Muslims and Hindus in the Culture and Morphology of Quanzhou from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century

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A long-standing stereotype has argued that China throughout its traditional era was an insular and xenophobic land, suspiciously and defensively oriented toward its "inner Asian" frontier to the north, uninterested and even afraid of its surrounding seas and the influences they bore from the south. Recent scholarship has begun at last to temper this stereotype with a more realistic appraisal of the relationship between traditional China and the non-Chinese world. Thomas Allsen, Chan Hok-lam, Morris Rossabi, Jingshen Tao, and many others have participated in a reassessment of the relationship between China and its "inner Asian" neighbors, demonstrating a greater level of equality and cultural exchange than the stereotype could ever acknowledge.\(^1\)

In this article I offer evidence that China's maritime frontier, and particularly China's coastline south of the Yangzi River,\(^2\) merits a similar reassessment. My immediate discussion is limited: it deals only with a single city, Quanzhou, located on the southeast coast in the area

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\(^2\) China's northern maritime frontier, including the Shandong peninsula and the Bohai Gulf, has been examined in several places, including the work of Mori Katsumi; see, for example, his NiSô bôeki no kenkyû (Research on Trade between Japan and Song) (Tokyo, 1984) and NiSô bunke kôtô no shomondai (Several Questions on Cultural Transmission between Japan and Song) (Tokyo, 1950). More recently, the maritime frontiers of north Asia were the subject of the First International Seminar on Commissioner Chang Pogo and Ancient Tang-Silla-Japan Maritime Relations, held in Wando, Republic of Korea, November 1992.
known since the eighth century as Fujian. I will show that Quanzhou was the focus of a cultural and economic exchange between China and the societies of the Indian Ocean littoral that was made possible by the presence of permanent communities of foreign residents. In the scope of this article I cannot prove my ultimate conviction: that the great port cities of China's southeast coast were the foci of an exchange that, though different in quality from that which characterized the northern frontier, was equally important to the evolution of high imperial culture. My purpose, instead, is to steer attention to this frontier for the importance of the exchange; to promote a greater awareness of China's debt to the cultures of the "South Seas," as the lands of the littoral were collectively known; and finally—and most optimistically—to urge greater attention to the maritime frontier and its contribution to China's later imperial culture.

In decided contrast to the northern frontier, where exchange was often conducted in an atmosphere of suspicion and hostility, exchange on the southern frontier was amicably conducted through China's trade with the littoral lands. Far from closing their southern frontier to the ideas and goods of the societies that gave shape to that trade, as the stereotype might suggest they would, the Chinese of the Song dynasty opened their ports to the merchants, priests, and itinerants of the numerous cultures with which they were in contact. In consequence, the culture and economy of the southeast coast, and ultimately of the entire empire was altered, often in fundamental ways.

My most immediate goal in this article will be to demonstrate the presence in Quanzhou of resident communities of foreign merchants and the Muslim and Hindu religions they brought with them between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries (fig. 1). Beyond this comparatively simple demonstration, however, my broader goal is to suggest how the presence of those communities affected the culture and economy of the society in which they were located. Although my geographic focus is narrow, it is important to bear in mind that Fujian was but one of several regions extending from the mouth of the Yangzi River all the way to Hainan Island that at one time or another hosted large communities of resident foreigners and the religions, foods, cultural traditions, and mercantile practices that they brought with them. It is, of course, always risky and sometimes even foolhardy to extrapolate generalized conclusions from one set of data; I believe, however, that the patterns of exchange in Quanzhou were probably common along the full length of the South Seas frontier.

Quanzhou, possibly more than any other city in premodern China, came to depend upon long-range foreign trade for its well-being, and it
was trade that brought foreigners to live there. The coastline of southern Fujian, known collectively as Minnan, was one of the last parts of the empire to experience significant Chinese settlement. Guangzhou (Canton), the great port city on China’s south coast, already had a

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1 On the tie between overseas trade and the economy of the region of which Quanzhou was the center, see Hugh R. Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks: Southern Fujian from the Third to the Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1991).
long history of trade with the lands of the South Seas when in the late seventh century the Tang dynasty finally granted prefectural standing to the small community that had emerged on the shores of Quanzhou Bay. No doubt some trade was even then passing through the settlement, attracted by the absence of the official oversight that had grown so predatory and oppressive in Guangzhou, where trade superintendents came to make their personal fortunes. There is equally little doubt that the Tang first established Quanzhou prefecture and the attendant official presence in order to assert some control over that illicit trade.

Throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, however, trade in Quanzhou remained an occasional thing. Guangzhou was firmly established as the most important port of the empire; the great inland city of Yangzhou, located so strategically at the juncture of the Yangzi River and the Grand Canal, was its only major rival. Quanzhou could not match the wealth or grandeur of either. It was a dusty and unattractive backwater in a remote corner of the empire, derisively dismissed by the grandees of the great cities and the bureaucracy as the land of bizarre culture, uncivilized barbarians, and a dangerous, unbearable environment. Witness, for example, the following poetic description of Chaozhou, a very near neighbor of Quanzhou with a similar early history, penned by the famous essayist Han Yu around the turn of the ninth century:

Typhoons for winds, crocodiles for fish—
Afflictions and misfortunes not to be plumbed!
South of the country, as you approach its boundary,
There are swollen seas linked to the sky.
Poisonous fogs and malarial miasmas
Day and evening flare and foam.

This was not a land that self-respecting types ventured to!

The emergence of Quanzhou as the first alternative to Guangzhou among the South Seas traders occurred in the course of the Ten Kingdoms interregnum, which came between the collapse of the Tang dynasty in the late ninth century and the reconsolidation of a unified empire under the Song dynasty late in the tenth. For most of those

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5 Translated by Schafer, The Vermilion Bird, p. 128.
years Fujian province was nominally ruled by the Min kingdom established by Wang Chao with its capital in Fuzhou in northern Fujian. Wang had been a local warlord in Huainan province, which lay just north of the Yangzi River, and he had led a band of several thousand men in flight from the turmoil that had wrecked his home during the Tang collapse. After crossing the Yangzi, they wandered through the mountains of south China before entering Fujian; there they encountered a power vacuum that had occurred with the collapse of Tang authority, and they seized control.

