

THE ISLAMIC MINORITY IN GUANGZHOU: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT DURING THE TANG DYNASTY

*(Minoriti Islam di Guangzhou: Sejarah dan Perkembangan pada Zaman
Dinasti Tang)*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to study the history and development of the Islamic minority in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty. Among the numerous dynasties in China, the Tang Dynasty stands out as one of the most prosperous in the country's history. The prosperity of the Tang Dynasty established Guangzhou as a prominent trading centre on the Maritime Silk Road. Adopting an open-door policy, Guangzhou attracted the arrival of traders from outside the country and in 651 A.D., the influence of Islam began to spread in Guangzhou. Khalifah Uthman dispatched a delegation, led by Saad Abi Waqas, to meet Emperor Gaozong. This friendship meeting led to the on the establishment of the first and oldest mosque in Guangzhou, the Huaihseng Mosque. This study used qualitative methods, namely the collection and evaluation of data from primary and secondary sources based on historical research methods. The sources and materials referred to were obtained from the website of China Radio International (CRI) and The Guangzhou Local Chorography Department, the Chinese Islamic Association, and the ancient books of the Tang Dynasty. Library research methods involving articles, magazines, books, and newspapers were also employed. The findings show that the Muslim community in Guangzhou has a long history since the time of the Tang Dynasty. The development of the Islamic minority in Guangzhou

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is evidenced by the establishment of the Muslim community, the construction of the Huaisheng Mosque, the emergence of Islamic scholars, the organization of religious activities, and the appointment of religious officials. This is because the policy of the administration and economic development during the Tang Dynasty gave the opportunity for Islamic development there. This research demonstrates that the Tang Dynasty had an impact on Islamic development in China. This finding benefits the public and other researchers seeking important information on the history and development of the Islamic minority in Guangzhou, China.

Keywords: Islamic minority; the Tang Dynasty; Guangzhou; history; development

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji sejarah dan perkembangan Islam minoriti di Guangzhou semasa zaman Dinasti Tang. Antara puluhan dinasti di China, Dinasti Tang merupakan dinasti yang paling makmur dalam sejarah negara ini. Kemakmuran Dinasti Tang telah menjadikan Guangzhou dikenali sebagai pusat perdagangan yang gemilang di Laluan Sutra Maritim. Guangzhou telah mengamalkan dasar pintu terbuka yang menyebabkan kedatangan pedagang dari luar. Bertitik tolak daripada dasar tersebut, pada tahun 651 Masihi, pengaruh Islam telah mula tersebar di bumi Guangzhou. Khalifah Uthman telah menghantar satu rombongan yang diketuai oleh Saad Abi Waqas untuk menghadap Maharaja Gaozong. Perjumpaan persahabatan ini telah membawa kepada perbincangan penubuhan masjid pertama dan tertua di Guangzhou, iaitu masjid Huaisheng. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, iaitu pengumpulan dan penilaian data daripada sumber primer dan sekunder berdasarkan kaedah penyelidikan sejarah. Sumber dan bahan yang dirujuk diperoleh daripada laman web China Radio International (CRI) dan Jabatan Korografi Tempatan Guangzhou, Persatuan Islam China serta nashkah sejarah Dinasti Tang. Kaedah kepustakaan bersumberkan artikel, majalah, buku dan akhbar turut diteliti. Dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa komuniti Islam di Guangzhou mempunyai sejarah yang panjang sejak zaman Dinasti Tang. Perkembangan minoriti Islam di Guangzhou dibuktikan dengan kewujudan komuniti muslim, pembinaan Masjid Huaisheng, lahirnya ilmuan Islam, kerancangan aktiviti keagamaan dan kewujudan pegawai agama. Hal ini kerana dasar pentadbiran dan perkembangan ekonomi semasa Dinasti Tang memberi ruang kepada perkembangan Islam di sana. Penyelidikan ini berjaya membuktikan bahawa Dinasti Tang meninggalkan kesan kepada perkembangan Islam di China. Dapatan ini memberi manfaat kepada masyarakat umum dan pengkaji lain untuk mengetahui maklumat penting tentang sejarah dan perkembangan Islam Minoriti di Guangzhou, China.

Kata kunci: Minoriti Islam; Dinasti Tang; Guangzhou; sejarah; perkembangan

INTRODUCTION

The existence of minority groups in a settlement is considered unique and has an interesting story to explore, whether it is related to their history, current developments, the challenges they face and many other things. According to Kinloch (1979), a minority is a group that is smaller in number than the majority group in a place and does not have power. Minority groups usually have differences in terms of skin colour, race, religion, language, belief, or culture from the majority group in a country (Kamsiah Abdullah 2015). Whatever the case may be, these two groups can live in peace and harmony if there is acceptance and respect for each other. However, armed with sources from both local and international media, the world is still presented with an endless crisis of oppression against minority groups in several countries. This news is not pleasant to hear for any a humane person who hopes for a better defence and change. However, there are still many minority groups that manage to maintain and build their generation in a harmonious situation supported by the surrounding majority community.

Who would have thought that in some non-Muslim countries, there are Muslim minority communities that have lived and built generations for hundreds or even thousands of years? Despite living under the dominant rule of a non-Muslim government, this community is still intact and strong, so as not to sink with the times and they want to continue to be remembered as a legacy of Muslim pride around the world. Muslim minority communities successfully show their image as Muslims either through practice or material expressions (Bao 2019). Examples of Muslim minority communities in the world are Muslim minorities in Japan, Korea, Myanmar, India, Thailand, Germany, Australia, and many other countries. There must be many sweet and perhaps bitter memories experienced by this community to maintain their existence in those countries with the status of Islam. Ahmad Suaedy (2018) stated that various challenges had to be overcome by minority groups in a certain place, but the success of overcoming all those challenges is a joy to be grateful for.

China, a country known for its economic vitality, has an interesting history of the spread of Islam in several regions of the country. This large walled country has 34 provinces with a total of over 1.4 billion people representing 56 ethnicities. In the past, China used the term 'dynasty' to indicate the period of rule by an emperor from one lineage. For example, the Sung Dynasty, the Yuan Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty, the Tang Dynasty, and dozens of other dynasties. Among all these dynasties, the Tang Dynasty was the most prosperous in the history of China. According to Ismail Suardi (2017), during the Tang Dynasty, the development of culture, art, and literature in China flourished and was glorious at that time. During this dynasty, Islam began

to spread and gain a foothold in one of the regions in China, namely Guangzhou. Significant events during the Tang Dynasty contributed to the development of Islam in China, leaving a lasting impact that persists to this day. Suffian Mansor (2010) stated that the Tang Dynasty can be an example of China developed its country because, at that time, various races worldwide were so happy with China's harmonious policy to establish cooperation in various fields.

