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## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF MUSLIMS AND THE *HUI HUI* COMMUNITY OF KOREA IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

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This paper details the advance of the “Hui” (回) people to Korea and their socio-economic activities in forming their own community during the late Goryeo and early Joseon period. Hui (回) or Hui Hui (回回) is generally recognized as representative of Muslim culture in Chinese and Korean sources.

From the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Korean-Muslim cultural relations accelerated as an outcome of ancient Chinese-West Asian commercial transactions along the Silk Road. These contacts between Muslims and Koreans on the Korean peninsula are borne out by references to Korea found in 23 Islamic sources written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by 18 Muslim scholars, including Ibn Khurdadbih, Sulaiman al-Tajir, and Mas’ud’i. Ibn Khurdadbih was the first Arab who wrote of Muslims’ residence in the Unified Silla Kingdom (661-935CE). However, in the period of Silla, we could not find any reliable written documents in Korea to show encounters between Korea and the Muslim world. In the *Goryeosa* (GS) chronicle, Muslim merchants who came to Korea were described as “Daesik” (大食: Tashi). Daesik

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<sup>1</sup> Chung Kei Won and G.F. Hourani, “Arab Geographers in Korea”, *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, 58, no. 4 (1938): 660.

(Tashi) is most probably derived from “Tajir”, which means “trader” in Muslim language.<sup>2</sup> Muslims’ mass influx and their wide ranging influence on Korean society manifested from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Goryeo Dynasty first came under Mongol control and afterward in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century with the new dynasty of Joseon in Korea.

**Keywords:** Mongol, Muslim in Korea, Goryeo, Joseon, Yuan, Hui Hui, Silk Road

## INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the era of “Pax-Mongolica” in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, cultural and economic confluence between the East and West along the Silk Road reached its utmost level, enabling men to travel in comparative safety from the Crimea to Korea, permitting ideas and inventions as well as merchandise to pass from one end of the known world to the other. The contacts between the two far flung regions of the Islamic world and the Korean Peninsula led to prosperity as a result of a wide range of cultural exchanges. In particular, from the period of Mongol-Yuan (1260-1368) dominance of Korea as a vassalage, which was completed in 1270, many Muslims called Hui Hui came to the Korean Peninsula as traders, migrants, and officials of the Mongol regime.

In the Hui Hui community located near Gaegyeong, Muslims enjoyed commercial profits and political privilege at the Goryeo court. During the Joseon dynasty, beginning from 1392, the scientific knowledge and transnational business knowhow of Muslims in Korea was widely utilized by the new dynasty.

It is particularly interesting that in court ceremonies, Muslims were allowed to give a glorification message to the king and to pray for his long life and the country’s prosperity in accordance with Islamic rites. However, the continuation of Islamic religious activities faced a serious threat posed by the issuance of a royal decree in 1427 which prohibited the performance of Islamic rites and the wearing of traditional dress and headgear. Afterward, the Hui community in Korea was rapidly assimilated into Korean society under a new policy emphasizing homogeneity in society. Few documents on Hui Hui in Korea were found until recently.

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, “Tajir” is used in other languages of Muslim peoples - in Arabic, Turkic, Urdu.

## WHO WERE THE HUI HUI IN KOREA?

With Yuan dominance of Goryeo starting from 1270, many Muslims from Central Asia and Persia came to Korea as interpreters, officials and bodyguards of Mongol masters and chamberlains of Mongol princesses. The Muslims were generally known as “Hui Hui” in China, Korea and Japan. The historical documents of Korea say that some of the Hui Hui made permanent settlements and were steadily absorbed into Korean society through marriage with local women and joining the civil service under the Goryeo court.

The religion of Islam probably began to be called and known to the Chinese in these times as Hui Chiao (回教) or Hui Hui Chiao (回回教), whose meaning is the religion of the Hui-hu (回鹘) or Hui-ho (回紇). Both represent Uighurs. In history, the title “Hui Hui” was introduced in 1124. According to Edward H. Parker, a Western orientalist, Hui Hui (Muslim) history begins with 1124. History makes no record prior to that.<sup>3</sup> He writes:

The Cathayan, Nohen, and Mongol Tartars in succession governed as rival emperors north of the Yellow River. . . . When the Cathayans lost their empire in North China to the Nohens, one of the Cathayan princes mustered all his forces, and determined to found an empire in Persia. On arrival at Kan-chou, he reminded the Hwei-huh (Uighur) king reigning there that for over ten generations he had enjoyed the patronage of Cathayan Suzerains: “I am now about to proceed to the Tazih and want a road through your dominions.” Bilga Khan offered him every hospitality. Then he went on to Samarkand, fought various battles, and after subduing several states received at Samarkand the submission and tribute of the Hwei-hwei (Muslim) King.

The word of “Hwei hwei” used by Edward Parker does not create the word Muslim directly, but means exclusively Muslim.<sup>4</sup> Parker at no point attempted to explain the etymology of Hwei-hwei, but only established the earliest date at which it was probably in circulation.