Although Wang Chao established a very real authority over all Fujian during his lifetime, his brothers and sons who ruled following his death in 898 were unable to perpetuate it: they destroyed their legitimacy as a result of bitter and often bloody infighting. By the second decade of the tenth century, the southern regions of Fujian had asserted an autonomy that the Min court in Fuzhou was unable to overcome. This autonomy positioned Quanzhou to become one of the principal ports of China. Wang Yanbin, a nephew of Wang Chao, ruled the prefecture as an independent satrapy for thirty years until his death in 934. During this time he became dependent upon revenues derived from trade to underwrite his administration; the success of his efforts to expand the volume of trade passing through the port earned him the popular sobriquet “Secretary Who Summons Treasure” ("zhaobao shilang"). The Fuzhou court managed to reassert some nominal control for several years during the late 930s, but following the collapse of the kingdom in the 940s Minnan fell under the sway of the fully independent warlords Liu Congxiao and Chen Hongjin, both of whom continued Yanbin’s policies in support of expanded trade. As Chen Hongjin negotiated his submission to the emergent Song dynasty in the 970s, he regularly made fabulous gifts of imported goods to the new rulers, a clear reflection of the great expansion in goods passing through his land.6

The radical transformation in the position of Quanzhou in the South Seas trade was acknowledged by the new Song court within months of Chen’s formal submission in 978, when the official state monopsony over the goods of the South Seas trade was established: “Early in the taiping tianguo era (976–984) the Queyi Pavilion [the office for collection of the trade monopsony revenues] was established in the capital. An edict then directed that thereafter spices, medicinals, and valuables reaching Guangzhou, Jiaozhi [Vietnam], Quan-

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6 The connection between the governments of the interregnum and expansion of trade is covered in some detail in Clark, Community, Trade, and Networks, chaps. 3-4.
As the Song organized its administrative structure, it sought to restore many of the lapsed institutions of the Tang. This effort included restoration of the trade superintendency (shibo si) through which the Tang had regulated overseas trade. Like the Tang, the new court required all trade to be under the oversight of the regional superintendency offices. It is, therefore, curious that despite its recognition of the port’s importance in the South Seas trade, the new court did not establish an office of the superintendency in Quanzhou until 1087—an oversight that technically rendered all trade through the port illegal. Despite this slight, however, trade volume continued to grow throughout the eleventh century, even before 1087. It reached its apogee in the twelfth century, when Quanzhou displaced Guangzhou as the preeminent port in the empire. This reality was acknowledged by Lin Zhiqi (1112–76) in an essay written c. 1170: “There are three prefectures that carry on trade relationships with the lands of the South Seas, among which Quanzhou is number one. The long-distance trade ships of Quanzhou carry on trade with numerous lands across the seas.”

There is good reason to reject the widely held impression that the Chinese were passive participants in this trade, waiting in their ports for foreigners to bring their goods to them. Still, there is no question that foreign merchants were major, perhaps dominant, carriers. Most prominent among the many foreigners who journeyed across the vast stretches of the Indian Ocean and adjacent regions of the western Pacific to find their fortunes in the great ports of China were Arabs and Persians from the far west. They were joined, however, by many others, including merchants from south Asia and the Indianized lands of southeast Asia. It was through this trade that resident communities of foreigners gathered in the major port cities of the southern coast, including Quanzhou.

Foreign communities had gathered in Guangzhou and Yangzhou as early as the eighth century. For example, when a Tang garrison erupted in a mutinous riot in the city of Yangzhou in the 760s, they killed “several thousand foreign merchants from Persia [Posi].” Guangzhou was

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7 Song huiyao (Draft documents pertaining to matters of state in the Song dynasty), 200 fascicles (Taipei, 1963), “zhiguan” 44:1b.
8 Lin Zhiqi, Juozhai wenji (Collected essays of the Juo Studio) (Siku quanshu zhengben ed.), 20 fascicles, 15:12a–b.
9 Xin Tangshu (New history of the Tang dynasty), 255 fascicles (Beijing, 1975), 144:4702.
the site of the largest foreign community in the empire. Numerous eighth- and ninth-century sources, both Chinese and foreign, refer to foreign residents there. When the army of the great rebel Huang Chao sacked the city in the late 870s, his forces were said to have massacred more than 100,000 foreigners—a number that most modern discussions assume to have been inflated but that is surely indicative of a large foreign community.10

Contemporary Chinese scholars frequently argue that Quanzhou also had a foreign settlement by the late Tang. They often cite a legend that two Muslim missionaries came to the city in the early seventh century, even before Muhammad himself had died, and established a mosque. In support, they point to the “Saints' Graves of Spirit Mountain” (“lingshan shengmu”), the supposed resting place of the two missionaries. Although some will argue sincerely that these graves are legitimate, there is little reason to believe that they are earlier than the thirteenth century; the tradition does not seem credible.11 Somewhat more plausible is the claim that the Abbasid Caliph Mansur (ruled 754–75) dispatched traders across the Indian Ocean and beyond the Malaysian Peninsula to China, where they built mosques in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Hangzhou. There is no question that traders from western Asia were traversing these routes by the eighth century. With communications along the overland routes through central Asia disrupted by the turmoil associated with the An Lushan rebellion and its aftermath, Mansur may well have sought to communicate with China via the southern sea route.12

Unfortunately, all such argument is based on very flimsy evidence and is ultimately inconclusive at best. On the other hand, the devoutly Muslim Persian geographer Ibn Khordadbeh (830–912) in his Book of Routes and Provinces, compiled no later than 885, included a place he called “Djanfou” among the four major ports of China. Most scholars today agree that this refers to Quanzhou.13 This is strong evi-

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10 For the most recent discussion, see Chen Dasheng, “Lun fanfang” (On the Foreign Quarter), Haijiaoshi yanjiu (1988): 68.
12 See the discussion in Zhuang Weiji, “Quanzhou Qingjingsi de lishi wenti” (Historical Questions about the Qingjing Mosque of Quanzhou), in Quanzhou Islanjiao yanjiu lunwen (Symposium on Quanzhou Islam) (Fuzhou, 1983), pp. 67–68. On general patterns of trade throughout the Indian Ocean in the eighth century, see K. N. Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean (Cambridge, 1985), especially chap. 2.
13 For a recent alternative opinion, see Su Jilang, “Jiu shiji Alapo wenxian suodai ‘Djanfou’ di wang kaobian” (An Examination of the Arguments concerning the Place
dence—especially when combined with other, less direct allusions in Chinese sources—that Muslims and other foreign merchants were visiting the port by the ninth century, even if they were not yet living there. 