When you mention the country of China, surely many imagine the case or issue of oppression that has been hotly talked about by the world, namely towards the Uyghur Muslims. Indeed, this news is very sad and the people of the world hope that protection can be provided for this group. However, on the other hand, in China, there are still Muslim minority groups that have lived peacefully for hundreds or even thousands of years, such as the minority group in Guangzhou province. According to the China Radio International website (2003), there are more than 20 million people from 10 Muslim ethnic groups including Huizu, Tajik, Kazakh, Tatar, Uzbek, and others live throughout China including in Guangzhou province. Today, the city of Guangzhou is known as the gateway to southern China and is one of the four most important cities in China (Cai & Jiang 2007). Guangzhou is a district in Guangdong province which is also known as Canton or Kwangchow and is located next to Hong Kong and Macau. Guangdong has existed for more than 2200 years and is the final destination of the Route or Road?, which was once the world's main port. Due to this strategic position, Islam was brought by foreign traders into it and the openness of the emperor during the dynasty period created space for Islamic settlement in their land.

This article aims to study the history and development of the Muslim minority during the Tang Dynasty in Guangzhou. The selection of the Tang Dynasty as a period for the study of minority Islam is very suitable because it demonstrates how the openness of the emperor at that time allowed Islam into mainland China and the effects of its development can be seen until today. The researcher believes that studying the history of the Muslim minority in Guangzhou is crucial to disseminating valuable information to the public. The establishment of Islam in Guangzhou serve as an inspiration to all other Muslim minority groups in the world, to continue to be strong and defend the legacy of Islam in their respective places even under the rule of non-Muslim countries. The study of the history and development of the Muslim minority in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty is very interesting to focus on because most other articles only discuss the challenges faced by the minority group without looking at the history of the beginning and how it has developed until now. The effect of the formation of Islamic groups in Guangzhou has led to an unceasing effort to continue to develop and maintain Islam there.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the territorial expansion, economic prosperity, political stability, and peace and prosperity, China's feudal society flourished and peaked in the Tang Dynasty, and there was also prosperity in the field of ideology at that time. According to Wang and Wu (2023), the Tang Dynasty had an open society that permitted the spread of numerous religions. Among these, the foreign religions brought to China via the Silk Road, such as Nestorianism and Islam, developed to some extent thanks to the Tang Dynasty's lax ethnic and religious regulations. However, during the Tang Dynasty, religion was primarily employed by the government as a tool of ideology. Taoism was the official religion of the Tang Dynasty and was intimately associated with imperial authority. The ruling class's adoration of or opposition to Buddhism was also influenced by political and practical considerations at the time. Tang (1996) claims that the Tang Dynasty's leaders mostly adopted an inclusive and multireligious mentality when it came to managing religion. In order to manage religions and prevent negative impacts, they also developed relevant policies and used a variety of administrative procedures.

Studies related to Islam are not only of interest to Muslim researchers but also to non-Muslim researchers. This is acknowledged by Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi (2019), who stated that many non-Muslim researchers use diverse approaches and methodologies and are seen as different from Muslim researchers in studying Islam. Ping Su (2017), Meng Wei (2010) and Cai and Jiang (2007) are non-Muslim researchers who have showed interest in studying Islam in Guangzhou. In addition, there are also Muslim researchers such as Husen Hasan Basri and Ta'rif (2018) who chose Guangzhou as the focus of the study to see Islamic life there. Through their research, various aspects have been explored such as the existence of the Huaiseng Mosque, the tombs of religious figures, the Guangta Fanfang Tower, and the life of the Muslim community in Guangzhou. However, this article is more detailed because it examines the history of the arrival of Islam in Guangzhou, the development during the Tang Dynasty, and its effects to the present day. Selected ancient documents and manuscripts in Chinese have been dissected to obtain authentic information related to Islam during the Tang Dynasty. The selection of the Tang Dynasty as the focus of the period was very important because it was a very prosperous dynasty and is used as an example of the best dynasty among other dynasties in China.

Studies related to minority Islam in certain countries have been carried out by past researchers. Among the countries studied are Germany, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, India, Taiwan, China, and many more. Studies by Esra Ozyurek (2019), Abhoud Syed M. Lingga (2004), Shaheer Ahmed, Ishtiaq Ahmad Gondal, and Waqar ul Haq (2018), as well as Fauziah Fathil and Fathiah Fathil (2011), have examined the challenges faced by Muslim minority groups and survival in their lives to maintain their Islamic

identity in the countries involved. There are various challenges that Muslims must face such as the constraints of organizing religious programs openly, the difficulty of acceptance by the majority group, the lack of funds for religious development, and many more. Nevertheless, even though this group faces various challenges, they still managed to remain there in peace and harmony. This study of minority Islam in Guangzhou is a little different because it does not focus on the challenges that were encountered, rather this study uncovers the history of Islam in Guangzhou since the Tang Dynasty and its development until now.

In addition, there are also previous studies related to Islam that have been conducted in other provinces in China by previous researchers. Although China is not an Islamic country, many mosques still stand firm, and the presence of the Muslim community there remains. Although the issue of Uyghur Islam is not pleasant to hear about in China, we need to know that Islam is still standing in China in other provinces such as Yunnan, Gansu, Xinjiang, Shanxi, Henan, and many more. Past researchers such as Bao Hsiu-Ping (2019), Suardi Wekke Rusdan (2017), Suhailiza Md. Hamdani, Dini Farhana Baharuddin, Nur Kareelawati Abd. Karim and Mariam Abdul Majid (2019), Fauziah Fathil (2019) and Achmad Ubaedillah (2016) have produced studies related to Islam and its society throughout China. On average, past researchers have discussed the issues of challenges, education, image, history, and the way of life of the Muslim community in China in general. On the other hand, this study focuses on the history and development of minority Islam during the Tang Dynasty in Guangzhou and its effects until today. Focusing on the Tang Dynasty to see Islam take root and grow to the present is interesting to highlight as a great and glorious era once upon a time. This precious history needs to be preserved in writing so that no one misses reading it and this information is extended. The history of the beginning of Islam during the glorious Tang Dynasty should be a source of pride. Therefore, analyzing and discussing the history and development of minority Islam in Guangzhou is a very important study so that future generations know and realize that Islam still exists, and its base is still strong in a non-Muslim country, namely China.

METHODOLOGY

This study is historical research that examines the beginning of the arrival of Islam in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty and its development to the present day. Through this study, various proofs of the existence of Islam and the life of the Muslim community can be seen clearly. Therefore, the library methods are used in this study to obtain information from primary and secondary sources based on the application of historical research methods. The website of China Radio International (CRI) and the website of the Guangzhou Local Chorography Department were used as research sources. According to Wardani (2022), library methods that apply critical

historiography are suitable for studying topics in the form of historical reflection. Other sources such as articles, magazines, old manuscripts, books, and newspapers were also used in this study. This library method is commonly used in the discipline of history (Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja, Noraini Mohamed Hassan & Chong Wu Ling, 2016). Therefore, this approach is very appropriate for this study which examines the history and development of minority Islam in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty.