Chang Ch’un (長春),<sup>5</sup> a Taoist monk, in his travel account titled *Hsi-yu-chi* (西遊記)

<sup>3</sup> E.H. Parker, *China and Religion*, New York, 1905, pp. 144-145.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>5</sup> Chang Ch’un was a Taoist author, reputed to have great wisdom and sanctity. He was born in 1148 in

describes the Islamization of the Uighur as follows:

The city of Samarkand lying more than ten thousand li<sup>6</sup> to the south-west, was built in the best place in the country of the Hui-ho (Uighur). It must be observed that the country from this place, stretching to the east, belonged to China at the time of the T'ang dynasty. West of it there are neither Buddhists nor Taoists. The Hui-ho only worship the west.<sup>7</sup>

Bretschneider, a Sinologue, assumes that the “Hui-ho” or “Hui-hu” of the early thirteenth century were Muslims, since Muslims always turn toward Mecca when they pray, and Mecca is of course located west of China.<sup>8</sup>

To sum up, the term Hui Hui was used for the first time in the early twelfth century for Central Asian Muslims. Afterwards, the term was used for the Uighurs by the Chinese since they accepted Islam and Islam was introduced to China through Muslim Uighurs. Furthermore, in the Yuan period following the influx of many Muslims from the western region (西域) to China, Hui Hui became a more generalized term, not used to point out any specific races or countries, but used for Muslims in general including Uighurs and Persians. In particular, some Yuan historical sources like *Yuan Sa* (YS) used the terms “Hui-ho” or “Hui-hu” (Uighur) for Muslims.<sup>9</sup> In my opinion, the etymology of Hui Hui, therefore, is most probably derived from “Hui-ho” or “Hui-hu”, the Chinese reading for Uighur. The Hui Hui appellation spread widely to the whole of China during the Yuan dynasty. The claim of M. Harmann that ‘The Islamic spread to Inner China would not have been possible without the Mongol Empire’, can be generally accepted in this context.<sup>10</sup> Now, the term Hui Hui is still widely used for Muslims in contemporary China, Japan and Korea.

Without doubt, the newly founded Yuan Empire needed a wide range of administrative organizations and staff. To control the Chinese population with Chinese

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Si-hia, Shantung. In spite of his old age, he made a long journey through Central Asia to Persia and the frontiers of India. The journey took three years, 1221-1224. The travel record was written by his disciples with the title of *His-yu-chi*.

<sup>6</sup> 10 li is 4 km.

<sup>7</sup> E. Bretschneider, *Notes on Chinese Mediaeval Travellers*, Shanghai, 1875, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.31.

<sup>9</sup> M. Broomhall, *Islam in China: A Neglected Problem*, London, 1910, p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> M. Hartmann, *Zur Geschichte des Islam in China*, Leipzig, 1921, p.83.

customs and practices, the Mongol leaders appealed to the Islamic-Turkic peoples for assistance, as they had experience in administrative and financial affairs. Many Muslims and Turkic nationals, therefore, played a significant role in the Yuan court. They served in general as interpreters, royal guards, teachers, diplomats, secretaries and financial experts.<sup>11</sup> A great opportunity was presented to the Uighur-Turkic peoples, too, because they had long-standing experience in financial and commercial affairs, and more importantly, they had their own alphabet, from which the Mongols could write their Mongol language. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of clerical and administrative officials in the Yuan court were Uighur, as Luc Kwanten has confirmed.<sup>12</sup>

In this connection, *GS* also writes that the Uighur language spread widely in the Goryeo court. High ranking Korean officials and court servants had to learn and speak the Uighur language for more effective correspondence and to keep good relations with Mongol officials and their deputies. Many Uighurs served in the Goryeo court. Moreover, the Uighur language became one of the court languages in the Goryeo dynasty, controlled by Mongols for some period of time.<sup>13</sup>

## THE ADVANCE OF MUSLIMS *HUI HUI* TO KOREA AND THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Under the Yuan regime, as has been noted, Muslims from Central Asia played an influential role in the national economy as well as local and central administration. As policy-makers, scientists, professors of civilization<sup>14</sup> or experienced merchants, they could secure important positions in almost every field of Yuan society. In these circumstances, it is quite natural that many Muslims extended their roles in Korea under Mongol domination.

The famous Mongol general Sartai, who had made a military expedition into Korea twice in 1272, was most probably a Muslim from Turkic tribes. Other versions of Sartai in Chinese and Korean sources are Sa-li-t'a (*GS* 23, 1a, *GS* 23, 5b, *YS* 208,

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<sup>11</sup> For more details, see B. Ogel, *Sino-Turcica*, Taipei, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> L. Kwanten, *Imperial Nomads* (Korean Trs.), Seoul, 1984, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Go Byeong-ik, "Han'guk-gwa Söyök", *Tong Asia-üi Chönt'ong-gwa Kändaehwa*, Samjiwön, 1984, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> This term (professeurs de civilization) was used for the Uighurs who contributed to the progress of backward Mongol culture by Rene Grousset. (See *Extreme Orient*. Vol. II. p. 428).

2b), Sa-li-ta (*GS* 23, 4a), Sa-erh-t'a and Sarta'ul (MGT 152). The word Sart (Sartha in Sanskrit) means trader. With a Mongolian suffix (-ul), Sart became Sartha'ul, which was used by the Mongols for the Kharezm Shah, Central Asian Turks or Iranian Muslims. Accordingly, the Sartai (Sart-ai), thought to be a variant of Sartha'ul, could be a Central Asian Muslim Turk.<sup>15</sup>

Since Chingis Khan, Central Asian Turks and Muslims had joined the military campaigns of the Mongols. A significant number of Muslims were to be found under the command of a Muslim general who was sent on a military expedition into Korea.<sup>16</sup> An event to support this fact happened in 1270, when a committed group of the Goryeo army who had refused loyalty to the Goryeo court and rebelled to fight against the Mongol troops killed Muslim soldiers affiliated with the Mongol army. The Goryeo-Sa states:

At the beginning of the anti-Mongol rebellion, Yi Baek-gi (이백기), a Korean general, refused to join the rebellion in spite of a strong request from Korean rebels. At this point, they beheaded general Yi in the street as well as the Muslims (Hui Hui) whom the Mongol had sent.<sup>17</sup>

When the Goryeo court fell under the vassalage of the nomadic Mongol regime, a group of patriots from the Goryeo army called *Sam byeol cho* (三別抄) rose in revolt against the Mongol army. The anti-Mongol rebellion under the leadership of Bae Jung-son continued until 1273.<sup>18</sup> In the course of this, the *Sam byeol cho* army killed Muslims who were staying in Korea under Mongol patronage. However, this doesn't imply that *Sam byeol cho's* hostility to Muslims arose from any religious reason. It merely indicates the firm determination of anti-Mongol resistance. By serving as agents of the Mongol rulers, like the Muslims in China, the Muslims performed significant services but at the same time provoked the wrath of the conquered.