Although there can be little doubt that foreign merchants were visiting Quanzhou by the late Tang, the earliest concrete evidence that any had settled in the city refers to the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The Zhufan zhi (Description of Foreign Peoples), compiled by the Quanzhou superintendent of trade Zhao Rugua in the early thirteenth century, makes the earliest reference: “In the yongxi era (984-88) there was a monk named Lohuna who came [to Quanzhou] by boat from across the sea. He said he was from Tianzhu [a general name for the Indian subcontinent]. Because he was a foreign monk (huseng), the foreign merchants selected gold and silks and precious things, for the monk had nothing. And they bought a piece of land south of the city wall where they built a Buddhist temple. Today [i.e., the 1220s] this is the Baolin Pavilion.” Lohuna, we are told, was a monk from the Indian subcontinent. On his arrival in Quanzhou shortly after the submission of the warlord Chen Hongjin to the Song, he was greeted by a resident community of foreign merchants who donated land and built a temple for his use. It is impossible to know anything specific about those foreign residents: Who were they? Where were they from? What religion did they practice? Given the date, by which time Buddhism was in definite decline throughout the Indian subcontinent in favor of a revived Hinduism, it does not seem likely that they were Buddhists, whatever Lohuna himself may have been. We can obviously conclude from their presence, however, that a permanent resident community of foreign merchants had taken shape in Quanzhou by the later tenth century; in all probability, this community’s roots lay in the preceding century of the interregnum.

If the ethnicity and religion of the foreign merchants who welcomed Lohuna are uncertain, there can be no question about the identity of the builders of the city’s first mosque. This event was recalled in

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14 For a full discussion of the surviving evidence regarding the origins of trade through Quanzhou, see Clark, Community, Trade, and Networks, chap. 2 (“The Late Tang”); and Li Donghua, Quanzhou yu woguo zhongguo de haishang jiaotong (Quanzhou and my country’s overseas communications in medieval times), chap. 1, “Tangmo Quanzhou de xingqi ji qi beijing” (The Rise of Quanzhou in the Late Tang and Its Background) (Taipei, 1986). Su (“Jiu shiji Alapo wenxian”) takes a different view.

15 Zhao Rugua, Zhufan zhi (Descriptions of foreign peoples) (New York, 1966), a:21b.
an Arabic inscription compiled early in the fourteenth century, when
renovations to the mosque were completed: “This mosque, which is
known to all for its antiquity, its long endurance, and its good fortune,
was the first [Islamic] place of worship for the people of this place
[Quanzhou]. It is called the Ashab Mosque [Chinese: Shengyou si]. It
was built in the year 400 [of the hijra, i.e., 1009–10 C.E.].” Just as the
arrival of Lohuna provides the first concrete evidence of a resident for-
eign community, so this inscription is the earliest evidence that Mus-
lims were a part of that community. Because there is no evidence or
reason to believe that this refers to native converts, it must point
instead to a resident community of foreign merchants.

Muslims, however, were not the only foreigners in early eleventh-
century Quanzhou. On the western edge of the modern city sits a
stone monument delicately known today as the “Stone Bamboo
Shoot” (“shixun”); all too obviously, however, it is a stone phallus. In
1011, because of some unspecified personal misfortune, the prefectural
magistrate Gao Huilian “severed the monument in two,” in which
state it remained until it was reassembled in the fifteenth century.
Beyond this there is no record of the origins of the monument, and
some argue that it is of great antiquity, a remnant of a long-ago and
long-forgotten indigenous culture. Of course, we cannot conclusively
rule that out, but if it were the case, more examples of similar fertility
monuments should exist, but they do not. On the other hand, stone
phalluses, or lingam, are integral to the Shiva cult of Hinduism. As
most contemporary scholars agree, that is exactly what the Stone
Bamboo Shoot is. We can safely assume, then, that by the early elev-
tenth century a community of south or southeast Asian Shivaites had
emerged beside the local Muslim community. It is entirely plausible,
though unprovable, that it was this community that provided the
great welcome for the monk Lohuna. Perhaps he was a Brahman,
rather than a Buddhist monk, as has been assumed.

In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, when these several

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16 According to the Chinese translation of the Arabic original in Chen Dasheng,
Quanzhou isilanjiao shike (Selected studies on Islam in China) (Fuzhou, 1984), p. 3.
17 Curiously and significantly, Muslims apparently did not engage in much proselytizing
along the southeast coast, in distinct contrast to their efforts in the provinces of the north-
west. This is doubt points to their purpose in coming to the southeastern ports, which was
trade. As explained below, they were anxious to provide for their own spiritual needs, but
that did not translate into seeking converts among the indigenous population.
18 Fang Ting et al., Jinjiang xianzhi (District Gazeteer of Jinjiang of the Qian-
long era) (compiled 1765), 16 fascicles, 15:7a.
19 See, for example, the tourist pamphlet Quanzhou mingsheng geyi (Scenic Spots and
Historical Sites in Quanzhou) (Fuzhou, 1982), pp. 37–38.
monuments were constructed, the communities could not have been large. They have left no other records of themselves, which is itself suggestive of their numerical insignificance. Furthermore, throughout the first century of Song rule Quanzhou was not a legal port for overseas trade. Trade law, until its revision in the 1070s and 1080s, forbade direct trade with the South Seas at any port other than Guangzhou, site of the only office of the trade superintendence through which trade in the monopsonized goods of the South Seas was permitted. Merchants from Quanzhou who wished to take part in the trade were legally required to base themselves in Guangzhou.

This should not be interpreted to mean there was no trade through the port. Zhang Fangping, a critic of the reforms of the 1060s and 1070s known as New Policies of Wang Anshi, railed in a memorial submitted in 1075: "[For years] ship captains have gone anywhere [they wished] in Guangnan, Fujian, Liangzhe, and Shandong, where local officials have publicly given them protection while they privately traded in the prohibited goods [i.e., those reserved for the state monopsony]."20 The official biography of Du Shun, judicial inspector of Quanzhou in the 1060s, gives more specific detail: when Du served in Quanzhou, "the port was clogged with foreign ships, and their goods were piled like mountains. At that time local officials traded privately with the merchants, collecting [as their share] less than a tenth of the value [of the goods—substantially less, in other words, than the 15% levied by the official monopsony in Guangzhou]. Only Shun and the prefect Guan Yong did not engage in this private trade."21 Smuggling—for that is what it was—was obviously beneficial to the merchants, who wound up paying a considerably smaller share of their profits to keep local officials happy in the illegal ports than they had to pay to keep the government happy in Guangzhou.