Next, this study also uses the document analysis method. Document or visual analysis aims to obtain information based on the application of historical research methods. The term document is used for materials such as letters, files, reports, videos, photographs, and other similar items (Fauziah Ibrahim, Khadijah Alavi & Nazirah Hassan, 2021). This document analysis method is one of the important methods for the researcher's reference because the source obtained is a guide for further discussion. According to Nik Hamizah Nik Mat, Hayatul Safrah Salleh, Yusnita Yusof, Wan Norhayati Mohamed, and Nor Azila Mohd Noor (2021), document analysis is a source of data that can be used in qualitative studies. Chinese association documents, historical manuscripts of the Tang Dynasty, and subsequent dynasties were selected and studied to obtain information. This method of document analysis has helped researchers to gather a variety of information that could be processed and written in this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses several subtopics that are important to answer the research objectives. Among the focus are the greatness of the Tang Dynasty, the history of the arrival of Islam during the Tang Dynasty in Guangzhou, ancient tombs, the Huaisheng Mosque, the life of the Muslim community in Guangzhou, and the role of religious officials in Guangzhou. All of this will answer how Islam began to gain a foothold in the land of Guangzhou, the development of Islam there, and its effects to this day. China underwent several dynasties after the Qin Dynasty controlled the entire Zhong Yuan in 221 BC, namely the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 AD-589 AD), the Sui Dynasty (581 AD-619 AD), the Tang Dynasty (618 AD- 907 AD), the Song Dynasty (960 AD-1279 AD), the Yuan Dynasty (1271 AD-1368 AD), the Ming Dynasty (1368 AD-1644 AD) and the Qing Dynasty (1636 AD-1912 AD). In the history of these ages, the religion of Islam has developed according to the transition of dynasties that began since the Tang Dynasty. The arrival of Islam during the Tang Dynasty period which has its own story was analyzed in this study. Below is the chronology of the arrival of Islam during the Tang Dynasty written and displayed on the walls of the Kuala Lumpur Islamic Museum.

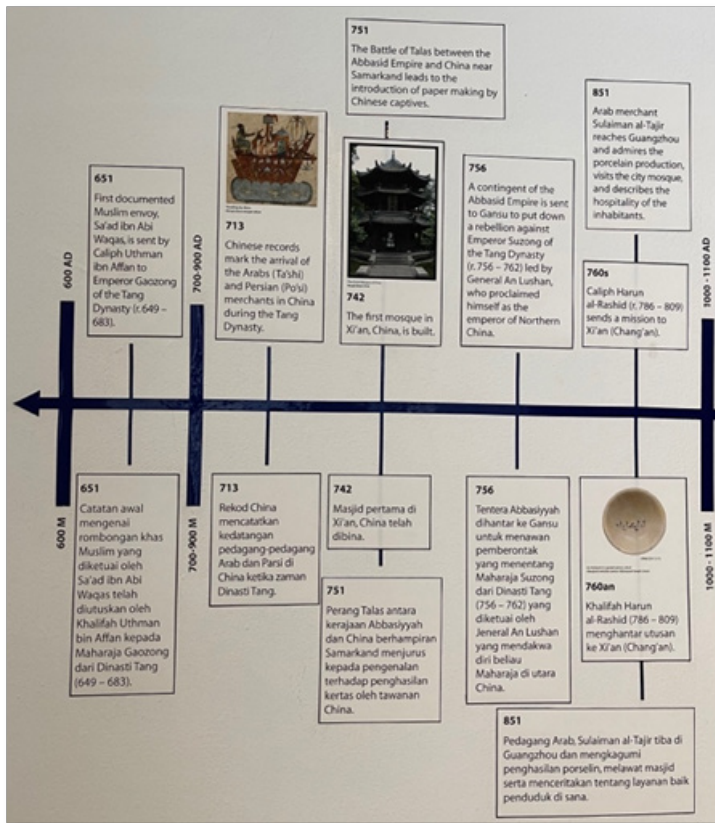


FIGURE 1. Chronology of the Arrival of Islam in the Tang Dynasty
SOURCE: Kuala Lumpur Islamic Museum (2023.01.17)

There is no exact date that records the arrival of Islam in China. However, according to this chronology, early records of a special Muslim group led by Saad bin Abi Waqas, a messenger from Caliph Uthman bin Affan, had come to see Emperor Gaozong during the Tang Dynasty, around 649 AD. The arrival of this group established an early relationship between Islam and the Tang Dynasty. The meeting that took place in Chang'an, which was the capital of the Tang Dynasty, indicate they was welcomed and received by the emperor at that time warmly and openly. This illustrates the peaceful interaction between the two civilizations, that is the Islamic civilization and China, and it became a starting point in the bilateral relationship between China and Islam. Next, the friendship group that was sent was celebrated with a bond of friendship that led to the construction of a mosque in Guangzhou. That was the earliest mosque in Guangzhou known as the Huaisheng mosque, its construction was very valuable and its strength can still be seen today.

THE GREATNESS OF THE TANG DYNASTY

The Tang Dynasty is important in the history of China. Beginning in 618 to 907, the Tang Dynasty marked a peaceful, powerful, and prosperous era with outstanding achievements in the cultural, political, economic, and diplomatic fields. In 627 A.D., the Tang Emperor Tai Zong (Li Shi Min), successfully unified the entire country and introduced the first open-door policy in Chinese history. In addition, His Majesty also encouraged foreign trade policies by creating special places for foreign traders, namely in important cities and bases. For example, Xin Luo Guan was designated for traders from Korea, and Fanfang was is for traders from Arab countries. His Majesty also completed the land and sea transport system to maintain security and facilitate activities between foreign traders. All these actions contributed to the rapid economic development of the Tang Dynasty which began in the Tang Tai Zong period.

The economic development during the Tang Dynasty made the capital Chang'an a famous trading centre on the Silk Road. Therefore, there was an interweaving of trade relations between China and the countries of Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe. According to the records of *Xi Yu Tong Shi* (General History of the Western Region), after exploring the Silk Road in the Han Dynasty, and its development in the Jin Dynasty and the Southern and Northern Dynasties, the prosperity of the Silk Road reached its peak during the Sui Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty (Yu 1996). Before the middle of the Tang Dynasty, the Overland Silk Road served as China's main trade route with foreign countries. However, this changed after the middle of the Tang Dynasty because, in the northwestern region of China, there was an incessant war. Therefore, many merchants began to shift their direction to the Maritime Silk Route and focused their trade on Guangzhou. Guangzhou became a booming economic centre and its navigation skills improved. Therefore, Guangzhou emerged as an important trading centre during the Tang Dynasty. According to the records of the *Xin Tang Shu Di Li Zhi* (New Tang Dynasty Manuscript: Geography) the Guangzhou Tong Hai Yi Dao route, which is the Guangzhou Sea route abroad, was located on the coast of Southeast Asia in China and continued to the countries of Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, East and North Africa, and the Persian Gulf (Xue 2022). This illustrates that Guangzhou had very strategic position and was favoured by many traders.

Moreover, according to the notes of *Xin Tang Shu Di Li Zhi*, the route from Guangzhou to the Indian Sea, namely the route from Guangzhou to Basra, Iraq was a famous route in the history of China's transport to Western countries (Zong 2001). This route was the longest route, which spanned about 10,000 square km in the voyage of Asian and African countries before the 16th century AD. China's trade with Asian and African countries boosted economic development during the Tang Dynasty. These Arab traders were appointed as the head of the Islamic religion to administer the Muslim community in Guangzhou according to their customs, religion and culture.

HISTORY OF THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN THE TANG DYNASTY

The arrival of Islam in a certain place must be through various means or factors and it may be planned or not. Islam starts to spread in a place if the community in that place accepts it. In addition, the role of the government in the area will also determine whether the religion can be spread and accepted or otherwise. The spread of Islam during the Tang Dynasty occurred through several factors as stated below.

