

Islam, Tourism, and Changing Foodways among the Utsat of  
Hainan Island

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This thesis discusses tourism and social change among the Utsat community in Hainan Island, China. The Utsat are Cham-speaking Muslims, classified as Hui in PRC. I examine the local meanings of “the traditional past” and “the changing present”, and show the significance of religious practice. The long and continuous Islamic history of the community gives the Utsat a sense of being pious Muslims. They observe the religious laws, of which the laws of food and eating are important in their daily life. However, the development of Sanya tourism has brought great changes to many aspects of their life, including the practice of Islamic laws. Thus in my analysis of the “changing present,” I examine Utsat changing Islamic foodways including the violation of religious food laws. The current Utsat social change has brought about religious crisis, which the local realized very well.

## 论文摘要

本文探讨了海南岛阿扎（Utsat）社区的旅游发展与社会变迁。阿扎是一个占族语系的穆斯林族群，在中国被划分为回族。通过研究阿扎生活“传统的过去”和“变化的现在”，笔者发现当地社会变迁的实质在于阿扎对其信仰实践的变化。阿扎信仰伊斯兰的历史非常久远，并虔诚地延续至今。他们遵循伊斯兰的法律法规，而其中最为突出的，当属在饮食方面的戒律。然而，随着三亚旅游业的发展，阿扎生活的方方面面都在发生着各种变化，包括对宗教教法的遵循与实践。因此，分析阿扎“变化的现在”，笔者落脚于对其变化的饮食方式与文化的观察，尤其关注一些打破伊斯兰教法的行为和现象。阿扎正在经历的社会变迁，对其自身而言，其实是一场信仰的危机，并且是一种已经被充分意识到了的危机。

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

There are a number of significant works on the study of changing life in China after 1978, when Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform and Opening-up policy was implemented. For instance, Davis' edited volume (2000) concentrates on the dramatic changes of consumption with case studies of many places. Tan's edited book (2006) focuses on the changing practice of tradition in southern Fujian, and Gillette's work (2000) analyzes the changing religious identity and the local perception of modernity in terms of consumption behaviors among Xi'an Muslims. The list goes on, showing a growing anthropological interest in this area.

Hainan Island, the youngest province and the biggest Special Economic Zone in PRC China is obviously an important region to study. However, it has received little attention from social scientists on the changing life there. Most of the works are economic studies, focusing mainly on the reasons for the economic bubble that Hainan suffered in the mid-1990s and its own strength for developing economy, such as tropical agriculture and marine tourism. Overall, Hainan Island is largely uninvestigated from a cultural perspective.

This thesis aims to discuss *what the changes mean to Utsat people*, with fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2009, by focusing on the local history and contemporary food choices. Utsat is a group of Chamic-speaking Muslims on Hainan Island, living in the Sanya Region. During the past two decades, significant changes

have taken place in many aspects of their life due to the development of local tourism. Being strongly aware of these changes they have currently experiencing and, more importantly, quite worried about the future, many Utsat regard the complex consequences of rapid economic growth as a threat to their traditional Islamic ways of life. It is such strong awareness of *being changed* that presents clear boundaries between the “past” and the “present”, and makes the Utsat a fascinating field site to study social change in post-1978 China.

Choosing food as a lens to investigate the changing life of Utsat was began with a personal experience. The first time I visited the Utsat villages was in 2005, when I was doing research on the ancient Muslim cemeteries for my undergraduate thesis. Before I went to the field site, as always, I had reviewed plenty of related works. Many Utsat reports in Chinese claimed that having strictly practiced their religion for thousands of years, in spite of living in such an extremely remote area (天涯海角), the Hainan Hui people are the very true Muslims (非常正宗的穆斯林). In a word, I was very impressed by their purported faithfulness.

Therefore, in my mind at that time, most of the Utsat must have behaved very “religiously”. In fact, this notion matched very well my first glance at the villages: everyday at dawn and dusk I heard the beautiful voices of prayer; in only two small villages I saw six magnificent mosques; not even one Utsat woman I observed wore short-sleeve dress; and every night I watched young kids go to the mosques to study

Arabic and Qur'an after one day's hard work in school.

This impression remained with me for a long time until one day, when I was having lunch in a small Utsat restaurant, I observed something strange: it sold beer! Suddenly it occurred to me that somewhere I had read consuming alcohol in Islam is considered as a more serious sin than consuming pork. And the banning of pork consumption includes not only consuming all its by-products but also any involvement in either the productive or distributing process. Hence I believed that the alcohol taboo was set in a similar vein. Therefore, no matter to whom these bottles of beer were sold to, Utsat or non-Muslims, such behavior would not be acceptable to the "very true Muslims".

Furthermore, during my stay, I frequently heard many Utsat elites say that they were quite worried about their people's future under the impact of tourism. The consumption orientation heavily impacted Utsat life, which might threaten their religious unity. These worries, apparently, matched my observation of beer selling. In this respect, "are the Utsat really as religious as what I had observed at first glance?" became the question that paralleled my study of the gravestones. Thus after the first research on gravestones was completed (see Wu 2007), I immediately embarked on the next project.

When I sat in the university library, thinking about how to phrase my research

question, it was three years after my lunch in the beer-selling restaurant. And I also shifted from an undergraduate in Wuhan to a postgraduate student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where I gained many new perspectives to view our daily practices, including from the angle of food and eating.

Everyday we eat, and consider the behavior is just “natural”, but what, how, where, when, and with whom we eat, all convey cultural meanings and are relevant to social identifications, changes, and beliefs. In Utsat life, food is not only their daily meals, but is also used in the religious ceremonies, life-cycle rituals, entertainment, socializing, and business activities, etc. For example, when naming a new-born baby, one should invite an imam by offering snacks and drinks; during a house-warming ceremony, one has to invite friends and relatives and offer meals; and when negotiating business one is supposed to invite partners to a variety of food and drinks. On many occasions as such, factory-made food without *qingzhen* (i.e. halal) brands and even some forbidden stuffs such as alcohol and drugs are often involved, questioning the meaning of being Muslim in the local context. In this regard, I was inspired to conduct a food-themed study in order to investigate the changing life of Utsat.

## **1. Research Question**

To understand the meanings of changing life to Utsat people, this research asks several specific questions which are based on the local expression of social change.

In the local context, *the past* (过去, 以前) refers to a long period of time before the development of Sanya tourism, dating back to the starting point of Islamic history on Hainan Island in ancient dynasties, which emphasizes the long-established Islamic tradition of the community. *The present* (现在) generally means the many changing aspects of life during these recent two decades after the promotion of Sanya tourism, especially the economic improvement and the changing religious faithfulness.

Hence *the past* and *the present* are linked by religious continuity on the one hand, and differentiated by the changing religious practices on the other. In this regard, *the essence of change* lies in the varying faithfulness of practicing Islam between *the past* and *the present*. Therefore, the study deals with three questions: 1). what is the Utsat Islamic history which represents the religious faithfulness in the “traditional past”? 2). what is the changing Utsat foodways that reflects the changing degree of religious faithfulness in the “present”? 3). what is the nature of Utsat social change?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Background: Tradition, Modernity, and Social Change**

In the simplest sense, contemporary social change is about the differences between the past and the present of a society, which is also expressed as the transformation from “tradition” to “modernity” in the post-industrial era (cf. Barker 2005: 444).

