chaghri-tegin.[39] The request went unanswered. The following year the Caliph dispatched another delegation to Sheng-tsung, again bringing up the same matrimonial request. This time, to the Caliph's surprise, the Khitan ruler granted one of his granddaughters, Princess K'e Lao, to be married to the Abbassid prince. This marked the formation of a political alliance between these two countries.

On her way to Baghdad, Princess K'e Lou and her escorts had to pass through Ghazanivid Khorasan. For this reason the Liao Emperor wrote a letter to Sultan Mahmud (r. 998-1030) saying:[40]

> "...As there is to take place an alliance with Qadir Khan (Caliph al-Qadir), through a noble lady from my house who is to be wed to his royal son Chaghri-tegin, thus uniting the royal families, we are therefore requesting the Qadir Khan to open the road for our envoy to him and for his envoy to us...so we may inform him (the Caliph) of how things stand with us...and our friendship with him...The purpose of this envoy...is to open the road for union and to fasten the ties of amity..."

The Caliph in Baghdad, under pressure from the Persian Buyids (945-1055), must have felt that he should find a friend in China; and the Liao ruler must likewise have felt a need for a friend in the west. For mutual political advantages, these two countries with different religious backgrounds, fell into instant alliance through a royal

marriage. As a result of this friendly tie, the door for Arabs and other Muslims to migrate into China became wide open again, after the long Silk Road blockade since the An Lu-shan (d.757) and the Huang ch'ao (d.884) rebellions.

So far as the Muslim migrations into China during 1021-1125 are concerned, no record exists in either Liao or Sung history. However, we do believe that the constant movements of Arabs, Persians and other Central Asian Muslims into Liao territory should have taken place during those 100 peaceful years. It should not be considered an exagerration to say that a total of about 200,000 to 300,000 Muslims might have settled down in Chinese Turkestan, Mongolia, Manchuria, and north China, under the Khitan rule.

2. Chin Period: Sayyed So-fei-er and Islam in North China

When North Sung (960-1127) still controlled the lands south of the Great Wall, there arrived in K'ai-feng a group of 5,300 Arab immigrants, under the leadership of a Bhuhara prince named Sayyed So-fei-er (d. about 1120). Accompanied by one brother, three sons and five grandsons, and bearing with them a large tribute, the Arab prince paid a visit to Sung Emperor Shen-tsung (1068-1085). He told Shen-tsung that he was a descendent of the Holy Prophet Muhammed in ~~the 26th de~~ the 26th generation and asked for permission to settle down in north China and to preach Islam. The Emperor

was impressed by his regal bearing and learning, and approved his requests. Later he served the Emperor in a capacity in connection with the pacification of a certain group of barbarians. For this the Emperor ordained him the Marquis Ning-I.[41]

For ordinary Muslims in a group as large as the prince's, it would have been difficult to cross the Liao borders to enter Sung. It was probably because the Khitans and the Abbassids had been on intimate terms after the royal marriage in 1021, that Prince So-fei-er was allowed to bring his 5300 tribesmen into China by the Liao authorities.

So-fei-er lived and died in north China. During his lifetime he made frequent religion-related trips between north China and Central Asia. He travelled widely in north China, preaching Islam. When the Chin replaced the Liao Empire, taking control of north China in 1125, his tribesmen remained to live and flourish under Chin rule after his demise.

The Marquis produced many famous descendants who served at the Chin, Yuan and Ming royal houses with high reputation and brilliant records. To name only three sayyeds, the first was Kurumatin Mahmud (d.1252), his great-grandson in the 4th generation. He was the Commander of the Hui-hui (Muslim) Regiment in the Chin Dynasty. He later served as Minister of War at the Yuan Court in early 13th century. Mahmud was a very religius man. Wherever he

was assigned an official post, there he built mosques and preached Islam. Many of the old mosques in K'ai-feng, Lo-yang, Peking, An-hui, Kiang-su, Je-ho and Manchuria, were constructed by him. He also converted many Mongols and Chinese to Islam.

The second sayyed to be mentioned here is Mahmud's elder son, Sayyed Edjill Chams-din Omar, one of the most outstanding statesman next only to his cousin, Sayyed Pai Yen (1235-1294), the powerful Prime Minister under Khoblai Khan. The third sayyed was Cheng Ho (1368-1644), or Ma San-pao, the universally known Commander-in-chief of Ming Royal Navy, considered the first and greatest explorer in Chinese history. He was Sayyed Edjill Omar's descendant in the 6th generation, and that of our Holy Prophet Muhammed in the 37th generation.

According to Chinese Muslim tradition, those 5300 Arab immigrants who followed Sayyed So-fei-er to China, together with those Muslims that settled down in Liao territory, became the earliest ancestors of the Chinese Muslims now living in Manchuria, Mongolia, and North China.

III. CONCLUSION: MUSLIM POPULATION AT END OF SUNG

Back in T'ang times, the Muslims who settled down in the North, Northwest and Southwest China, were mostly soldiers recruited in the Abbasid-T'ang armies, in the battle between China and rebel An Lu-shan, and that between China and the Tibetan Kingdom, in the 8th and 9th century respectively.

There were about 50,000 Arab soldiers who chose to live in China and marry Chinese women. Thus, right from the onset, their numbers were doubled. By the end of T'ang (907), their population should have reached 500,000. The majority of them became farmers, tradesmen, herdsmen, laborers, soldiers, and civil servants. They were the earliest ancestors of Muslims in these areas.

During the Sung-Liao-Chin period (316-1276), more Arab, Persian and Central Asian Muslims migrated to and settled down in Liao and Chin territories, and fewer to Sung China. We do not have any historical records to back it up; however, we should not deny that such events took place. So far as the Muslim immgrants are concerned, we should not only take their mobility in Sung China, but also their movements within Liao and Chin states into consideration. This is because as soon as the Mongols established the Yuan Dynasty, the territories controlled by the Khitans and the Nüchens were put under their dominion.

If the total Muslim population at the end of T'ang (907) was around 500,000, then after 369 years, by the end of the Sung (1276), the total Muslim population should have reached 2,000,000, or just four times the former figure. This is no exaggeration. According to the 1110 Sung census taken during the reign of Hui-tsung (r. 1101-1125), there were approximately

46,734,784 people, of which the 2,000,000 Muslim immigrants represented 4.3%. This percentage rate seems to have been maintained through the Yuan, Ming, Ch'ing and Republican periods, without much change.

As to those Muslims engaged in sea trade in Southeast coastal areas, being merchants talented in business, sophisticated, well-educated, and intelligent, they controlled the import and export in Sung China, and built strong financial bases in coastal cities. They also produced some outstanding scholars of Chinese literature and political science. They were affluent and influential, but most of them did not have the intention of residing permanently in the Confucianist Middle Kingdom, as those Muslim soldiers had done in the high lands. They brought Islam with them, but they did not establish any Muslim communities or villages in Southeast China, without which the future growth of the Muslim population was not possible.

In Kuang-chou, Ch'uan-chou, Hang-chou, and Yang-chou, these merchant Muslims built numerous mosques of great historical value, ones that stand to this day, but where are their descendents? The contributions they made to Chinese Islam cannot be compared with those made by the T'ang-Sung-Liao-Chin Muslim immigratns who chose to settld down in North, Northwest and Soutwhest China. The future of Chinese Muslims lay in these highlands. The light of Islam was to

transcend from the West to the East.