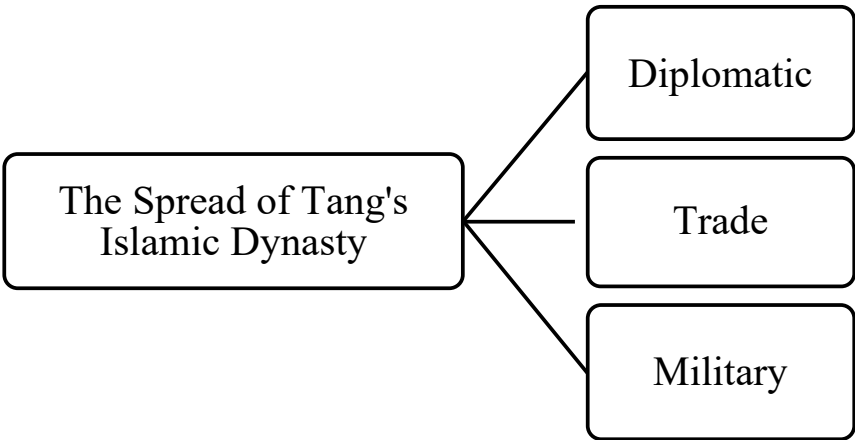


FIGURE 2 Factors in the spread of Islam during the Tang Dynasty from 618 to 907 AD

Figure 2 shows the factors behind the spread of Islam during the Tang Dynasty which started from 618 AD to 907 AD. The arrival of Islam in Mainland China is believed to have slasted during the reign of the Tang Dynasty and reached its peak during the reign of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties (Seng, 2010). Furthermore, according to the records of the Tang Dynasty, the arrival of the Persian ambassador was for diplomatic activities, to explain the Islamic religion, but a conflict arose in the meeting between the emperor and the Persian ambassador. This is proven in the writing of the Jiu Tang Shu manuscript (Manuscript of the Old Tang Dynasty) which records the spread of Islamic religious culture, which was related to Dashi diplomatic officers. This manuscript describes the introduction of Islamic culture and religious rules by the official to the emperor of the Tang Dynasty, namely Tang Gao Zong and his treasurers.

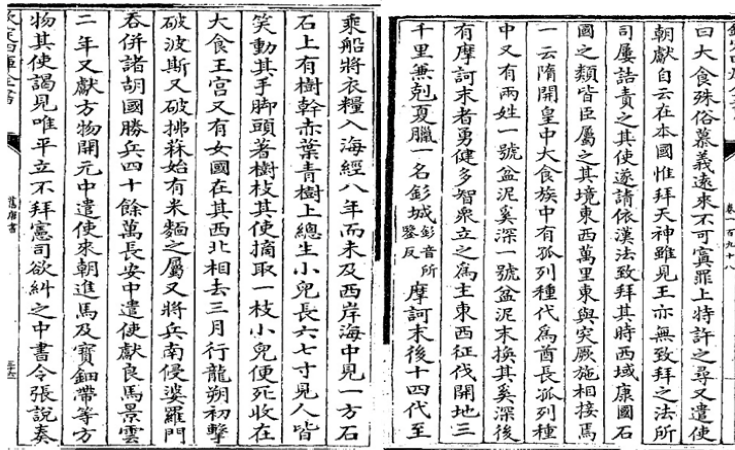


FIGURE 3 *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Tang Dynasty Manuscript)
SOURCE: The Chinese Text Project

Figure 3 is a quote from Ancient Chinese sources, which is a manuscript from the Old Tang Dynasty that explains the introduction of Islam during the Tang Dynasty. In these old manuscripts, officials only recorded anything that happened while serving at the emperor's side. Some of the contents displayed in this passage can be seen in the translation below.

“At the beginning of Kaiyuan, messengers were sent to the Tang Dynasty to bring in horses and belts, treasures, and other things. When the envoys faced the emperor, they did not pay respect to the emperor, instead, they just stood. The Constitution Secretary wanted to correct this, and Zhongshu ordered Zhang Yue to tell that “Dashi has a special custom. If they come from far away, they cannot be blamed.” The emperor allowed the act. After that, Dashi sent a messenger to the Tang Dynasty again to explain that they only worshipped God in his country, even if they faced the emperor, there was no way to worship, so the secretary repeatedly questioned him, so the messenger asked to worship according to the Tang Dynasty law”

(Quoted and translated from *Jiu Tang Shu*)

The above translation is an entry in a manuscript of the Old Tang Dynasty that talks about the arrival of Dashi when he appeared before the emperor. While facing the emperor, Dashi did not bow down to pay respect to the emperor, instead, they just stood. This act of theirs became a question mark for everyone who was there at that time. Therefore, they had to explain the Dashi customs in detail to the emperor. During this explanation, they explained about Islam and stated that they only worship God.

Narrations about Islam carried out by Dashi officials are recorded in Tang Dynasty manuscripts and are strong proof that the spread of Islam began to take root in China at that time. This shows that the spread of Islam at the initial stage was accidental, and this spread occurred because of internal diplomatic conflicts between foreign officials and the Chinese government.

In addition, the spread of Islam from the aspect of trade was also a cause of the development of Islam during the Tang Dynasty. Starting in the 7th century until the 15th century AD, before the Portuguese gained power in trade, international maritime trade was dominated by Muslim traders, especially from Arab and Persian lands (Li 2001). Guangzhou's strategic position and its trade policy at that time attracted traders from outside to trade and do business. The Emperor of the Tang Dynasty opened the door to trade, and this facilitated business and became an attraction for traders from outside to do business. According to Bai (2003), the purpose of the arrival of the Dashi traders in the early stages was not to spread Islam, rather their main purpose was to trade and conduct business. In this process, the spread of Islam occurred directly. This is because the actions and behaviour of outsiders easily caught the attention of residents. In addition, residents and workers who interacted with outsiders were also involved in the customs and religions they brought. This situation created a bright space and opportunity for the spread of Islam in China. The friendly relationship forged in this trade has sparked a traditional friendship between China and the Arab world.



FIGURE 4 Tang Dynasty Taro War Map 751 AD
SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons

In addition to diplomatic and trade factors, the spread of Islam during the Tang Dynasty also occurred due to military factors. Figure 4 shows the place where the Talas War took place during the Tang Dynasty. The war that broke out between Dashi and the Tang Dynasty was recorded in the *Jiu Tang Shu* manuscript. According to records, the Talas war took place in 751 A.D. because of competition to obtain certain territories or interests, leading to a military conflict that caused a border war to erupt. In this war, the soldiers of the Tang Dynasty suffered a defeat and tens of thousands of soldiers were captured by the Dashi side. All these captured Dashi soldiers were exposed and experienced the process of cultural exchange between Islam and the Tang Dynasty. Through their own experience in the life of the Muslim community at that time, they were able to understand Islam in more detail and depth. A captive named Du Huan who was captured during this battle, travelled for 12 years throughout the Dashi, and returned from the South China Sea in 762 A.D. Later, he wrote a book titled *Jing Xing Ji* (Voyage Notes) based on what he had seen and heard over the past ten years. In the book, he talked about the teachings and rules of Islam and the social life of Arabs. The book has become the earliest record of the development of Islam and thus proves that such an important event in the history of the spread of Islam in China was not the result of deliberate preaching by Muslims who came to China, but rather was the result of a war conflict (Li 2001).

