

Islam in China

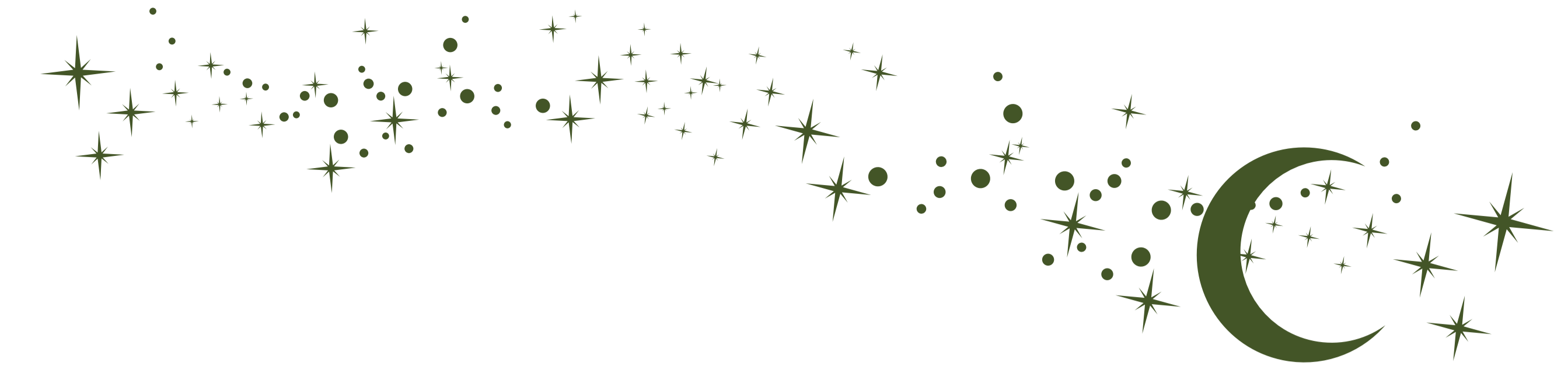
Due to the Silk Road Trade there had been contact and trading between the Pre-Islamic Arabs and the Chinese. The first Muslim envoys were Saad ibn Abi Waqqas and Jafar ibn Abi Talib both were related to the Prophet (pbuh). Twenty years after death of the Prophet (pbuh) in the year 657 CE a diplomatic delegation led by Saad ibn Abi Waqqas was sent by the third Caliph Uthman. This delegation was received by Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty, the delegation was warmly welcomed by the Emperor and the visit left such an impression that the Emperor ordered to build the Huaisheng Mosque.

During the Tang Dynasty the relationship between the Islamic Empire and imperial China developed even further, despite a conflict with the Abbasids in the year 751 CE (Battle of Talas) after which relations quickly resumed to normality. Furthermore during the Tang Dynasty many Arab and Persian traders settled through the Silk Road in China. They would later on, by intermarriage with local Han Chinese, form the basis of the Hui Chinese. The Hui Chinese do not differ ethnically nor linguistically from the Han Chinese, the only difference are the Muslim customs and dietary regulations that the Hui follow. The Uyghurs however, also a Muslim ethnic group in China, differ in every aspect from the Han Chinese, as the Uyghurs belong ethnically and linguistically to the Turkic nations and have always been a sovereign independent nation until recent years. This is also the origin of the tensions between the Chinese government and the Uyghurs. The other ethnic Muslim minorities consist of the following eight groups: Kazakhs, Dongxiang, Kyrzyg, Uzbeks, Salar, Tazi, Bonan, Tatar. The majority of these Muslim groups reside in the area which is known as the "Qur'an Belt" in the western region of China adjacent to Central Asia.

During the beginning of the history of Islam in China the Muslims contributed a great deal to economy, defence, governance. During the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279) Muslims dominated the foreign trade.