There is no sure way of knowing how much revenue the government was losing because of the illegal trade, but there is reason to think that the volume passing through Quanzhou began to expand significantly in the mid-eleventh century.22 This became important under the reform administration of Wang Anshi, who sought to maximize revenues as part of a broader plan to rationalize government. Under

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20 Li Dao, Xu zizhi tongjian changbian (Collected data for the continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government) (Taipei, 1974), 520 fascicles, 269:11a.
21 To To, Songshi (History of the Song dynasty) (Beijing, 1977), 496 fascicles, 330:10631–33.
Wang, overt trade out of Quanzhou finally was legalized, though local merchants still had to submit to inspection by the Guangzhou superintendency on their outbound journey and pay duty to the same office upon their return. As one official argued in the subsequent campaign to free local merchants from this burden, the two enforced layovers in Guangzhou could extend their journeys by as much as two extra years!23 Ironically, the counter-reform movement that sought to overturn most of Wang's reforms in the mid- to late 1080s finally legalized direct trade between Quanzhou and the South Seas. As mentioned above, this was accomplished in 1087 through the simple expedient of opening a new branch of the trade superintendency in the port. In the aftermath of legalization, both the volume of trade and the size of the resident foreign community exploded.

In the two centuries between the opening of the Quanzhou superintendency and the rise of the Mongol Yuan dynasty late in the thirteenth century, Muslims from west Asia established themselves as the dominant foreign community in Quanzhou. Among the best known references to foreign Muslims in Chinese sources is the inscription by Lin Zhiqi quoted earlier, in which he discusses the affairs of a gentleman he called "Shinawei": "While he lived in Quanzhou, Shinawei spent freely and cared for the public interest of his fellow traders. Among his several concerns, the maintenance of the several dozen graves of overseas traders was primary. These are on his property... located in the eastern suburbs of Quanzhou... Whenever a foreign merchant dies in our land, he is buried here... Shinawei died in 1163 and was buried here himself."24 Zhao Rugua, in his Zhufan zhi, echoed Lin: "There was a foreign merchant named Shinawei who lived in the Quannan section [i.e., southeast of the city]. He treated his wealth lightly and loved to provide for others. Because he had the customs of the western lands [i.e., Islam], he established a graveyard outside the city walls to the southeast where the bodies of foreign merchants could be buried."25 Lin mistakenly identified this man as a native of Srivijaya (Chinese: Sanfoqi), a trading kingdom located on the island of Sumatra; this is a significant error to which we shall return. As was first noted by F. Hirth and W. Rockhill early in the twentieth century, however, "shinawei," which both Lin and Zhao took to be the man's personal name, is instead a transliteration of the Arabic term shilavi, or "man of Siraf." Siraf was a port city on the Persian Gulf and a key

23 See the memorial of Chen Cheng quoted in his biography in Yonglo dadian (Comprehensive encyclopedia of the Yonglo era) 22,857 fascicles (Beijing, 1960), 3141:180-193.
24 Lin, Juozhai wenji, 15:12a-b.
25 Zhufan zhi, 3:24b.
center in the long-range trade networks of the Muslim merchants of west Asia. Despite his repetition of Lin's mistake concerning the gentleman's name, Zhao Rugua did identity him as a native of Dashi, a generic term used to refer to the many trading ports of the Persian Gulf. The gentleman was, clearly, a native of Siraf. From both passages we learn that he established a Muslim cemetery in the eastern suburbs of the city where "several dozen graves of overseas traders" were already located by the later twelfth century.

There is only one other epigraphic source of the twelfth century that includes a precise identification of a member of the Muslim community. In 1965 construction workers found a tombstone with the following inscription: "This is the tomb of Husayn ibn Muhammad Khalat. May Allah have mercy on him. Died in Rabi’ul-Akhir 567 [December 1171]." As the name indicates, the gentleman was a native of Khalat, the capital of Armenia. In light of the location of the tombstone, Husayn may have been buried in the cemetery of "Shinawei," in which case this is the only tombstone from that cemetery to have been found to date.

Despite the lack of specific references, there is ample evidence that the local community was growing throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Shortly before "Shinawei" established the local Muslim cemetery, for example, the community built its second mosque, the Qingjing Mosque. This event was recalled in a Chinese inscription compiled when renovations were undertaken in 1351: "In the first year of the shaoxing reign [1131], one Najib Muzhir al-Din came to Quanzhou via trading ship from Siraf [Chinese: Sanawei]. He built this mosque in the southern suburbs of Quanzhou. He installed silver lamps and incense burners to worship Heaven, and he bought land and built houses for his followers." Might Najib in fact have been the famous "Shinawei"? We cannot resolve this question, but the parallels between the two are striking: both were rich, both were devoted patrons of the local Muslim community, both were merchants from Siraf, and both were in Quanzhou in the 1130s. The probability that they are the same man is high.

For many years the Qingjing Mosque was thought to have been the same as the Ashab Mosque. The extant copy of the above inscription,

27 From Chinese translation of Arabic original and accompanying discussion in Chen, Quanzhou isilanjiao shike, p. 15.
which was inscribed in 1507 because the original “had been worn out by the ravages of time,” was placed in the Ashab Mosque. This was where the original had been since the Qingjing Mosque was destroyed, an event that most likely occurred in the commotion that accompanied the fall of the Yuan dynasty in the 1360s. By the sixteenth century local Muslims had largely been absorbed by Han Chinese society and custom, and had forgotten much about their origins. Because the only record of the foundations, and indeed of the name, of the Ashab Mosque—the inscription quoted earlier—was in Arabic, a language that no one could read in sixteenth-century Quanzhou, there was no way to know that the 1351 tablet, compiled in Chinese and recording the history and name of the later edifice, had in fact been transferred from its original location. So the distinction between the two mosques was forgotten. But since neither the dates nor the other details concerning the two mosques are in agreement, it is clear that they were separate structures.29

According to the same inscription, by the time the Qingjing Mosque was restored in the mid-fourteenth century, there were “six or seven” mosques scattered about Quanzhou. While archaeology has revealed evidence about several, it is not possible to date any of these other mosques with any precision. Current opinion, however, places at least one in the Song period. This is the “Yemen” Mosque, so called because a commemorative plaque, written in Arabic, reads: “Naina Umar ibn Ahmad ibn Mansur ibn Umar al-Albinia, a pious and sincere elder from Yemen, built this entrance and the enclosure of this propitious mosque. May Allah bless and pardon him.”30 The inscription, which has no dates, was found in the rubble of the foundations of the Tonghuai Gate, which was reconstructed in the first years of the Ming dynasty. It is assumed, therefore, that this mosque, like the Qingjing Mosque, must have been destroyed about that time; this would place its construction some time earlier, perhaps in the thirteenth or even the twelfth century.

