

# ISLAM IN ASIA

VOLUME II

SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIA



*The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace*

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# ISLAM IN ASIA

VOLUME II

SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIA

*Edited by*

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## PREFACE

This collection of papers is the product of the International Conference on Islam in Asia held under the aegis of the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in April 1977. Due to the wealth of materials submitted and read at the Conference, it was decided to divide the Proceedings into two volumes: Volume I, edited by Y. Friedmann, covers South Asia, and the present volume (Volume II) covers Southeast and East Asia.

The Muslim populations discussed in these two volumes account for roughly two thirds of the 750 million Muslims in the world today; the remaining third represents the core of Islam in the Middle East and the African periphery. These numbers underline the importance of studying what has been labelled 'peripheral Islam', i.e., the various cultural environments to which Islam has spread, as well as the unity underlying the Islamic community throughout this world. The papers herein do not focus on a single theme; nor do they purport to answer any particular question regarding Asian Islam. It is, however, hoped that they will provide a multi-faceted picture of the unity which has grown out of the immense diversity of cultures and territories of the farther lands of Islam.

The themes uniting all Muslims are reflected in the common terminology and concepts shared by believers in all Muslim environments. The analytical index therefore represents an attempt to bridge the gaps between the various subject matters covered by the papers included.

Thanks are due to the Harry S. Truman Research Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for organizing and financing the Conference on Islam in Asia, to its staff for ensuring that the Conference ran smoothly, and to its Publication Department, under the direction of Norma Schneider, for preparing and seeing the two

## **Preface**

volumes through the press. We are also grateful to the Jerusalem Van Leer Institute, which played host to the Conference. Above all, I should like to thank my colleagues Y. Friedmann and N. Levtzion who, together with myself, constituted the Organizing Committee.

R. Israeli

Jerusalem, 1984

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# Muslim Merchants in Nan-Hai

M. Nakahara

There can be little doubt that Muslim merchants introduced Islam into Southeast Asia. The Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, owing to their geographical position between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, played an important role in early commerce. The foreign merchants had to wait for the next wind, the monsoons of the Indian Ocean or the trade winds of the South China Sea, in the ports along the trade route. This environment of an *entrepôt* between East and West helped to shape Malayan history and gave its society Islamic characteristics. Many states in Southeast Asia, especially in the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago, based their prosperity and political power on maritime trade. Before the Europeans came to the region, Muslim merchants dominated maritime trade and formed communities in various parts of Asia. When Islam developed beyond its isolated position as the religion of these foreign merchants in their minority communities and became the religion of the native rulers and people, Islam changed itself and became an important social and political factor in the societies of Southeast Asia.

In China, the T'ang court received the envoy from Ta-shih, the country of the Muslim Arabs, in 651; this was the first envoy from an Arab country. According to the *Chiu T'ang Shu* (198, *Hsi Jung, Ta-shih*);

(A) In the second year of Yung-hui (651), (Ta-shih) sent an envoy



and brought tribute for the first time. (B) *Hsing* is *Ta-shih* and *ming* is *Tan-mi-mo-ni* (*Amīr al-Mu'minun*). (The envoy) said 34 years have already passed since the foundation of the country. There have been three rulers.

This Chinese source contains the information which the Chinese court obtained in the sixth year of Yung-hui, not the second year as quoted above. According to the *Chiu T'ang Shu* (4), "Ta-shih sent an envoy and brought tribute (in the sixth year of Yung-hui.)" The sixth month and third day of the sixth year of Yung-hui is 11 July, 655 and also the first January, 35 in the Moslem calendar. The sixth year of Yung-hui is the 34th year since the *Hijra* in 622. The third ruler who sent the envoy to China was the third caliph 'Uthmān (23-35/644-656). Thus, the Chinese court had obtained quite accurate information about the newly founded Muslim country in the Arabian Peninsula.