From the above quoted document of *Goryeosa* it is clear that with the Mongols' initiation of expeditions to Goryeo in the 1230s, many Muslims were already stationed

<sup>15</sup> W. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, (trs. T. Minorsky), Vol. I. Leiden, 1956, p. 31 / I. Kafesoglu, *Harezmsablar Devleti Tarihi*, Ankara, 1984, p. 246, n-83. / W.E. Henthorn, *Korea: The Mongol Invasions*, Leiden, 1963, p. 79, n-1.

<sup>16</sup> E. Schuyler, *Turkistan*, London, 1876, p. xiii.

<sup>17</sup> *GS* 130, 38b/ *GS* 43, Yeol-jeon, Bae Jung-son, chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Sang-gi, *Dong Bang Munbwa Gyorusa Nongo*, Euljumunhwasa, 1884, pp. 202-204 / W.E. Henthorn, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-193

in Gaeseong, the Goryeo capital. With the normalization of Mongol-Goryeo relations after 1270, Muslims became immigrants in increasing numbers. Prospering from the special “master-subject” relations between the two courts, the Muslims threw themselves into political affairs. Sometimes they abused their powers. As Mongol officials or chamberlains of Mongol princesses who later became queens of the Goryeo court, they exerted great influence upon the court.

Two good examples of Muslims’ progress in the Goryeo court can be found in the cases of Samga and Min Po (閔甫). Both came to Korea in the 1270s and became naturalized Koreans, gaining high ranking posts. Samga (三哥), described in the GS as a Hui Hui (Muslim), was sent to Korea in 1274 as a chamberlain for the princess Je-guk, daughter of Kubilai Khan (Shih-tsu). She soon married the Goryeo king Chung-yeol and was known as the first Mongol princess to be a Goryeo queen. Samga was given the Korean name Jang Sun-ryong (張舜龍) by King Chung-yeol, and became a naturalized Korean through marriage to a Korean woman. He was gradually promoted until he reached the rank of senior official. From time to time, he was sent to Ta-tu on special missions for the Goryeo king and Princess Je-guk.<sup>19</sup>

Another Hui Hui (Muslim) named Min Bo also became a naturalized Goryeo citizen and was promoted to the rank of Dae-Jang-Gun (大將軍: Great General) of the 3rd military degree. He was sent to the Yuan court five times as special envoy of King Chung-yeol. Whenever he went to Ta-tu, he always took falcons with him. He was appointed by King Chung-seon to the post of mayor<sup>20</sup> of Seogyong (西京) as Jon-mu-sa (Special Envoy for the Pacification of District Disputes).<sup>21</sup>

For the most part, the political influence of Muslims in the Goryeo court was considerable. Many of them became Korea nationals through marriage. Under the protection of their Mongol masters, they became high ranking Goryeo officials. Meanwhile, the Goryeo court was under strong pressure from Mongol-Muslim political groups. The Muslims packed their own communities with important members who were connected closely to the Goryeo royal family or Mongol princesses. The GS contains information on the influence of Muslims:

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<sup>19</sup> GS 36, Jang Sun-ryong chapter.

<sup>20</sup> The second big city of Goryeo after Gaegyeong. Modern Pyeong-yang, the capital of North Korea.

<sup>21</sup> GS 33, Se-ga, the 10<sup>th</sup> month, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of King Chung-seon chapter (1310).

All Muslims invited the King<sup>22</sup> and held a banquet in the New Palace. They held privileged political status in the Goryeo palace. In great numbers, they could invite even the King and hold an exclusive banquet in the palace.<sup>23</sup>

The Goryeo dynasty came to an end in 1392 when the Joseon dynasty was established. Political confusion in the period of the changeover, however, did not seriously affect the status of Muslim residents who had settled during the period of the Goryeo dynasty. Their privileges in many fields continued until at least the early fifteenth century when a considerable number of Muslims lost their places in the hierarchy of administration and social life. The *JWS (Chronicles of the Joseon Dynasty)*<sup>24</sup> gives us some information to show the social status of Muslims in the Joseon dynasty.

In 1407, when the Muslim priest Doro (都老) and his family wished to live in Korea, King Tae-jong gave permission and ordered the authorities concerned to grant them a house.<sup>25</sup>

Again in the Chapter of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of 1416, *JWS* mentions:

The Minister of Finance requested that the stipends paid to Muslim (Hui Hui) and Japanese residents should be reduced so as to economize in future budgets, and this request was granted by the king.<sup>26</sup>

It is clear from these references that at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty, there were still many Muslim residents in Korea and they were even receiving stipends from the court. As the number of Muslims was quite large and the total amount of their stipends high, the Ministry of Finance was hard pressed to budget for them and had to request to the king that the stipends be reduced. Muslims were also invited to such regular court occasions as the enthronement ceremony, New Year greetings and royal ancestral worship held in the palace.

The *JWS* records Muslim participation in the enthronement ceremony of King

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<sup>22</sup> The event happened in 1279. The King may be Chung-yeol.

<sup>23</sup> *GS* 48, 29, Se-ga, the 10<sup>th</sup> month, the 5<sup>th</sup> year of King Chung-yeol chapter (1279).