Another inscription, this one a heavily damaged Arabic text commemorating repairs undertaken to an unidentified mosque in 1322, may also point to the Song: “. . . this noble gate, and renovated them. . . . the honorable Nakhid al-Mushai al-din. . . . such act pleased Allah

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29 See the discussions in Zhuang Weiji and Chen Dasheng, “Quanzhou Qingjingsi shiyi xinkao” (New Evidence concerning the Historical Remains of the Qingjing Mosque in Quanzhou), in Quanzhou isilanjiao yanjiu lunwengao, pp. 102–14; and Chen Dasheng, Quanzhou isilanjiao shike, pp. 8–14.

30 From Chinese translation of Arabic original in Chen, Quanzhou isilanjiao shike, pp. 13–14.
the most high and won his pity. . . . the twelfth Muharram 722 [of the hijra, or 1322 C.E.]. . . . by the clemency of Allah. . . .” There is no other reference to Nakhid, so we do not know who he was or where he was from. The fact that the mosque in question was undergoing repairs in 1322, however, at least suggests that its origins were also in the Song.

Obviously, much is speculation. But we can say conclusively that there was a resident community of Muslims in Song Quanzhou with roots extending back certainly to the early eleventh century and very likely into the preceding century of the interregnum. There is nothing more than vague and circumstantial evidence, however, to support those who argue that the community’s origins lie in the eighth or ninth century. We can also state that this community experienced marked growth in numbers and wealth following the opening of the local office of the trade superintendency in 1087, growth that was reflected in the expanded services that it provided for itself, such as mosques and graveyards.

Once again, however, it is important to emphasize that west Asian Muslims, although apparently dominant, were not the only foreign community in the city in the thirteenth century. Both epigraphic sources and surviving monuments indicate that there were residents from the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia as well. There is only one epigraphic reference to residents from the Indian subcontinent. Zhao Rugua, in his discussion of Malabar (Chinese: Nanpi guo)—an inclusive term that refers to the southwestern coast of the Indian subcontinent—observed: “Because this land is so far away, few of its boats come [to Quanzhou]. At the present time, Lobazhiligan and his son, who live in the southern suburbs, are from there.”

Zhao regarded Lobazhiligan and his son as exceptional; they were worthy of note because resident south Asians were so unusual in the city. Harking back to Lin Zhiqi’s inscription quoted above, it is clear that in contrast, southeast Asians were comparatively numerous: “The long-distance trade ships of Quanzhou carry on trade with numerous foreign lands, among which Srivijaya is number one. The overseas traders from Srivijaya are fabulously wealthy, and several dozen live in Quanzhou.” “Srivijaya” has occasioned considerable debate among historians, for it is not entirely clear what the name refers to. It is

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31 From Chinese translation of Arabic original in ibid., p. 13.
32 Zhufan zhi, 3:15a. “Lobazhiligan” is Zhao’s Chinese rendering of the man’s name; I do not know what the name may have been in his native tongue.
33 Juozhai wenji, 15:12a.
34 For two recent examples of the debate, see the discussion in Bennet Bronson, “The Archaeology of Sumatra and the Problem of Srivijaya,” in Early South East Asia: Essays in
generally agreed, however, that the name as used during the Song applied to the Malacca Straits region, including the eastern coast of the island of Sumatra and the adjacent Malay peninsula. Lin Zhiqi, on the other hand, may have used it inclusively to refer to men from the southeast Asian archipelago; the problems connected with his text around the name “Shinawei” have already been discussed, and it is well documented that Quanzhou had extensive trade contacts throughout the archipelagoes. In either case, the archipelago was heavily influenced by Indian civilization and culture and is one of the few areas of the world outside the Indian subcontinent where Indian culture and elements of the Hindu religion, especially the god Shiva, established an enduring foothold.

Whatever the merits of Lin's inscription, there is extensive evidence that there was a community in Quanzhou whose members shared an Indianized culture. Most explicitly, there is an inscription written in the Tamil script so widely used in the trading regions of southern India. It was found in the course of excavations within the city proper in 1956 and reads: “Obeisance to Hara. Let there be prosperity. On the day Chitra in the month Chittira [April] in the Saka year 1203 [1281 C.E.], the Tavachchakkarvarattigal Sambadhapperumal caused, in accordance with the written authorization of the Chekachai Khan, to be graciously installed the god Udaiyar Tirukkadalisvaram Udaiyanainar, for the welfare of the illustrious body of the illustrious Chekachai Khan.” As John Guy has explained, the god in question is an image of Shiva, who was at the center of the Indianized cults that were so common throughout the western islands of the Indonesian archipelago around the turn of the millennium. Although the inscription is dated 1281, five years after Yuan forces had overwhelmed the city, and is presumed to point to the origins of the temple in question, we have already seen that evidence of a Shiva cult in Quanzhou, in the form of the “Stone Bamboo Shoot,” dates back at least to the early eleventh century. It would be rash to conclude from this that the cult had endured in Quanzhou without a break since the eleventh century or before. The provenance of the “Stone Bamboo Shoot” is much too hazy to permit firm conclusions about the early community, and the complete absence of further epi-

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graphic information about it until the late thirteenth century does not suggest that the community endured or prospered. Yet it is clear that Quanzhou was host to traders who were themselves devotees of Shiva, and that at various times these traders amassed enough influence within the community to erect monuments to their god.

Their position within the city is further evident from the extensive iconographic material evocative of Shiva and the Shiva cult that was incorporated into the motifs of the Kaiyuan Temple, the dominant Buddhist temple of the city, during later reconstructions. Unfortunately, none of the images can be dated with any precision, but all are considered to belong to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. They include several uses of lingam and other motifs that are equally strongly connected with the god, such as the sacred cow.36 Shiva is not the only Indianized image found there; Vishnu, for example, is also featured, though less often.37

Perhaps most interesting, however, are the two images of the monkey-god Hanuman, protagonist of the great Indian epic the *Rama-yana* and one of the most widely venerated gods throughout all of south and southeast Asia.38 The lesser known of the images is in the base of a stone pillar found in the course of demolition of the Quanzhou city wall in 1947. Chinese scholars assume this pillar to have been paired with another, found several years earlier at a nearby site and bearing the image of an Indianized man, perhaps Lord Rama himself, at the entrance to a Hindu temple. Since the Quanzhou city wall in which the two pillars were entombed was built in the early years of the Ming dynasty, both obviously date to an earlier time, presumably sometime between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.39