Accordingly, how to view “tradition” and “modernity” as well as their relationship to social change have caused a lot of debates. In a general sense, “tradition” refers to the legacies of the past, in particular, a set of customs or practices of a long period before the modern age. “Modernity” typically denotes “a post-traditional, post-medieval historical period” (Barker 2005: 444), marked by the rise of industrialism, capitalism, secularization, the nation-state, which is widely believed as the main cause of many contemporary social changes. What makes these two simple concepts controversial?

Debates began with Hobsbawm’s argument of the concept of “invented tradition” (1992), which represents a turning point in the understanding of “tradition”. In the “Introduction” to this edited volume, Hobsbawm argues, “‘Tradition’ which appears or claims to be old is often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. (p. 1)”

According to him, the term “invented tradition” means as follows:

It includes both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity. ... ‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past (p.1).

This term and its definition have been frequently cited and discussed in a wide array of social science works ever since the publication. Among these, one of the most

important volumes was *Religious Identity and the Invention of Tradition* (2001), edited by Jan. Willem van Henten and Anton. Houtepen. These two scholars raised some questions about the practical difficulties of applying this concept in religious studies (2001:4):

Linking religious traditions to Hobsbawn's reflections about the invention of traditions triggers a cluster of questions. If traditions are sometimes being invented as Hobsbawn suggested, how do we know that they are invented? And if some of them are invented, others may not have been invented, and how can we know that? Or should we rather assume that all religious traditions have been invented and that all elements of which religious outlooks on life are based upon are human constructions?

Actually, as early as the 1980s, the difficulties of figuring out "a real tradition" had been pointed out by Eric Wolf. According to him, most of the world was already a mix of the indigenous and the exogenous by the time the Western anthropologist arrived on the scene (1982:50). This is based on a historical fact that the emergence of anthropology was in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, around four centuries after the beginning of the expansion of European colonialism (the 15<sup>th</sup> century). And almost at the same time, the Industrial Revolution took place in the United Kingdom, then subsequently spreading throughout Europe, North America, and eventually the whole world, marking the advent of the modern age. This is to say, the first generation of anthropologists had already encountered the issues of social change caused by both the centuries' old colonialism and the newly spreading Industrial Revolution.

Joel S. Kahn, an anthropology specialist of Southeast Asia, was once thinking about a question of “whether there nonetheless remain ‘remote’ spaces within Southeast Asia that are somehow outside modernity or whether these remote traditions are similarly the ‘inventions’ of a colonial society that was by any measure of rationalization, social differentiation, commoditization, and bureaucratization itself already modern (2001:655).” He then did an archival research on the colonial history of central Sumatra. Finally, he concluded that: “the Minnangkabau as they became known to an earlier generation of ethnographers were actually a historical product of specific patterns of modern state formation, colonial land alienation, and the growth of a capitalist economy (2001:656).” This indicates that when mentioning the existence of “real tradition”, it is necessary to recognize anthropology’s own modernist origin in the first place. In other words, the “cultures” that anthropologists could observe at the very beginning were already a mixture. To use Wolf’s terms, it was “the indigenous” versus “the exogenous”, in the contemporary fashion, it is “tradition” versus “modernity”.

However, if the existence of “real tradition” is so highly doubtable, what is the meaning of the term “tradition” that we often mention. At the moment, it is crucial to note the contexts of using “tradition”, which have always been associated with social change. This is where the debate of “modernity” arrives, by asking what happens to “tradition” in social change. A number of people view that “modernity” denotes the opposite of “tradition”, and accordingly, “social change” refers to the process and



result of the replacement of tradition by modernity. Hence both the “change” and “modernity” are understood as the other side of “tradition”. Not unexpectedly, this viewpoint has received challenges from many different angles and perspectives, which can be summarized into one major orientation although with different emphasis, that is, tradition is not the opposite of change.

For example, from a discovery of the trade among the Hawaiians and the Kwakiutl, Sahlins concluded that “their respective cultural traditions survived in the different ways they changes (2000:51).” Also, in his research of To Pomona society in Indonesia, Schrauwers (2000:228-229) claimed that “To Pomona culture cannot be understood as combining elements from the past and the present. Instead it is an integrated whole representing a particular regional form of modernity”. And, in the study of traditionalism and identity of a Muslim community in southern Fujian, China, Fan (2006:36) believed that there exists “the reciprocal nature of the exchange between traditionalism and modernity”, so on and so forth.

From my point of view, underlying all these debates are the nature of contemporary social change, the big question of this research. In the mid twentieth century, British anthropologists had claimed that generally “social change is structural change (Mair 1969:3),” whereas half a century later, a number of anthropologists argued that “we must distinguish structural reproductions from structural transformations in which we can identity such historical changes as modernization and secularization that are

nonetheless structural transformations (e.g. Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:10).” It shows that the nature of social change is very much a matter of degree. This does make sense to me theoretically, but, also, provoke another question: does it mean that the nature of social change is all about “how much”, no matter in what aspect and in what ways?

As the Utsat is a Muslim community, this question is especially crucial. Before asking “how much” the society has changed, we must first clarify the issue of change as perceived by different actors such as the Utsat, and non-Muslims, including scholars, journalists, the Chinese state, and neighboring Hans. In this case, from the non-Utsat perspective, the Utsat social change is primarily measured by the improvement of their material life<sup>1</sup>, whereas from an emic (Utsat) point of view, the religious aspect weighs more than the material. As noted previously, this research aims to find out the meanings of change to the local Utsat people, not to the outsiders. Therefore, the emic approach will be applied.

Based on all the previous works and the questions they have inspired, this research seeks to further the discussion with the starting point of clarifying the meaning of “tradition” and “past” as well as “modernity” and “present” in the local context. In the field, I did hear “*chuantong* (传统, tradition)” and “*xiandai* (现代, modernity)” sometimes mentioned to address the current social change. But more often what I heard were “the past (过去, 以前)” and “the present (现在)”. Although from an etic

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<sup>1</sup> See “1.2.3 Field Site Literature: Utsat Studies”, pp. 15

point of view, it is fine to describe the present Utsat life as modern, in reality, the term “modernity” was used on very rare occasions by the locals. When mentioning the cause of being changed, the most frequent statement was “now the people are rich (现在的人都有钱了).” Therefore, rather than simply using “tradition” and “modernity”, I prefer to describe the Utsat case with “the traditional past” and “the changing present”, which will be specifically explained in the following chapters and which, I believe, can better comprehend the reality.

## **2.2. Research Perspective: Food studies**

### *2.2.1 Food and Culture*

The study of food and eating has a long history in anthropology. According to Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois (2002), this academic area includes classic ethnographies, single commodities and substance, food and social change, food insecurity, eating and ritual, eating and identities, and instructional materials. This research fits into one of them, “food and social change”. Before we go through the literature on this specific topic, let’s have a general picture of how food has been viewed anthropologically.

First, from a culture materialist perspective, Marvin Harris (cf.1974, 1987, and 1997) focuses on ecological-evolutionary systems to account for the origin, maintenance and change of socio-cultural systems. There are three key concepts in his studies:

Infrastructure (production and reproduction), Structure (social institutions: families, workplace, religion) and Superstructure (ideologies, values, beliefs: cow worship). By analysing how these three levels interact, he locates food in the production domain under “Infrastructure”.

Second, from a structuralist perspective, Claude Levi-Strauss (1997: 28-35) believes that there exists unconscious structure that underlies social reality, which is, a binary structure, such as darkness/light, land/sea, men/women, nature/culture. Thus people use myth to deal with anomalous categories. In this vein, he explained cooking as an anomalous act because it transforms nature into culture. Therefore, cooking myth is based on three premises: first, cooking is a language; second, cooking is structured by the culinary triangle: raw, cooked, and rotted; third, the abstract triangle is filled with oppositional pairs (roasted/boiled, boiled/smoked). Together, they show how the binary structure is expressed in human food and eating.