Thanks to the far-sightedness of Sung Emperor T'ai-tsu and Emperor Kao-tsung in the development of Sino-Arab trade, and the kindness of Emperor Shen-tsung in allowing Sayyed Prince So-fei-er and his 5,300 tribesmen to live in North China, and thanks also to the alliance between the Abbassid Caliphate and the Liao Empire through their royal marriage in 1021, the Muslims--particularly the Arabs--had been given all kinds of opportunities to choose their professions, to establish their business entwrprises, and to build up their communities throughout China. The last, but not the least, of all the favors they received, was the permission to become sons-in-law of the Han Chinese. Without their Chinese fathers-in-law, the Muslims would have been isolated from the Han Chinese, and experienced the same miserable existence endured by the Christians and Jews of their time who were not allowed by their priests and rabbis to intermmary with the Chinese.

MUSLIM MOBILITY IN SUNG-LIAO-CHIN PERIOD

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21. Lo Hsiang-lin, P'u Shou-keng Yen-chiu (Studies on P'u Shou-keng), (Hongkong: Chung-kuo Hsueh-sheh, 1959), pp.143-Ying-shih by Yueh K'e, Chuan 11, quotation.

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24. Li Chieh, Yuan History (Hongkong: Hai-ch'iao Publisher, 1962 p. 56.

25. T'o T'o, op. cit., 'Ying-kuo Marquise Biography', p. 185.

26. See Note 21.

27. The Secret History of Chinese Muslims was written by Ibrahim Ma Chün (d. 1941) in Shan-si. The present author, Hajji Yusuf Chang, was Ibrahim's student who had helped his teache in editing that book in 1937. Soon after it was finished, the Sino-Japanese war broke out, and Yusuf Chang left Shan-s for the Middle East as a member of the Chinese Muslim Middle East Goodwill Mission. Before his departure, Ibrahim held Yusuf's hand saying: "Yusuf, take care of yourself. Take this book and promise me that you will one day write the History of Chinese Islam on behalf of our Chinese Muslims." He replied, "Teacher, I promise that, In-sha Allah, I will write a history of Chinese Islam before I go back to Allah! You should take care of yourself too!" Alhamdu lin-Allah, Yusuf Chang is writing the book, Ming Emperor Chu Yuan-chang and Chinese Muslims, in order to fulfill his promise. Unfortunately, the book that Ibrahim Ma wrote, that Yusuf had, was lost in the last war.

28. Hirth, Chau Ju-kua, 'Borneo', p. 157.

29. Lo Hsiang-lin, op. cit., p. 12, quotation from Hsin Shih by Cheng So-Nan on P'u Shou-keng's ancestors in Ch'üan-chou.

30. Ibid., pp. 144-6 on mosque and minaret in Kuang-chou.

31. T'o T'o, op. cit., chüan 328, p. 1726, 'P'u Tsung-ment Biography

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34. Ibid., p. 41, quotation: 'Min Shu' by Ho Ch'iao-yuan, on P'u Shou-keng.

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38. T'o T'o, Liao History (Taipei: I-wen Press), p. 413.

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ISLAMIC LITERATURE, Lashore, Sept. 1970, XVI, 9

The Earliest Sino-Arab Relations

The Change in the Control of Central Asia from the Chinese to the Arabs

I. *The Historical Background of Central Asia in Relation to China before Arab Expansion*

To state briefly, since the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 219 C.E.), Central Asia was the extension of Hsi-yü, the Western Territory,[1] in the eyes of the ancient Chinese expansionists. In a broader sense, Hsi-yü covers the Chinese Turkestan, modern Sinkiang, and the vast land stretching from its western border, Ili and the Onion Range, to the east of the Caspian Sea, and from the northern end of the Iranian plateau to the southern tip of the Kirghiz steppe.[2]

The first time that the Chinese extended their suzerainty to Sinkiang, Ferghana and Badakshan was 60 B.C., when the Western Hsiung-nu (the Huns) Empire was completely destroyed by China under Emperor Han Wu-ti (reigned 140-88 B.C.). Hence there came into existence the so-called fifty petty kingdoms of Hsi-yü,[3] as well as the Silk Road. By this road, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Islam penetrated first into Chinese Turkestan and then China Proper, during the first to seventh

1. Tseng Wen-wu, *History of Chinese Exploitation of Hsi-yü* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), 1-2.

2. Wang Mo, "General View of Central Asia," *Chung-yang Ya-hsi-ya* (Peking: Chung-yang Ya-hsi-ya Hsieh-hui, 1942), I, No. 1, 1.

3. Tseng Wen-wu, op. cit., 29-30.

centuries.[4]

However, the Chinese had to give up Central Asia as soon as the Western T'u-ch'üeh (hereafter written as Turkish) Khanate united under their rule the greater part of Central Asia after their conquest of the Ephthalites in 562.[5] The Chinese could not re-establish their suzerainty until 658 when Emperor T'ang Kao-tsung (reigned 650-683) defeated the final resistance of this Turkish Khanate in Chinese Turkestan and Central Asia. As a result of this victory, "Chinese forces reached as far west as Kish, and the Emperor Kao-tsung had officially annexed all the territories formerly included in the Turkish dominions. In the later year [661 C.E.], the provinces of Sogdiana and the Jaxartes were organised in sixteen districts, including a 'Government of Persia' under the Pērōz, situated apparently in Sijistān, possibly even in Eastern Khurāsān."[6]

Among the sixteen districts in Transoxania, there were the nine historically known tribes Chao-wu Chiu-hsing who were the descendants of the ancient Yüeh-chihs, the Ephthalites. The Yüeh-chihs, who had lived for some centuries in the western part of Kansu province, were driven out of China, in about 140 B.C., by the united forces of the Hsiung-nu and the Wu-sun tribes. Then they migrated westward and settled in the Oxus basin. They made Samarkand their capital and then divided among themselves the basin land into nine kingdoms, namely: An Kuo (Bukhara), Ho Kuo (Kushaniyah), Huo Hsün (modern Khiv), Jung Ti (modern Betik), K'ang Kuo (Samarkand), Mi Kuo (Marymurgh), Shih Chih

4. C.P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia* (London: Methuen, 1926), XII, 169. Chang Hung-ying, *Culture of Central Asia* by T. Hanada (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1941), XV, 67. Fang Hao, *History of the Communication between China and the West* (Taipei: 1955), II, Ch. 19, 198-236. S.A. Huzayyin, *Arabs and the Far East* (Cairo: Fouad I University, 1942), 243, 250, 265-9.

5. W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (London: 1958), 186. Feng Ch'eng-chün (tr.), *Hsi T'u-ch'üeh Shih-liao* (*Documents sur les Tou-kiue Occidentaux* by E. Chavannes), (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1962), 156-60.

6. H.A.R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquest of Central Asia* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 22.

(modern. Tashkent), Shih Kuo (Shebr), and Ts'ao (northeast of Samarkand). In 658 C.E, T'ang Kao-tsung conferred the title of K'ang-chü Prefectural Viceroy upon the king of Samarkand, their tribal chief. Consequently, all the other eight kingdoms pledged allegiance to the T'ang Emperor.[7]

After the collapse of the Western Turkish Khanate, there remained the ten Western Turkish tribes who lived in the northern part of Chinese Turkestan and the northeastern part of Central Asia. They were divided into two wings: the Right Hsiang and the Left Hsiang. These tribes lived there quietly under the control of the T'ang military authorities in northern Chinese Turkestan until 689 C.E., when a powerful Eastern Turkish tribe, under the leadership of Me-ch'o Khan, moved westward, defeated the ten tribes and established a Khanate in this land, which lasted from 689 to 716. After the death of Me-ch'o Khan, one of the ten Western Turkish tribes founded another shortlived Khanate, called Türgesh with Sulu Khan being its chief.[8] Both of these two Khanates had been supported and conferred with titles by Empress Wu (reigned 684-704) and Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung (713-55), respectively,[9] and they had played some important role in the struggles for dominating Central Asia between the Chinese and the Arabs, which will be discussed later.