<sup>24</sup> This is the official chronicles of the Joseon dynasty compiled between 1413-1865.

<sup>25</sup> *JWS*, the 7<sup>th</sup> day, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 9<sup>th</sup> year of Tae-Jong Silrok chapter 13 (1407).

<sup>26</sup> *JWS*, the 5<sup>th</sup> month, 16<sup>th</sup> year of Tae-Jong Silrok chapter 16 (1416).

Se-jong in 1418.

The royal family and all the high officials with ceremonial costumes stood in the courtyard of Gyeong-bok Palace in accordance with their ranks. When the King in ceremonial costume appeared in the courtyard with his crown prince, all the subjects offered their loyal greetings in accordance with ceremonial protocol. Muslim leaders, Buddhist monks and students of Seong-gyun-guan<sup>27</sup> also attended the ceremony.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to this, Muslims were regularly invited to the year-end and New Year ceremonies or annual ancestral rites of worship right up to 1427.<sup>29</sup> The record of January 1, 1425, of the *JWS* says:

The annual ancestor worship rites were performed at In-jeong Pavilion in the presence of the crown prince and high ranking officials. Soon after, King Se-jong along with the crown prince received New Year greetings from his subjects with Muslim monks being among these.<sup>30</sup>

Again, in another part of the *JWS* we find:

King Se-jong together with the crown prince and high officials celebrated the year-end party on the day of the winter solstice. The King continuously received congratulatory greetings from his subjects in the court garden. Muslims, Japanese and Khitais were also among these.<sup>31</sup>

It was an exceptional honor to be invited to attend these official court ceremonies. The Muslims who had been resident since the late Yuan period enjoyed certain privileges in the political sphere. As high officials of the Goryeo court, most of them concentrated their efforts and abilities in the diplomatic area in particular because this offered more advantageous positions for negotiating with the Yuan court.

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<sup>27</sup> A national university. The graduates of this university in general were appointed to important posts in the court.

<sup>28</sup> *JWS*, the 8<sup>th</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> year of King Se-jong Chong-seo chapter (1418).

<sup>29</sup> *JWS*, the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter.

<sup>30</sup> *JWS*, the 1<sup>st</sup> day, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 7<sup>th</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter.

<sup>31</sup> *JWS*, the 15<sup>th</sup> day, 11<sup>th</sup> month, 8<sup>th</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE *HUI HUI* IN KOREA**

The Muslims in Korea took up positions not only as officials of the Goryeo court, but also as private traders or immigrants in almost every corner of the country. These Muslim immigrants, who mostly came from Central Asia through Yuan-China, were absorbed into Korean society and benefitted from a lot of attractive conditions. They engaged in various occupations. They mainly preferred, however, to conduct commercial business in which they had the experience of generations. Without doubt, as in Yuan-China, Muslims in Korea played a great role in financial and commercial affairs. Their experience in these fields helped the Goryeo court. Benefiting from privileged positions, Muslims were also connected with the royal family of the Goryeo court and conducted business on their behalf. *GS* tells:

King Chung-hye<sup>32</sup> distributed linen to Muslim households and later took a high profit from the business.<sup>33</sup>

The King needed more income to cover increasing court expenses for luxurious banquets and entertainment. Sometimes the King was forced to do business with Muslims whose experienced business skills always satisfied the King because of the high returns on his investment.

Muslim merchants from Central Asia co-operated very well with Mongolian leaders during the period of Mongolian rule. They dominated East-West trade along the Silk Road. Furthermore, they were experts, in particular, in the matter of tax-collection and conducting business monopolies. They organized Ortaq, an association of merchants, through which they enjoyed extraordinary privileges, together with high rates of interest on their investments. Much of the commerce of North China unquestionably was in the hands of these Ortaq merchants, who were, for the most part, Muslim Uighurs. It is quite possible that they played some other commercial role in Goryeo.<sup>34</sup>

According to Korean sources, some Muslims opened shops in Gaeseong, the

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<sup>32</sup> He was in power twice, between 1330-1332 and 1339-1344.

<sup>33</sup> *GS* 36, Se-ga, the 5<sup>th</sup> year of King Chung-hye chapter.

<sup>34</sup> H. F. Schurmann, *Economic Structure of the Yuan Dynasty*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 214. Go Byeong-ik, *Donga Gyoseopsa ni Yeongu*, Seoul National University Press, 1980, pp. 362-364.

Goryeo capital, in which they dealt with the products of Muslim countries.<sup>35</sup> Another source informs us that Korean traders might have known the Ortaq system, which was a monopolized and syndicated business system of Muslim traders in Central Asia. The *GSYP* introduced the origins of a system of civil monopoly and warned of the bad impact of the civil monopoly system of the Sung and early Yuan periods.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the Mongol princess Je-guk herself engaged in Korea in the trade of ginseng and pine nuts. Muslim merchants from Southern China often worked on behalf of the princess and made large profits from this work.<sup>37</sup> Besides Muslim merchants, a few non-Muslim Central Asian merchants were also found in Goryeo either carrying out business or living as permanent residents.

