

Historical Reading of the Arab Presence in China during the Reign of the Qubailai Khan Dynasty Emperors (670-770 Ah/1271-1368 AD)

Ekhlas Mohammad Al-Eide *

Abstract

The nucleus of the Arab presence in China was formed by groups of Arab merchants, who had arrived in China centuries before Islam via the sea silk route. As Islam spread, the influx of Arab merchants to China increased; thanks to the call for Islam for trade among nations.

The Arab presence in China witnessed significant support during the rule of the Qubailai Khan Emperors. This study examines the governance policies adopted by the Qubailai Khan emperors and which had an impact on granting the Islamic community in the states of China many privileges, which encouraged them to settle in that country.

The results of the study showed that the Arab and Islamic communities in China lived under the rule of the Qubailai Khan emperors in their own districts called Fang Feng. At the time, all Muslims of all nationalities were free to practice their religious rites.

Keywords: Arab Community, Qubailai Khan, Mongol, Religious Tolerance Policy, Fang Feng.

* كلية العقبة، جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية، الأردن.

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قراءة تاريخية للوجود العربي في الصين إبان حكم أباطرة أسرة قوبيلاي خان
(670-770هـ/1271-1368م)

إخلاق محمد العيدي

ملخص

تشكلت نواة الوجود العربي في الصين من مجموعات متفرقة من التجار العرب، كانت قد وصلت إلى بلاد الصين قبل الإسلام بعدة قرون عبر طريق الحرير البحري والبري. ولما انتشر الإسلام زاد توافد التجار العرب إلى الصين؛ بفضل الدعوة إلى الإسلام وتشجيع الدين الإسلامي للحركة التجارية بين الدول.

شهد الوجود العربي في الصين دعماً وتأييداً ملحوظاً خلال حكم أباطرة أسرة قوبيلاي خان. وتبحث هذه الدراسة في سياسات الحكم التي تبناها أباطرة هذه الأسرة وكان لها أثر في منح الجالية العربية والإسلامية في ولايات الصين العديد من الامتيازات الدينية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية؛ مما شجعها على الاستقرار في تلك البلاد.

أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الجاليات العربية والإسلامية في الصين عاشت إبان حكم أباطرة أسرة قوبيلاي خان في أحياء خاصة بهم سُميت بـ(فانفانغ) وفيها تمتع المسلمون جميعاً على اختلاف قومياتهم بحرية ممارسة شعائرهم الدينية، كما تمكنوا من إدارة (فانفانغ) بنظام داخلي بُني على تعاليم الدين الإسلامي.

الكلمات الدالة: الجاليات العربية، قوبيلاي خان، المغول، سياسة التسامح الديني، (فانفانغ).

Introduction

An in-depth reading of the history of the Arab presence in China confirms that the presence of Arabs in China has witnessed, through successive historical times, instances of differences ranging from supporting and encouraging to denying and restricting; while there were governments that supported and backed the Arab presence, others rejected their existence, and persecuted and displaced them. One of the most prominent historical periods in which the Arab presence in China enjoyed support and encouragement was the reign of Kublai Khan and his successors.

Kublai Khan is a Mongol leader, who had grown up in the shadow of his grandfather, Genghis Khan, the greatest ruler of the Mongols, to be a man of war who makes his way with ruthless cruelty, brutality and bloodshed. However, in the midst of this cruel military build-up, Kublai Khan found in his mother (Sorghaghtani) a light that lit up the dark sides of his upbringing. His mother distinguished him from other Mongol son by educating him at the hands of Chinese scholars, as he learned the Confucianism philosophy that calls for harmony between peace and war. From this, he realized that the ruler, in order to build a durable empire, he must not only strive for conquest and cruelty; but also he must respect the traditions of the peoples who plundered their lands, and conserve their resources to serve his empire and spread the peace. By virtue to knowledge and sciences acquired from the Chinese, Kublai surpassed his nomadic background and managed to rule a society of multi-peoples, cultures and religions based on tolerance and moderation. He also managed to strengthen the link among different segments of society, and accordingly, he gained the trust and support he needed for his rule.

