

The History, Culture, and Major Contributions of the Chinese Hui Nationality to the Development of the Yellow River Civilization

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Abstract

The Muslim Hui people, are the second largest minority ethnic group in China. Some of the ancestors of the Hui people were Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Central Asian Muslim merchants who migrated to the northeastern region of China in the middle of the 7th century crossing the rugged mountains of Central Asia and traversing the Silk Road overland. While some other Muslim ancestors sailed through the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea to eventually settle down in the coastal cities of the southeast of China during the Tang and Song Dynasties. The Hui people are distinguished from the other Chinese nationalities by their practice of Islam as a religion and a comprehensive way of life. Through trade and intermarriage, the mélange of the Hui people with other Chinese nationalities facilitated their adoption of the culture and some of living practices of the major ethnic group, the Han Nationality. This paper is aimed to examine the history, evolution, culture, and major contributions of the Hui people to the development of the Yellow River Civilization.

Key Words: Silk Road, Hui Nationality, Yellow River, Islam in China, Han, Mongolian, and Uyghur Nationalities

Interdiction

Islam was first introduced to China through “Saad ibn Abi Waqqas” (Arabic: سعد بن أبي وقاص), who was one of the most important companions of the Prophet Muhammad. He was sent to China in 650-651 AD as an official envoy by “Uthman ibn Affan” (Arabic: عثمان بن عفان), the third Caliph, to the Chinese Emperor “Yung-Wei”. This was his third time to visit China heading a small delegation of companions (Gladney, 2004). The Ancient Record of the Tang Dynasty describes this milestone visit as a momentous event to the Chinese Muslims, and is considered to be the birth of Islam in China. To show his admiration for Islam, Emperor “Yung Wei” ordered the establishment of China's first mosque. The magnificent Canton (Guangzhou) city mosque known to this day as the “Memorial Mosque” still stands today after nearly fourteen centuries. One of the first Muslim settlements in China was also established in this port city of Canton (Guangzhou). The “Umayyads” (Arabic: الأمويين) and “Abbasids” (Arabic: العباسيين) sent six delegations to China, all of which were warmly received by the Chinese (Islam.Ru, 2015). As a result of these visits to China, Islam was brought to China through diplomacy, and the Chinese Muslims have been in China for the last 1,400 years. Islam expanded gradually across the maritime and overland traveling across the silk roads from the 7th to the 10th centuries for the purpose of trade, diplomatic missions, and cultural exchanges (Gladney, 1996).

One of the major Chinese Muslim minorities is the Hui Nationality, which is a distinct indigenous group in China. By their size and prevalence throughout China, the Hui people constitute the second most significant of China's 56 nationalities. They are especially distinguished for their practice of Sunni Islam, dietary practices, and unique social traditions. Based on official population statistics, the 1990 census estimated the Muslim Hui population at 8,602,978. This number represents a significant increase by 19.04% from the 1982 Hui population estimate of 7.22 million. Based on the most recent estimates, the Hui people are approximately 10.5 million. To put these statistics in perspective, this Hui population growth is nearly double the Han population growth during the same period (Dillon, 1999 & Wang, et al., 2002). The Hui people are an ethnic *mélange* of descendants who hailed from Arab, Persian, Mongolian, Turkish Muslim merchants, officials, and soldiers who traveled to China in the middle of the seventh century and intermarried with local Chinese women and settled making China their adopted home (Gladney, 1996). Additionally, the first wave of Muslim migrants arrived by trekking overland across the mountains and plains of Central Asia from cities such as Samarqand, Bukhara, Andkhui, Herat, Shiraz, and Isfahan to western China (Figure 1). Including in this group of migrants were farmers, herdsmen, and traders from Central Asia who converted to Islam and established domiciles mainly in the Northwestern Region of China. This wave of newcomers also included a group of Muslim Arab and Persian merchants and dealers who sailed from the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf on route to China traversing the ocean around the Indian Subcontinent (Association for Asian Studies, 1976). Upon arrival, they discovered that trading goods and materials with their local Chinese counterparts was adequately lucrative, which made them decide to settle down permanently in the Chinese coastal cities they had arrived to from sailing thousands of miles. As a result of these two waves of migrations during the 7th century, sizable Muslim communities were established in cities such as Yangzhou (Jiangsu), Canton (Guangdong), and in the seaports of Fujian (Israeli, 1989 & Wang, et al., 2002).