The diplomatic relations between T'ang China and the Arabs started in 651. That is to say, the Muslim envoy came to China in that year. However, we can find no evidence of Arabs propagating Islam in China at that time, and so we can hardly regard that date as marking the first appearance of Islam in China.

After the second envoy was sent to China in 655, the Chinese court received the third envoy in 681, after a 26 year hiatus. During the period of the Umayyad dynasty from 661 to 751, 17 envoys were sent to China. As a result of these frequent diplomatic relations, Arabs and Persians came to live in China. Sulaymān, a Muslim merchant who visited China in 851, mentioned the Muslim community of foreign merchants in Khanfu (Kuang chou); Abū Zayd reported that more than 120,000 Muslims, Christians and Jews were killed when Banschona (Huang Ch'ao) captured Canton in 878. Besides Canton, another Chinese source indicates foreign merchants in Yang chou, also then a prosperous city in China. When Liu Chan revolted in 760, Têng Ching-shang, the local governor, ordered T'ien Shên-kung to suppress the revolt. When T'ien's army entered Yang chou the soldiers looted property and hidden treasures, dug up graves and killed several thousand Arab and Persian merchants.

All these sources indicate that quite a number of foreign merchants, including Muslims, were living in Chinese cities.

The first full Chinese account of the sea route between China and the Arab countries was written by Cha Tan during the same period. Since Cha Tan mentioned Baghdad in his book, *Huang-hua-ssu-ta-chi*, as the capital of the 'Abbasid dynasty, it must have been written after 762, when the 'Abbasid caliph moved his capital there. During the 'Abbasid period, from 750-798, there were 18 envoys to China.

Islam in the early centuries was largely restricted to being the religion of the Muslim merchants living in their small communities in China and Southeast Asia. The conversion of rulers was a turning point and following this Islam was accepted among the natives and began to change the characteristics of Southeast Asian society culturally and politically.

It was along the northern coast of Sumatra that Islam was first accepted among the native rulers and people. Beginning in the second half of the 7th century, Srivijaya played an important role in medieval trade between the Middle East and China, maintaining this role for more than 500 years. Srivijaya spread its power on Sumatra, and into the Malay peninsula and Java, but after Malaya, Srivijaya's former dependency, had taken power in the late 11th century, the centre of Sumatra moved from Palembang to Jambi. Thus, Srivijaya monopolized the intermediate trade as the great centre of maritime commerce and as an *entrepôt* for the products of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, India and China until it was destroyed by Majapahit. Chou Ch'ü-fei, in the *Ling-wai-tai-ta* (written in 1178), wrote of Srivijaya:

Srivijaya is in the Nan-Hai. It is an important trade centre among various foreign countries. On the east there are Javanese countries, on the west there are Ta-shih, Ku-lin, etc. There are no countries which can reach China without passing through its territory.

I Tsing was the first Chinese to leave a record of Srivijaya, during the T'ang dynasty. As a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, he left Canton in 671 bound for Palembang, the capital of Srivijaya. The following year he continued his voyage to India; he studied there for 11 years before

returning to Srivijaya in 688, where he stayed for two years, on his way back to China. One day in the autumn of 689 he boarded a ship to ask someone to take a letter to China. But the ship suddenly left the port and thus he returned to China after a 19 year absence. But he soon returned to Srivijaya with four other Buddhist monks and stayed there until 694.

He recommended Srivijaya as a suitable centre for Buddhist students before they went to India to study Sanskrit and other Buddhist subjects. According to the early T'ang sources on Srivijaya, it was the great centre of Buddhism in Southeast Asia and its name was recorded in Sanskrit as *Shi-li-fo-shi* (Srivijaya). In the 8th century Cha Tan used the abbreviated form *fo-shi*. The form *San-fo-ch'i* appeared in the Sung period. This is the form used by the Arabs in the 9th century to designate the island of Sumatra. Chau Ju-kua, in his book *Chu-fan-chi* (A Description of Barbarous Peoples, or a Record of Foreign Nations), wrote in 1225: "This country [*San-fo-ch'i*] began to have relations with China during the *T'ien-yu* period of the T'ang (904-907)."