The Qubailai Khan Emperors supported the Arab presence in China and promoted it through the policy of religious tolerance inherited from their grandfather Qubailai Khan. Additionally, during the course of their reign, they supported the Arabs because of their interest in revitalizing the trade movement throughout the entire Asian continent. Therefore, the Arabs enjoyed the freedom of practicing their faith and culture without restrictions. Fang Feng also enjoyed a special Muslim ruling system granted to them by the Mughal government, and which allowed them to choose a man called the Sheikh of Islam to be their president who was responsible for managing the internal issues within his region. Moreover, the system allowed for appointing a judge who resolves conflicts and disputes that arise among the

people according to the teachings of Islamic law. Moreover, the Mongol governments allowed the merchants to build markets for trade and mosques to perform religious duties, as well as to establish corners in the mosques for teaching religion and Arabic.

Based on the importance of the privileges granted by the Qubailai Khan Emperors to the Arab community in China, this study is intended to highlight the impact of these privileges on the social, economic, and religious conditions of the Arab community. I have addressed this subject through three questions. The first topic dealt with the family of Qubailai Khan, who ruled China for nearly a century, while the second topic dealt with the beginning of the Arab presence in China and the role of the Qubailai Khan Emperors in promoting it. In the third part, the study described the internal rules of Fang Feng. The study showed the impact of the privileges policy granted by the governments of the Qubailai Khan Emperors in supporting the stability of the Arab community in China.

Significance of the Study

The importance of the study stems from two factors: first, to emphasize that the Arab traders who came to China to trade settled, lived, adapted to its people, and managed to form the nucleus of an Arab Islamic presence that contributed to the dissemination of the Arab civilization and culture and religion in China's various states.

The second factor emphasizes that the activity of the Arabs in China has expanded and deepened after the success of the Mongols in the establishment of an empire that included the provinces of China and the eastern provinces of the Islamic world under their control. This union resulted in the influx of large numbers of Arabs and Muslims to China. The historical sources confirm that these expatriates managed to be favored and privileged by the rulers of the Mongols of China, the emperors of the Qubailai Khan Mongol Dynasty, who ruled China in the period between (670-770AH/1271-1368AD). These rulers distinguished themselves from the other Mongols by their keenness to deepen their links with the teachings of Chinese society of different nationalities, in order to preserve the commercial interests of their empire.

Methodology of the Study

The approach adopted in the study is a historical descriptive one. Accordingly, data collection and analysis were mainly based on a scientific research, analysis and criticism. The main drive behind such approach is to reach a closer view to the historical truth and facts based on the fundamentals and rules of the historical approach in research.

Temporal and Spatial Frameworks

Temporal Framework. The study discusses the Qubailai Khan rule of China (670-770 AH /1271-1368 AD).

Spatial Framework: China is located in the far east of Asia, bordered by the east and south-east by the Pacific Ocean. From the south and some parts of the south-east its bordered by the Indochina Peninsula; from the west by India, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and from the north by Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia.

Introducing the Kublai Khan Dynasty

The Family belonged to Kublai Tolui of the Mongols - the grandson of Genghis Khan, the greatest emperor of the Mongols and the founder of their state. The Mongols were nomadic (Bedouin) tribes that inhabited areas east of the Argon River, and then stretched on the Mongolia Plateau (Al-Saied Baz,1986). Prior to their unification, these tribes lived a harsh nomadic life, which was described by the Persian historian Ata Malik Al-Juwaini(1985) as "a nation that lives on theft, violence, debauchery and vice. They made their cloths from the skin of dogs and rats. They ate the meat of the dogs and other animal carcasses, and drank the milk of livestock. Additionally, they used to collect fruits from trees that grow without care or planting in the mountains"(p.71). The Mongol tribes continued to suffer from poverty and hardship, until the presence of the leader Temujin (later Genghis Khan) who, then, was able to unite Mongolia's tribes under his rule. In 603 Ah/1206AD, Temujin held a meeting with the Tribes of Mongolia, specifically, those were united under his rule, to proclaim himself as the ruler, and gave himself the name "Genghis Khan" - a Mongolian word meaning the Ruler of the World, and since then, the new era of the Mongolian state began(Al-Sayad,1980)

After he had succeeded in establishing his state, Genghis Khan was keen to strengthen its unity and cohesion, and made efforts to deal with every danger that may threaten it; therefore, he was provoked by the acts of Khitai Tribes - tribes that were spreading in northern China and across Mongolia's eastern border – who incited Mongol tribes against each other in order to create instability in Mongolia. Such acts contributed to push Genghis Khan to think of invading (Al-Sayad,1980) Khitai Tribes, and made him launch several military campaigns to subdue them. The successive victories of such campaigns seem to have aroused his enthusiasm to launch more aggressive and broader campaigns. Here, I refer to his campaigns in northern China, which lasted several years (608-612 Ah/1211-1215 AD), and ended with Genghis Khan taking control of Beijing, the capital of the Jin dynasty, which ruled the northern part of China (Al-Areeni,1986).