Even more striking are the images of Hanuman and related figures of the Chinese folktale *Journey to the West* that are incorporated into the motifs of the twin pagodas of the Kaiyuan Temple. Although there have been later repairs, both pagodas were built in their current stone form in the first half of the thirteenth century, when they replaced

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older wooden structures; their imagery, therefore, cannot be later than the southern Song. Gustav Ecke and Paul Demiéville, in their catalog of the images on the pagodas, described the eleventh panel on the fourth story of the West Pagoda as follows: “A guardian with a monkey-head, holding with one hand a rosary which is hanging around his neck, and with the other a sword which is emitting a cloud from its tip. He wears a short tunic, travel sandals, and a rope-belt from which are hanging a calabash and a scroll with the Chinese title of the Mahamayurividyarajni (a text which was used as a charm against all calamities, dangers, wounds, and diseases). [According to local tradition], it is Sun Wu-k’ung, the name of the monkey assistant of Hsüan-tsang in the Hsi-yu chi novel.” Victor Mair has carried Ecke and Demiéville’s comments further, noting:

The band on the Zayton monkey’s head [that has been noted by Anthony Yu in his translation of Journey to the West, vol. 1, p. 497 n.23]... recalls the band around the head of representations of Andira, the simian guardian of Avalokitesvara (Ch. Guanyin)... It is crucial to note that all the features [of the Zayton Sun Wukong, including the earrings, the tilt of the head, long locks of hair flaring out behind the head, the elongated monkey’s mouth, and the decorations on the forearms and the upper arm] can be found in South Asian and Southeast Asian representations of Hanuman.

In short, the iconography of Sun Wukong as inscribed on the West Pagoda was very nearly identical to that of Hanuman as found throughout south and southeast Asia. When this is paired with the fact that construction of the companion East Pagoda was completed in 1250 under the direction of an anonymous monk described as “a preaching monk from India” (“tianzhu jiangseng”), it is obvious that by the thirteenth century the Kaiyuan Temple itself had become an important focus of Indianized culture within Quanzhou.

As noted at the beginning of this article, it has been comparatively simple to demonstrate that a foreign community was resident in Quanzhou throughout the Song dynasty. This in itself is significant, for the presence of foreigners suggests the possibility of exchange between

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41 Ecke and Demiéville, Twin Pagodas of Zayton, p. 35.
them and the local population. However, my larger intention is to suggest that the presence of resident foreigners was symptomatic of a pattern of exchange that was much broader than mere contact. We can consider this first in a physical sense and finally in a deeper, cultural sense.

We have seen that as of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, there were at least two influential communities of foreigners resident in Quanzhou, each with roots extending back several centuries. The religious monuments these communities left behind provide some of the best evidence of their presence. In addition, the monuments were important variables in shaping the morphology of the city. They obviously contributed to the appearance of the city. Although the city skyline was dominated by the twin pagodas of the Kaiyuan Temple—themselves so heavily shaped by the influence of foreigners on the community—the several mosques and the monuments to Shiva were also important contributors. Even today the roofless and attenuated remains of the Ashab Mosque are a vital variable in the shape of the surrounding neighborhood; despite their disheveled state, they are the largest structures for blocks around, and the restored main gate remains an imposing edifice that dominates its surroundings. We can imagine that at a time when there were “six or seven” mosques they must have been an inescapable influence on the shape and feel of the city. We know almost nothing about the structure or even the location of the Hindu temple, but it too must have influenced the shape and so helped determine the flavor of the neighborhood.

At another, and perhaps even more perceptible, level these monuments contributed to the actual physical layout of the city. They were concentrated on the south side of the city, outside the Tonghuai and Zhennan Gates between the city wall and the Jin River (fig. 2). Throughout the early history of the city, this area, which had long been known as “south Quanzhou” (Quannan), had been an undesirable place, a low-lying and sodden marsh. The initial efforts to drain the land in the early ninth century were unsuccessful, at least in the long term. When Liu Congxiao, the first of the late interregnum warlords of the tenth century, surrounded his burgeoning metropolis with a new and much larger city wall in the mid-tenth century, he left the area outside the enclosure: it was not fit for habitation. Yet by the middle of the eleventh century Quannan had become a center of settlement. In the 1030s the old drainage networks of the ninth century were restored; when heavy rains inundated the region in the summer of 1066, settlement had grown so dense that a crisis resulted: “There was a great rain. As the canal network was all obstructed, the water
Figure 2. Map of Quanzhou City, showing the location of major sites. **Walls:** Inner Wall (eighth century); Main Wall (first built 940s); Outer Extension (built 1230). **Government Offices:** 1, Office of Trade Superintendency; 2, District and Prefectural Offices. **Religious edifices:** a, Kaiyuan Temple; b, Stone Bamboo Shoot; c, Ashab Mosque; d, Qingzheng Mosque; e, Yemen Mosque; f, Baolin Pavilion. **Gates:** I, East (Renfeng) Gate; II, North (Chaotian) Gate; III, West (Yicheng) Gate; IV, Southwest (Linzhang) Gate; V, “Flying” (Tongjin) Gate; VI, South (Zhennan) Gate; VII, Southeast (Tonghuai) Watergate. (Based on Su, *Tang-Song shidai Minnan Quanzhou shidi lungao*, (Taipei, 1992), map 3, p. 105.)
could not run off. Thus the dwellings of over a thousand households were destroyed.43 Eleventh-century Quanzhou was experiencing rapid growth, and perhaps many of those who had seized the land between the city and the river were opportunistic migrants willing to live anywhere as they looked for their share of the city’s prosperity. Already by the late tenth century, however, this was where the foreign community was centered: the Baolin Pavilion, built by the foreign merchants for the Indian monk Lohuna in the 980s, was located on the riverbanks directly outside the Zhennan Gate.44 In the decades and centuries that followed, those same riverbanks became one of the main anchorages of the vessels bringing the goods of the South Seas; it was here, no doubt, that the “goods [of the foreign merchants] were piled like mountains,” as the biography of Du Shun, cited earlier, reported of the mid-eleventh century. Following the opening of the local branch of the trade superintendency, this was the location of the superintendent’s office and of the warehouse for the storage of trade monopsony goods. And when the resident foreign communities built their homes, their monuments, and even their graveyards, this was their location.