It is obvious that the majority of the peoples of Central Asia, disregarding the older residents—the Greeks and Persians—whether they were the Hsiung-nus, the Wu-suns, Yüeh-chihs, or the Turks, were not unacquainted with the Chinese at all. Later, when the T'ang Chinese appeared on the scene in Central Asia, they were instantly accepted by these nomadic peoples as their old masters

7. Tseng Wen-wu, op. cit., 105-7. Wang P'u, *T'ang Hui-yao* (Shanghai: Commercial Press 1936), 1774. Ou Yang-hsiu, *Hsin T'ang Shu* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), Vol. 221b, 1.

8. Barthold, op. cit., 166-70. Ou Yang-hsiu, op. cit., Vol. 215, 11.

9. Wang P'u, op. cit., 1691: Empress Wu appointed Me-ch'o as Ch'ien-shan Khan in 698. Ou Yang-hsiu, op. cit., Vol. 215b, p. 9a: Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung appointed Sulu as Chung-shun Khan in 719.

or acquaintances.

From the above sketch of the historical background of Central Asia in relation to China, it is not wrong to say that Central Asia has served as a large reservoir for the non-Chinese nomadic tribes expelled from China before the eighth century, and also that it has been and is a melting-pot of the Chinese, Greek, Persian, Huns, Ephthalites, Turkish and later the Arabic and Mongol races and cultures.

II. *Central Asian Military Alliances under the T'ien Ko'han*

Before discussing the Sino-Arab struggles for domination over Central Asia, there is another politico-military development which should not be overlooked. In 630 C.E., when the Eastern Turkish Khanate was destroyed by the T'ang army, Emperor T'ai-tsung (reigned 627-49) was acclaimed T'ien Ko'han the Khan of Heaven (or Tamghaj Khan as called by some Arab historians) by the various petty kingdoms of Hsi-yü. Thereupon, he would protect these peoples and the Chinese interests in Central Asia against the aggressive Turks, who, although defeated by China, were still strong enough to invade these small states. Under this organisation, all of them had to obey the order of the Chinese Emperor, who acted as the arbitrator if disputes arose between the members of the alliance, and who would use force if they were invaded by other enemies. The invaded could ask for military aid or relief from the Tamghaj Khan, and from the member-states who were also subject to the Ko'han's call, if China herself needed their assistance[10]—a situation, in fact, did arise in the eighth century.[11]

When the Sasanid Prince Firūz, son of the last Persian King Yazdjird III (d. 641), fled to China in 654, appealing for help to

10. Lo Hsian-lin, *History of the Culture of T'ang Dynasty* (Taipei : Commercial Press, 1955), 54-87. Wang P'u, op. cit., 1796. H. Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* (London : 1903), I, 29-32.

11. Wang P'u, op. cit., 1789-90. I. Mason, "When and How Mohammadens First Came," *JNBCRAS*, LX, 1929, 42-78.

recover his kingdom from the Arabs,[12] the Chinese Empire began to be on the alert for any further expansion of the newly born Muslim Empire into the territory east of Persia. In consequence of this critical situation, T'ang Kao-tsung, in his capacity of Tamghaj Khan, immediately established sixteen districts in the Oxus basin in 661,[13] on the one hand, and, on the other, Empress Wu not long after made peace also with the Turks (in 697).[14] The disputes between the Turks and other Central Asian states were, therefore, reconciled, and the united military strength of the Central Asian Alliances became strong enough to slow down the Arab conquest for about half a century.

Besides military purposes, the system of Tamghaj Khan had also had its cultural significance. It was under the protection of this system that the first Zoroastrian Muhu, Ho Lu, reached Ch'ang-an in 631 and, four years later, he was followed by the first Nestorian priest, Alopen.[15] In about the same time, Muslims also came into China by this route, although the Chinese records 651 as the date of official arrival of Islam at Ch'ang-an from Arabia.[16]

Furthermore, the Central Asian music, arts and amusements were also introduced into China and were quickly absorbed by the already multiformed Chinese culture. On the other side, Chinese civilisation, such as the law, painting, silk-weaving, paper-making, and even Chinese poetry, was transported into Central Asia by some of the Chinese officials and soldiers who were sent to the West during the seventh-eighth centuries.[17]

The system of Tamghaj Khan was established in 630 and lasted about 150 years until the complete withdrawal of Chinese

12. Lo Hsiang-lin, op. cit., 62. W. L. Langer, *Ency. of World History* (Boston: 1948), 127-8.
13. Cf. note 6.
14. Cf. note 9.
15. Lo Hsiang-lin, op. cit., 77.
16. Broomhall, *Islam in China* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1910), 10-3. Pai Shou-i, *An Epitome of the History of Chinese Islam* (Shanghai: Wen Tung Shu-chü, 1947), 6.
17. Lo Hsiang-lin, op. cit., 77-8.

influence from Central Asia under Arab pressure.[18] Had not this international organisation been installed by the T'ang Empire, Central Asia as a whole would have been conquered by the Arabs long before the Abbasid Ziyād b. Ṣāliḥ came onto the scene in 751.

III. *The Arab Conquest of and the Chinese Withdrawal from Central Asia*

1. *Qutaybah's Conquest of Transoxania and His Failure to Enter China.* Qutaybah ibn Muslim (d. 715) was the central figure who accomplished the Arab conquest of Transoxania during his ten years' tenure as the governor of the eastern provinces of Khurasan, trusted by Caliph al-Walid (705-15) and supported by Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 714), the governor of Iraq. Transoxania, in the early centuries, was a place full of racial, political and cultural amalgamation and conflicts. Disputes between the Greeks and the Persians, the Persians and the Turks, the Turks and the Yüeh-chihs (the Ephthalites), and the Chinese and the Turks had been very strong and frequent. It was the most difficult territory to be conquered both militarily and religiously by the Arabs in the East; the task of conquering it required a man of great calibre. For this reason, Qutaybah was recommended by Ḥajjāj to Caliph al-Malik (685-705) and Caliph al-Walid (705-15) as the right man to fulfil the mission. He was not only an able military commander but also a good administrator and an enthusiastic Muslim. His military successes were, particularly, due to the co-operation he received from the Persians, who were then one of the leading majorities in Transoxania.

To explain briefly, Qutaybah's conquest of Transoxania may fall into four periods:[19]

(1) 705: the recovery of lower Tukharistan;
(2) 706-12: the conquest of Bukhara;
(3) 710-2: consolidation in the Oxus Valley and its extension into Sughd;

18. Ibid., 80.
19. Gibb, op. cit., p. 31.

(4) 713-5: expeditions into the Jaxartes provinces, Ferghana, Shāsh and the border of Kashagar.

According to Chinese records, Tukharistan, Ferghana and the nine Chao-wu tribes, including Bukhara, Samarkand and Shāsh (Shih Chih Kuo), were the member-states of the organisation of the Tamghaj Khan. During Qutaybah's campaigns against these states, China had tried to help them against the Arab aggressions indirectly by using the forces of the Turks. For instance, in 710, the Eastern Turks joined the battle at Bukhara, waged by the Sughdian, Shashian and Ferghanian troops against Qutaybah; in 712-3 when Qutaybah returned to Merv, Sogdiana was temporarily occupied by these Turks; and during 716-36 there were continuous interventions into Transoxania by the Türgesh Khanate, a powerful Western Turkish tribe.[20] On these occasions, both the Western and the Eastern Turkish Khanates served as the buffer states between the Umayyad Empire and the T'ang Empire, since reconciliations had been made by the Chinese Empress Wu between the Turks and the rest of the Transoxanian kingdoms in 697.