Third, from a symbolic point of view, Mary Douglas claims that humans create symbols to maintain social life. For instance, purity and pollution are important symbols, providing moral order of what is acceptable and unacceptable. In her renowned essay “The Abominations of Leviticus” (Douglas 1966:42-57), she analyses how the prohibited animals in Bible are not just primitive hygiene regulations, or a show of the religious commitment, but are moral codes that structure social behaviour.

Fourth, influenced by Karl Marx, Sidney Mintz applied a historical perspective to study the dramatic transformation in sugar consumption: in 1968, sugar was a rarity, whereas in 1980, the average American consumed over 135 pounds a year. By tracing the history of this period, Mintz arrived at the conclusion that the meaning of eating “arises out of use, as people use substances in social relationships” (1986:xxxix). Therefore, food and eating is not only biological but significantly social. It is in this way that the dramatic change of sugar industry mirrors the whole change of socio-economic framework in Britain.

Finally, a holistic view concludes that history, geography, climate, ethos, etc interact to produce a particular foodway. No one factor alone can determine the foodways of a group of people. Hence all the theoretical approaches above make sense to a certain extent, but no theory alone can explain all phenomena of human foodways. I myself agree with this point of view that foodways are a result of comprehensive interactions, and therefore are able to mirror many invisible conditions of culture and society, including the changing state of Utsat life.

### *2.2.2 Social Transformation and Changing Foodways*

Discussing social change from the lens of food and eating parallels other areas of food-themed studies, productively producing a number of intelligent ethnographies and adding fresh pieces into the pool of social change literature. *Changing Chinese Foodways in Asia* (Wu & Tan, ed. 2001), for instance, is an important edited

volume of a series of articles, identifying four major types of changes among contemporary Chinese foodways in Asia (Wu & Tan 2001:12-13):

- (1) There is change due to changes in local ecology and economy as well as new forces increasing by penetrating from outside.
- (2) There is change among Chinese foods due to intermixing of Chinese cuisines. ...
- (3) There is change due to localization. In this book, we can identify two types of processes. One is a result of ethnic Chinese adapting to living in a non-Chinese larger society ... The other is non-Chinese incorporating Chinese foods into their foodways ...
- (4) There is change due to globalization and intermixing of local foods with non-local foods.

A main theme that clearly emerges in these four types of changes is the phenomena of culture exchange. As it is widely acknowledged that qualitative change comes from quantitative change, the degree-oriented question of social change appears again, that is, what is the degree of social change and how significant is this change. Consequently, we need to know how we measure this change. According to the Utsat, the development of Sanya tourism does enormously improve their material life, but at the same time, what cannot be changed is their belief in Islam (“信主的心不变”). Hence changes in material and economical acquisitions are quite superficial. As long as their religious faithfulness continues, there is no “structural transformation” as I have discussed above, but then, how does one measure “religious faithfulness”?

Having been converted to Islam for centuries, the Utsat follow a system of Islamic codes in everyday life, including the eating taboos and related etiquettes. But just as what commonly happened elsewhere, the process of modernization brought

significant changes to many aspects of their life, including food and eating. In this regard, the “religious faithfulness” is measurable in terms of observing whether the changes in Utsat foodways include Islamic food law-breaking behaviors.

### **2.3. Utsat Studies**

As the only one Muslim group of Southeast Asian origin in China (cf. Pang 1990 & 1996), which speaks its own language “Tsat”, the uniqueness of Utsat has long been significantly recognized, especially by linguists from both China and the West. However, many important aspects of their social life and culture are largely uninvestigated in general, such as ethnicity, ethnic relations, social change, and foodways.

As early as in the Tang and Song dynasties, this small group of Muslim has already been portrayed in travel notes, legendary tales and official historical records (see below). But largely due to its remote geographical location and small population size, related reports are very rare. Only in until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century did it come into academic focus with some ethnographic data provided by some foreign scholars. And only after the 1950s did Chinese researchers begin to show interest in this group of people. For the sake of clarity, I set four categories of Ustat studies over the past half century.

Firstly, historical and archeological studies mainly focus on the ethnic origins and ancient remains, in particular, the old Islamic cemeteries. Major works are Li and Wang (1987) and Wu (2007), etc, casting light on the Arab-Persian origin of the Utsat.

Secondly, scholars of sociology got involved in Utsat research, but only several articles were produced, with topics of Utsat education (Wu 1991 & Wang 2004), economic development (Ma 1998 & 2001), social relations (Sun 2004) and social transformations (Chen 1999). These are all short articles, emphasizing the rapid economic growth and the different changing aspects of Utsat life it caused in the recent two decades.

Thirdly, linguistic researches on Utsat are comparatively fruitful. Linguists of both China and overseas have done many in-depth investigations, for example, Zheng (1997) wrote an important book and several articles (e.g. 1986) on Tsat (referred as huihuihua [回辉话] in Chinese), concluding an ancestral relation between Roglai (拉德语, a kind of Coastal Chamic language<sup>2</sup>) and Tsat. Additionally, Tsat has attracted several western linguists too, such as Thurgood (1999) who has conducted extensive studies on Chamic languages and also made connection between Tsat and Chamic languages.

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<sup>2</sup> Chamic languages include North Chamic (Tsat) and South Chamic (Coastal Chamic [Cham, Chru, Roglai, Cacia] and Plateau Chamic [Harj, Jarai and Rade]). See Thurgood (1999).



Fourthly, from an anthropological point of view, studies conducted by Chinese scholars are few. Among these, Wang's book (2007) is worthy of special mention due to the fact that it is, so far, the most comprehensive work on Utsat, covering topics from history, ethnic origin, genealogy, religion, education, ethnic customs, language, oral tradition to social change, transnational connections, and so on, which is a good summary of previous studies on Utsat. In addition, one Singapore anthropologist Pang Keng-Fong has contributed greatly to this area. It is her works that first applied anthropological perspectives to view this group of people. Beginning with her Ph.D dissertation in 1992, she continuously produced lots of papers on Utsat on a wide array of significant anthropological topics, such as transnational networks (1989 & 1990), gender (1997), identities (1987, 1994 & 1996), social relations (1998a) and even linguistics (1998b). Overall, anthropological studies of Utsat people are extremely limited. By adding a food-themed ethnography, this study will add to the literature in English on Utsat history, and discuss some features of the Utsat changing life in post-1978 China.

### **3. Methodology**

This research is based on a three-month long fieldwork and a long-term archival study, answering the three specific questions posed previously in the research question section: 1). what is the Utsat Islamic history which represents the religious faithfulness in the "traditional past"? 2). what is the changing Utsat foodways that

reflects the changing degree of religious faithfulness in the “present”? 3). what is the nature of Utsat social change?

Therefore, I need to collect two major kinds of data. The first one is historical information, which is mostly based on historical documents, archaeological findings, and oral traditions, etc. The second is ethnographical data, which mainly came from interviews and participant observations during fieldwork. Having been interested in the Islamic history of Hainan Island since my middle school days, I have collected many kinds of historical data on Utsat people for several years. Hence this section concentrates on introducing how my ethnographic data was collected in field work from June to August in 2009.