In addition, the spread of Islam in China also stemmed from aspects of warfare during the Zhide period (756-758 AD). The Tang Dynasty also borrowed troops from Dashi and other regions to suppress the Anlu Mountain rebellion. According to records in *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Tang Dynasty Manuscripts), *Xin Tang Shu* (New Tang Dynasty Manuscripts) and *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* (Chronological Records of Dynastic History), in September of the second year of Zhide, Li Chu, the King of Guangping led an army comprising a Fan-Han alliance to fight the rebellion. In addition to the Tang Dynasty's army, the combined forces also included troops from the Huihe, Nanman, Dashi and Bahana forces as well as from other countries and regions. In the section of *Xirong Zhuan* (Biography of the Western Province of the Tang Dynasty), *Jiu Tang Shu* there was also a connection between Dashi and the Tang Dynasty as recorded, in which at the beginning of Zhide, Emperor Daizong used Dashi soldiers to recapture both the capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang.

After regaining the two capitals and succeeding in the war, the Muslim army that helped the Tang Dynasty was given three destinations to choose from. One of them was to leave China by land route with the Huihe soldiers. The second was to return home by sea. However, most members of the Dashi Auxiliary Army did not return to their home countries, instead, they chose the third option, which was to continue living in Chang'an and intermarry with local Chinese women. This was the first group of Muslims to officially settle in China (Li 1997). Their residential area successfully

encouraged the settlement of more foreigners in Chang'an and China. The residence and intermarriage of the Dashi auxiliary troops facilitated the of Islamic culture during the Tang Dynasty. They married Chinese women and raised children from mixed marriages, and this has made them the earliest Muslim Chinese in China.

THE BACKGROUND OF ISLAM'S INTRODUCTION TO GUANGZHOU

Many Chinese history experts believe that the earliest Muslims who came to China were not there to spread Islam, but rather for trade purposes. Muslims migrated during the time of the Tang Dynasty through the trade route that connected China to the Persian and Arab countries. Guangzhou was an important naval and trading base during the Tang Dynasty due to its strategic location. In order to get to Chang'an (now called Xi'an), which was the Tang dynasty's capital, Arabs and Persians who sailed to China had to transit through the Guangzhou area. During their journey, the traders promoted Islam throughout Guangdong Province (Ma 2000).



FIGURE 5 Guangzhou's Strategic Location

SOURCE: Baike <https://baike.so.com/doc/5338910-24448771.html>

Figure 5 is a map of Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty that shows Guangzhou's strategic location, which is the area with a red star on the seashore. Guangzhou, in the south of China, has a sea area that created opportunities for merchants to come and trade from all over the world, especially from Southeast and Central Asia. Guangzhou,

the capital of Guangdong province, is also known as “Canton”. The city of Guangzhou is a historical city of China with 2200 years of history and is one of the most important cities in China besides Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen. Because Guangzhou is one of the cities at the southernmost point of Mainland China, as shown on the map above, it is not impossible for Guangzhou to develop into an area with a rapidly developing economy because history states that settlements located in river areas tend to develop and prosper faster than areas further inland. In addition, Guangzhou is the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road and a pioneer in China’s economic reform and open-door policy.

Early on, the city served as a hub for both foreign trade and the Silk Road. West Asian and European traders began to concentrate in Guangzhou, making it the most significant trading hub in East Asia. Based on its strategic position, it is said that Islam also spread in this city through the arrival of traders from West Asia. According to scholars, Guangzhou was the initial gate that received the spread of Islam in China. To this day, the city of Guangzhou remains a rapidly developing and busy city in lanes and routes while continuing its legacy as a connecting point between Chinese and foreign trade.

HUAISHENG MOSQUE AS THE BEGINNING OF THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN CHINA

According to the latest data from the China Islamic Association website, there are approximately 30,000 mosques throughout China. In Guangzhou, there are four mosques, with the Huaisheng Mosque dating back to the 7th century and being the city’s oldest. The Huaisheng Mosque, which is a mosque built to commemorate the Prophet Muhammad SAW, is located on Guangtalu Street in Guangzhou, Southern China. Like mosques all over the world, the mosque here is also a symbol and identity of Islam and a place of worship for Muslims. During the Tang Dynasty, the mosque was not only a place of worship but also a centre for the spread of Islam and culture, a place for preaching and religious activities.

The Huaisheng Mosque, which was constructed during the Tang Dynasty, is a very significant Silk Road gem and is well-known all over the nation. The position of this mosque has remained unchanged since the Tang Dynasty. However due to the expansion of the main port into a community and commercial hub, this mosque is now located far inland, four kilometers inland from the sea. Until now, this mosque has been preserved from one dynasty to another for over 1300 years. This mosque has a very valuable historical value because it proves the introduction of Islam into China. The Chinese government until today has done the maintenance and restoration of this mosque.

The Huaisheng Mosque was built by Saad bin Abu Waqas about 1300 years ago in a place known as Guangtalū. At that time, this mosque was also known as the Lighthouse Mosque or also often referred to as a prayer hall. The word Huaisheng is used in *Nan Hai Bai Yong- Fan Ta* (Tales of the South Sea, Strange Tower) by Fang Xinru, of the Southern Song Dynasty. The third book of *Nan Hai Bai Yong Xu Bian* (Extended South Sea Tales) by Fan Kunwu of the Qing Dynasty, mentioned that the leader of the Islamic religion was the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims called him a Prophet. Thus, this mosque was named Huaisheng which means commemorating the saint, namely the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W.



FIGURE 6 Huaisheng Mosque Area
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

Figure 6 above shows the area inside the Huaisheng Mosque. The Huaisheng Mosque covers an area of approximately 3200 square meters and has an architecture that combines classical Chinese elements and Arab characteristics (China Radio International 2017). In this mosque area, there are men's and women's prayer rooms that can accommodate hundreds of worshippers at one time. Inside this mosque, there is also a historic tower located in the western part of the Huaisheng Mosque which is the Fire Tower.



FIGURE 7 Fire Tower in Huaisheng Mosque
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

The Fire Tower in Figure 7 has been built since the Tang Dynasty. The cylindrical tower, characterized by Islamic architecture, has a height of 36.3 meters. This tower was then situated near the main port, in the Guangzhou region, on the banks of the Pearl River. Usually at night, the lights on the top of the tower would be installed to help pass ships and that is why this mosque was later called the Lighthouse Mosque. The people of Guangzhou also utilized this tower to watch the ships and merchants sailing towards the port of Guangzhou, which was particularly essential to merchants as a navigational aid. Nowadays, tourists are drawn to this tower because it is still securely in place and serves as an important reminder of the Islamic past.



FIGURE 8 Notes on the Huaisheng Mosque’s Wall
SOURCE: Author’s Personal Picture

Figure 8 depicts the Huaisheng mosque’s wall area, which is covered with numerous Chinese writings. The history of the minaret, the mosque’s structure and use, and other topics are covered in this writing. The following are some quotes from the wall:

“The Huaisheng Mosque is situated in the western portion of the city and was built by the people living in Fanfang. There is a tower within with a roof decorated with a gold-plated chicken and standing about 36 meters tall.”