This short note showed that Chau Ju-kua was not aware that *San-fo-ch'i* was identical to *Shi-li-fo-shi*. Thus, Srivijaya came to be called *San-fo-ch'i* following Chau Ju-kua's mistake. Why did Chau Ju-kua, who was without any doubt in a position to be well informed, make this mistake?

In the *Sung Shih* (489), on *San-fo-ch'i*, it is written that

In the first year of the T'ien-yu period of T'ang (904), (*San-fo-ch'i*) sent tribute (the T'ang), named its envoy, the foreign chief, P'u Ho-li (or P'u Ho-su, Abū 'Alī, Abū Faḍl, Abū Ḥussan), as General of Ning-yüan.

In this short source the name of the envoy draws our attention because it is Arabic. Presumably, the name of Srivijaya was given by him in Arabic pronunciation, *San-fo-ch'i*, Sarboza, and was thus recorded by the Chinese officials. Chau Ju-kua must have obtained his information on *San-fo-ch'i*'s relations with China from the T'ien-yu record via a Muslim envoy from Srivijaya.

Most of Srivijaya's envoys who were sent to China after the end of

T'ang had Arabic names and they seem to have been Muslims. For example, Srivijaya's envoys given in the *Sung Shu* (489) and *Sung Hui Yao* include:

962 Deputy Envoy	Li A-mu (Li Muḥammad)
971 Envoy	Li Ho-mu (Li Muḥammad)
975 Envoy	P'u T'o-han (Abū Adam)
980 Foreign Merchant	Li Fu-hui (Abū Ḥayyā')
983 Envoy	P'u-ya-t'o-lo (Abū 'Abd Allah)
985 Owner of the ship	Chin-hua-ch'a (Ḥākim Khwājat)
988 Envoy	P'u-ya-t'o-li (Abū 'Abd Allah)
1008 Deputy Envoy	P'u-p'o-lan (Abū Bahram)
	Ma-ho-wo (Muḥammad)
1017 Envoy	P'u-mo-hsi (Abū Mūsā)
1028 Envoy	P'u-ya-t'o-lo-hsieh (Abū 'Abd Allah)
1155 Envoy	Ssu-ma-chieh (Ismā'il)
	P'u-chin (Abū Sīnat)
	P'u-hsia-'erh (Abū Aghānī)
	P'u-ya-t'o-li (Abū 'Abd Allah)

Chau Ju-kua also said in his book: "A large proportion of the people of this country [*San-fo-ch'i*] are surnamed P'u."

Hirth mentioned in his note that *P'u* stands for *Bu*, an abbreviation of *Abū* (father), which precedes so many Arabic names. Chau Ju-kua must have realized that many envoys from Srivijaya had the surname *P'u*, or these envoys must have told him that there were many people named *P'u* in Srivijaya.

In the various Chinese sources during the Sung period the name *P'u-ya-t'o-li* (Abū 'Abd Allah) frequently appeared. He went to China as an envoy of Srivijaya in 983, 988 and 1028. He also went to China as an envoy of Ta-shih in 995 and 999.

The evidence implies that there were many Muslims occupied in the maritime trade between Srivijaya and China, either as merchants, envoys or ship owners. If we remember Srivijaya's position in the maritime trade of the area and the fact that its prosperity depended mostly on this trade, it is clear that these Muslim merchants must have played a significant role in the country's development. The

trading communities had great influence on local society, and created the basis for the future conversion of the native people over several centuries.

There were two important conversions among the Malay rulers — that of the Pase-Samudra rulers and of the Malacca rulers.