From June to early July, I lived in an Utsat village hotel, mainly focusing on food and eating of inter-domestic sphere, such as at restaurants, food stalls, night clubs, drinking house, and so on. Yan was my key informant at that time. He is an Utsat young man in his thirties, teaching Mathematics in a village primary school. He introduced me to many Utsat villagers of his generation, both male and female. I was hanging around with them almost everyday: shopping, eating, talking, and drinking, etc. During this period, I also interviewed some old imams in the mosques, and some middle-aged women who are in charge of small restaurants in the villages. Furthermore, I was very lucky to attend a wedding.

In early July, my professor Tan Chee-Beng visited my field. When I brought him to one of the village mosques, the North Mosque (清真北大寺), we met Ha, the youngest imam in the community, who was in charge of the summer section of Qur’anic education in the mosque<sup>3</sup>. At that time, I was looking for a host family. Prof. Tan explained to Ha that as a fieldworker, I needed to live with a host family in order to gain a holistic understanding of their life, including their religion, culture and foodways. On 11 June, I moved into Ha’s family house, concentrating on domestic eating and the local religious interpretations related to food. That was a big family, living in separate houses within a yard. Ha had seven siblings, three sisters and four brothers.

There are three houses in the yard: Ha’s parents living in the smallest one, the family of Ha’s eldest sister living in the middle one, and the families of Ha’s eldest brother and his second brother living in the biggest one, a two-storey house. The other three sisters lived with their husbands’ family, two in the same village, and one in Guangzhou City. Ha’s youngest brother lived in his middle school boarding house in Sanya City. Hence there were four households living together within the yard. I summarize them as follows (the table aims at presenting the location of the households rather than the kinship system):

eldest brother	eldest sister	2 <sup>nd</sup> sister	3 <sup>rd</sup> sister	2 <sup>nd</sup> brother	4 <sup>th</sup> sister	Ha	youngest brother
Living in the yard	Living in the yard	Marry out	Marry out	Living in the yard	Marry out	single	single

<sup>3</sup> Every summer, the mosques organize Utsat children and teenagers to study Arabic and religious knowledge during the summer vacation.

Ha was actually a student of a religious school in Yunnan (云南), who had just come back home for his summer vacation. He lived in a room of the second floor in the biggest house. Due to his fluent Arabic and respectable family background (Ha's father was also an imam), Ha was invited to be the head of the mosque's educational committee, organizing the learning activities in the summer. I lived with the family of Wen, Ha's second brother on the second floor of the biggest house. Everyday I ate with Ha, Wen, Lily (Wen's wife), and their two small daughters. At the same time, I was able to observe the other three families of Ha's parents and siblings.

Living with this big family provided me an excellent base to find informants. Apart from the Ha's family, I also observed and interviewed other nine Utsat families. Six of them are the families of Ha's relatives, neighbors, and friends. The other three are Yan's family and the families of my undergraduate alumni. In total, there are around 42 informants, covering both the males and females in different levels of age, class, occupation, and educational background. I selectively present 25 of my most important informants with pseudonyms in Appendix I. Additionally, towards the end of July, I attended a conference in Kunming, Yunnan Province, and took the opportunity to visit the Muslim community in Shadian (沙甸), where many Utsat (including Ha) received Islamic education in one of its mosques, namely, the White House Mosque (白房子清真寺).

Lastly, the limitation of this study lies in the language I used in the fieldwork. As a native speaker of Mandarin and Hainanese, I have no problem to communicate with the Utsat because most of them were fluent in the both. However, in everyday life, they always communicate with each other in Tsat, which I do not speak. Thus sometimes it was difficult for me to fully understand what was going on and this limits the depth of my fieldwork.

#### **4. Chapter Organization**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides an Islamic history of Utsat, giving a clear sense of what is religious faithfulness in the “traditional past”. The following two chapters deal with the changing degree of faithfulness in the “present” in terms of analyzing the Utsat changing foodways. Chapter 3 provides an ethnographic background of Utsat life after the development of Sanya tourism. Chapter 4 focuses on the meaning of qingzhen, linking the past to the present by capturing the embodiment of religious continuity and changes in eating regulations. Chapter 5 discusses how Utsat food and eating have changed under the impact of local tourism development, in particular, the law-breaking behaviors and their implications for changing religious faithfulness. Chapter 6 concludes the nature of Utsat social change by summing up the major findings and implications of this research.

## Chapter 2: An Islamic History of Utsat

The past is politically highly charged, ideologically powerful, and significant.

---- Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (2004:547)

Utsat could have qualified as the eleventh Muslim minority nationality in the People's Republic of China because they are historically, linguistically, and culturally distinct from mainland Hui by every criterion listed by the Minority Nationalities Commission.

---- Pang Keng-Fong (1987:29-38)

The term “Utsat” (pronounced as [ʌ:tzʌ]) is an autonym, used to refer to themselves by the Utsat when speaking in their indigenous language, Tsat. Thus non-Tsat speakers, including those scholars who study Utsat people without learning to use Tsat, are usually not aware of this term (Pang 1998b). It was only in 1992 that this term was introduced into English literature by Pang Keng-Fong. Among the Chinese academics, the term “Utsat” remains unknown. Instead, they are referred to as “Hainan Huizu” (海南回族) or “Hainan Muslims” (海南穆斯林) in Chinese literature, because they were identified in the 1950s by Chinese ethnologists for the State Commission for Nationality Affairs of People's Republic of China as an ethnic minority “Hui (回)”. The following will introduce the three main origins of today's Utsat people and how they became identified as Hui as well as how these historical accounts symbolize a “traditional past” of religious faithfulness.

### 1. Arabian-Persian Merchants

The uniqueness of Utsat is highly related to the special historical and geographical conditions of Hainan Island. In the ancient times, Hainan has been regarded as a place that situated at the edge of the ocean and the corner of the sky (天涯海角), and viewed as a backwater by successive Chinese dynasties and a mystery to foreigners. It was used for the imperial court to exile disfavored officials, believed to be a place that God forgot<sup>4</sup>. But meanwhile, located between East Asia and Southeast Asia, it serves as the most convenient gate way for the connections between China and the various Southeast Asian countries as well as one of the vital marine trading ports that links China to the West.

As early as the Tang dynasty, there were Muslims of Arab-Persian origins living on the island. They are considered as the earliest Muslims of Hainan and even, according to some scholars (e.g. Lai 2007 & Huang 2008), of the whole China. Those who came from Dashi (大食 a general name referring to nations of Arabian Peninsula in the Tang dynasty) were mostly merchants and travelers, transporting goods back and forth between China and the West along the Marine Silk Road (海上丝绸之路), an ancient sea route opened by Emperor Han Wudi (汉武帝 reigned 140-187 BC).

From the Tang (618-907) to the Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty, profits from the maritime trade were one of the Chinese government's major sources of revenue.

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<sup>4</sup> Described by the U.S South China Mission of Presbyterian Church, cited from *The Isle of Palms, Sketches of Hainan: the American Presbyterian Mission*, 1980, pp. 1, New York: Garland Pub.

Hence during that time, the central courts appointed special Commissions of Maritime Affairs at coastal cities to oversee maritime trade and provide logistical support and preferential treatment to foreign merchants in China, particularly the three main seaports of South China: Panyu (番禺, present-day Guangzhou [广州]), Mingzhou (明州, present-day Ningbo [宁波]), and Quanzhou (泉州).