In recognition of the importance of Quannan to the local economy, the area was finally included within the city’s walls as a result of their final extension in 1230. It thus became the last neighborhood to be formally accorded urban status; its inclusion gave the wall the carplike shape for which the city was so widely known in later centuries. In recent years there has been a debate among Chinese scholars whether Quannan became a foreign ghetto, a fanfang, such as Zhu Yu (c. 1075–after 1119) described in Guangzhou.45 The evidence is ambiguous concerning whether foreign residence was restricted to this area, as it was to the foreign ghetto in Guangzhou. The evidence is clear, however, that this was the location of their monuments. As they built their temples and graveyards, the foreign communities helped shape the city, for the concentration of foreign culture came to define the southeast quarter of Quanzhou city.

43 He Qiaoyuan, Minshu (A comprehensive gazeteer of Fujian), 154 fascicles (microfilm copy of 1629 edition), 33b.
44 On the location of the Baolin Pavilion, see Su Jilsng, “Lun Songdsi Qusnzhoucheng de dushi xingtsi” (On the Urban Morphology of the City of Quanzhou in the Song), in Su, Quanzhou shidi lungao, map 3, p. 105. Su apparently believes that the Baolin Pavilion was in fact the Hindu temple. Despite Zhao’s description of the pavilion as “Buddhist,” Su’s conclusion is entirely plausible. Unfortunately, there is no textual or archaeological evidence to support it.
The physical impact of the foreigners and their residential quarter was important. It is also easy to assess: the foreigners were there, and so they affected the community. Of greater importance is the question of how they affected the culture, but this is also more difficult to assess, for it is less concrete. Yet the effect was real and can be addressed in several ways. First, the presence of the foreigners had pronounced impact on the local agrarian and mercantile economy. Foreigners, for example, served as the conduit through which new crops were introduced that helped to revolutionize China’s agriculture. Champa rice was perhaps the most notable of these. Named for the Mekong delta region from whence it came, Champa rice is both quick ripening and drought resistant—properties not shared by China’s indigenous strains, and properties that made it very useful in opening the rugged country of the Fujian interior. On the negative side, this rice has a low gluten content, which detracts from the taste and so from its appeal. In 1012 the court ordered it distributed from Fujian to areas of the central Yangzi valley stricken by drought and famine; under the circumstances its unappealing taste was easily ignored, and it was widely adopted. In the decades and centuries that followed, however, Chinese peasants came to understand its positive properties and how to impart them to the better tasting but more vulnerable indigenous strains. Champa rice and its derivative strains thus prompted a far-reaching change in China’s rice-growing habits, paving the way for the extension of rice-culture into heretofore inaccessible parts of the empire and truly laying the foundation for China’s later rice-based culinary tradition.

We cannot know just when the new strain was first cultivated in China, but the fact that it was distributed from Fujian early in the eleventh century clearly points to some time during the tenth century. It is, of course, also unknown whether the rice was introduced to China by foreign merchants or brought back by Chinese traders. The timing argues strongly for the foreigners, because Chinese traders were as yet few and far between in the waters of the South Seas. In either case, however, introduction of Champa rice into China is inseparable from the trade contacts of the South Seas frontier, and its impact on Chinese culture has been immeasurable.

Champa rice is the most notable crop to be introduced via the South Seas trade, and also the only one for which the evidence is

47 See Li Dao, Xu zizhi tongjian changbian, 77:13b.
incontrovertible. Widespread cultivation of at least one other crop that became central to later Chinese agrarian practice may have been encouraged, if not actually introduced, by the trade: cotton. By the twelfth century cotton was widely grown throughout Fujian and Guangdong provinces, and it may have become a staple crop in these regions as early as the late eleventh century. The only evidence hinting at a connection between cotton and the South Seas trade is circumstantial and inconclusive: the crop came to China from either India or southeast Asia, the heart of the South Seas, and became a mainstay in the agriculture of Fujian and Guangdong, the two areas most involved with the trade, at the very time the trade reached its height in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This is far from definitive, yet it is certainly plausible that the widespread acceptance of cotton among southern Chinese at this time was prompted by a growing familiarity with its benefits among those who traveled to and traded with the lands of the South Seas.

The new crops that were introduced or the use of which may have spread as a consequence of the South Seas trade affected all China. At another level, the regional economy of southern Fujian was fundamentally altered by the trade as well. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the regional economy of southern Fujian was transformed from a subsistence economy based on the cultivation of rice and hemp into an export-oriented economy producing luxury fruits, including oranges, lichee, and sugarcane; fibers, especially cotton; and a range of finished artisanal goods, including stoneware, porcelain, and metal. It was possible to focus on the production of such goods in part because of the extensive markets made available by the trade networks that had developed both within the empire and to the lands of the South Seas that lay beyond, an obvious outcome of the trade. Furthermore, these same trade connections facilitated the importation of rice to Fujian from areas of surplus production, such as the Jiangnan provinces of the Yangzi River valley and Guangdong, the adjacent province to the south. Such imports became necessary as the commercialized crops and goods entered the local economy and displaced rice in the local patterns of production.

49 Our discussion focuses on the Song dynasty rather than later periods, but it is worth remembering that in later centuries as well several very important crops were introduced to China via the maritime frontier. These included the New World crops of corn, potatoes, tobacco, and peanuts. Thus the maritime frontier has played a very important role in forming both the culinary and agrarian traditions of modern China.
50 See Clark, Community, Trade, and Networks.
If economics and cropping patterns are not exactly what is meant by "culture," these phenomena had undeniable cultural consequences. The prefectures along the Fujian coast, for example, were in the forefront of a fundamental cultural transformation: the growing acceptance of merchants and merchant careers among elite society. Before the eleventh and twelfth centuries, merchants had been excluded from elite circles; orthodox Confucianism had designated them the least prestigious members of society. In a society experiencing soaring prosperity so clearly derived from commerce, however, such stigmas were no longer viable and were increasingly ignored. Social contact between merchants and gentry, a gulf that was once unbridgeable, became the norm.\footnote{Note, for example, the comments of Yuan Cai, a twelfth-century scholar and bureaucrat who wrote a treatise on family management, approving a mercantile career for some sons within even the most prestigious, scholarly families: "If the profession of scholar is not possible [for your son], then the arts and skills of medicine, Buddhism and Daoism, gardening, and commerce can all provide support for your family without bringing shame to your ancestors" (Shifan [Precepts for Social Life], trans. Patricia Ebrey, in Family and Property in Sung China: Yuan Ts'ai's Precept for Social Life [Princeton, 1984], especially pp. 267–68 [emphasis added]).}