With the advent of the 9th century, Muslim migration into China increased significantly to reach record numbers. During these earlier periods of migration, Muslims immigrants lived separately from local Chinese in secluded quarters and maintained their own different way of life. They also self-governed by their own Islamic rules, traditions, and regulations. For years, they were able to maintain their seclusion by enjoying implicit extraterritorial rights afforded to them by the local authorities at the time. In due course, many Muslim men intermarried with Han women and had children with them. Intermarriage and having children with Han women was an instrumental factor not only in the numerical growth of the Hui people, but also it enabled them to facilitate their smooth integration into the Chinese society mainstream way of life (Israeli, 1989).

1. Materials and Methods

Numerous published research papers, books, and studies represent the history of Islam in China, the inception and evolution of the Hui community in China, their distinctive culture, and their contributions to the Yellow River Civilization and Chinese society were systematically reviewed and analyzed. Data obtained from the analysis of these research papers and studies were examined in order to answer the threefold question that has motivated the current study, which was (1) how Islam was introduced to China (2) how the Hui people were established into a significant minority in China (3) what are the major contributions that the Hui people have made to the Yellow River Civilization and Chinese society? In order to arrive to an answer to this three-part question, this study employed a meta-analysis systematic review methodology of a multitude of germane published research papers, studies, as well as authoritative books on the subject under investigation. The data obtained from this study were reviewed, synthesized, and analyzed in order to determine common underlying findings leading to answering the study's manifold question.

1.1. The Role of the Silk Road in the Muslim Migration to China

The Silk Road commenced its activity as a major global mercantile highway around (138 B.C). Incipiently, it began as a means for China to export its silk fabric as a high-value commodity to the rest of the world. Foltz, (2010) suggested that, historically, silk was used in China since at least 3600 BCE, and has been found in Egypt from around 1000 BCE; it was also found in Europe from 300 years later than Egypt. Since the Silk Road was utilized as a trans-Asian trade network linking the Mediterranean Region with East Asia, the Chinese silk fabric found its way to Ancient Egypt and Europe through the Silk Road travelers and traders. Not only the Silk Road promoted the trade of the Chinese silk fabric, but also facilitated the exchange of other products, artistic culture, and religious practices between the Southeast Asian and Western Civilizations. The exchange through the Silk Road was mutual between China and other faraway civilizations.

In China, the manufacturing of glassware was unknown before the introduction of high-quality blown glassware imported from Egypt and other Middle Eastern Arab cities (Figure 2). Moreover, gold and silver pieces with Middle Eastern artistic themes have been excavated from Chinese tombs, and Muslim merchants are credited with introducing cobalt blue-and-white tin-glazed ware to China. Later on, the Chinese adopted the application of this mineral treatment to porcelain and exported it to the Middle East bearing decorations of Arabic script, illustrations of tulips, and depictions of pomegranates. Historically, the name "Silk Road" was coined in the 19th century by the German traveler, geographer, explorer, and scientist Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (Turner, (2014). In 1877, he described a "global thoroughfare" of both commercial and cultural exchanges between China and Central Asia and Europe (Esposito, 1999). Throughout the centuries, the Silk Road was used for numerous trade and cultural exchanges, which made substantial contributions to the development of the Chinese, Persian, Arabian, Indian Subcontinent, and European civilizations (Bentley, 1993).