Of these, Guangzhou is of special significance. Archaeological findings reveal that it was a major commercial and trading center in South China since ancient times. It has also been debated by many scholars as the starting point of the Marine Silk Road (cf. Zhao 2003 a&b and Zeng 1994). According to historical records, Hainan was a place that must be passed by sea to Guangzhou. For example, statements in *Guangzhou Tonghai Yidao* (广州通海夷道, The Maritime Passage from Guangzhou to Foreign Countries) described the route from Guangzhou to Arab nations by way of Hainan (Jia 1975: 1153-1154):

Sailing two-hundred kilometers in the southeastern direction from Guangzhou (广州) will arrive in Tunmenshan (屯门山), from where sailing in the west direction with a fair wind in two days will reach Jiuzhoushi (九州石). From there sailing southwards for another two days will arrive at Xiangshi (象石)<sup>5</sup> ... then Da-shi (大食国 Arab nations)<sup>6</sup> lies in the west of the west shore ... (translated by author)

This was a long and dangerous journey, complicated by pirates and shipwrecks. The vessels in South China Sea were regularly threatened by late-summer typhoons.

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<sup>5</sup> *Jiuzhoushi* (九州石) and *Xiangshi* (象石) were ancient place names of Hainan, the former is today's Qizhouliedao (七州列岛) in Wenchang county (文昌县) and the later was today's Dazhoudao (大州岛) in Wanning county (万宁县).

<sup>6</sup> Da-shi (大食), deriving from the Persian name Tazi, referring to a people in Persia, it was later used by the Persians to refer to the Arab lands. The Chinese used it from the Tang dynasty until about the 12<sup>th</sup> century to refer to Arabs.



Thus many of them had to berth at Hainan, which were documented in several historical records. For example, *Tai Ping Guang Ji* (太平广记) records the following (Li 1926:24).

Chen Wuzhen (陈武振), a powerful landlord in Zhen State (振州)<sup>7</sup>, owned a great deal of fully-filled warehouses with rhinoceroses, ivories, and tortoises. His wealth came from plundering merchant ships of the Western Region. At the very beginning, some of these vessels were just drifting down his land occasionally. Afterwards, however, as long as there were ships passing by, he climbed to a high hill with hair disheveled, using black magic to raise horrible winds and waves to cast a spell over the ships and drive them to his enchanting land. It was in this way that he became powerful (translated by author).

Also *Todaiwajyo Toseiden* (唐大和尚东征传 Jianzhen's Biography) records as below:

Every year, many merchant ships from Arab or Persia are plundered by Feng Ruofang (冯若芳, a powerful landlord in Hainan Wanan State, Tang Dynasty.). He took the plundered goods for himself and enslaved the captives. Moving toward south or north in three days, and east or west within five days, one would see the Arab-Persian slave villages, one after another (translated by author). (Zhenrenyuankai 1979:68)

These records show that the early Arab-Persian traders were often captured and enslaved by the local Hainanese landlords.

Apart from such historical documents, archaeological findings also support that in the Tang dynasty, today's Sanya City (三亚市), Lingshui county (陵水县), Danzhou county (儋州县) and Wanning county (万宁县) had been densely inhabited areas of foreign originated Muslims. There are six ancient cemeteries that remain to this day,

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<sup>7</sup> 'Zhen' is a name of a state of Hainan island in Tang Dynasty, where is present-day's Sanya City.

and these are directly linked to them, a great number of tombs are apparent of Arabian-Persian art style, particularly the gravestones (see Wu 2007).

Furthermore, ethnographical data collected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century show that some physical characteristics of Utsat imply their connections to the Middle East. Visiting Sanya twice in 1931, in his report, German ethnologist H. Stübel (Lo 1959:23)<sup>8</sup> observed that,

the Moslems of the district are of two distinct types. One group has narrow faces and long, hooked noses. The other group has snub noses with sunken bridges; the beards of the older members being either straight or curly, and their heads, generally, round. Those who have long, hooked noses are undoubtedly Semitic, which indicates both Arabs and Jews.

Later on, in 1942, a Japanese anthropologist named Kotsuna Aisho (translated as Hunajian'gai [忽那将爱] in Chinese literature) conducted a physical anthropological study of the Utsat, by sampling 198 Utsat adults, including male and female. He argued that the long nose clearly indicates their Arabian ancestry (cf. Jiang and Dong 1992:7)<sup>9</sup>. Today, the long nose trait is still easy to observe, particularly among the Utsat males. For example, Ha, my host brother, was called “Arabian Prince” by some Utsat women, for his long nose and fine deep eyes, making him a good looking man (see figure 1)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> This English statement is cited from *A New Study of P'u Shou-Keng and His Times* (see Bibliography). The original text was written in Germany, see Hans. Stübel. 1937. *Die Li-Stämme der Insel Hainan: Ein Beitrag zur Volkskunde Südchinas, unter Mit-wirkung von P. Meriggi*. pp. 263-265. Berlin: Klinkhardt and Biermann.

<sup>9</sup> The original writing is Japanese, see Aisho, Kotsuna (忽那将爱). 1944. 海南岛三亚回徒教的人类学的研究 (Anthropological Research on Hainan Muslims in Sanya). In 海南岛学术调查报告 第二回 (Academic Reports on Hainan Island Vol. 2), pp. 1-3. Taibei: Taihoku Imperial University 台北帝国大学.

<sup>10</sup> Shortly after I came back to Hong Kong, Ha went to Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (广州外语外贸大学) to study English. This picture was taken by one of his friends in the campus. He sent it to me in September 2008.

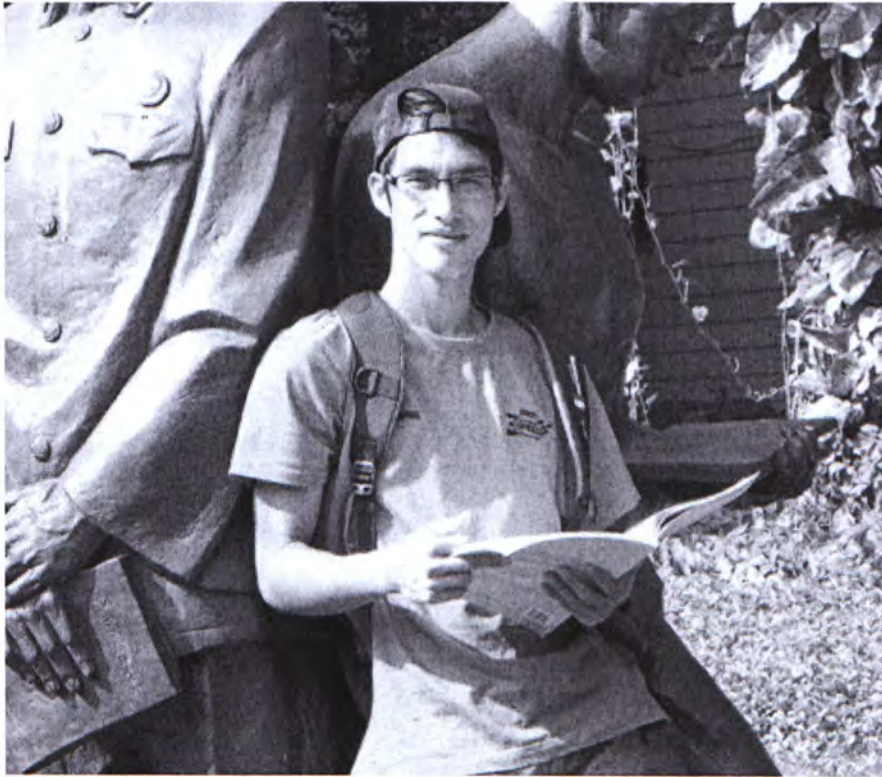


Figure 1: My host brother Ha, Sanya (photography by an Utsat friend of Ha, 2009).