After the withdrawal of the Eastern Turks from Sogdiana and the Arab reconquest of Samarkand and Bukhara in 713, which has been confirmed by Chinese records, Qutaybah began to realise the importance of the political and commercial relations between these petty kingdoms and T'ang China, and he immediately sent in the same year a mission to China, for both diplomatic and commercial purposes.[21]

In the following year, Qutaybah started an expedition into Shāsh, the prince of which appealed to China for assistance, but in vain. However, not long after the expedition was interrupted by the sudden death of his supporter, Ḥajjāj. In 715, Qutaybah renewed the raid on Shāsh and Ferghana. According to the Chinese source, he

20. Ibid., 45, 65-7. Barthold, op. cit., 187. Fang Ho, op. cit., 139.

21. Gibb, op. cit., 50, 60. Fang Hao, op. cit., 135-8. According to Gibb, during 713-55, sixteen Arab embassies were sent to Chinese Court, but according to Fang Hao, during the same period, one more mission was sent.

was helped by certain Turfan (Tibetan) troops in the attack on Ferghana, but was defeated by the Chinese commander of K'uch'eh, Lü Hsiu-ching.[22] In the same year, Caliph al-Walīd also died. When Sulaimān (715-7) succeeded to the throne, Qutaybah roused a mutiny in which he was unexpectedly killed. The Arab tradition that Qutaybah had occupied Kashagar for a while in 715-7 cannot be confirmed by Chinese history.[23]

The death of Qutaybah, therefore, postponed the Arab conquest of Central Asia and prolonged Chinese suzerainty for about thirty-five years until 751 when the Abbasid general Ziyād b. Ṣāliḥ appeared on the scene. If it were not for the death of Caliph al-Walīd or for Caliph Sulaimān's hatred of the party of Ḥajjāj, the entire Central Asia, including Chinese Turkestan, would have been grasped by the Umayyads, and Islam would probably have taken the place of Buddhism and Confucism, at least in western China, three centuries earlier.[24]

2. *Ziyād's Conquest of and the Withdrawal of China from Central Asia.* One year after the death of Qutaybah, in 716, the Türgesh Khanate came into existence with the support of Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung. In 724, the Arab general, Muslim b. Sa'īd al-Kilābī, led an expedition into Ferghana, where the army was defeated by a joint force of Ferghana and the Türgesh. This disaster, known as the "Day of Thirst,"[25] was practically the last aggressive expedition of the Umayyads in Central Asia. This victory of the Chinese allies meant a diplomatic success of China, as expressed in a letter sent three years later (727) by the king of Tukharistan to Emperor Hsüan-tsung.[26]

The favourable situation of China lasted only eleven years until

22. Tseng Wen-wu, op. cit., 141-2.

23. C. Brockelmann, *History of Islamic Peoples* (New York : Putnam, 1947), 83. Gibb, op. cit., 51-4. Tseng Wen-wu, op. cit., 142. Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate : Its Rise, Decline and Fall* (Beirut : Khayats, 1963), 365-6.

24. Chang Hung-ying, op. cit., 71.

25. Gibb, op. cit., 65-7.

26. Tseng Wen-wu, op. cit., 143.

738 when China gave the last blow to the Türgesh Khanate, which then disappeared from the scene in Central Asia for more than two centuries to come. The battle happened at Ts'uai-yeh-ch'eng,[27] modern Tokmak ; it was a battle which destroyed the last Turkish Khanate, and finally brought China face to face with the Arabs, thirteen years later. It happened that, in 750, the Chinese commander of the base at K'u-ch'eh, Kao Hsien-chih, a Korean soldier, raided on Shāsh, captured its king by deceit, looted its wealth, and executed the prisoner in Ch'ang-an, for obviously no sound reasons. Consequently, the prince of Shāsh fled to Sogdiana, and there, with the assistance of his tribal kingdoms, the nine Chao-wu tribes, he persuaded Abū Muslim, the then Abbasid governor of Khurasan, to despatch his lieutenant Ziyād b. Ṣāliḥ to lead a strong force and a joint force of the nine tribes, marching towards Chinese border. The Chinese, who numbered 30,000 including some Ferghanians and Karluks (Turks), met Ziyād's troops at Tarāz, and after five days' fighting, Kao Hsien-chih's army was completely defeated, which was partly due to the desertion of the Karluks. Only a few thousand returned.[28] Since this war, the organisation of the Tamghaj Khan collapsed in fact, if not in name, and the Abbasid colours flew everywhere in Central Asia.

The loss of Central Asia to China was entirely the fault of Kao Hsien-chih, an able but covetous general, who afterwards was executed. Had he not invaded Shāsh and killed its king, the relations between China and the nine Chao-wu tribes would have been maintained at least for some time, and the political situation in Central Asia would have been quite different.

It is interesting to note here that the Abbasid Arabs had learned some of the Chinese sciences, particularly that of paper-making, which made Samarkand a flourishing city, until the Europeans learned it in the twelfth century from the Arabs.

27. Ibid., 131.
28. Gibb, op. cit., 95-7. Barthold, op. cit., 195-6. Wang P'u, op. cit., 1771-2.

Another important episode is that the secretary of Kao Hsien-chih, named Tu Huan, who was a Chinese scholar, was one of the Chinese prisoners in the hands of the Arabs. He lived in Iraq and Syria for twelve years. When he returned to China in 763-4, he wrote his diary, *Ching Hsing Chi* (Records of Experience and Travels in the West), which is the firsthand Chinese report on the political, social and religious institutions and lives of the Islamic Middle East and Central Asia of the eighth century. From his report, the Chinese began to call Islam "the Laws of Ta-shih" (Ta-shih means Arabs), or the Laws of the Arabs. His original work was lost, but important quotations can be found in the *T'ung Tien*, written by Tu Yu, who was the uncle of Tu Tuan. The writer has translated a part of Tu Huan's records, quoted by Tu Yu, as follows :

The title of the king of Ta-shih is Mu-men-tu (Ameer al-Momenin). In this country, both men and women are tall and handsome. Their dress is pretty and clean; their manner is quiet and beautiful. Their women always go out under veil. Disregarding rich or poor, they say five prayers a day. They eat meat, keep fast, and kill animals during religious ceremonies. . . . . Forbid drinking wine and playing music. There are quarrels, but no fighting. There is a large hall, being large enough for several tens of thousand men to assemble together. On every seventh day, the king attends the prayer, sitting on a high seat and delivering sermon : "While it is very difficult to accomplish the worldly life, it is also not easy to accomplish the hereafter. There is nothing more sinful than committing adultery, slander, plunder, steal, selfishness, cheating the poor and maltreating the low. Those who lose their lives in fighting against the enemies will be blessed. . . ." (It seems that Tu Huan wrote this sermon in his book simply as a sample only.) Their laws are lenient. Their burial ceremony is simple. . . . There are all kinds of produce. . . . Brocades, silk, pearls, and other valuables are plentiful in the markets. Many domestic animals are seen in the street. . . . Glasswares and articles made of precious stones are numerous. Their rice and flour are not any different than the Chinese. . . . Chinese painters, such as Fan Shu, and Liu Tz'ü, and Chinese silk artists, Lo, Huan and Lü Li, are still serving there. . . .