Genghis Khan's successors followed in his footsteps in taking control of China. During the reign of Ogedei Khan (623-639Ah/1226-1241AD), the Mongols controlled over northern China, paving the way for the annexation of southern China to the Mongol state (Al-Juwaini,1985). Furthermore, during the reign of Guyuk Khan (644-647Ah/1246-1249AD), the Mongol armies began their movements towards the south, but were unable to achieve their mission (Al-Sayad,1980)

It was only during the reign of Mongu Khan that the Mongol emperors were able to take control of southern China (649-657Ah/1251-1257AD): In 654Ah/1256AD, Mongu Khan entrusted his brother Kublai to command a large army towards southern China - an area that was called " Metri " - which was ruled by the Chinese Song dynasty. In the year (658Ah/1260 AD), when Kublai launched numerous campaigns in southern China, he held a meeting in the City of "Meng-Qi Fu", one of the cities of northern China, in which he declared himself a ruler of northern China, and making Beijing as the capital of his state(Al-Abd,1988). In the year (670Ah/ 1271 AD), he officially named his state as "Yuan", and called himself Yuan Shi Zu, becoming the first Mongol Emperor of China (1271-1368). In 675 Ah/1276AD, Kublai took control of southern China, after he overthrown the rule of the Chinese Song dynasty. Since then, China had been united under the Mongol Family of Kublai Khan (Jian,1987).

The Kublai Khan dynasty ruled for nearly a century, during which China enjoyed stability and prosperity. The Italian traveler Marco Polo, who visited China and spent nearly seventeen years as an employee of the Imperial Court of Kublai Khan, recorded the progress and advancement of civilization, that China experienced under the rule of this family (Marco Polo,1995). With regard to the history of this Mongol family, it is noteworthy that it did not follow the approach of the Mongol armies of killing and displacing Muslims. Instead, this family valued the Muslim communities in China, and respected their presence on their territory. Ibn Battuta's description of the status of Muslims in China is perhaps the best witness on that, as he wrote: "In every city in China, there is a city for Muslims, where they have their own residences, and they have mosques to practice Friday prayers and others, and they are most respected and valued" (Ibn Battuta,1997,p.127) The study seeks to highlight this bright aspect of the history of Muslim communities in China.

The Arab Presence in China, and the Role of the Emperors of the Kublai Khan Dynasty in Strengthening such Presence

The nucleus of the Arab presence in China was formed by various groups of Arab merchants who had arrived to China centuries before Islam, via the land and maritime Sea Silk Road (One of the oldest roads in the world, stretching from China to the eastern Mediterranean coasts and to Greece, dates back to the second century BC and continued until the eighth century AD (Shawqi, 1996). Some Arab tribes, particularly the Home rite, had caravans of merchants, adventurers, geographers, historians, philosophers and ambassadors, who were able to cross the kingdoms and countries and reached India, China and the coasts of Africa for trade (Zaitoun ,1964).

As Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, the Arab presence in China increased; as the Islamic religion moved the Arabs further than they had previously intended. Through Islamic propagation and conquest, Muslim reached many countries, such as the lands of the Roman and Persians, and moved to Europe, and reached India and China, and strengthened their positions in those regions (Abdel Halim,1986) On the other hand, Islam had invigorated and stimulated the Arab trade movement, to be one of the most important motives that encouraged Arab Muslims to reach China. This is evident in the nature of the Chinese Arab community, which was primarily a commercial one.