Today, the Utsat speak the Hainan dialect and Mandarin in addition to their local language, namely, Tsat, a Chamic language belonging to the Austronesian language family (cf. Zheng 1986, 1997 and Pang 1987, 1990). It derives from an ancient kingdom, Champa (2-17th century), which stretched from central to southern contemporary Vietnam. This raises the question of how the Utsat, described as descendants of Arab-Persians, came to speak a Chamic language.

## 2. Champa Immigrants

The answer is found in another set of historical data, revealing that the majority of today's Utsat are mostly the descendents from another Muslim kingdom in Southeast Asia ---- Champa (translated as *Zhancheng* [占城] in Chinese literature). Located along the coastal plains of southern and central Vietnam, the kingdom of Champa flourished in Vietnam from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup>, and its king accepted Islam between 1607 and 1676. Indeed, many Champa inhabitants had already become Muslims much earlier than that. For instance, *Song Shi* (宋史 The History of Song Dynasty) recorded that in 961 AD, an envoy of Champa to China was a Muslim named Abu Hassan<sup>11</sup> (Setudeh-Nejad 2002:452). These Muslims came to settle in Champa probably because “ships from Basra, Sriaif, and Oman regularly passed the Indochinese region when they went to the country of Sin<sup>12</sup>”(Maspero 2002:5).

The early contact between Hainan and Champa was facilitated by the geographical closeness (see figure<sup>13</sup>).

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<sup>11</sup> In Chinese, “Abu Hassan” was recorded as Pu He-San (菩诃散), translated according to the pronunciation.

<sup>12</sup> “Sin” is another name of China in the ncient dynasties.

<sup>13</sup> This is a map describing the situations of the Song and Yuan dynasties, copied from Quanzhou Maritime Museum (泉州海外交通史博物馆). I have added the English place names.

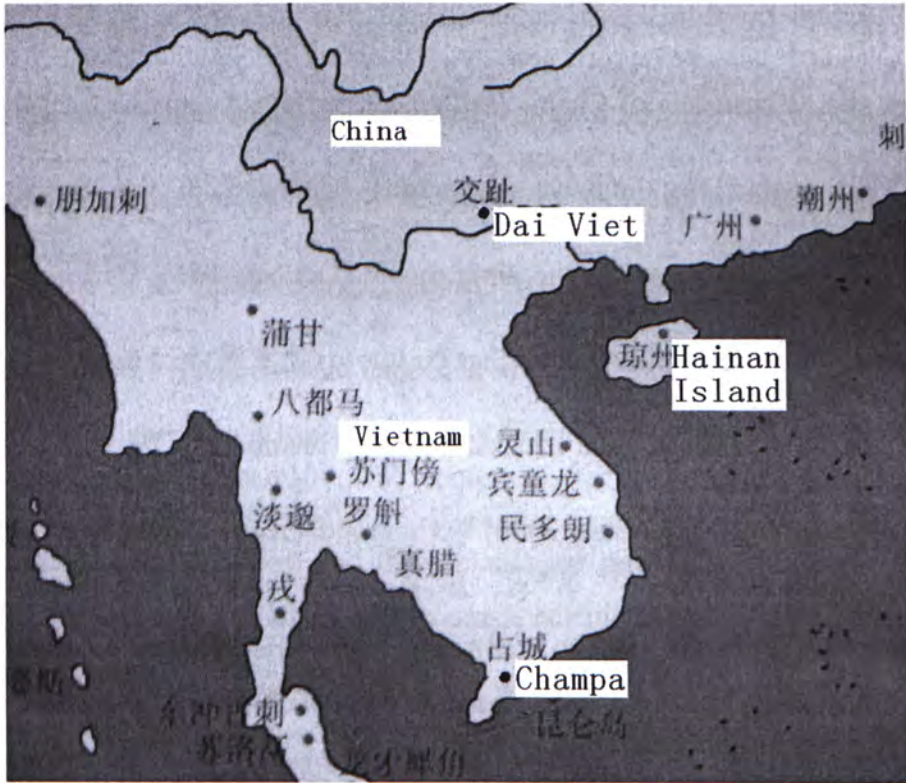


Figure 2: The map of Champa

In her research on the coasts of Vietnam (2006), Historian Li Tana stated that “Hainan’s most vital connection to the outside world, however, was Champa; beginning in the Song period, Cham envoys often stopped first in Hainan before proceeding to the mainland (p.93)” According to *Ming Shi* (明史 The History of Ming Dynasty), sailing with the wind from Qiongzhou (琼州, an administrative division name for Hainan used since the Tang dynasty), one can reach Champa in one day and night (Wade 2003). It is such a short distant that increases the possibilities of Chams to live in Hainan since very early times. Additionally, “the Chams, like their Malayo-Polynesian cousins, were skilled navigators who in early times reached lands so distant as China and Java, hence Cham colonists could easily have settled in Hainan”(Benedict 1941:130).

Although the earliest date of Chamic settlement in Hainan remains a mystery, it is clearly documented that massive migrations happened in the Song dynasty (960-1279). *Song Shi* states “In the ninth month (Oct/Nov 986), Danzhou (儋州, a prefecture on Hainan Island) reported that Pu Luo’e (蒲罗遏) had been forced off by Jiaozhou (交州, Dai Viet)<sup>14</sup> and had led over 100 members of his clan to come to allegiance (translated by Wade, 2005).” Thurgood (1999:22) analyzed that “this report, including “Pu”, used in the name of the leader, affirms the arrival of the Cham from Champa, the group we now identify as the Utsat”.

Although there is no direct evidence to prove that Pu and his clan are the ancestors of today’s Utsat, the name “Pu” itself bears some clues. As one of the most common surnames among the contemporary Utsat, Pu (蒲) is always mentioned with a legend which has been told from generation to generation. This was told to me as the local oral history, saying that a long time ago, when the Utsat ancestors arrived in Hainan, they were very hungry. Later on, they met some indigenous people on the island who asked about their name. But the Utsat didn’t understand the Hainanese language and just wanted food. They repeatedly said *wa pu* to the indigenous, meaning “eating” in their own language, Tsat. Therefore, the native Hainanese thought *wa pu* was the name of those Utsat people. That is why many of them were named as Pu.

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<sup>14</sup> Dai Viet is an independent Vietnamese state which was founded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, located at the border of contemporary China and Vietnam (see picture 2-1, pp. 7). See Maspero’s work (2002:61-122) for detailed historical studies on the battles between Champa and Dai Viet.

Such memory of immigration linguistically links the Utsat to the Chams and also matches the historical account, documenting that the strength of Champa and the life of its people had been tremendously destroyed by the years of wars with Dai Viet, which resulted in the massive immigrations. A 17<sup>th</sup> century's *Chinese encyclopedia* (《古今图书集成》) reports what happened in Hainan Island:

The foreigners [here] were originally from Champa, during the Song and Yuan dynasties (10<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> centuries), because of great disorder, they brought their families in ships and came to this place. They settled along the coast and these places are now called “foreigner’s villages”<sup>15</sup> or “foreigners’ coast”<sup>16</sup>. The people now registered in San-ya village are all of this tribe. Many of them are surnamed “Pu” and they do not eat pork. Within the home, they do not worship their ancestors, but they have a deity hall, where they chant scriptures and worship their deity. Their language is similar to that of the Hui-hui. ... They do not marry the natives and the latter do not marry them (translated by Wade 2009:233).