As to the laws of Ta-shih . . . they do not eat the meat of pig, dog, donkey and horse; they do not worship the king of their own parents; they do not believe in ghosts or gods, but worship the Heaven (here Tu Huan means Allah) only. . . .

The Earliest Sino-Arab Relations

This report on the Arabs and Islam in Baghdad, and on the introduction of Chinese arts into the Arab world by the Chinese prisoners of war, is the earliest and most accurate document that is found in Chinese history.[29]

IV. *Conclusion*

To conclude this short paper, the writer wishes to point out the important factors which caused the Arab conquests of and the Chinese withdrawal from Central Asia, and wishes to discuss simultaneously the significance of the influence of these Arab conquests in relation to the spread of Islam in China. These important successes have been unnoticed by many historians, particularly the Chinese.

(1) *Factors Contributing to the Arab Victories in Central Asia.* First, the Arabs, both the Umayyads and the Abbasids, had very capable military leaders as exemplified by Qutaybah and Ziyād. The former was supported by al-Walid and Ḥajjāj, the latter by Abū Muslim. Looking at the other side, neither the Transoxanians, principally the nine Chao-wu tribes (the Ephthalites) and the Turks, nor the Chinese, had competitive leaders capable of handling the critical situation with courage and wisdom. This was evidenced by the wrong appointment of the Korean general, Kao Hsien-chih, who destroyed the friendship between China and the nine Chao-wu tribes, thus culminating in the fatal defeat of the Chinese.

Second, the communication line between Khurasan and the Oxus basin was short and convenient, with Merv as the main Arab base; whereas the Chinese headquarters in K'u-ch'eh, which had been frequently threatened by the Tibetans from the rear, was too far from the various battlefields.

Third, while the Arabs had a united military command, the Chinese and their allies were not only loosely organised under the nominal system of the Tamghaj Khan, but also disputed often

29. Tu Yu, *T'ung Tien* "Encyclopædia Dealing with Manners and Customs" (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), Chüan, 193-4.

among themselves.

The fourth factor, which may be the most important one, is that, due to the different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds, the morale of the Chinese and their allies was surpassed by the morale of the Muslim Arabs. The Muslim Arabs fought not only for territorial expansion, but also, even more important to them, for the spread of Islam. Both the Confucian Han and T'ang Empires did not despatch Confucian teachers together with their military forces to the West. They lost the chance to have the Central Asia tribes Confucianised. Now that the Muslim Arabs invaded this polytheistic territory with their combined military and religious might, the atheistic Chinese and the pagan Turks and Transoxanians could meet the invaders only with their undisciplined troops, fighting for the suzerainty of the Tamghaj Khan, but not for God. The result of the struggles was very obvious.

(2) *Significance of the Influence of the Arab Conquests in Relation to the Spread of Islam in China.* The quick Islamisation of Transoxania that followed Qutaybah's final conquest in 712,[30] and the same process administered in the north of the Jaxartes after Ziyād's conquest in 751, were the main sources from which emerged the first immigration of the Muslims, Arabs and converts, into China in 757. In this year, the second year of Chih-teh T'ang Su-tsung, Prince Kwang-ping-chün, who later became T'ang Tai-tsung, commanded a united force of 200,000 foreign troops, including the 4000 Muslim Arabs despatched by Caliph Ja'far al-Manṣūr (754-75), and several thousand Uighurs, in the war against the Turkish rebellion led by An Lushan. After the war was over, these Arabs and the converted Uighurs were permitted to live in China; they married Chinese women and became the earliest ancestors of the Chinese Muslims in northwestern China.[31]

It is a doubtful question whether the Arabs numbered only 4000. In view of the statement :"... When Tai-tsung was the com-

30. Brockelmann, op. cit., 83. Gibb, op. cit., 39.
31. Broomhall, op. cit., 26. Ou Yang-hsiu, op. cit., Vol. 6, p. 7a.

commander-in-chief, the Arabs recovered the two capitals . . ." contained in the *T'ang Hui-yao*, under Ta-shih Kuo,[32] which indicates the important role the Arab troops played in the anti-rebellion expeditions, it is unreasonable that the victorious Muslims were only 4000 at the beginning of the war. It must be several times as much, otherwise they would be much less than 4000 after the war was over.

Without this Muslim immigration, the spread of Islam in China would have been postponed until the Mongol conquest of Central Asia in the thirteenth century, and then Islam in China would have had a different history.

As limited by both time and reference materials, this short paper can only serve for the readers as a stimulant to a deeper study of the early Sino-Arab relations and the spread of Islam in China.

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Selected Scholars on Sino-Arab Relations between T'ang-Sung China and Abbasid Caliphate

HAJJI YUSUF CHANG
Former Lecturer in Chinese
University of Chicago

I. INTRODUCTION

In the eyes of the ancient Chinese expansionists, Central Asia has been the extension of Hsi-yü, the Western Territory, since the Han Dynasty (306 B.C. to 219 A.D.). In a broader sense, Hsi-yü covers the Chinese Turkestan, modern Sinkiang, and the vast land stretching from its western border, Ili and the Onion Range, to the east of the Caspian Sea, and from the northern end of the Iranian plateau to the southern tip of the Kirghiz Steppe.[1]

The first time that the Chinese extended their suzerainty to Sinkiang, Ferghana and Badakshan, was 60 B.C., when the Western Hsiung-nu (the Huns) empire was completely destroyed by China under Emperor Han Wu-ti (r. 140-88 B.C.). Hence there came into existence the so-called Silk Road, via which Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Islam first penetrated into Chinese Turkestan and then China Proper, during the first seven centuries.[2]

From 60 B.C. on until 750 A.D., Central Asia was under Chinese domination, sometimes tightly and sometimes loosely. But in 751, T'ang China lost this vast territory to the new Arab power, the Abbasid Caliphate, as a result of the Sino-Arab war at Taraz, in which the Chinese army under the command of Gen. Kao Hsien-chih (高仙芝), the military governor of Hsi-yü, was defeated by the Abbasid army led by Ziyad b. Salih, the lieutenant governor of Khurasan.[3]

Consequently, Central Asia was soon Islamized, and the Religion of Prophet Muhammad (570-632) began to be firmly established in China. Interestingly enough, in the six centuries to come, the Taraz war did not deepen the hostility between the Chinese and the Arabs, but instead produced peace, diplomatic intercourse, military alliance, and cultural and commercial exchanges.

The relations between China and Arabia, to be surveyed in this short article, will briefly cover certain important writings on the geographical, religious, political, military, and commercial aspects of these two great nations, by a select number of famous Sino-Arab historians, officials, and travellers, who lived in the first century B.C., and 7-13th centuries A.D.

During the period of the Abbasid Caliphate, which was the central power in Arabia from 750 to 1258, known to the T'ang Chinese as "Hei-i Ta-shih," the Black-Robe Arabs, there were three Chinese dynasties: the T'ang (618-906), the Liao or Kitan (916-1125), and the Sung (960-1179).

It was in the 13th century that both Sung China and the Abbassid Caliphate were conquered by the Shamanist Mongols under the leadership of Jenghis Khan (1162-1227), Kublai Khan (1214-1294) and Hulagu Khan (1217-1265). Although Baghdad was completely destroyed by the Mongols, most of the descendants of Mongolian Khan, the rulers in Arabia, Persia and Central Asia, soon embraced Islam and fanatically devoted themselves to spread Islam even further into Russia.