Because of the many centuries of Islamic existence in China, a unique synthesis of Islamic and Chinese culture developed. A prime example is found in the names of Hui Muslims:

Ma, Mu, Han : Mohammed
Ha : Hassan
Hu: Hussein
Sai : Said
Cai : Uthman



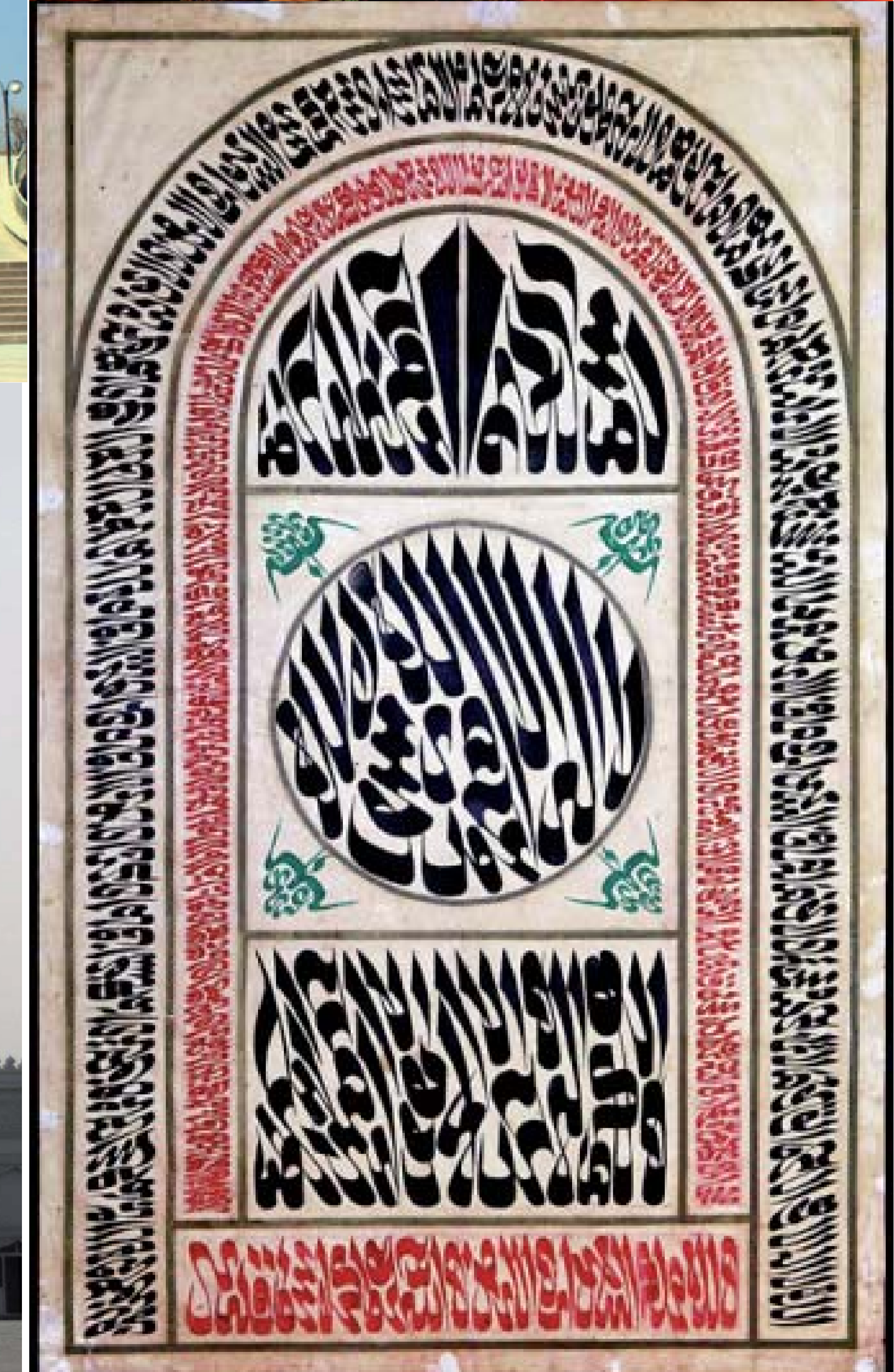
Emin Minaret in Urumqi. XianXing(Uyghurstan), China



Uyghur men in traditional clothes.



Hui Mosque in Ningxia - China



Chinese Islamic Calligraphy