The Arab-Islamic trade missions were increasing over the years. As a result, the number of Arabs in the coastal cities increased. This may be due to the fact that during the Islamic era, the maritime commercial route was more widely used than the land one (Bader Al-Din Hay, 1950). According to sources, Arab merchants have settled in Chinchew, the present-day city of Quanzhou in southern China, since the 2Ah/8AD century, and lived there in Islamic communities that brought together Arabs and Iranians alike (Bader Al-Din Hay, 1950) In this regard, (Suleiman Al-Tajir & Al-Sirafi 1995), who traveled to China by sea through India, emphasizes that the Muslim community who settled in the Chinese city of Chinchew lived enjoyed an organized religious life, in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic religion long after his visit to China in the 3AH/9AD century. Suleiman said that:” Chinchew has Many Muslims, who are ruled by a judge appointed by the ruler, and if it is Eid time (Islamic festival), he prays with Muslims and sermons and then prays for the Sultan of Muslims” (p.14). The Chinese scholar (Bader Al-Din Hay, 1950), who conducted a study of historical buildings in China, concluded that Arab Muslims and Persians lived in their own locality in the city of Chinchew known as "Fan Fang" in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries, a Chinese word meaning “locality of foreigners”. This locality is headed by a Sheikh elected by Muslims, and one of his most important duties is to look into the affairs of Muslim merchants and collect royalties and Islamic tax on agricultural land (Kharaj), which foreign merchants must pay to the ruling authority.

The Arab presence in China achieved a great leap during the reign of the emperors of the Mongol Kublai dynasty (670-770 AH/1271-1368 AD), due to the entry of new elements into the communities of Arab merchants. In addition to the merchants, there were a number of soldiers, administrators, scholars and Muslim preachers who had the opportunity to extend commercial, political or religious influence throughout China (Al-Wajeeh, 2015) The encouragement of the Kublai dynasty emperors for the commercial movement and the continued influx of Arab commercial convoys to China prompted members of the Arab communities to move from the coastal cities, where they usually concentrated, to the Chinese territories, as they reached the cities of Chuan Zhou, Yang Zhu, Hang Zhou and Chang-an (Bader Al-Din Hay, ed). This is confirmed by the Moroccan

Traveler ibn Battuta and the Italian traveler, who visited China under the rule of the Kublai dynasty (Ibn Battuta & Marco Polo,1995).

The question is, what are the most important policies adopted by the Emperors of the Kublai dynasty and have played an influential role in supporting the Arab presence in China?

The answer to this question lies in the religious, economic, military and administrative policies of the Emperors of the Kublai dynasty, which formed the motives that encouraged the Arab movement to China. The study will examine the two most important motives: the first is the policy of religious tolerance of the Mongols, and second is their interest in activating the trade movement throughout the entire Asian continent.

As for the Mongol religious policy; the Mongols were initially following the Shamanism faith in the period before they were united under the leadership of Genghis Khan. But after imposing their military control over China, Transoxiana, Iraq and Iran, they gradually began to renounce their faith as a result of their contact with other nations who were culturally advanced (Al-Amadi & Jabran, 1998). Although the reality necessitates the replacement of the dominant civilization over the defeated one, the Mongols went against such reality and got influenced by the civilization of the defeated nations. Accordingly, Genghis Khan showed a tendency toward religious nations with civilized cultures, such as Muslims, Uighurs, and Chinese. Perhaps this is the reason why he adopted the policy of religious tolerance, and based on it he stood neutral among followers of other religions, whether among Mongol tribes, groups coming to the lands of the Mongols or residents of Mongol-controlled territories (Al-Amadi and Jabran,1988). That is, he dealt with the logic of a political statesman who is free from any religious influence.

The Mongol emperors in China inherited their grandfather Genghis Khan's religious policy, which resulted in a Mongol-Islamic rapprochement and an increase in the number of Arab and Iranian Muslims in China, and many of the latter were loyal to the Mongol throne, and provided services that strengthened the Mongol state and consolidated its entity. The writings of (Ibn Battuta, 1997) confirm that the indulgence of the Mongols with other nations had contributed to the increase in the number of Muslims in Chinese cities. This was accompanied by an increase in the number of mosques as well as schools that teach the teachings of Islam and the Arabic language. In addition, Muslims were granted the right to run their affairs in accordance

with Islamic law, despite their presence within the territories of the Mongol Empire.