The Silk Road was not only one transcontinental road, but a myriad of thoroughfares; in fact, it was a network of roads mostly meandering from East to West and in the converse direction (Foltz, 2010). The Silk Road layout changed over the centuries. However, the original ancient road commenced in China and spanned over to Korea and Japan from eastern China, and then connected to Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent from the southern border of China. The Silk Road also crossed to Turkey and Italy from the western border of China. Generally, the Silk Road included travel using both overland and maritime routes (Figure 2) to trade horses, merchandise, gold, and silk. However, the Europeans seldom trekked the Silk Road overland to China. Buddhism and Islam were introduced to China through traveling the Silk Road by sea and across land (Esposito, 1999, Foltz, 2010). Stretching out for 4,000 miles (6,437 kilometers), the Silk Road has earned its name from the profitable trade in Chinese silk carried by silk merchants along its vast distances. Historically, this silk trade can be traced back to its beginning during the Han Dynasty (206-220 AD). Alexander the Great followed by founding a commercial practice during the Hellenistic kingdoms (323-63 BC), where he established a number of trade networks extending from the Mediterranean Sea Region to modern Afghanistan and Tajikistan right on the borders with China. This commercial system established by Alexander the Great further facilitated the interaction between China and the Muslims in the Mediterranean Region and Central Asia. This also opened the door for more Muslims to establish homes and families in northeast China (Boulnois, 2005). The cultural interchange of the Silk Road worked well reciprocally, and influences from Buddhist China and other regions affected far-reaching influences on Islam.

According to Elverskog, (2010), in his book titled "Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road", he purported that in addition to religion, Islamic scientific and medical advancements also had a significant impact on the Silk Road travelers. Chinese Buddhist traders adopted Islamic medical knowledge in healing conditions such as wounds and conducting urine analysis. As Muslims traded in India, they also brought with them scientific knowledge and insights in astronomy, including questioning the theory of the geocentric universe, which was a concept founded in the Indian scientific community coinciding with a period of intense Islamic trade from the Silk Road. Further, Elverskog, (2010) suggested that the most significant influence transpired in the 12th century when a genre of abstract Islamic arts unexpectedly began to depict bodies of various human figures. This practice was for centuries considered prohibited by Islamic law. Mainly, it was credited to Muslim painters' experience in Buddhist iconic statues and Indian narrative artworks that they encountered on the Silk Road that lead mosques starting to display non-Muslim artworks on depictive murals, and Islamic arts suddenly flourished with the adoption of new techniques and depicting of human figures (Islam's Influence on the Silk Roads, 2014).

1.2. Hui Muslims Contributions to the Development of the Yellow River Civilization

Attributable to its importance as both cultural and material influence on the life of the Chinese people, the Yellow River is often referred to as the "Mother River". Although the Yellow River is the second longest River in China, the Yangtze River being the longest, the Yellow River valley is deemed to be the cradle of the Chinese Civilization (Figure 4). It was the foundation where the earliest Chinese dynasties were based and flourished. From there, the Chinese civilization outspread onto a substantial geographical landmass. The Chinese civilization did not only influence the indigenous Chinese population within China's borders, but also expanded its influence further to encompass the rest of the world (Civilization Overview, 2014, Hui people, 2014). The Hui people are known for being industrious and resilient. Their resilience was an instrumental characteristic in their development and progress, which have been facilitated by their adoption of the Han language and living in a harmonious coexistence with the Han people.

Since the Yuan and Ming dynasties, significant numbers of Hui farmers and herdsmen worked together with the Hans; as well as people of other nationalities in reclaiming wasteland, farming and grazing pastures in the Yellow River surrounding areas, including the border regions. In the Liupan Mountain area, where land was distressed by serious water scarcity nearly every year; however, as a result of the allocation of funds for constructing water pumping station projects, especially in the regions of Haiyuan; Guyuan; and Tongxin; the people who live in these areas were able to extract water from the Yellow River and supply much needed water to the long-standing drought-stricken lands. The projects were aimed at providing a relief for the drinking water and irrigation water shortage in those regions for both the Hui and Han peoples similarly (The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008).

Hui artisans were celebrated for their craftsmanship in making incense, nontraditional medicine, leather tanning, and cannons. They also worked in mining and casting of various metals and machineries. Hui merchants played a positive role in the economic exchanges between the inland and border regions of China, as well as they made trade contacts between China and other neighboring Asian countries. Hui scholars and scientists made significant contributions to China in introducing and spreading the achievements of Western Asia in astronomy, astronomical calendars, medicine, and a myriad of other academic and cultural contributions. Those contributions facilitated the promotion of the good fortune and productive activities of the Chinese people at large (The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008).