Along with the above official historical records and Utsat oral history, studies on the language Tsat also show the genetic closeness between Utsat and the Chams, which is considered the most compelling evidence. Extensively studied by linguists from many different countries, Tsat is defined as an Austronesian language spoken by Hainan Cham. It split off from North Rglai (a Chamic language) of Vietnam and migrated to Hainan in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century (see Zheng 1986 & 1997; Thurgood 1999; Pang 1990 & 1989). Therefore, being the only one Muslim group of Southeast Asian origin and the only Tsat speakers in China, a number of scholars (Pang 1992, 1987, Gladney 1991, 1989, 1987, and Pillsbury 1989, 1976, and 1973) argue that despite

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<sup>15</sup> 番村 (by author)

<sup>16</sup> 番浦 (by author)

being classified by the PRC as Hui, the Utsat are historically, linguistically, and culturally different from the mainland Hui.

### **3. Mainland Muslims**

Although the Utsat are distinct from Hui in many ways, a number of clues indicate that they have complicated relations with the mainland Muslims. From ancient times to the present, Muslims from elsewhere in China have immigrated to the Island, and gradually integrated into the Utsat community. Regardless of the impossibility to trace the ancestry of each individual, evidences from genealogies, local oral history, and ethnographic data all show that the Ming and Qing dynasties were the peak period of such immigrations from the mainland, particularly, the areas of Guangdong and Fujian. Of these, Pu (蒲) and Hai (海) are the most frequently mentioned clans which connect to the two famous persons in Chinese history, namely, Pu Shou-geng (蒲寿庚) and Hai Rui (海瑞) (see below).

Among the contemporary Utsat, these two surnames belong to a considerably large percentage of the population. Those with these two surnames are regarded by some Utsat as well as some scholars to have ancestral relations to Pu Shougeng and Hai Rui. But in fact, all the evidences from the genealogies and oral histories show that the connections between the Utsat and these two famed persons are indirect, albeit the genealogies recording that there were Pu and Hai family members who moved to



Hainan in early times. In the following, I will firstly explain the complex relations between Utsat and these two famous clans. And then, I will offer some ethnographic data that I have collected in the field which suggests that the proposed genetic relations may be attested by similarities in culture rather than genealogy.

### 3.1 The Pu (蒲) Lineage

The family of Pu Shougeng (蒲寿庚)<sup>17</sup> is one of the most influential Muslim clans in Chinese history. According to *Minshu* (闽书 *Records of Fujian*), “Pu Shougeng, the head of foreign traders, whose ancestors were from the West (西域, today’s Central Asia)” (He 1996:729). Having been originally engaged in foreign trade and shipping in Quanzhou (泉州, a City of Fujian Province) in the early 1200s, he was appointed as Customs Commissioners in charge of the external communication and trade in Quanzhou as well as the Pacification Commissioner along the Fujian coast at the end of the Southern Song dynasty (南宋末年, the late 1270s). However, his irresolute and wavering attitude led to his defection from the Song to the Yuan Dynasty when the latter took over the Empire. After his surrender to the Mongolian rulers, Pu played a leading role on the persecution of the members of the imperial family of the Song in the Quanzhou district. In this way, his alliance with the new Yuan rulers brought him high official posts, including those of Commander-in-Chief of the Fujian-Guangdong area, of Political Commissioner for Guangxi, of Governor

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<sup>17</sup> For the most detailed account of Pu Shougeng, see Kuwabara Jitsuzo, “On P’u Shou-keng,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, Vol. II (1928): 1-79, and also VII (1935): 1-104.

of Fujian, and finally, membership of the Cabinet in the Central Government. In the Yuan dynasty, the striking success of Pu Shougeng elevated the power of his clan in the political and economic arena within the areas of today's Guangdong and Fujian, where the Pu descendants mostly lived in the following Ming and Qing dynasties.

According to *The Genealogy of Pu* (《南海甘蕉蒲氏家谱》 Ding Guoyong 1987:6-7)<sup>18</sup>, in the Ming dynasty, the third brother Pu Jie (蒲杰), head of one Pu family in Guangdong<sup>19</sup>, moved his family to Hainan for business and settled down in Eman district (菽蔓乡), Dan county (儋县). His great grandfather, Pu Fushan(蒲甫山), was the son of Pu Shou-geng's brother, Pu Shoucheng (蒲寿成). Today, the tomb of Pu Jie still exists, located at the Fanpu village (番浦村), Xinying county (新英镇), Danzhou City (儋州市). Largely due to this piece of record, many people tend to make the genetic linkage between the Utsat Pu and the clan of Pu Shougeng.

For instance, Li Tana (2006:93) states:

Pu family genealogies thus serve as clues to trace the links between Hainan, Indochina and mainland China. These family genealogies are found in Hainan (Yaizhou), Fujian (Dehua), Guangdong (Guangzhou) and the Qinzhou areas in Guangxi. In other words, Pu families spread and lived where their trade was located, and the area around the Gulf of Tonkin was one of the places where they were concentrated.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Genealogy of Pu* (《南海甘蕉蒲氏家谱》 1987) had been originally written in 1619 AD (the Ming dynasty), and experienced a three-time revision during the Qing dynasty (1848, 1881, and 1907). In 1913 (Republic of China), it was printed and distributed to many Pu families. During the 1980s, one of them was collected by Guangdong Provincial Museum (广东省博物馆) and Guangdong Ethnic Study Institution (广东省民族研究所) in Foshan (佛山, a City of Guangdong). In 1987, it was published as one volume of "a series of historical documents of the Chinese Hui (中国回族古籍丛书)", edited by Ding Guoyong (丁国勇).

<sup>19</sup> According to the genealogy, there were eight *Pu* families in Guangdong at that time (Ding Guoyong 1987:6).

However, a research conducted in 1990 (Ma & Du) reported that most of Pu Shougeng's descendants were assimilated to Han (汉化) and Li (黎化), giving up Islam and taking up local cultural practices such as eating pork, worshiping ancestors, celebrating Han festivals and taking a new surname *Fu* (符) to become ethnic Han and Li. The only one custom remains that perhaps have something to do with Islam is "in funeral, the body is wrapped in white before it is put into a coffin." (p.98 translated by author).

Thus before 1983, almost all of the people had identified themselves as Han or Li without knowing any thing about their Muslim origin. In 1983, a Hainan Pu villager who worked in Guangzhou unexpectedly found a genealogy of Pu and he sent it back to Hainan. Since then, the Pu villagers knew their Muslim origin and their relations to a powerful lineage. Suddenly, many of them identified themselves as Hui and believed that they should be officially identified by the PRC government as such. Thus they applied for the Hui minority status but failed. Later on, they contacted the Utsat community in Sanya and expressed their strong willingness of becoming Hui.

The Utsat were moved by their strong sense of belonging, and sent several Utsat villagers to investigate the Danzhou Pu villages. Afterwards, the Utsat investigators reported that the similar funeral customs verified their Muslim origin, as was recorded in *The Pu Genealogy*. As a result, the Utsat told them that if they truly wanted to be Hui, to move to the Utsat community and live together. Hence in 1984,

more than thirty Pu families (more than 100 villagers) moved from Danzhou to Sanya. They received a warm welcome: the Utsat helped them to build houses and offered lands for them to farm.

However, they didn't live happily thereafter. Many Utsat villagers recalled that because drinking is prohibited, worshipping ancestors banned; raising pig and consuming pork outlawed; and praying, fasting, as well as studying Qur'an are required, etc, these "new Muslims" failed to adapt to the Islamic lifestyle from the very beginning. No more than a month, the Utsat found some of the "new Muslims" slipped into the Han villages nearby to drink alcohol and eat pork.