The second motive that strengthened the Arab presence in China was the trade movement in the Asian continent. It is evident that the trade movement on that continent has been greatly affected by the Mongol occupation of the region. It can be said that it became more active than before, as land and maritime contact between East and West Asia, before the Mongol control, was weak due to political unrest in that region, which was ruled by a number of states (Al-Sayad, 1986) When the Mongol force was able to take control of the Asian territories from east to west, and after the Mongol military campaigns subsided, which previously led to the destruction of buildings and the spread of diseases and epidemics as a result of killing large numbers of people (Al-Juwayni, 1985) by the Mongols, life then had to return to its former state.. This included the trade movement, which found drivers in the new conditions that facilitated such movement, most notably the security and stability imposed by the Mongols in their controlled territories. (Ibn Battuta, 1997) commended the conditions by writing that: "Chinese territories are the safest ones and the best for travelers; as any individual can travel alone for nine months with plenty of money in such territories, without being concerned of his life or money" (p.134). In addition, he commended the Mongols' adoption of the policy of former Chinese governments regarding hotels control system; as the arrangement at that time was based on the presence of a hotel in each commercial area an administrator, who lives in the hotel, is appointed under the protection of knights and men. At sunset or dinner time, the administrator comes to the hotel with his clerk, where he writes the names of all the hotel's guests, and stamped the log and then locked the hotel door. When morning time, he comes with his clerk, and would call guest by their names and would write an explanation for each, and then guests will be sent to their next hotel accompanied by an employee. The employee shall bring a paper, signed by the second hotel' administrator, that the guests has reached him. If the second hotel administrator doesn't provide such paper, he will be requested to do so, and this procedure is carried out in every hotel in China. These hotels have all the supplies and essentials that travelers need. (Ibn Battuta,1997).

One of the policies adopted by the Mongols, and which was considered a catalyst for trade movement, was to prevent merchants from falling into corruption. (Ibn Battuta, 1997) said that: "if a Muslim merchant came to a territory in China, he would be given the option of staying with a Muslim merchant or at a hotel. If the guest likes to stay at the merchant's residence, then the guest will count his money and will hand it over to the Muslim merchant, who will guarantee such money, and will spend on the guest as needed. Then, if the guest decides to travel, he would count his money, and if he finds some missing, the merchant shall compensate him. If the guest likes to stay at the hotel, he will hand over his money to the hotel owner, who will who will guarantee such money, and will spend on the guest as needed. However, spending his money on corruption matters is not possible. They said we don't want to hear in Muslim countries that they're losing their money in our country" (p133).

We witnessed the interest of the Mongols Khan in stimulating the trade movement in their country; as the sources highlighted that Kublai Khan ordered the paving of old trade routes and set up new roads, and providing them with heavy security to provide security for trade convoys (Al-Sayad,1986).

Despite the flourishing trade movement between the Mongol State and the Arab and Muslim merchants, it was sometimes exposed to setback; due to snitches who were provoking the wrath of the Khans against the Muslims. (Rashid Al-Din Al-Hamdhani, 1983) addressed such history, by stating that although Kublai Khan had begun his rule by bringing Muslims closer to him and respecting their faith teachings, he turned against them due to snitch told by a group of Christians, several years after he had assumed rule. The group's acts resulted in an official decision from the Great Khan to prevent Muslims from practicing Islamic rites, prevent them from slaughtering animals in accordance with sharia law, and kill anyone who violates such regulations and does not comply with the law.

This hostile policy has negatively affected the interests of the Mongol State; which resulted in disrupting trade movement and reducing its financial returns. Kublai Khan realized the great loss suffered by his government due to the serious constraints he imposed on Muslims (Al-Hamdhani,1983) particularly after the increase in Muslim immigration from China to the South-East Indies Islands, trade movement coming from Iran, Iraq and Egypt stopped, Islamic commercial convoys would stop at Indian

ports without going to China (Hoidi,1998) This drive Kublai Khan to retract his decisions, and ordered for the construction of a mosque in The City of Khanbaliq (Beijing) with a capacity of 100,000 Muslim worshippers (Al-Jwarneh, 2003), in an attempt to appease the Muslim community in China, and restore past relations with such community, that was based on tolerance and mutual respect.

The Conditions of the Arab and Islamic Communities in China during the Reign of the Kublai Khan Dynasty Emperors

While researching the civilization of Arabs in China, the study faced two issues; firstly: is the lack of resources that did not help us to form a clearly defined vision of the civilization reality of the Arab community in China, except for some information provided by Ibn Battuta during his visit to China, in addition to scattered references in other historical sources. Secondly, historical sources, including Ibn Battuta's journey, did not address the Arab community in China except in the context of their talk about the Muslim community in general. After researching, it becomes clear that this was due to the Mongol position of the Arabs. The Mongol government regarded the Arab community as part of the Muslim community, which included all Muslims of all races and ethnicities. Since Muslim minorities lived in the China's cities within their own neighborhoods called (Fang Feng), the Arab community shared these neighborhoods with these Muslim; this means that the description of the life of the Muslim community in (Fang Feng) necessarily reflects a perception of the civilization reality of the Arab community.