The records on the wall provide historical evidence for the mosque that Muslim residents in *Fanfang* built during the Tang dynasty. Additionally, they also explain the Fire Tower found in the area of this mosque which clearly shows its importance to traders at that time. The calligraphy on this wall amply demonstrates proof of Islam’s introduction during the Tang Dynasty. This document must be maintained because it is crucial to ensuring that future generations can read it.

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN GUANGZHOU IN THE TANG DYNASTY AND TODAY

The Islamic community in Guangzhou began to form after Islam was introduced by merchants and accepted by the local community there. During the Tang Dynasty, Muslim traders halted and settled in Guangzhou, where the neighborhoods was also populated by locals. They, therefore, interacted and socialized with one another, particularly when it came to business and trade issues. Social Interaction Theory explains that social interaction between two different groups is very important to establish useful relationships to know various things (Soekanto 2018). Meanwhile, Thibaut and Kelley (2018) also explain that based on Social Interaction Theory, events of communication or socialization will form an influence on each other which will create a result. Therefore, this coincides with what happened between Muslim traders and the local community in Guangzhou who interacted and socialised, then formed a trust in business and trade matters. The wisdom of these Muslim traders made them influential in Eastern China and dominated the economic field, namely export and import (Seng, 2010). As a result, the Muslim community in Guangzhou was free to establish a life there in safety and openness without having to hide. Life as a Muslim who obeyed the true teachings of Islam in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty has been proven through manuscripts in ancient Chinese. Below is an old manuscript belonging to the Song and Ming Dynasties that contains the story of the life of the Muslim minority in Guangzhou during the Tang Dynasty.

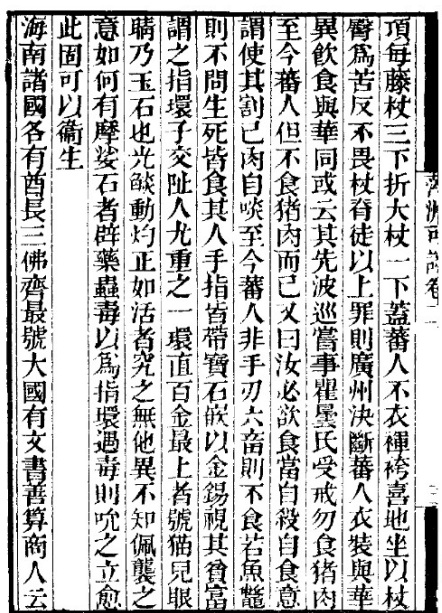


FIGURE 9 Manuscript Ping Zhou Ke Tan

SOURCE: *The Chinese Text Project* (中国哲学书电子化计划)

The document in Figure 9 is very important to demonstrate the lifestyle of the Muslim community in terms of nutrition and clothing during the Tang Dynasty. This old manuscript has been translated into English as below.

“In Fanfang Guangzhou, they (Muslims) like to sit on the floor, have different clothes compared to locals, and eat the same food except for pork. If they want to eat meat, they must slaughter it first, and they can directly eat any fish and seafood”.

Zhu Yu (Juan Er: Ping Zhou Ke Tan)

Written during The Song Dynasty and ended in 1119 AD.

Based on the manuscript above, it clearly describes about the Muslim community during the Tang Dynasty who liked to sit on the floor and wear clothes that were different from the Chinese community. Regarding this difference in clothing, what is meant is that the Muslim community wore clothing that covered the private parts as ordered in religion. The identity of the clothes on display left an impression and was remembered by the Chinese community until it was written in old manuscripts. In addition, based on the text above, Muslims in the Tang Dynasty likewise adhered to religious edicts, such as abstaining from eating non-halal food, such as pork and only eating meat that had been slaughtered and seafood. This shows that the Muslims of that time held fast to their religion because they took care of their diet according to Islamic Shariah.

Until now, Muslims in Guangzhou have placed a lot of emphasis on halal and haram in nutrition, so many halal restaurants and Muslim-friendly grocery stores exist there to make it easier for the Muslim community to get halal goods and food. For instance, in the Yuexue district of Guangzhou, Xiaobei Street is known for its halal eateries and meat markets. The halal butcher businesses near Xiaobei Street are depicted in Figure 10.



FIGURE 10 Halal Meat Shop on Xiaobei Street
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

Below are some of the halal restaurants in Guangzhou that are owned by the Muslim community there. All these shops and restaurants receive the attention of many Muslim communities there and even become the focus of Muslim tourists from outside Guangzhou.



FIGURE 11 Halal Restaurant in Guangzhou
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

Figure 11 above shows a halal restaurant that is the focus of people in Guangzhou. The Chinese writing on the shop's sign means "Taufiq Dumpling Restaurant". Dumpling is a traditional Chinese food but in this restaurant, it is made and sold as halal and has become an attraction for Muslim buyers. This shows the occurrence of cultural mixing between Chinese and Muslims from the aspect of nutrition. There are many other halal shops and restaurants around Guangzhou. In addition, to make it easier for the Muslim minority community in Guangzhou to buy halal food, there are several official accounts on Chinese social media platforms that provide information about halal food stores. Among the official accounts are "Halal Canteen", "Halal Food Choices in China", "Halal Food Culture" and many more. These official accounts can guide Muslims there to find halal food sources with more certainty.

In addition to topics like attire and nourishment, there are also historical manuscripts written in ancient Chinese that talk about the worship of the Muslim minority during the Tang Dynasty. The intended worship includes fasting, prayer and faith in Allah. According to Mohd Hamdan Ahmad, Moradi Behrang and Dokoushkani Farimah

(2014), Muslims are a community that tries to behave well, be polite and dignified when sheltered under a government and always seek permission as a priority. It is sufficient to explain the lives of the Muslim community from the past to the present, who live simply and peacefully without damaging the area where they reside, based on this ancient document that was left behind.



FIGURE 12 Shuyu Zhouzi Lu

SOURCE: *The Chinese Text Project* (中国哲学书电子化计划)

The writing in Figure 12 above was written during the Ming Dynasty, which was a dynasty after the Tang Dynasty that took responsibility for recording the life of the people of Guangzhou in the past. The essence of this Figure 12 document has been translated as below.

“They (Muslims) are serious about slaughtering. If the meat is not slaughtered, they will not eat. They do not eat pork and fast every year for a month. They wash and change their clothes and must change their place of residence. Every day they face the West and pray. They cherish their faith and even if they move to another place, they pass their religion to their descendants from one generation to the next and are not afraid of change”.

Yan Congjian (Shuyu Zhouzi Lu)

Written during The Ming Dynasty and ended in 1574 AD.

Based on the text above, it clearly describes minority Islam during the Tang Dynasty in relation to their worship. At that time, Muslims observed annual fasts throughout the month of Ramadan and offered daily prayers facing the Qibla. In addition, they also held fast to religion and preached to their family members and descendants. This illustrates that the Muslim community during the Tang Dynasty practised Islamic teachings based on religious law and did not shy away from displaying their identity as Muslims in front of the public. Excerpts from the two manuscripts above have described the life of the Muslim community at that time. The conclusion that can be made is that the Muslim community during the Tang Dynasty had a similar and unchanged lifestyle to the current Muslim community in Guangzhou. This demonstrates that even though the world is increasingly modern, Muslims are steadfast in their religious beliefs to the point where there are no changes that contravene religious regulations.