According to the legendary story told by Hikayat-Raja-Raja Pasai of the conversion of the Pase-Samudra rulers, the first king of Samudra who converted to Islam was Malik al-Salleh. He died in 1297 but we do not know when he converted or how long he remained on the throne. The Samudra king appears for the first time in a Chinese record of 1282. According to the *Yuan Shih* in 1282, the King of Samudra, Tu-han-pa-te, welcomed the Chinese envoy, Yang Ting-bi. In consequence, China responded to their wish. Tu-han-pa-te on that day accepted the order and established a tribute relationship. The king sent two envoys, Ha-san and Su-lin-man (Hassan and Sulaymān), to China.

The two envoys sent to China by the king of Samudra had Muslim names, and were referred to as *shin* (subject). This is important because all previous envoys were foreign Muslim merchants while these two must have been subjects of the king. This probably means that they were native Muslims or Muslims who had become the king's subjects. According to the *Yuan Shih*, Samudra continued its diplomatic relations with China and in 1294 China allowed the envoys from Namberi and Samudra to return to their respective countries. This occurred at the time of the campaign to Java, when envoys from foreign countries were forced to stay in the capital, a Samudra envoy among them.

Samudra survived between the two strong powers of Java and Siam. In defence against the Siamese, it seems to have made an alliance with the new states on the Malay peninsula. There is a Portuguese source which describes the close relationship between Samudra and Malacca. Some have insisted that the founder of Malacca, Parameswara, came from Java; others argue that he came from Palembang.

The early history of Malacca has provided us with many difficult problems, such as the identity of the early kings and manner of their

conversion to Islam, and the sources for the early history of Malacca, including Malay, Portuguese and Chinese sources, are often contradictory. As to the early development of Malacca as an important international trading power, we should examine the Chinese sources written during the Ming period.

The first Chinese record of Malacca is dated in 1403, when the eunuch Yin Ch'ing was sent there by the Chinese emperor to persuade Malacca to send an envoy to China.

After Yung-lo's accession on July 30, 1402, he began sending missions abroad to establish diplomatic relations with foreign states. This positive foreign policy, the edict of 1402 prohibiting private trade overseas, and the re-establishment of the Bureau of Maritime Trade, indicate his concern to establish state control of trade. As a result Yung-lo ordered Yin Ch'ing to visit Malacca on October 28, 1403. Thus, Malacca became involved in Ming China's foreign policy.

Yin Ch'ing would have arrived in Malacca the following year; he returned to Malacca after visiting India and Samudra to pick up the first Malaccan envoy to China.

The *Yung-lo Shih-lu* states:

On October 3 [1405], the ruler of Samudra, Zaynal-'Ābidīn, the ruler of Malacca, Parameswara, and the ruler of Calicut, Sha-mi-ti, sent envoys with the eunuch envoy Yin Ch'ing to pay tribute. An edict was promulgated appointing them all as kings; they were provided with seals and patents and also presents of suits of coloured silks.

This is the first envoy from Malacca to the Chinese court. The first king of Malacca who sent his envoy to China was Parameswara, the founder of Malacca. The Portuguese sources state that Parameswara was the son of the king of Palembang. After an unsuccessful revolt against Java, Parameswara escaped to Singapore, where he killed the local prince and ruled until expelled by a Siamese force. This expulsion eventually brought him to Malacca where he founded his own state. The genealogists do not corroborate the Portuguese accounts.

According to the Chinese source, it is quite obvious that Malacca insisted on overlordship of Palembang.

The *T'ai-tsung Shih-lu* (143) contains the Imperial Edict which was given to the King of Java:

September of the 11th year of Yung-lo (1413) — I have heard that you are worried because the King of Malacca asked to be given the land of the Old Port (Palembang). If I admit this request, there should be an edict to you, the King. Since there was no edict in the court, King, why should you worry about this? Don't listen to the common people's rumours.

Thus, there was a rumour that the King of Malacca had asked the Chinese emperor to give him the land of the Old Port, meaning Palembang. Considering Parameswara's past, the rumour might well have seemed plausible.