Muslims' commercial activities continued up to the early 15<sup>th</sup> century without any major hindrance. The newly established Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) of Korea did not at first show clear antagonism to Muslims. As under the Goryeo dynasty, they still had a close connection with the new ruling party. The new dynasty also needed Muslims' commercial experience and scientific technology. It is clear that some naturalized Muslims still engaged in intermediary trade business between Korea, China, and Central Asia. They brought their own products to Korea and exported Korean products such as silk, cloth, ginseng, gold and silver. To guarantee the security of their profitable business activities, they sometimes supplied their own rare products to the court. The *JWS* reads:

Abdullah Chiwi, Bayan Timur and Doro came and presented their native products to the king, and at the audience the king ordered these be accepted and for them to be entertained at dinner.<sup>38</sup>

Abbdulah Chiwi and Doro were Muslims. Bayan Timur might well have been a Central Asian Turk or Muslim. In return for their friendly present, the king showed his appreciation. The *JWS* says:

The king ordered that five 'seok' of rice should be given to the Muslim priest,

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<sup>35</sup> Go Byeong-ik, "Goryeo wa won", *Dong Asia ui Jeontong gwa Geundaehwa*, Samjiweon, 1984, p. 128. / Choi Sang-su, *Korea and Arabia*, Eomungak, 1981. p. 57.

<sup>36</sup> *GSYP* 10, 3-86.

<sup>37</sup> Go Byeong-ik, "Goryeo wa won," p. 135.

<sup>38</sup> *JWS*, the 10<sup>th</sup> month, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter (1420).

Doro.<sup>39</sup>

Doro, the Muslim priest, and his family, along with other naturalized Muslims, engaged in acquiring a collection of jewelry in Korea. Doro was mentioned frequently in Korean sources. The *JWS* mentions:

A Hui Hui (Muslim) priest by the name of Doro was ordered to collect pure crystal on Mount Geumgang in the Sunheung and Gimhae areas. Doro once won the praise of King Tae-jong when he offered him a hat decorated with a crystal crown produced in his native country. Doro also proposed to the king that he should be sent on a mission to search for rare jewels throughout the country. He explained to the king that Korea might possess rich veins containing precious stones because of its topographical structure.<sup>40</sup>

Upon his request, King Tae-jong appointed him to search for and collect jewels or precious stones. He collected 300 keun (180 kg) of crystal, which he offered to the king. The next year (1413), he was again sent to the county of Sun-heung to collect crystal.<sup>41</sup> Korea abounds in crystal and pearls, which were very attractive to the Mongols. The Yuan court periodically sent special missions to Korea for the purpose of collecting jewels and pearls. According to the *GS*:

In March 1276, the Yuan court dispatched Yim Yu-gan and the Hui Hui (Muslim) Asilmiria to Goryeo to collect pearls in Tamra island. Yim Yu-gan came to Tamra to collect pearls, but on his failure to find enough pearls, he returned to Yuan taking about a hundred pearls that had belonged to individual citizens.<sup>42</sup>

The Muslims certainly had an eye for the beauty and quality of jewelry while also possessing excellent craftsmanship in making jewelry. Some Muslims like Doro, who had an appreciative eye for craftsmanship in jewelry, supplied jewelry or precious stones with a high quality finish to the royal family of the Goryeo and Joseon courts. Because of this, they gained certain privileges in Korea. The Muslims in Korea were

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<sup>39</sup> *JWS*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 4<sup>th</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter (1422).

<sup>40</sup> *JWS*, King Tae-Jong Silrok 23, 14b (1412).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 21a (1413).

<sup>42</sup> *GS*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of King Chung-yeol chapter. *GSJ* III, 19 (1276).

scattered all over the country. Most of them preferred to stay in Gaeseong, the capital, and its outskirts, where they could more easily make contact with the royal court for business or social involvement. Sometimes, the king himself visited the Muslims. The GS notes:

King Wu (1375-388) once visited a Hui Hui named Kim-hu to take one of his girls, but she was not at home, so he gave a saddle and horse to the Hui Hui's son and allowed him to attend the king as a chamberlain. Afterward, he did take the girl and permitted her to be his chamberlain and dressed her up in men's clothes.<sup>43</sup>

Even ordinary civilian Muslims were selected from time to time as chamberlains so that they could serve the Mongolized kings more effectively. In particular, many Muslims worked in Ung-bang, an office for falcon collection which was established by the Yuan court to collect falcons and hawks, so popular among the Mongols as hunting companions. The officials were usually dispatched by the Yuan court, and they were given extraordinary power in Goryeo.<sup>44</sup>

The Goryeo king granted houses and servants to M'zar and seven other Yuan officials upon their arrival to manage the Ung-ang.<sup>45</sup>

M'zar, the head of the Eung-bang, was most probably a Muslim. Angered by his Korean ministers, the King invited Muslims who were trusted by the Yuan emperor as being capable of controlling the Ung-bang to become officials. In this way, he hoped to limit the power of his Korean ministers. Jo In-Gyu,<sup>46</sup> however, and the Mongol princess appealed to him to cancel plans to invite Muslims.<sup>47</sup>

From the above source, we can see that Muslims played an important role in the affairs of the Ung-bang and they exercised political influence over the Goryeo court. Muslims' abuse of power, however, raised serious political issues. Certain yardsticks were therefore adopted by the Yuan court to prevent Muslim officials from abuse of

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<sup>43</sup> GS 4, 19, the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Sin U (1378).

<sup>44</sup> Yi Gi-baek, *Hanguksa Sinron*, Seoul, 1976, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> GSJ III. 19 (1276).

<sup>46</sup> Jo was a Korean interpreter of the Mongolian language. He was promoted to the position of Chan Seong-sa, a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree official, under the patronage of the Mongol princess Je-Kuk.

<sup>47</sup> GSJ 20, the 6<sup>th</sup> year of King Chung-yeol chapter. GS the 6<sup>th</sup> year of King Chung-yeol (1280).

power or unlawful behavior. The *GSC* states:

The Yuan court sent Manja Kaya (Hai-ya)<sup>48</sup> to prohibit Muslims from excessive unauthorized animal hunting.<sup>49</sup>

Their excessive abuse of power and retention of social and economic advantages caused Korean people to describe Muslims as bad people. One of the popular poetic songs extant in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century explains that some Muslims became a target of reproach by Koreans.