From the aspect of education, the Muslim community there began to receive education when Li Yan Sheng, a *Jin Shi* who came from *Tazik*, which was an area from Arab countries, delivered teachings and education to the Muslim community there. Then, various forms of religious education continued in the Huaisheng mosque delivered by imams, religious officials, reciters and so on. Friday prayers and Eid prayers were also conducted in this mosque. In essence, this mosque evolved into the hub of Muslim community life in Guangzhou. Since ancient times, the Muslims there have enjoyed engaging in activities that might strengthen their bonds of brotherhood. Below is a picture of the Muslim community there holding a break-the-fast ceremony in the month of Ramadan at a Muslim restaurant there.



FIGURE 13 The Muslim Community Held a Ceremony to Break the Fast in Guangzhou
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

There are numerous further educational and social initiatives undertaken by the local Muslim minority. For instance, there is a Muslim magazine in Guangzhou that is published by the Guangzhou Muslim Association periodically, i.e., once or twice a year. In addition, there is also the Guangzhou Islamic Culture Forum that is held every two years with the production of a volume of dissertations compiled by the Guangzhou Islamic Society and the Hui Ethnic History and Culture Research Council in Guangzhou. The picture in Figure 14 shot from the reading room at the Huaisheng Mosque demonstrates the active involvement of the Muslim community in Guangzhou.



FIGURE 14 Muslim Magazine in Guangzhou and Forum Dissertation Volume
SOURCE: Author's Personal Picture

Such programs and activities must continue to be implemented so that Islam can continue to be strong, and Muslims continue to defend their religion. What can be concluded is that the Muslim community there has been practising Islamic teachings since the Tang Dynasty until now. The Muslim community there is not ashamed to display its Muslim identity and this needs to be maintained. Mohd Shahrul Azha Mohd Sharif, Arba'iyah Mohd Noor and Mohd Firdaus Abdullah (2021) stated that the government should not interfere with the understanding and beliefs of Muslims. This is indeed the case in Guangzhou because until now the government has not interfered and allowed religious activities to be carried out in peaceful conditions there. Therefore, the Muslim community in Guangzhou can live in peace and comfort as a Muslim.

Besides that, Muslims fast for one month each year during the month of Ramadan. The Muslim minority in what is CZ? observes fasting as well, without exception. The mosque will typically host a ceremony to break the fast and offer Tarawih throughout this auspicious month. Additionally, the Muslim community in this area also observes *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. There is a holiday prayer and a sermon read in Mandarin on the morning of the holiday. Even today, the Muslim community in Guangzhou continues to celebrate the festival with enthusiasm and simplicity, just as all Muslims around the world do. Even though they adhere to Islamic law, they are respectful of local customs and cultures.

Although the Muslims' outward appearance and language have changed, Islam is still practised, mosques are still used as places of worship, and Arabic and Islamic studies are still taught and learned. The solution may lie in the distinctive feature of Islam itself, where once adopted it would be impossible for the devotees to entirely reject it as Islam embraces all aspects of their lives. This may help us understand why or what led the Sinicization to fall short. The Hui Muslims were often half Chinese because they were descended from early Muslim invaders and local Han Chinese, which is an interesting notion that the Chinese by nature never totally abandon their roots or identities (Leslie1998).

Assimilation of different cultures would not be feasible without the willingness of those who embraced the culture of another. To put it another way, the Muslims themselves demonstrated a willingness to assimilate into Han culture, maybe for the sake of their own sustainability, in contrast to the racial. They must integrate into society, neglecting to do so would only alienate and marginalize the Muslim minority. As a result, it appeared that the Muslims in China slowly implemented the adjustments to become more Chinese-like. For example, names with sounds resembling Chinese were picked. Hassan became Ha, Nuruddin became Ding and Muhammad became Ma, Mu, or Ha. etc.

Chinese attire was substituted for traditional Muslim garb, and Chinese cooking methods were preferred, however, Muslims continued to choose food items in accordance with Islamic rules. As a result, some traditional Chinese cuisine was modified to halal. For example, Guangzhou is famous for the traditional food dim sum. In the Muslim community and the surrounding areas of Guangzhou, Cantonese restaurants, like Hui Min Fan Dian, offer a variety of great and delicious halal cuisine, which also includes halal dim sum.

In addition, a significant number of Muslims began to write and speak in Chinese characters. Another manifestation of the impact of Sino-Islamization was the construction of mosques that resembled pagodas. Mosques with Chinese and Arab elements can also be found, which makes it a unique Islamic culture overseas. It is believed that Muslims who choose to adapt to civilization typically receive better treatment and Islam as a marginalization identity can be well prevented (Fathil 2019). Throughout the imperial rule, China's government policy towards Islam and Muslims was generally tolerant and flexible (Fathil 2019).

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES IN GUANGZHOU IN THE TANG DYNASTY

Because Guangzhou was the largest base during the Tang Dynasty and the first route that foreign merchants had to pass before reaching the capital Chang'an, Guangzhou became a trading centre, and many *Fanke* (foreigners) such as Arabs and Persians gathered there. Also in the Tang Dynasty, there was a law that stated that if they married a local in China, they were not allowed to return to their place of origin and had to settle in Guangzhou (Jia 2011). This caused many Muslim traders to settle around Guangdong, and *Fanfang* communities (foreign settlement areas) were formed. The earliest *Fanfang* in the Tang Dynasty was in Guangzhou, which was located in the southwest part of Guangzhou city, around the area of the Huaisheng Mosque. After the formation of this *Fanfang*, the increase in the number of Muslims caused various problems and conflicts. To control this *Fanfang* community, an official was appointed among the residents, namely *Fanzhang*. He became the head of the Muslim *Fanfang* administration and held the position of head of religion appointed by the Tang Dynasty government (Jia 2011).

According to the Song Dynasty script, *Fanzhang* was a judge who was appointed and was also an imam or religious leader, and the place where he lived was called *Fanzhangsi* (place of worship) (Bai 2003). In addition to managing *Fanfang*, *Fanzhang* also had other duties. He was given the responsibility of attracting foreign merchants to come to China to do business and pay tribute to the government. According to the records of a Tazik merchant named Sulaiman, who came to Guangzhou in 851. AD,

the Emperor of China appointed a Muslim to manage various matters, including cases involving accusations against Muslim merchants. In addition, *Fanzhang* would also lead the Muslim community to pray, deliver a sermon, and pray for the government, and all Arab merchants would follow the official.

Fanke, or foreigners in Guangzhou, were able to hold their own religious views and openly practise them in the *Fanfang*, or communal space. They could also maintain dress and dietary customs. When they communicate with one another, they also used their own language. At *Fanfang*, there were other entertainment activities like playing chess made of elephant teeth, keeping birds and teaching birds to speak (Yuan 2009).