During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD), a number of distinguished Hui achievers made significant contributions to the Chinese civilization. Among them the Hui astronomer, Jamal Uddin, who compiled a perpetual calendar and produced seven kinds of astrosopes, including the armillary sphere (also known as spherical astrolabe), the celestial globe, the terrestrial globe, and the planetarium. Alaowadin and Yisimayin led the development of a mechanized way of shooting stone balls from cannons, which exercised an important bearing on the military affairs in general. The Hui architect Yehdardin learned from the Han architecture and designed and led the construction of the capital of the Yuan Dynasty, which contributed to the foundation and the eventual development of the city of Beijing (The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008). The Huis in the north primarily grow wheat and dry rice crops providing a bread basket to the Chinese people. In the south, they mainly grow wet rice. In urban city settings, Huis work mostly as laborers or work in manufacturing factories. The Hui people are also well-known as traders, herdsmen, and work in other craftsmanship businesses. Currently, approximately 29 % of the Hui people work in service industries such as restaurants, which constitute the highest proportions of any other minority group in China (Wheeler, 1985).

During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 AD), the Hui navigator Zheng He (1371–1433 AD) (Figure 3) was a mariner, explorer, diplomat, and a fleet admiral of a Muslim Persian descent. In a span of 29 years, he commanded the largest wooden ship fleets ever sailing the seas as many as seven expeditionary voyages visiting more than 30 countries in Southeast and South Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa from 1405 to 1433 AD. These voyages were long neglected in official Chinese historical records until the publication of Liang Qihao's biography titled "Our Homeland's Great Navigator, Zheng He" in 1904. This unparalleled feat served to promote the friendship, as well as economic and cultural exchanges between China and those countries he visited. Zheng He was accompanied by Ma Huan and Ha San, also of Hui origin, who acted as his interpreters. Ma Huan gave a true account of Zheng He's visits in his book titled "Magnificent Tours of Lands Beyond the Ocean", which is of a major significance in the study of the history of communication between China and the Western civilization (The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008, & Peterson, 1994).

The Hui scholar Li Zhi (1527-1602 AD) was born in Jinjiang, Fujian Province (Quanzhou in modern-time). He was a leading progressive thinker in the Chinese ideology history. He was also a prominent Chinese philosopher, historian and writer of the late Ming Dynasty. His ancestry by seven generations was Li Nu, the son of Li Lu, a maritime merchant. Li Nu visited Hormuz in Persia in 1376, converted to Islam upon marriage to a woman of either a Persian or an Arab pedigree. In 1551, he passed the town examinations, and five years later, he was appointed as a lecturer in Gongcheng (modern-time Huixian, Henan Province). In 1560 he was promoted to the Guozijian in Nanjing as a professor. He returned to his native Quanzhou. During this time he took part in the defense of the coastlines of China against the Wokou (Japanese pirates) raids in the 16th century, where coastal regions of China were attacked by Japanese marauders (Association for Asian Studies, 1976, Howland, 19963, Peterson, 1994, The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008 & Xiangrong, 1980). Li Zhi's family background and diverse life experiences shaped his philosophy as a multicultural way of thinker and intellectual.

His concepts of relativism and skepticism were influenced generally by his familiarity and direct interaction with wide-ranging groups of diverse cultural backdrops, including tribal groups, Hui Muslims from his own family, Yunnan people for whom he served a governor, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, and an assemblage of global traders and merchants (Handler-Spitz, 2008).

During the early Yuan Dynasty, late in his years, Sayyid Ajall Sham Suddin (1211-1279 AD) served as the governor of the Yunnan Province. Among his accomplishments was laying special emphasis upon the development of the agriculture sector. He also established special areas for farmers in order to reclaim wasteland and grow grains and plant other food crops. He was instrumental in accomplishing the connection of six rivers in Kunming, the capital city of the province. One of his notable endeavors at the time was establishing a network of way stations for dispatch riders to change horses and take a respite during their long journey. During his tenure as a governor, Sham Suddin advocated and supported teaching Confucianism, and he was effective in creating harmonious relationships among the diverse nationalities in the province. Sham Suddin's contributions did not only include social, economic, and cultural improvements for the people of Yunnan Province, but also he was successful in facilitating bringing about closer relationship between the central government and the province (The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008).