Ibn Battuta (1997) provided useful information describing the internal organization of the so-called (Fang Feng). We conclude that during the reign of the Emperors of the Kublai Khan dynasty, Muslims gathered within their own neighborhoods in china's major cities; its architectural planning was to build a mosque in the middle of the neighborhood, surrounded by the houses and markets of Muslim merchants. This is evident in Ibn Battuta's writing about the Muslim community in the City of Khansa, as he stated that "Fang Feng" were "good neighborhoods, and their markets were arranged the same way as those in Islamic countries, and there were mosques and muezzins."(p.146) Through this architectural organization similar to the

Organization of Cities in the Islamic Countries, this confirmed that the Mongol state had given the communities the right to organize their areas according to their art and culture.

Ibn Battuta (1997) confirmed that every Muslim community in China's cities must have a chairman, called the Sheikh of Islam, to whom its members refer in all their matters. The chairman shall be supported by a judge, who is judged among the Muslims of the community, in addition to the major merchants of scholars and religious personnel. Ibn Battuta's writings about the Islamic community in the cities of Zeytoun, Guangzhou, Gunjun Fu and Hangzhou illustrate this situation. (Ibn Battuta, 1997) said in his visit to the Islamic community in the city of Zeytoun, that he met with its Sheikh of Islam, who was then Sheikh Kamal Al-Din Abdullah Al-Isfahani, and its judge Taj Al-Din Al-Ardaweli, accompanied by a number of dignitaries, such as Sheikh Burhan Al-Din Al-Kazroni and merchant Sharaf Al-Din Tabrizi, who was distinguished by Ibn Battuta as the one who memorized the whole Holy Quran, and the one who recited it more. Based on Ibn Battuta's writings, we refer to the keenness of the Muslim merchants in the city of Zeytoun to pay the zakat of their money to those newcomers from Islamic countries, and the commitment of the Islamic communities in China to apply the teachings of Islam. (Ibn Battuta,1997) In his writing about the city of Guangzhou, he mentioned that in one of its parts, there was a town for Muslims, that includes a mosque, a school and a market, and their Sheikh at the time was Awhad Al-Din Sinjar (Ibn Battuta,1997). Ibn Battuta's admiration of the status of the Arab community in the City of Gunjun Fu was reflected through the warm reception he received by its community, and the joy of meeting one of his Moroccan citizens, Qewam Al-Din Al-Sebti, who was a wealthy and high-power individual in a foreign country, despite being far away from his homeland. Sheikh AL Islam of the community of this city was called Sheikh Dhahir Al-Din Al-Qarlani (Ibn Battuta,1997).

As for the Islamic community in the city of Hangzhou, (Ibn Battuta,1997) mentioned that its Sheikh and judge was called Sheikh Afkar Al-Din, and there was Othman Ibn Affan Al-Masri, who is one of most prominent figures in that community. Othman has many endowment properties, and who goes the credit for building the big mosque in the city. Ibn Battuta's description of the situation of the Muslim community in the city of Hangzhou in the 14th century not only gives an honest picture of the situation of Muslims there, their social systems and influence in the city's

markets, but also their cultural influence in the city's population. This is evident in his statement, when the city's prince invited him to a feast at his residence; he used a Muslim cook, who slaughtered the goat according to Islamic way. In addition, when they went with the prince's son on a cruise, he used Chinese, Arab and Persian singers, who sang in the three languages; (Ibn Battuta,1997) indicating that Chinese are accustomed to hearing Arabic.

Ibn Battuta (1997) points out that there was a position in the Muslim community called "Sahib Al-Diwan" (the Head of the Court), but he didn't provide any details or explanation of such position, except for reference to some of his functions; the most important of which is the organization of contact with the Ballikan and the community merchants. Hussein Mou'nes(2003) commented on this subject by stating that: Ibn Battuta meant by such position the Head of the Administrative Court, who is the individual in charge of organizing the trade of foreign communities in the ports, as such position was known in the Islamic countries before. Based on information received by the Chinese researcher Jian during one of his journeys, It seems that the Mongolian government appointed the Arab merchant (Boshio Gan) to be responsible for managing the foreign trade of the communities in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian(Jian,1987) The importance of this information lies not only in confirming the presence of the administrative position for foreign merchants within the administrative positions held by community merchants in China, but also in highlighting the strength of the Arab presence in the administrative system of the Mongol state of Yuan; as such incumbent was considered one of the most important government officials. (Jian, 1987) confirmed that the Arab merchant (Boshio Gan) has held a senior position in the Yuan government.