When I (a girl) went into the Hui Hui (Muslim) store to buy ssang-hua<sup>50</sup>  
The Hui Hui shook my hands  
If this rumour should spread outside  
Dorro-reo-beo-diro (refrain)  
I am sure that you (a small crowd) are to blame (refrain)  
I would go to sleep there (refrain)  
Dorro-reo-beo-diro (refrain)  
When I slept over there,  
No place was so rough and dirty as there.<sup>51</sup>

Some of the Muslims stationed in Gaeseong City opened their own shops and introduced their own culture into Korean society. They married Korean women, but for a certain period, they usually continued their traditions and culture, which was a mixture of Islamic and Central Asiatic Turkic ones. The above song, which seems to be a type of popular ballad which originated in Gaeseong City and its outskirts, signifies the corrupted social ethics of the Goryeo dynasty. The Muslims were just mentioned there as scapegoats<sup>52</sup> to satirize the immoral Goryeo society in which

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<sup>48</sup> Man-cha has the meaning of barbarous people and is used for Southern Chinese. Hai-ya is sometimes transcribed as Gaya (stone), a Turkic name. Therefore, Mancha Gaya might be a Central Asian Turk in South China.

<sup>49</sup> *GJ* 20, the 6th year of King Chung-yeol chapter (1280).

<sup>50</sup> Ssang-hua is regarded as a kind of mandu, made of wheat flour by Central Asian Muslims (Central Asian origin)

<sup>51</sup> *GS* 71, Ak-ji 2. *GS* 125, Yeol-jeon 38.

<sup>52</sup> Apart from Muslims, representatives of various circles of Goryeo society like Buddhist monks or charcoal dealers also became targets of the song.

national ethics and fine customs were seriously downgraded by the influx of foreign culture and heterogeneous customs under nomadic Mongol occupation. At times, as a section of the ruling class, the Muslims were regarded as negative figures who abused their power in order to break down the traditional customs of Goryeo. Their unfamiliar costumes led them, however, to be presented as the symbol of Shaman, whom Korean peoples worshipped to cure illness and protect them from unexpected disasters.<sup>53</sup>

One noteworthy event concerning a Goryeo immigrant was the coming of a Muslim prince to Goryeo from Su-ch'uan Province in China during the turbulent transition from the Yuan dynasty to the Ming dynasty of China.

A man dubbed the "Prince of Muslims" came to Korea from China. He had been exiled by the founder of the Ming dynasty in 1373 along with other Chinese politicians.<sup>54</sup>

A Muslim prince lived in Cheongdam-dong in Gaeseong. His grandson, Mun Chi-sang (文致祥), who had passed the Chin-shih (high civil officials) examination, became a high official in the Goryeo court.<sup>55</sup>

Even though the fate of their descendants is not known, they are believed to have had permanent residence in Gaeseong for many generations. At the time of the Joseon dynasty, statues of the Muslim prince became the object of civil worship among Korean people and there was even a popular song concerning him.<sup>56</sup>

At this time, some other Central Asian Turks who could not be clearly identified as Muslims were active in Korea. Some of them came to Korea through their very close acquaintance with the Goryeo king and royal family, and having been sent to Ta-tu, the Yuan capital, as hostages or students, were brought up there as pro-Mongol intellectuals. In Ta-tu, people from every part of the world gathered for various purposes. The majority were, without doubt, Central Asians who were serving as assistant administrators for their Mongol masters. In particular, the residence of a large number of Uighurs in Ta-tu gave Korean aristocrats the opportunity to establish

<sup>53</sup> Go Byeong-ik, *Hanguk Gwa Seo-yeok*, p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> *Jung Gyeong Ji (JGJ)* Vol. 3. The book was written by Kim Yu-Jae (1767-1847).

<sup>55</sup> Go Byeong-ik, *Hanguk Gwa Seo-yeok*, p. 87.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87.

close relations with the Uighurs.

When King Chung-hye ascended the throne, the dethroned King Chung-suk was sent to Ta-tu as a hostage. Chung-suk made friends with some Mongol nobles and the Uighurs there, and roamed around with them. He once fell in love with a Uighur girl and frequently stayed away from his residence.<sup>57</sup>

Another person who came to Korea thanks to the result of close friendship with Goryeo princes in Ta-tu was Seol-son (楔孫). The DSGM says:

An Uighur named *Seol-son* had the rank of Jeong-ja in the Yuan court. When the Goryeo king was in Ta-tu, Seol-son had many friendly meetings with him. Upon the arrival of Seol-son in Goryeo, on his escaping from political disturbances in the Yuan court, the king<sup>58</sup> accepted him very politely and conferred on him the title of Bu-won-hu.<sup>59</sup>

Significantly, Muslims in Goryeo extended their commercial activities to the major ports of Southern China. In July 1985, a tombstone was found near the Muslim cemetery affiliated to an old mosque in Guang-chou, China. The tombstone has been confirmed as belonging to a Korean Muslim named Ramadan, buried in Guang-chou in 1349. The original tombstone can be found at the storehouse of the Hui Seong Mosque in the same city. The size of the stone is 64cm in height, 42cm in width, and 6.2cm in thickness. Arabic is inscribed on the front face and Chinese is written on the back. The full text is as follows:

God, there is no God,  
God says, "Those who died in a remote area while traveling are already martyrs."  
This tomb belongs to Ramadan, a son of Aladdin. God forgive and bestow His blessing upon him.

Ramadan is a Goryeo citizen and owner of Ching-hyun-guan Pavilion in Ta-tu (Beijing). His age is 38, now appointed Darugachi of Young Chou County of Guang

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<sup>57</sup> *GJ* III, 25 (1339).