Born a son of a Hui merchant in the City of Kaifeng, Henan Province, Bai Shouyi, also known as Djamal al-Din, Bai Shouyi (1909-2000 AD) was a prominent Chinese Muslim historian, thinker, and ethnologist who made significant contributions to the advancement of the field of historiography of China. He was also a pioneer in the reliance on scientific excavations and science-based reports. He received his education at Zhongshan and Yanjing universities. In 1939, he commenced his professional career and taught for more than 40 years at Yunnan University, Nanjing University, and later at Beijing Teachers University, where he served as the director of both the Department of History and the Institute of History. Among his multitude of accomplishments, professor Bai's varied interests were reflected in the courses he taught in subjects such as general historiography, historical materialism, general history of China, cultural history of China, history of Chinese historiography, history of China's external communications, history of Chinese Islamism, history of the Spring and Autumn-Warring States Period, history of the Sui and Tang dynasties, and history of the Qing Dynasty. Bai Shouyi was also the chief editor of several major publications such as the Morning Star monthly, Islam monthly, Cultural News monthly, History of Teaching Journal, and the bi-monthly Beijing Teachers University Journal. He also was the chief editor of the quarterly magazine Studies of the History of Historiography. In 1982, Bai Shouyi authored a major book titled "An Outline History of China 1919-1949", which was also published in an English edition in 2002. He became erudite and articulate speaker of the Arabic language, which he learned from his Arabic-speaking mother and aunt. Bai Shouyi died in Beijing at the old age of 91 (Dillon, 1999, Editorial Reviews, 2014, Gladney, 2014 & Lalan-lalan, 2005).

Zhang Chengzhi, is a renowned contemporary Hui Chinese writer born in 1948 to Hui parents of Shandong Province roots. He is often distinguished for being the most influential Muslim author in China's recent history. His historical narrative titled "History of the Soul" on the subject of the rising stance of the Sufi school of Islamic thought known as "Jahriyya" (哲合忍耶) (a term used for a school or order of Sufism, and is derived from the Arabic word "jahr". 1994, his book titled the "History of the Soul" was the second most popular book among Chinese readers. His work has not only managed to keep alive an old-fashioned idealism, but also has provided the humanist subject matter a new surge of energy searching for it in both a new self-liberation causes, and a new experience of what can only be called reaching the sublime level of spirituality. Zhang's impact on Chinese literature and thought is widely recognized, especially his early work in 1981 titled "Rivers of the North and Black Steed", which was published in an English version in the United States in 1990. His most celebrated book yet titled "History of the Soul", a work of personal account of historical fiction, which in it he explores his personal and religious belief struggles during them 172 years of evolution of the "Jahriyya tariqah" (English: "way or path", or Arabic: طريقة) in China's Northwest Region (Jian, 2002 & Zhang, 2014).

Huo Da is a contemporary Chinese female writer and translator of the Hui Nationality descent. Her Hui name is "Fa Tomay" or "Fatima" in Arabic. She was born in Beijing in 1945 into a family of scholars, and she received her education from Beijing Construction College. Huo Da launched her professional career as a translator of literary works for many years before she began writing her own literary books. In addition to being an accomplished author, she has also been working as a film editor for the Beijing Film Studio.

One of her literary works is a book titled "The Rituals of Muslim's Funeral", which won the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 1991. Her book has been translated from her native Chinese into major languages such as English, French, Arabic, and Urdu. Among her other book writing accomplishments are "I'm not a Hunter (我不是猎人) in 1982, Red (红尘) in 1985, War (国殇) in 1988, and the split Sky ((补天裂) in 1997 (Huo, 2014).

During the eras of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, numerous talented and highly-accomplished Hui scholars, thinkers, poets, painters and playwrights became well-known for their significant contributions to the Chinese society. This group of intellectual luminaries included Lan Yu, a Ming Dynasty general who ended the Mongol attempts to reconquer China; Sadul, Gao Kegong, who was a Chinese poet and painter known for his landscapes painting style; Ding Henian, a Hui ethnic poet and a renowned medical scientist and expert in health and well-being maintenance, he established the He Nian Tang medical clinic and the first health care pharmacy for traditional Chinese medicine in Caishikou, Beijing; and Gai Qi who was a Hui Muslim poet and painter born in western China during the Qing dynasty, his paintings mainly portrayed plants, beauty settings, figures, and landscapes. In poetry, he preferred to employ the Chinese classic poetry rhyming style, known as "ci (詞)", and amalgamated such poems to his paintings in a novel art-poetry genre. Contemporarily, Hui Muslim contributors include Yusuf Ma Dexin, an Islamic scholar in Yunnan Province and known for his fluency and proficiency in both Arabic and Persian, as well as for his scholarly knowledge of Islam; and Shi Zhongxin, whose ancestors hail from Jilin and served as a mayor of Harbin Province (2002-2007) (Hui people, 2014, Laluan-laluan, 2005, Medical Culture, 2014 & The Hui Ethnic Minority, 2008).