II. ANCIENT SINO-ARAB SCHOLARS' KNOWLEDGE OF GEOGRAPHY

1. How Did the Ancient Chinese Name Arabia?

The pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula was called T'iao-chih (條枝) by Chinese historians. This name first appeared in the Shih Chi (史記), the "Historical Records" written by the first Chinese historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (司馬遷), in the first century B.C. Later it appeared in T'ung-Tien (通典) by Tu Yu (d. 812) as an independent article dealing with the 97 A.D. arrival of a Han general Kan Ying (甘英), in T'iao-chih, on his way to Ta-ts'in (大秦), Roman Empire of the Orient. To the Chinese understanding, T'aio-chih actually meant Mesopotamia, with its capital in Baghdad since the T'ang dynasty. There were no historical records about Arabia until the year 651 A.D., when an Arab ambassador sent by Caliph Uthman (r. 644-656) arrived at the court of Emperor T'ang Kao-tsung (r. 650-683), marking the first official diplomatic and religious contact between the two powers. From that time on, the T'ang Chinese called the Arab Caliphate "Ta-shih" (大食) instead of "T'iao-chih."[8]

2. Sino-Arab Scholars' Knowledge on Communication between China and Arabia:

The earliest Chinese authority on the Sino-Arab geographical relations was Chia Tan (賈耽), (730-805). He wrote the book, Huang Hua Ssu Ta Chi (皇華四達記), "Records of the Routes from China to Foreign Countries," while he served as the prime minister under Emperor T'ang Teh-tsung (r. 780-805). In his book, he says that a sea traveller of his day would cover more than 20 important states, from Canton westward to Baghdad, in about 100 days. Both Ubullah, a sea port at the mouth of Euphrates in the Persian Gulf, and Basra were noted as two important commercial cities often visited by Chinese travellers whose destination was Baghdad.[9]

An Arab topographer by the name of Ibn Khuradadhbah (d. 912), who lived between the 9th and 10th century, authored a famous book, On the Book of Routes and Provinces, when he was the director of the post and intelligence service under the 13th Abbassid Caliph Mutamid (r. 878-892). This book has special value for its historical topography, and has been widely used by later Arab geographers. Four of its pages deal with Chinese sea traffic to the West. Names of Chinese cities, such as Sanfu (Champa), Khanfu (Canton), Janfu (Ch'uanchow), Kantu (Kiangtu), and countries such as Sila (Sinlo), Tibet and Turkestan are recorded along with descriptions. Distances are given in terms of time. For example, he writes: "From Sanfu to Al-Wakin, which is the first port of China, is one hundred Farsangs either by sea or by land...You can go from Al-Wakin...to Khanfu in four days by sea, or in twenty days by land..."[10]

At the end of the 12th century, another Chinese scholar named Chao Ju-kua (趙汝适), did a similar but more comprehensive work, entitled Chu Fan Chih (諸蕃志), "Description of Foreign Peoples," which has been translated by F. Hirth and W. W. Rockhill into English in 1911. The author, a descendant of Emperor Sung T'ai-tsung (r.960-976) in the 8th generation, wrote this book while he was the Inspector-General of Foreign Trade, "Shih-po Shih" (市舶使), in Fu-kien province. His work not only tells us the distances and dates of the sea-routes between China and Arabia, but also gives valuable notes on the political, military, social, religious and commercial lives, as well as the important animals, minerals and plants of the entire Ta-shih Empire. In addition, it contains individual reports on Mecca, Oman, Baghdad and Basra.[11] Obviously, it served as a guide to the international trade between China and the Near East via the South Seas, not only for the peoples of the 12th century, but for centuries to come.

A contemporary of Chao Ju-kua, but of Persian origin, was Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir al-Marwazi (d. about 1120), a physician at the court of Sultan Malik Shah (r. 1073-1093) and the author of the book, The Natural Properties of Animals. In Chapter VIII of this book[12], he tells something about the capital city of the Sung Empire, Kwfwa (K'ai-feng 開封); about the land-routes from Kashgar, via Yarkand, Khotan, Keriya and Sha-chou, to the capitals of Sung, Kitan and Uighur; and about the city of Canton and the Persians and Arabs who lived there at his time. Most of the information contained in his book are accurate. Both of his book and Chao's are useful to the study of the communications between China and Arabia, either by land or by sea, during the Middle Ages.[13]

III. SINO-ARAB MILITARY AND POLITICAL RELATIONS

1. Abbasid Caliphate's Conquest of and T'ang China's Withdrawal from Central Asia:

In 716, there came into existence a Turk state, by the name of Turgesh Khanate, with the approval and support of Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung (r. 713-755), who was the T'ien-k'e-khan (天可汗), or the Tamghaj Khan in Arabic, the Khan of all the Khans in Central Asia.[14] In 724, the Arab general, Muslim b. Said al-Kilabi, led an expedition into Ferghana, where the army was defeated by a joint force of Ferghana and the Turgesh. This disaster, known as the "Day of Thirst,"[15] was practically the last aggressive expedition by the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) in Central Asia. This victory of the Chinese allies improved the political prestige of Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung among the various Turkish tribes in Central Asia.

The peaceful situation of Central Asia lasted only fourteen years, or until 738, when China eliminated the Turgesh Khanate at the battle of Ts'uai-yeh-ch'eng (碎葉城)[16], modern Tokmak. As a consequence, thirteen years later, the military victory brought China face to face with the Arabs. In 750, the Chinese commander of the base at K'u-ch'eh (庫車), Kao Hsien-chih, raided Shash, captured its king, looted its wealth, and executed the prisoner in Ch'ang-an. The prince of Shash fled to Sogdiana, and there, with the assistance of his tribal kingdoms, the nine Chao-wu tribes (昭武九姓), he persuaded Abu Muslim, the Abbassid governor of Khorasan, to dispatch his lieutenant Ziyad B. Salih to lead a strong joint force that

included the nine tribes, to march towards the Chinese border. The Chinese, numbered 30,000, including some Ferghanians and Karluks (Turks), met Ziyad's troops at Taraz, and after five days of fighting, the T'ang troops were totally wiped out.[17] Since this war, the organization of T'ien-k'e-khan collapsed, and the Abbassid colours flew everywhere in Central Asia.

2. Abbassid Troops Rescued T'ang Empire from An Lu-shan Rebellion:

Since China lost Central Asia, the political relations between the Chinese and the Abbassids, which had formerly been hostile, turned unexpectedly friendly. One year after the Tazaz war, in 752, the first Abbasid ambassador appeared at the T'ang court. The fifteen arrivals of the Black-Robe Arabs (in the years 753, 754, 755, 756, 758, 760, 763, 769, 772, 774, 791, and 798) are recorded in history.[18]

Of these fifteen Black-Robe Arab delegations, the one that arrived in 756 was the largest. It was composed of twenty-five members. They came just at the time when An Lu-shan (安祿山), a Turkish leader, rebelled. Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung abdicated and fled to Ssu-chuan. China was in great turmoil. It seems to be the result of this Abbassid mission that Caliph Jafar al-Mansur (r. 754-775) dispatched the well-trained Arab contingent of about 10,000 soldiers from Central Asia in 757. They helped the New Emperor T'ang Su-tsung (r. 756-762) to have Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, the West and East capitals, recovered from the rebels. Peace was finally restored in 763.[19]

After the war, several thousand remnants of the Arab contingent were allowed to live in China, where they were married to Chinese women, with the Emperor's approval. They then preached Islam and became the early ancestors of the Chinese muslims in the Northwest.