<sup>58</sup> King Gong-min (1351-1374).

<sup>59</sup> *DSGM* 7 (1360).

Xi Province. He died on the 23rd of March, 1349, and was buried in the garden in Guang-chou on the 18th of August and a tombstone was erected for him.

The key issue is who Ramadan was. Was he an ethnic Korean or an immigrant Muslim settler from Central Asia? The answer becomes clear when we consider the condition of Muslims in Korea in medieval times. In the Goryeo dynasty under Mongol occupation in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were a lot of Muslim settlers from Central Asia who were involved in active transnational trade from Gaeseong to Southern Chinese ports.

Muslims in Goryeo survived in the new Joseon dynasty due to their expertise in business and technology and their administrative experience. There are some references to close relations between Korean kings and Muslims.

After hunting at Seosan near Geum-gyo-yeok town, the king arrived in Gaeseong in a parade of horse-carriages. Han Ong, the district chief, and Yi Jeok, the deputy, with village elders and Muslims, received the king and his entourage in front of the guest house.<sup>60</sup>

We can therefore understand that many Muslims not mentioned in official documents lived in various parts of the country, mostly in Gaeseong and its outskirts, and had formed to some extent their own communities. In particular, during the reign of the King Se-jong (1418-1450) of the Joseon dynasty, prominent Muslims attended official court ceremonies, where they congratulated the king and read passages from the Quran and prayed in the Islamic way for his long life and the prosperity of his kingdom.

The master of ceremonies explained to the king that when congratulations were to be offered at court after the worship at the ancestral temple, first the officials had to bow twice. Then the Buddhist priests and the Hui Huis (Muslims) were to enter the courtyard and pay their own respects and offer their good wishes and generally convey greetings in their own way. Once the king was seated, the music started, and it finished when the king went to his room.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *JWS*, Chong-seo (1418).

<sup>61</sup> *JWS*, the 9<sup>th</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> year of King Se-jong chapter (1419).

This occurred during the reign of the great king Se-jong, who is regarded as the most eminent king in Korean history. During his reign, the Korean alphabet called Han-geul was invented, and Korea enjoyed the highest cultural prosperity as well as political stability and economic equilibrium.<sup>62</sup> It is particularly interesting that in court ceremonies, the Muslim were honored to give glorification to the king and to pray for his long life and the country's prosperity in accordance with Islamic rites. On these occasions, some verses of the Quran were most probably recited and certain Arabic rites were carried out in the court in front of the king. These ceremonies (回回禮訟: Hui Hui Ye Song) continued to be carried out up until April 1427, when a decree was announced to prohibit Islamic rites. In other words, it shows that the Islamic religion was officially approved and ordinary Muslims could continue their religious duty with full freedom. In court ceremonies, the Muslim representatives were given almost the same status as Buddhist priests, despite the majority of Korean people being adherent to Buddhism during the Goryeo dynasty. The status given to Islam by the Joseon dynasty in the early fifteenth century was to ensure the continuation of Muslim privilege in the late Goryeo period under Mongol dominance.

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY AND ASSIMILATION

Muslims in Korea maintained their own customs and religious rites for some time, forming their own communities in several districts near Gaeseong, the Goryeo capital. In their communities, they celebrated their own festivals, put on national dress and headgear, spoke their own language and performed Islamic religious rites. It is believed that they even built a Mosque called Ye-gung (禮宮).<sup>63</sup> Yi Neung-hua (李能 和), a well-known Buddhist historian, wrote:

It is recorded that at some date unknown, Muslims came from a part of China under the domination of the Yuan to Korea and settled in one town, where they remained until the time of the Joseon dynasty. They wore their own type of dress and headgear and maintained their religion unchanged. They built a Ye-gung and observed the Muslim festivals.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Han Woo-geun, *The History of Korea*, Seoul, 1970, pp. 280-281.

<sup>63</sup> The transliteration is "ceremonial pavilion".

<sup>64</sup> Yi Neung-hua, *Joseon Bulgyo Tong-sa*, Seoul, Sinmunguan, 1918, Vol. II, p. 605.

A group of the Muslim came to our country from the Yuan. Their generation formed a town.<sup>65</sup>

In the Muslim communities, most probably they had religious leaders to administer Islamic matters and to lead regular prayers and rituals. Doro was mentioned in Korean sources as a Muslim priest (Hui Hui Sa Mun: 回回沙門). Sa-Mun is a religious term which means a respected religious leader. Therefore, Hui Hui Sa Mun might well have been a religious leader. However, the continuation of Islamic religious activities faced a serious threat posed by the issue of a royal decree in 1427, which prohibited the performance of Islamic rites and the wearing of traditional dress and headgear.

The master of ceremonies explained again that the fact that the Hui Hui (Muslim) wore headgear and dress, being different from everybody else, was causing embarrassment, and since they had become part of Korean society, they ought to wear the same as we did. This would also facilitate wedding rites. He further asked that the special offer of congratulations at court by the Hui Hui should be discontinued. The king granted this appeal, and afterward, the Hui Huis performed the same rituals as other Koreans.<sup>66</sup>

With the establishment of a new dynasty based on neo-Confucianism, national identity was emphasized and national customs and conservative morality were strengthened to regenerate Korean culture, which had been repressed under Mongol dominance.<sup>67</sup>

Korean people were shy of marrying Muslims because of their heterogeneous dress and headgear. As Korean citizens, Muslims were thus forced to follow Korean-style dress and behavior, to facilitate assimilation through inter-marriage. With the enforcement of this decree, no more records of naturalized Muslims in Korea sources can be found until the initiation of the period of modern Islamic immigration in the 1900s. However, certain diplomatic contacts of Korean emissaries with Muslims sometimes occurred in the Ming court of China. According to Korean sources, these kinds of contacts continued until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, even though the direct entry of Muslims during this period was not recorded any longer. Incomplete though these references may be, they include mention of some Muslim missions (Hui Hui Sa Sin)

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 605.