3. Hui people Contributions to the Chinese Culinary Culture

It was soon after the rise of Islam in the 7th century that Muslims arrived to China and through them Islam was introduced to China; mainly through Muslim ambassadorial emissaries, merchants, and herdsmen from the Middle East, Persia, and Central Asia. Most of them arrived traversing one of the many Silk Road routes where goods moved from East to West and in the reverse direction. Those Muslim migrants from the West did not only transport their Islamic religion into China, but also their traditional clothing, behaviors, butchering of animals for food, and other Islamic cuisine practices (Newman, 2004). The cities in the western province of Xinjiang became essential centers of Muslim culture, including culinary traditions, as early as the 10th century. In 1258, the Mongols conquered the City of Baghdad, Iraq. Despite of the Mongolian occupation of Baghdad, Islamic cuisines continued to expand their sphere of influence reaching as far as the Mongol Empire in China. Evidence of the influence of the Islamic cuisine in China was represented by a colorfully illustrated cookbook and dietary manual titled "Proper and Essential Things for the Emperor's Food and Drinks". This Imperial dietary manual was compiled in 1330 AD by Hu Szu-Hui, the Emperor's physician in the Bureau of the Imperial Household. This prescribed Imperial dietary manual reveals how Mongols embraced a myriad of cooking ingredients and recipes brought together from Islamic cuisines from their immense Empire at the time (Blair, et al., 2014 & Turner, 2014). The Chinese Hui and Uyghur Muslims follow certain Islamic dietary requirements, which they have practiced for centuries. To the Hui and Uyghur Muslims, according to Islamic teaching, they are prohibited to consuming any pork, pork products, blood of any animal, and several other animal meats such as meat from beasts or dead animals (Junru, 2011).

During the Yuan dynasty, the "halal food" process of slaughtering animals and preparing food according to Islamic teaching was forbidden by the Mongol Emperors, starting with Genghis Khan who prohibited Muslims from slaughtering their animals according to their own Islamic method. Instead, they were forced to follow the Mongolian method of slaughtering animals, which was not consistent with Islamic practice (Dillon, 1999 & Elverskog, 2013). During the Ming Dynasty, Muslims, especially in Beijing were provided some degree of freedom to pursue their Islamic way of life. There were no too many restrictions imposed on their religious practices, freedom of worship, and following their Islamic dietary practices. They were treated as being ordinary Chinese citizens who were in living in the City Beijing (Naquin, 2000). Islamic cuisine "halal food" restrictions and practices are clearly stated and specified in the Holy Quran or Koran, which is the central religious text of Islam that all Muslims follow according to its teaching. The concept of "halal food" is based on 'pure' and 'true' beliefs of eating according to Qur'anic specifications and Islamic teachings. These teachings influence how all Muslims prepare their food and what they eat or do not eat. Muslims believe that principles from the chapters of the Quran to be the literal and true words of God. Muslims also consider Arabic their sacred language, and recognize that the Qur'anic chapters two, five, six, and sixteen of this important text to be God's revelations to Mohammad in terms of their dietary practices, as well as managing their daily way of life.

According to Islamic teachings, Muslims must butcher animals for food purposes only, and they must pay stringent attention to the cleanliness of oneself and animals, provide special care when they are slaughtering animals in the most humane way, and uttering the appropriate prayers when butchering animals. According to Islamic constraints, Muslims can only slaughter animals for food when they need it. It is a customary practice for Muslims to share the slaughtered animal so that none of it would be wasted. Muslims also do not drink alcoholic beverages, no matter how negligible the amount of alcoholic content is (Laluan-laluan, 2005 & Gillette, 2000). Due to the considerable Muslim population in western China, many Chinese restaurants either cater to, or are owned by Muslims. Northern Chinese Islamic cuisine that originated in China is deeply influenced by Beijing cuisine recipes, with nearly all cooking methods are almost identical. They only differ in the ingredients they use due to religious restrictions that Muslims must adhere to. As a result, northern Islamic cuisine is often included in home Beijing cuisine, however seldom included in the east coast restaurants (Dillon, 1999 & Admiral, 2014).