In southern Fujian this is made most explicit in the connection between the Fang kin group of Putian and the Temple of Auspicious Responses (Xiangying miao), which was located several miles north of the Putian district city. The unnamed god of the temple was credited with a succession of miracles that first benefited the peasants of the surrounding locales but ultimately were connected to the growing role of commerce. A stele erected in 1138 by the cousins Fang Lüe and Fang Zhao records:

At that time merchants who were preparing to travel abroad could expect to confront wind and waves and to experience danger in pursuit of profit. Merchants who were bound for other prefectures or headed abroad and who failed to worship at this temple always experienced bad luck; they lost their ships to wind and waves, or they fell into the snares of pirates. But Zhou Wei, a native of this prefecture [Putian], while preparing to trade in Liangzhe [the wealthy region at the mouth of the Yangzi River], told the god [of his plans]. Later, at the Devil’s Gate, his vessel encountered strong winds and towering waves. His crew lost their color and wailed of their doom. But Zhou proclaimed that he had told the god of his voyage; thus this ought not be happening. He called out, begging [the god’s] aid. From the midst of the deep they heard an echo, and then the wind calmed and the waves subsided, and no one on the ship was hurt.

Then the Quanzhou merchant Zhu Fang, as he prepared to sail to
Srivijaya, requested ash from the god's altar, which he venerated. His voyage was swift and uneventful, and he completed the round-trip within a year, returning a hundred-fold profit. No one had done so well either before or since, and all attributed [his fortune] to the god. Ever since, as merchants prepare for their distant journeys, there are none who fail to come before the god to worship.52

The temple that became so intimately associated with the commercial prosperity on which the local economy and culture were built was itself closely linked to the Fang kin group. The cousins Lüe and Zhao erected the 1138 stele, and other kin had donated land to underwrite temple costs and had funded a series of temple restorations at least since the 1080s. This is especially significant because the Fang were the most eminent kin group in all Minnan, amassing more of the highest ranking bureaucratic degrees and holding more of the top bureaucratic offices than anyone else. They were, in short, archetypes of the elite bureaucratic kin groups that would never have associated with merchants in preceding centuries.

Finally, there was a foreign influence on that most basic realm of culture, the ideas and motifs through which people express themselves. The two religions that have been discussed here did not leave a lasting imprint themselves. Hinduism does not survive on China’s southeast coast, nor in all probability did it survive the fall of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in the mid-fourteenth century. Islam endures, but only in an attenuated form in a few places.53 On the other hand, few motifs are as deeply etched in Chinese culture as that of the monkey god. From his introduction along the southeast coast via the South Seas trade, through his adoption as a favorite subject of the marketplace storyteller, to his ultimate evolution into Sun Wukong, the irascible disciple of the pilgrim monk Xuanzang in the sixteenth-century novel Journey to the West (Xiyouji), the monkey god has held a central place in China's popular culture. His enduring appeal was recently

52 See the text in Chen Qiren, Minzhong jinhilue (Shuzhuang congshu, ed.), 8:20b–25b. The original stele is currently housed in the precinct of the Confucian Temple in Putian. The translation of the temple's name is by Kenneth Dean, who has also published a translation of a portion of the inscription. See Kenneth Dean, Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China (Princeton, 1993), p. 35.
53 Over the last decade or so, Islam has experienced a controlled revival in selected sites along the southeast coast. In Minnan this has led to the restoration of the mosque in Xiamen, now the major port of the region, and a partial restoration of the Qingxheng (actually “Ashab”) Mosque in Quanzhou. This revival, however, appears to have resulted less from a renewed interest in the religion among the Chinese people than from the desire of the Chinese government to gain both diplomatic and monetary backing from the Muslim lands of the Persian Gulf.
seen when the novel was serialized on Chinese television; week after week the entire country came to a halt as people gathered around to watch.

Quanzhou is only one port, and I have only considered events over three centuries. Yet I believe I have made a case that the societies with which Quanzhou and the empire gained contact through the South Seas trade had a significant influence on life in China’s coastal cities and made important contributions to Chinese culture.

Quanzhou, of course, was not the only locus of such an exchange. Guangzhou was, as I have noted, the traditional center of the South Seas trade. Although temporarily displaced as the dominant port by Quanzhou during the later Song and Yuan dynasties, Guangzhou reestablished its dominance in later centuries and was especially important in the strategy of the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) to restrict the “western barbarians,” as the European and North American merchants were known, before the Opium War of the early nineteenth century. Over the centuries after the onset of the South Seas trade in the early Tang, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, Mingzhou, Fuzhou, Xiamen, and Chaozhou all were important points of contact along the maritime frontier, rising and falling according to varied events and currents both domestic and international.

For two centuries, however, from the height of the southern Song through the following Mongol Yuan dynasty, Quanzhou had an unrivaled position among all the ports of the empire. It became a cosmopolitan center hosting merchants from throughout the Indian Ocean littoral. During the brief era of Mongol domination in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the city became even more cosmopolitan, adding small communities of Christians and Manicheans to the Muslim and Hindu communities; Rome even dispatched a bishop to oversee this, its most distant flock. Ironically, it was Quanzhou’s failure to perpetuate its position through later centuries that made the present study possible, while comparable studies of other ports are less feasible if not impossible. The port sank back into marginalized obscurity after its last burst of prominence under the Mongols in the early fourteenth century, and the resulting somnolence left untouched the remains that allow my analysis. In contrast, Guangzhou’s success at reclaiming its central position makes it all but impossible to compare its role as a locus of exchange in the Song dynasty to that of Quanzhou. In the pursuit of building materials and the ensuing reconstruction of the city itself, later generations obliterated the archaeological monuments that are central to my analysis of Quanzhou.
Finally, let us loop back to the stereotype alluded to at the beginning of this article. Through its long history China has in fact often treated the “inner Asian” frontier with suspicion and hostility, the result of too many disruptions at the hands of those who lived beyond the Great Wall. It is equally true that the southern lands beyond China’s own cultural ecumene were frequently derided as base and uncivilized, home to strange peoples with weird and sometimes dangerous attributes. What separates reality from stereotype, however, is the inability of the latter to see exceptions to normal patterns or to appreciate how important those exceptions can be. The failure to see beyond the obligatory and formulaic repudiations of foreign traditions by those who guarded China’s own, and so to become aware of just how influential those traditions have been, has long dominated thinking about China’s frontier relationships. However, as Mai Chaocheng, director of the Academia Sinica, wrote recently: “China is not merely a continental country; it is also a maritime country. The oceans have been an important element in China’s historical development. They absolutely must not be ignored by our country’s academic community.”\(^\text{54}\) That is the challenge I have addressed in this article.