<sup>66</sup> *JWS*, Se-jong Silrok 36, 1a, the 4<sup>th</sup> month.

<sup>67</sup> Han Woo-Geun, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-290.

dispatched to the Chinese court. These are to be found in the reports of Korean missions that visited China during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, such as envoys of thanks (謝恩使: Sa-eun-sa), congratulatory missions (송절사: Song-jeol-sa) or envoys for communication (통신使: Tong-sin-sa), which were regularly dispatched to China for the promotion of mutual relations.<sup>68</sup> The *JWS* records<sup>69</sup>:

A Korean envoy named Yi Seok spoke of his observations in the Ming court. He said that the Ming emperor, when seeking diversions in the open-yard, used to take two or three foreigners selected for the time from among missions of the Tatar, Muslims (Hui Hui), French, Champa and Lama to learn their languages or watch their specific arts.

Again the *JWS* reports on Muslims of a Korean mission:

An envoy of thanks, Kim Geuk-bok, who had been sent to the Ming Court, told us that the Ming emperor appeared at the Hui T'ung Kuan Pavilion and whiled away the time in company with some foreigners of Tatar and Muslim origin (Hui Hui). The emperor asked the Muslims to prepare their own dishes. On these occasions, he would himself put on foreign costume and learn their customs. Any courtiers who railed against him for this frivolity would be whipped.<sup>70</sup>

Another record in the *JWS* informs us of the observations of a Korean emissary at a Chinese court ceremony. According to the Korean envoy, named Jo In-deuk, when he attended the court ceremony celebrating the emperor's birthday in 1586, he noticed that the Chinese ceremonial officers let him stand in the eastern line for the civilian officers, while envoys from Muslim countries and Siam, not in court dress, had to stand well behind in the western line for military officers.<sup>71</sup> In those days, civilian officers were superior to their military counterparts, even though they were of the same rank. Apparently, Muslim countries often dispatched diplomatic missions to the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, but we understand those Muslim missions were assigned somewhat lower positions than Korean envoys in accordance with court protocol.

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<sup>68</sup> Choi Sang-su, *Korea and Arabia*, pp. 67-71.

<sup>69</sup> *JWS*, the 12<sup>th</sup> month, 15<sup>th</sup> year of King Jung-Jong chapter (1520).

<sup>70</sup> *JWS*, the 9<sup>th</sup> month, 14<sup>th</sup> year of King Jung-Jong chapter (1519).

<sup>71</sup> *JWS*, the 1<sup>st</sup> month, 21<sup>st</sup> year of King Seon-Jo chapter (1588).

The descriptions in the *JWS* show that even in the second half of the 17th century, Korean envoys to China left reports on Muslims. The *JWS* says:

Min Jeong-chung, who had been sent to the Ch'ing court as the winter solstice envoy (冬至使: Dong-ji-sa), answered the king's question as to whether other countries had also sent their missions, that only three Muslim envoys were present and their dresses were like that of the Mongols, and their eyes were blue.<sup>72</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Muslims in the Yuan period flowed into Korea in great numbers from the second half of the thirteenth century up to the late fourteenth century. Engaging in various occupations, most of them became Korean by virtue of the inducements arising from their privileged political social status as a semi-ruling class in the Goryeo dynasty, seasonable weather and excellent environmental conditions, high profit derived from their commercial business inside and outside the country, Koreans' generosity and positive attitude toward Muslims and the attraction of the high culture offered by Korean society. Even though Koreans were in intermittent contact with Muslims outside Korea, under the assimilation policy of the Joseon dynasty, Muslim settlers in Korea gradually shed their native attire, customs and rituals to which they had adhered for some 150 years.

What were the general catalysts in the political and cultural fields affecting Muslims' existence inside and outside Korea? With the downfall of the Mongol-Chinese regime of the Yuan, the new Chinese dynasty, the Ming, was established in China. The Ming dynasty emphasized the revival of Chinese cultural origins and ideology which had degenerated for a century as a result of the heterogeneous culture of the nomadic settlements of the Mongol conquerors. The main policy based on neo-Confucian ideology, therefore, came to oppose any policy of "laissez-faire". All foreign trade was banned except official tribute trade. The founding emperor, Tai-tsu of the Ming, proclaimed a decree in the first year of his reign (1368) expressing his intent to reject foreign influence. The favoritism shown by the Mongols to Muslims, therefore, was considerably damaged. Many pro-Mongol Muslim administrators were replaced by Chinese Confucian scholars. The new changes in China had a direct influence on

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<sup>72</sup> *JWS*, the 11<sup>th</sup> year of King Hyeon-Jong (1670).

Korea, where for a century Mongol dominance was also to be found in every area of Korean society.

When the Joseon dynasty was established by Yi Seong-gye in 1392, overthrowing the declining Goryeo dynasty, a wide range of reforms were initiated, as was not uncommon in other newly established dynasties. As a basic national ideology, the ruling elites of the new dynasty adopted neo-Confucianism instead of Buddhism. As Confucian cultural influence increased, there was a growing tendency for Koreans' outlook to become more and more conservative. Emphasis was placed on the observance of traditional customs and the reinforcement of Confucian ethical principles in every area of society. They were not very receptive of foreign culture unless it was Chinese. Foreign culture, including that of Islam, which had continued to exist in Korea, lost its distinguishing characteristics as a result of assimilation.

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