One of the favorite foods of the Hui people that they have contributed to the Chinese diet, are the grilled pancakes. In China, they are called “dabing”. Commonly, they are grilled, or are fried; some are stuffed with meat and/or vegetables, most are not stuffed. Second favorite to pancakes (dabing) is their love of eating noodles, which are considered an essential ingredient and a staple in the Chinese cuisine (Newman, 2004). Noodles are an authentic traditional Chinese cuisine made of white flour. Historically, the old-fashioned way of making noodles was to boil them in soup or water. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), minced halal meat or vegetarian sources were introduced as ingredients in preparing noodles (Jian, 2002). Traditional noodles are usually made from wheat, rice, or any other kind of vegetable flour. If vegetables are used, they are finely minced with the use mung beans or soy beans, use of dry yams, sweet potatoes, and many other vegetables, and then they are ground to make these pancakes and noodles (Newman, 2004). Beef noodle soup is another favorite of Chinese cuisine. There are two common variations of beef noodle soups; they mainly differ in the way the broth is prepared for the soup. When soy sauce is added, the soup is called red-roasted or braised beef noodles. The Chinese Muslim-styled of beef noodles is also known as clear-broth or consommé stewed beef noodles. This method often uses “halal” meat and contains no soy sauce, resulting in more flavor of the beef in the soup (Lu, 2013 & Taiwan, 2013).

4. Conclusion

The Muslim Hui ethnic group is one of China's largest ethnic minorities. With a population over 10 million people all of them hail from a Hui origin, and they make nearly half of the over 23 million Chinese Muslims. Huis make nearly 1.8% of the total Chinese population, which accounts for nearly 89.1% of the total Chinese minority population. The Chinese Hui people in China can be geographically and demographically separated into two distinct groups. The first group is the Western Huis, and they are mainly located in Ningxia. The second group is the Eastern Huis, who predominantly reside in the eastern half of the Inner Mongolia Region. While originally from the northwest and southwest of China, the Hui people can be found living in most of the major provinces and cities throughout China. In addition to the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, they also live in Gansu; Qinghai; Henan; Hebei; Shandong; and Yunnan Provinces, as well as the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The religion of the Hui people is Islam, which was introduced to China in the middle of the 7th century primarily through the migration of their merchant and herdsman ancestors who traveled the Silk Road from the Arab Middle East, Turkey, Persia, and Central Asia to China and settled down there. Islam has a profound influence on all aspects of the way of life of the Hui people, including their dietary practices, marriage ceremonies, burial rituals, and clothing. Gladney, (1987) observed that historic unique Hui cultural artefacts such as mosques, tombs, as well as their distinctive dietary habits and ethnic folklore provided special recognition to the local Hui people's identity in a far-reaching international perspective beyond being a merely localized ethnic minority.

The data presented in this paper indicate that for centuries, the history of the Hui people has demonstrated that they are hardworking and resilient people who have made valuable contributions to Chinese Civilization, as well as the Yellow River development. Commencing in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD), major accomplishments were achieved in fields such as astronomy, mathematics, traditional medicine, and science. Among those accomplishments a voluminous medical book titled “HuiHui Prescription” containing both western and Chinese medical treatment of diseases, and was recorded and edited by the Hui people. The Silk Road commerce and migration by the Hui people forerunners was a major contributor to the development of Yellow River civilization. The Huis worked together with the Hans to reclaim and cultivate the land in the Yellow River Valley for agriculture, which was a major part in the growth and development of farming the soil of the Yellow River Valley, as well as the expansion of the agricultural development in China.