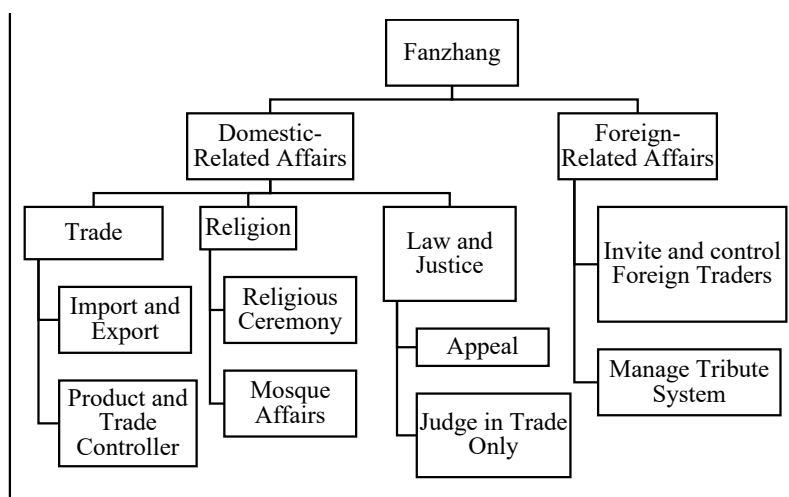


FIGURE 15 *Fanzhang*'s Responsibilities (modified from Fan1990)

Figure 15 records the responsibilities of the *Fanzhang*, who was the head of the *Fanfang* area, which was the area under his care. According to Figure 15, the responsibilities performed by *Fanzhang* in *Fanfang* could be divided into two parts, which were domestic-related affairs and foreign-related affairs. All trade activities, religious management, law, and justice were domestic affairs that are the responsibility of the *Fanzhang*. Trade activities, namely export and import, were the main activities in the economy. Many goods from overseas, such as spices and gems, sold in the Guangzhou area were regulated by *Fanzhang*. *Fanzhang* also had the right to invite foreign merchants from abroad and manage the tribute system for the emperor of the Tang Dynasty.

When it comes to these roles and obligations, the Muslim community had long demonstrated its capacity for strength and leadership. The greatness and responsibility

of *Fanzhang* in this management became a historical record in the ancient manuscripts of the Tang Dynasty. Norazilawati Abd Wahab, Arbai'yah Mohd Noor, Mohd Firdaus Abdullah, and Noraini Mohamed Hassan (2022) stated that a leader who holds an important position in a government must adhere firmly to the teachings of Islam and must not commit prohibited acts. Coinciding with this statement, *Fanzhang* was a leader who was highly responsible for leading his community. The impact of *Fanzhang*'s leadership once upon a time can be seen through the strength of Muslim organizations in Guangzhou to this day.

ANCIENT TOMBS AS EVIDENCE OF ISLAM'S INTRODUCTION

Saad bin Abu Waqas was a very famous figure in bringing Islam to China. He is said to have died in Guangzhou and to have been buried in the Xianxian Mosque (Xian Xian Mu), built by Muslims to commemorate him. The tomb of the religious leader Saad bin Abu Waqas is located inside the mosque of Saad bin Abu Waqas. In the early 1980s, the new Abu Waqas Mosque was built to accommodate the growing number of Muslims in the city of Guangzhou. This mosque is a famous and important mosque after the Huaisheng Mosque. Every Friday, the congregation that fills this mosque is usually around two thousand people, and it is expected that Muslims will be more concentrated in Guangzhou in the future. Figure 16 below shows the gate leading into the Abu Waqas Mosque area.



FIGURE 16 Entrance to the Saad bin Abu Waqas Mosque Area
SOURCE: Author's personal picture



FIGURE 17: Ancient Tomb of Saad bin Abu Waqas
SOURCE: Author's personal picture

Figure 17 shows the ancient tomb of Saad bin Abu Waqas, located in the Saad bin Abu Waqas Mosque area. The ancient tomb of Wali Saad bin Abu Waqas is very famous in Guangzhou. The Ancient Tomb of Wali Saad bin Abu Waqas, also called “Hui Hui Tomb”, is located on Guihua Hill, which is around the Yuexiu Park area. In the tomb area, there is a house structure, while on the west side, there are three halls, and on the north side, there is a prayer room (Cai & Jiang 2007). In the Islamic world, Saad bin Abu Waqas is considered an important figure who brought Islam into China and spread it from 618 AD to 626 AD (Wang 2011). Meanwhile, for the local community, Saad bin Abu Waqas is a saint who is held in high esteem and highly respected. His importance and contribution to bringing Islam to China cannot be denied. Because of this, Saad bin Abu Waqas’s tomb has been declared sacrosanct and is a place of pilgrimage.

The mausoleum is an Arabic circular arched building, facing south from north, with a circle at the bottom and a circle at the top, about 6 meters wide and 6 meters deep. There are small windows on the east and west walls of the tomb and a small arched gate on the south side, with the words “Saad bin Abu Waqas Tomb” inscribed on the entrance. In the middle of the area lies a rectangular sacred tomb (Guangzhou Local Chorography Department, 2016). The tomb is built with a dome that looks like a hanging bell. When people are chanting or talking in this tomb room, the echo can be heard clearly. That is why this tomb is known as the “echoing tomb”. This ancient tomb of Saad bin Abu Waqas serves as evidence of the arrival and influence of Islam brought by him in Guangzhou, which is very valuable and remembered today. In addition, there are more than 40 tombs of Chinese Muslim figures and foreign figures on both sides of the grave path.

CONCLUSION

The 30 million Muslims in China symbolize that this society is so strong that the Islamic Religious Association was established in China. Muslims in China are also seen to be gaining respect and recognition as one of the most important communities in China. They can also live in that great country in peace, and it is hoped that this minority will continue practising Islam freely and proudly until the end of their lives. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Islam has continued to grow rapidly and Muslims live in Mainland China as freely as any other ordinary citizen. Muslims and non-Muslims in China are equal, and even the Muslim minority there works in various fields and has made a significant contribution to the development of China.

The knowledge possessed by the Islamic religion has influenced and left an impact on the development of Chinese science and technology, such as the existence of guidance tools, mathematical sciences, medical knowledge, cruise science, art, astronomy, construction techniques, and weaving. This clearly shows that the expertise and knowledge brought and possessed by the Islamic religion were accepted and learned by the community in China. The history of minority Islam in China has gone through a considerable period, which is over 1400 years ago. At this early stage, the number of adherents was not large, and most of the Muslims were from Arab countries living in China. Over time, Islam has grown, and many Chinese have begun to believe and profess Islam.

Therefore, a wide variety of information and references on the origins of Islam, its way of life, practices, relics, and more can be investigated and made public by researchers. The Islamic identity in Guangzhou can be seen through the existence of restaurants, grocery stores, supermarkets, and halal slaughter centres there. This has become an attraction for Muslim tourists to come to Guangzhou with pleasure, as halal food is readily available as well as being able to see some Islamic historical relics such as the Huaisheng Mosque, lighthouse tower, religious tomb, and others. This study is expected to provide input and benefit to researchers studying Islam minorities in China, provide awareness to the public about the survival of this minority group, and serve as an example to minority Muslim communities elsewhere. The Tang Dynasty became the initiator of the spread of Islam, and further development was continued by the Song, the Yuan, and the Ming dynasties to the People's Republic.

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