It is also remarkable to note that the last group of Abbassid envoys, composed of three Arabs named Han-ch'a (含嵯), Wu-chi (烏几) and Sha-pi (沙比), were all conferred the title Chung-lang-chiang (中郎將), a military rank equivalent to lieutenant-general, by Emperor T'ang Teh-tsung (r. 780-804). These envoys were the military representatives of Caliph Harun Ar-Rashid (786-809 r.). In view of the fact that there had been desires on both Chinese and Arab sides to remove the Tibetan influence from Chinese Turkestan, which interrupted the eastern and western communications for almost 100 years from the 8th century, these three Arab generals might have been sent to China for arranging further military agreement.[20]

3. Royal Marriage Between Liao Princess and Abassad Prince:

The Liao (a Mongolian race) Dynasty (907-1119) came into existence soon after the downfall of the T'ang Empire in 906. Its territory covered practically all of Manchuria, Mongolia and the Northern part of China proper. At its west territory, the Uighurs ruled Chinese Turkestan. Under these situations, the land communications between China and the Abbassid Caliphate was cut off, and the Silk Road became the main traffic used by the Liaos, the Uighurs, and the Arabs only, not the Chinese.

There were many contacts between these powers, none of which we will be concerned with here, except for one episode: a marriage between the two royal houses. According to Liao History, a Ta-shish ambassador arrived at the court of Emperor Liao T'ai-tsu (r. 916-926)

in 924.[21] After this, there was a long silence. Then, in 1020, there came the second Abbassid mission, sent by Caliph al-Qadir (r. 991-1031), bearing gifts of elephants and Arabian products, to the Emperor Liao Sheng-tsung (r. 982-1031). And a request that a Liao princess be given in marriage to a son of the Caliph, named Ts'e-ke (冊哥). The following year another Abbassid envoy visited the Liao Emperor again, with the same matrimonial request. In reply, Sheng-tsung granted one of his grand-daughters, Princess K'e-lao (可老公主), to be married to the Arab prince.[22] Despite their religious differences,[23] this royal marriage had an unusual political significance, as it took place at the time when the Liaos, after seriously defeating the Sung Chinese in 979 and 986, were at their peak in ruling over North China. Naturally, the Abbassids wished to have a friendly neighbor in the Far East.

On her way to Baghdad, the Princess and her escorts had to pass through Ghaznavid Khurasan. For this reason the Liao Emperor wrote a letter to Sultan Mahmud (r. 998-1030), saying:[24] "...And as there happened to be alliance with Qadir Khan (Caliph al-Qadir) through a noble lady from the bosom of my house who became married to his son Chaghri-tegin, and (thus) both houses became united through her, we have asked Qadir Khan to open the road to our envoy. The object in dispatching this envoy...is to open the road of union and to fasten the ties of amity..."

The political intention of this marriage, to tell the world that Liaos and Arabs were united, was evident not only to Sultan Mahmud but to all other countries, including China and Central Asia.

4. Sung China and the Abbassid Caliphate: 960-1279:

According to Sung History, twenty-six Ta-shih missions visited China during 968-1131.[25] Most of these delegations were concerned with commercial interest. Since land communications were interrupted in the Tarim Basin, which was under the control of the Tibetans during 758-860,[26] China and the Abbassid Caliphate were linked by sea trade rather than military or political contacts during those years. Many of those Arab envoys were probably merchants picked up by the Caliphs as their ambassadors.

For instance, an Arab ship-captain named P'u-hsi-mi (Abu Hamid?) asked the Abbassid envoy Li-ya-wu (Ali Ahmed?), who came to China in 993, to present to the Emperor Sung T'ai-tsung (r. 976-997) 50 elephant tusks, 1800 catties of frankincense, 700 catties of fine steel, 100 jars of rose-water, and some western brocade. In return, he received from the Emperor some embroidered robes, silver utensils and silk. Two years later, his son, Pu-ya-t'o-li (Abu Abdullah?), had an interview with the Emperor, to whom he presented some tributes. He was allowed to stay in the capital for several months and finally was given certain amounts of gold to cover the value of his gifts.[27]

The so-called Arab diplomats were so business-minded that whenever there was an opportunity for them to make profits they would make the most of it. For example, when Emperor Sung Chen-tsung (r. 997-1022) held a state sacrificial ceremony at T'ai-shan, (the East Sacred Mountain in Shantung province in 1008), an Arab captain named T'o-p'o-li (al-Tabari?) was permitted, contrary to custom, to bring certain quantity of Arabian merchandise to sell at the festival.[28]

It is true that Sung China's military claws were retracted from the great North, but her commercial horns were extended overseas. At

the beginning of this dynasty, an international trade policy was laid down by Emperor T'ai-tsung. He sent out eight of his chamberlains to the South Seas with the aim of developing trade relations with all the countries in this area and the West. This movement ushered Asia, particularly China herself and the Abbassids, into what might be called the first period of the great Oceanic Commerce in the history of the world.[29]

IV. SINO-ARAB RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

1. Islam in Baghdad Reported by Tu Huan, A T'ang Chinese Scholar:

The Sino-Arab war at Taraz in 751 was a great military disaster to the T'ang Empire. There is an interesting episode concerning a Chinese scholar by the name of Tu Huan (杜環), secretary of the Chinese commander Kao Hsien-chih. He was captured by the Abbassids as a prisoner of war. Living in Iraq and Syria for twelve years, he saw Islam in Baghdad and was well versed in the customs and life patterns of the Arabs. When he returned to China in 763-4, he wrote a book, Ching Hsing Chi (經行記), "Records of Experience and Travels in the West." His original work was lost, but some important quotations are contained in the T'ung Tien (通典), edited by his famous uncle, Tu Yu (杜佑), who was the prime minister under Emperor T'ang Teh-tsung (r. 780-805). His scholarly and truthful report on the religious, social, political and economic lives of Muslims in the Near East and Central Asia of the eighth century is considered unsurpassed among any other ancient Chinese writings.

Here below is part of Tu Huan's report quoted in T'ung Tien, translated into English:[30]

"Ta-shih is also named Ya-chu-lo (亞俱羅). The title of the king of Ta-shih is Mu-men-tu (慕門都 Ameer al-Momenin). In this country, both men and women are tall and handsome. Their dress is pretty and clean; their manner is quiet and beautiful. Their women always go out under veil. Whether rich or poor, they say five prayers a day. They eat meat, keep fast, and kill animals during religious ceremonies...Forbid drinking wine and playing music. There are quarrles, but no fighting. There is a large hall, being large enough for several tens of thousand men to assemble together. On every seventh day, the king attends the prayer, sitting on a high seat and delivering a sermon, such as: 'While it is very difficult to fulfill one's worldly duties, it is also not easy to fulfill that of the hereafter. There is nothing more sinful than committing adultery, slander, plunder, theft, selfishness, cheating the poor and maltreating the lowly. Those who lose their lives in fighting against the enemies will be elevated to heaven. Those who kill enemies will be blessed...' Their laws are lenient. Their burial ceremony is simple...There are all kinds of produce...Brocades, silk, pearls, and other valuables are plentiful in the markets. Many domestic animals are seen in the street...Glasswares and articles made of precious stones are numerous. Their rice and flour is not any different than the Chinese...Chinese painters, such as Fan Shu (樊淑) and Liu T'zu (劉泚), and Chinese silk artists Lo Huan (樂環) and Lü Li (呂禮) are serving there.

"As to the laws of Ta-shih...they do not eat the meat of pig, dog,

whipped with a rattan from head to foot...Offenses entailing banishment or more severe punishments are carried out by the Department Magistrate of Kuang-chou."