In his study of Muslim trade activity in Chinese ports, the Chinese researcher (Bader Al-Din Hay, 1950) considered that the position of controlling navigation and maritime trade has created a new system it was the position of inspecting incoming and departing vessels and collecting fees for incoming goods of different values. This position was usually held by an Arab or Iranian Muslim individual, who had full knowledge of the conditions of maritime trade and all related matters.

Based on what have been covered in this study, we conclude that Arabs and Muslims in China enjoyed the freedom to practice their faith and cultures without restrictions during the reign of the Emperors of the Kublai Khan dynasty. Therefore, (Gang Feng) enjoyed an internal Muslim system, granted by the Mongol government, which allow Muslims to choose a man among them, the Sheikh of Islam, to be their head of the neighborhood's internal affairs, in addition to a judge who solve problems among people in accordance with the teachings of Islamic law. It also allowed merchants to build markets for trade and mosques to perform religious duties, as well as allowing them to establish schools to teach religion and Arabic language, such as the Sheikh Othman School in the city of Hangzhou. Ibn Battuta's description of the status of Muslims in China is perhaps the best witness to the rise of Muslim communities under the Rule of the Kublai dynasty; as he mentioned that: "In every city in China, there is a city for Muslims, where they have their own residences, and they have mosques to practice Friday prayers and others, and they are most respected and valued." (Ibn Battuta,1997, p.130).

Findings and Recommendations

The study comes up with the following findings and recommendations:

1. The Mongols are nomadic tribes who inhabited areas east of the Argon River, and then spread across the Mongolian plateau. Before unification, they lived in a harsh nomadic life until the leader Temujin (later Genghis Khan) showed, who united the tribes of Mongol under his rule, announcing the beginning of the new era of the Mongol state.
2. The rule of the Mongols over China was represented by the reign of the emperors of the Kublai dynasty, who ruled for nearly a century, during which China enjoyed stability and prosperity.
3. The core of the Arab presence in China was formed by various groups of Arab merchants who had arrived in China centuries before Islam, via the land and maritime Sea Silk Road. As Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, the Arab presence in China increased; as the Islamic religion moved the Arabs further than they had previously intended. Through Islamic propagation and conquest, Muslim reached many countries, such as the lands of the Roman and Persians, and moved to Europe, and reached India and China, and strengthened their positions in those regions. On the other hand, Islam had invigorated and stimulated the Arab trade movement, to be one of the most

important motives that encouraged Arab Muslims to reach China. This is evident in the nature of the Chinese Arab community, which was primarily a commercial one.

4. The sources pointed out that the Arab merchants in China settled in the city of (Guangzhou), the present city of (Canton), located in southern China, since the 2ndAh/8AD, and lived within communities that brought together Arab and Islamic minorities of all races and ethnicities, called as (Fang Feng), a Chinese word meaning the locality of foreigners. This locality is headed by a Sheikh elected by Muslims, and one of his most important duties is to look into the affairs of Muslim merchants and collect royalties and Islamic tax on agricultural land (Kharaj), which foreign merchants must pay to the ruling authority.
5. The Kublai dynasty emperors supported the Arab presence in China, and promoted it through the policy of religious tolerance that inherited from their grandfather Genghis Khan and their interest in activating trade movement throughout the entire Asian continent.
6. The study of the cultural reality of the Muslim community in China shows that Arabs and Muslims enjoyed the freedom to practice their faith and cultures without restrictions during the rule of the Emperors of the Kublai Khan dynasty. (Fang Feng) enjoyed an internal system for Muslims, granted by the Mongol government, which allow Muslims to choose a man among them, the Sheikh of Islam, to be their head of the neighborhood's internal affairs, in addition to a judge who solve problems among people in accordance with the teachings of Islamic law. It also allowed merchants to build markets for trade and mosques to perform religious duties, as well as allowing them to establish schools to teach religion and Arabic language, such as Sheikh Othman School in the city of Guangzhou.
7. Arab studies did not address the history of the Arab presence in China enough to give a clear picture of the state of the Arab civilization at that time; therefore, this study recommends that researchers shall deepen their research in the history of Arabs in China, and cover many aspects of the civilization of Arab and Muslim communities that still include ambiguity and lack of clarity.

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