According to the *Ying-yai-sheng-lan* (Malacca):

In the 7th year of the Yung-lo (the cyclic year) Chi-ch'ou, the Emperor, ordered the principal envoy, the grand eunuch Cheng-ho, and others, to assume command of the treasure ships and to take the imperial edicts and to bestow upon this chief two silver seals, a hat, a girdle and a robe. [Cheng-ho] set up a stone table and raised [the place] to a city, [and] it was subsequently called the country of *Man-la-chia*. Thereafter Hsien-lo did not dare to invade it.

Thus, newly founded Malacca assured its existence with the help of Ming China. Parameswara sent six envoys between 1405 and 1413. In 1411 the King himself visited China with his wife, son and more than 500 subjects. They stayed in China for two months. In 1414 Parameswara's son, his successor, Mugat Iskandar Shah, went to China and reported his father's death.

Here arises the question of genealogy. Sir Richard Winstedt wrote that Parameswara is the very same person as his supposed successor, Mugat Iskandar Shāh, as *Sejarah Melayu* has noted. D.G.E. Hall, in his *A History of South-East Asia*, cites R.A. Kern as stating that in 1414 Parameswara's son, Mohammad Iskandar Shāh, went to China to

announce his father's death but that this would appear to be a mistake, which, as Sir Richard Winstedt points out, was due to the Chinese failure to realize that Parameswara had become a Muslim and changed his name to Mugat Iskandar Shāh.

According to the *Tai-tsung Shih-lu*, the Malaccan prince Mugat Iskandar Shāh came to China and reported that his father had died. The Emperor ordered him to succeed to his father's title and become king. The Emperor bestowed on him gold, silver, brocade, fine gauze silk, a hat, a girdle, and a golden robe.

It is almost impossible to take these two identities as representing one person, as Hall contends. In 1411 Parameswara himself came to China with his son, Mugat Iskandar Shāh, and they stayed for two months. China also sent envoys to Malacca five times between 1403 and 1414 during his reign. Cheng Ho and other Chinese foreign officials must have met the king and his son during their visits to Malacca. It is quite clear that the first king of Malacca is Parameswara, and that his son succeeded in 1414 and took the title Mugat Iskandar Shāh, as the second king of Malacca.

Tome Pires wrote in his *Suma Oriental* that this second king married a daughter of Pasai and converted to Islam. Several wealthy Muslim merchants (from Persia, Bengara, and Arabia) moved from Pasai to Malacca. During this period many merchants from these countries came and involved themselves in big business and were very prosperous. These wealthy merchants brought in their trained Muslim scholars. Thus, it is likely to have been under Mugat's reign that many Malaccan natives converted.

In the *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, Ma Huan wrote: "The king of the country and the people of the country all follow the Muslim religion, and fast doing penance and chanting liturgies".

This source is important and reliable because the author, Ma Huan, joined Cheng Ho's expeditions three times, the fourth (1413-1415), the sixth (1421-1422), and the seventh (1431-1433), and wrote his book based on his observations in Malacca during the fourth expedition. Like Cheng Ho, he was a Muslim and his reporting is more reliable than those of non-Muslim observers.

When Yung-lo started his policy of state trading and persuaded



foreign countries to send tributes to China, newly founded Malacca did not miss this golden opportunity to prevent the further southern expansion of the Siamese. Parameswara was well aware that a new diplomatic relationship would bring Malacca both protection and prestige. The close relationship with China continued until the Ming court finally changed its foreign policy. This drastic change led Malacca to seek another pillar of support. This is the period in which the fifth ruler of Malacca assumed the Muslim name Muḥaffar and took as his royal title the Muslim title Sultan. Sultan Muḥaffar Shāh despatched his envoy to the Chinese court to tell of his accession. In the *Ming Shih-lu* this tribute was recorded in 1455. The king's Malaccan name was also recorded, for the first time in Chinese record, with the Muslim title Sultan.

After Sultan Muḥaffar Shāh's reign, Islam became deeply rooted in Malacca and spread throughout the Malay peninsula. Its acceptance among rulers and people gave society an impetus towards further development, transforming the religion itself and creating a unique culture among the Malay people.