Hui merchants, artisans, artists, farmers, and craftsmen played a constructive role in the economic exchanges between central China and the border rejoin. They also contributed to the promotion of trade contacts between China and other Asian countries. Hui scholars, intellectuals, and scientists made noteworthy contributions to China by promoting and disseminating Chinese accomplishments throughout the West, Asia, and a multitude of other countries across the world.

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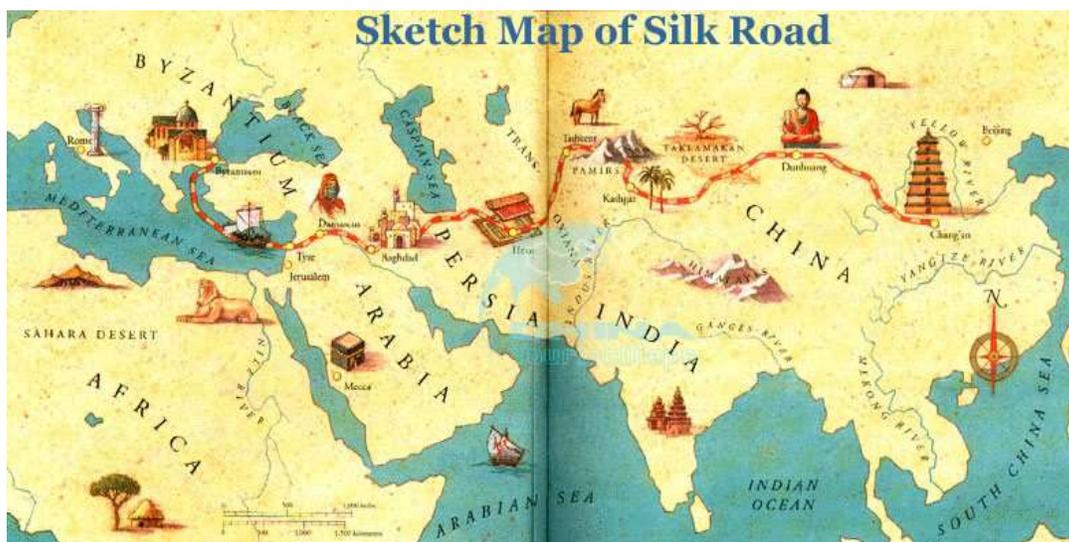


Figure (1) Ancient Silk Road location in the World. Source: Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk_Road



Figure (2) Silk Road Map: Source: Wikipedia Maps: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk_Road

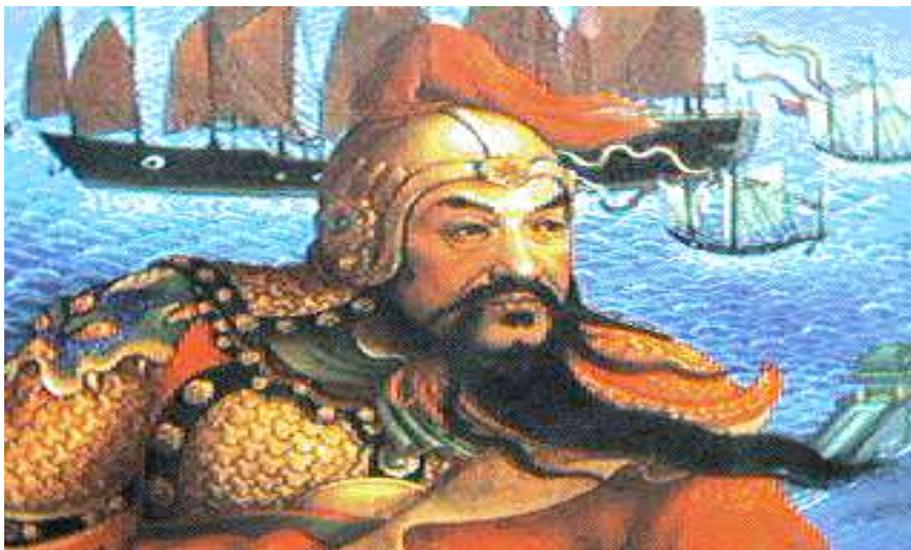


Figure (3) Admiral Zheng He. Source: Google Images: www.google.com



Figure (4) Yellow River. Source: Google Maps.com: <http://www.china-tour.cn/China-Maps/Yellow-River-Map.htm>