The second scholar, Yüeh K'e (岳珂), described briefly the religion of the Arabs in Canton in his work, Ying Shih (桯史),[34] written in the latter part of the 12th century. Part of his observation is quoted in the following:

"...These foreigners are religious and clean. Almost daily, they worship together in a hall for blessings. The name of their god is similar to Buddha, but there is no idol. His title sounds like 'Ao-vah' (close to Allah), which I do not understand...There is a high stone tablet in the hall, on which some strange (Arabic) writings are engraved, in appearance like (Chinese) seal characters. The worshipers all stand facing the tablet..."

What these scholars reported is quite accurate; according to Islamic laws, Muslims should say prayers five times a day, preferably in congregation at the mosque, with their faces towards Mecca, the holy center of Islam. Before prayer, they must take ablution. They worship Allah only, and no one else, not even their Prophet Muhammed. The mosque houses neither idols nor images, but verses from the Holy Koran which are either written on walls or engraved on tablets made of stone or wood.

About 25 years after Sulaiman the Merchant, Ibn wahab of the Koraish tribe, descended from Hebar, the son of al-Asud, spent quite a long time in China. He was received by the Emperor T'ang Hsi-tsung (874-888) and they had a long and interesting conversation about the life and custom of the Arabs, the conquest of Persia by the Arabs, the great kingdoms of the world, the Prophet Muhammad and other Prophets, the Caliph of Baghdad, and so on. What Abu Zaid Hassan al-Siraf in The Travels of Two Muhammadens (in 915) quoted later proved true of the actual situations of China at that time.[35]

There was one important incident, personally witnessed by Ibn Wahab in 878, that shed light on the lives of the numerous Arabs in Canton. It was the wholesale massacre of "one hundred and twenty thousand Mahomedans, Jews, Christians, and Parsees, who were there on account of traffic," by the rebels led by Huang Ch'ao (d. 884).[36] This tragedy serves to show that the population of the Arabs and others in Canton during the 9th century was larger than the population of the foreign nationals who lived in Peking or Tientsin, if not Shanghai, before the downfall of Chinese mainland in 1948. It also may help historians to know the propserous conditions of the Muslims and Islam in China 1000 years ago.

Such was another episode in Ibn Wahab's relations to Canton. The famous Huai Sheng Mosque (懷聖寺), one of the oldest religious structures still in existence, was said to be built by him in about 900, according to Dr. Kerr, the author of Canton Guide.[37]

V. SINO-ARAB COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

Being limited by space, in this paper we shall restrict ourselves to discussions of activities in Canton and Ch'üan-chou, as representative of China as a whole:

It is also said that an Arab merchant at Ch'üan-chou, Fu Lien (佛 al-Bahrain?), a son-in-law of P'u Shou-keng, owned eighty ships of the oceanic type. When he died in 1293, just the pearls that he left was 130 piculs in weight (1 picul equals 133 pounds). [47]

VI. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing historical records and the eye-witness reports by a few selected Arab and Chinese scholars, we have learned that T'ang China and the early Abbassid Caliphate had maintained good political, military, religious and commercial relations without breakage for almost three centuries. Each side cooperated beautifully in all these contacts, which, in turn helped Islam to become deeply rooted in Central Asia and China. The early descendants of the Arab soldiers and merchants became the ancestors of the Chinese Muslims in the Northwest. Arab arts and customs were integrated into Chinese culture. These accomplishments were the permanent fruits of the early Sino-Arab relations.

After the downfall of the T'ang Dynasty in 906, the Liao Empire became the ruling power of the North. Sino-Arab relations continued to be maintained in peaceful manners. As a result of the royal marriage between the Liao Princess K'e-lao and the Abbassid Prince Chaghr-tegin in 1021, Islam penetrated into the Liao royal house, whose traditional belief was Buddhism.

As to the Sung Dynasty, it never had any opportunity to unite China. Because the Liaos and the Nüchens (女) were, one after the other, the overlords of the Great North, the Sung government had to shift its political and economic centers to the South, resorting to sea-trade for survival. Consequently, those Arabs who used to come to China by the Silk Road now had to take the sea traffic from the Persin Gulf via the Indian Ocean, the South Seas, and finally settled down in either Canton or Ch'üan-chow. Wherever they settled down, Islam travelled with them. Many influential wealthy Arabs became citizens in these cities and quite a few of them joined the Sung and later the Yüan and Ming governments as high officials. They spent tremendous amounts of money in China for the social and religious welfare of the Chinese people. This explains why the Chinese Muslims, who were mostly the descendants of the Arabs, lived a comfortable life for almost one thousand years before the Manchu conquest of China in the 17th century.

It was the Arabs who rescued the T'ang Empire from the rebellion led by Ann Lu-shang. It was they who helped the Sung Chinese to create the first Oceanic Commerce of the world. It was they who later assisted the Mongols to rule China. Finally, it was they who offered their services to Chu Yuan-chang (朱元) to build the Ming Dynasty (13680-1644). But above all, it was the Arabs who firmly planted the religion of Muhammed in the Far East. Islam in China still exists, whereas the T'ang, the Sung, the Liao, the Yuan, and the Ching royal houses can only be traced in history.

1. In Canton

Commercial relations between China and Arabia were started not long after 166 A.D., when the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius (121-180) sent an envoy to the Han Emperor Huan-ti (147-167 A.D.) with gifts of ivory, rhinoceros horn, and chelonian shells, through the channel of Annam (安南) government.[38] In return, Chinese silk was presented via the Silk Road.[39]

At about 300 A.D., the enterprising Arabs of the southern Arabian coast, who had in very early days established stations at all the principal ports-of-call along the coast of the south Indus, appeared to also have had a settlement or colony in Canton.[40] This was, in fact, the real beginning of the commercial relations between the Chinese and the pre-Islamic Arabs. Consequently, Chinese foreign trade was greatly encouraged and Chinese ships sailed even as far as the Persian Gulf in the T'ang (618-906) period.[41] It was in the 8th century that the Muslim Arab merchants had some great factories operating in Canton.[42]

As to the wealth and the influence of the Arab merchants in Canton, it has been vividly described by some Chinese scholars. For instance, Yüeh K'e wrote:[43]

"Many hai-liaos (海獠) lived scattered about Canton. The most prominent among them was a man surnamed P'u (Abu) who was by birth a noble of Chan-cheng (占城)...Later on he took up his permanent residence in China, to attend to his import and export trade... He lived inside the city where his home was furnished in the most luxurious fashion, for in wealth he was number one of his time... scattering gold like dirt..."

Another Sung scholar, Chou Ch'ü-fei (周去非), the author of Ling Wai Tai Ta (嶺外代答), said:[44]

"Of all the wealthy foreign lands which have a great store of precious and varied goods, none surpasses the realm of the Arabs..."

Chou Ch'ü-fei, who was not an overseas traveller, was probably impressed by the riches and influence of the Arabs whom he saw in Southern China.

2. In Ch'üan-chou

Sometime during the 9th century, a portion of the Southern sea-trade of China was diverted to Ch'üan-chou ( ), probably as a result of the Arab trade which took this sea-port as its new basis in handling business with not only the Sung Chinese but also with the Japanese and the Koreans. Two centuries later, Ch'üan-chou, which was known to the Arabs by the name of Zaytun, became of equal importance with Canton.[45] Finally, it surpassed the latter at the end of the Sung Empire, during the time a Sinogized Arab high official, P'u Shou-keng ( )--possibly related to the most influential Arab Abu family of Canton, as pointed out by Yüeh K'e--was the Ch'üan-chou Superintendent of Merchant Shipping ( ) for 30 years (1245-1275). It was said that he owned a commercial fleet himself; so wealthy and powerful was he that his surrender to Kublai Khan (1214-1294) in 1279 was responsible for the collapse of the Sung Empire.[46]

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