Moreover, these were not all the difficulties they had encountered. Coincidentally, it was late August, the period of typhoon. Endless heavy rains poured down day and night, many fields of the "new Muslim" families were destroyed by the flood. This time, the Utsat were upset already and were not willing to help. Finally, these Pu people decided to give up the dreams of being Hui. Half a year later, some of them began to move back, and one year later, all of them left the Utsat community. From then on, they had not contacted the Utsat. Anyway, the piece of genealogical record cannot be used to show that contemporary Utsat Pu surname originated from the mainland Pu Shougeng lineage. But, this does not deny possible relations between the Utsat Pu and the clan of Pu Shougeng.

### 3.2 The Hai (海) Lineage

Similarly, the importance of the Hai family also lies in the fame of a person, Hai Rui (海瑞), a well-known politician in the Ming dynasty, who was well known for his justice, honesty, and straightforwardness. Starting his official career in 1553, when he was already 41 years old, with a position as headmaster of an educational institution<sup>20</sup> in Fujian province, Nanping county (南平), where he built his reputation on uncompromising adherence to an upright morality and scrupulous honesty. These won him widespread popular support but meanwhile, earned him many enemies in the bureaucracy.

He served three emperors with difficulties. He was sentenced to death in 1566 by Jiajing Emperor (嘉靖帝) because he submitted a memorandum to impeach the Jiajing Emperor. But luckily, the emperor died soon and he was released and reappointed under the successive, Longqing Emperor (隆庆帝). Not surprisingly, he was soon forced to resign due to the many complaints made against him by his colleagues. He then spent 15 years of retirement in Hainan before being finally brought back in 1585 by Wanli Emperor (万历帝). But only two years later, he died in office and his body was sent back to his hometown Hainan to be buried (cf. Li Hongran's *Annals of Hai Rui* 1995a, 1995b, and 1996). Today, all the Hainanese including Utsat is proud of being the countrymen of Hai Rui. Memories of this

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<sup>20</sup> This educational institution was called Junxiang (郡庠). Hai Rui's position was called Jiaoyu (教谕), similar to today's school headmaster.

honest man were embedded in the Island: in temple statutory, in school textbooks, and in night story telling.

Today, five volumes of Hai genealogy (《海氏答儿公族谱》) are preserved in the library of Hainan Normal University (海南师范大学). The records reveal that this family originated from Fujian but moved to Guangdong in the Song dynasty. In 1374 (the Ming dynasty), one descendant of the fifth generation, Hai Da'er (海答儿), became a soldier and followed the army to Hainan, where he settled down in Qiongsan (琼山). His son was the great grandfather of Hai Rui. The reason why Hai Rui was linked to Muslim lies in his surname Hai, which is a Muslim surname in Chinese history. Furthermore, the name of his ancestor, Hai Da'er, is one of the most common Arabian male names, translated from Haydar or Haidar (cf. Yang 2002:419-422 & Li 1995a:67) in Arabic (حيدر), literally means "lion". However, connections between the Hai family members and the Utsat community are nowhere recorded in the genealogy. Nor does it document any Islamic practice. On the contrary, it reports that Hai Rui, his father, and his grandfather all married Han women. Therefore, I tend to see Hai Rui as probably the descendant of a Muslim family but, the chance of he himself being a Muslim is quite slim. In sum, both the families of Pu Shougeng and Hai Rui have little to do with the Utsat, but then why do a large number of Utsat today has surnames Pu and Hai?

### 3.3 The Book of Utsat Genealogies (《通屯宗谱全书》)

Today, Pu remains one of the largest surnames among the Utsat, and according to the local oral history, many common surnames in the villages such as Ha(哈), Hai(海), Gao(高), Liu (刘) and Yang (杨) were directly changed from the Pu during the Qing dynasty. The reason for this change lies in a compromise between the Islamic practice and the Han Chinese tradition. In ancient China, marriage between the people of the same surname was not accepted. But the fact was that most of the Utsat were surnamed Pu. The majority of non-Pu surnames were non-Muslim ethnic groups. And the Utsat traditionally did not marry non-Muslims. But at the same time, they also followed the Chinese traditional practice of not marrying people with the same surname. Therefore, some Utsat Pu family just simply changed their surname so as to facilitate the intra-ethnic marriages. This story of name-changing is supported by a newly discovered collection of Utsat genealogies in Hong Kong, 2004. But where did it come from? What makes it reliable?

In 1998, an article named “On the Genealogies of Hainan Hui People” (Jiang: 221-219) was published, claiming that “having searched the genealogies among the Muslims in Hainan for many years; we haven’t got any result yet (translated by author).” This is to say, for a long time, it was believed by the academics that the Utsat genealogies were absent. However, many old Utsat villagers today recalled that until the early 20th century, detailed genealogies of each surnamed family were still well kept in the villages. Also, in *The History of Hainan Island* (《海南岛史》

1943 [Zhang 1979])<sup>21</sup>, a Japanese scholar Kobata Atsushi (小叶田淳) clearly pointed out he borrowed a book of genealogies from Liu Xianzun (刘贤遵), the headmaster of Huihui primary school (回辉小学), who had collected all the genealogies of different surnamed families in the village and edited them into one book, namely, Tongtun Zhongpu Quanshu (通屯宗谱全书, the book of Utsat genealogies). How did it get lost? Where has it been?

This is a long story. Right before the liberation of Hainan Island (1950), Xiong Jinzhong (熊进忠), the head of Guangdong Islamic Foundation (广东省伊斯兰教基金会), asked for the book of genealogies from Liu Xianzun (刘贤遵). And Liu gave the only one version to him. Liu recalled that Xiong brought their genealogies to Taiwan and then disappeared. Half a century later, the villagers told me that in 2004, Zhou Weimin (周伟民), a professor of Hainan University who was strongly interested in the genealogies of Hainan, got a chance to go to Taiwan for a conference. Before he left, some Utsat asked his help to find their genealogies. Interestingly, Prof. Zhou didn't find it in Taiwan, but unexpectedly found it in the library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on his way home. Then, Zhou made a copy of it and brought it back to Hainan. The villagers said that they appreciated Zhou very much and made several copies from him.

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<sup>21</sup> The book was originally written in Japanese, and published in Tanbei in 1943. Here I use the Chinese version, translated by Zhang Xunqi (张迅齐) in 1979.



I myself saw one of these copies in an imam's house. In fact, the one that Prof. Zhou found is not the original text which was borrowed from Liu half a century ago, but was edited as part of a book chapter titled "The P'u Family of Hainan Island" (Chapter IX p. 165-226). The book is titled *A New Study of P'u Shoukeng and His Times*, authored by Lo Hsiang-Lin, and published in Hong Kong, in 1959, about ten years after it had been taken from the Utsat. In the "References", Lo explicitly states that "the book of genealogies of Hainan Hui people was provided by Liu Xianzun" (p.259). Therefore, it is believed that this newly-found book of genealogies is the one that had been lost decades ago.

Providing very detailed records on when and who changed their surname Pu into others, these genealogies verify the Utsat oral history of surname-changing. For example, Gao Shi (高仕) was the second generation (after his father [unknown name]) to be Gao (高) (p.169-172), Pu Chengshu (蒲成树) was the first generation to change his surname to Ha (哈) (p. 174-176), Pu Tianfu (蒲天福) was the first generation of being Liu (刘) (p.178-180), Pu Chunfa (蒲春法) was the first generation to be Yang(杨) (p.183-184), and Pu Shangzhi (蒲尚志) was the first generation to be Hai (海) (p.195-201), etc<sup>22</sup>. Finally, the myth-laden relations between Utsat and the clans of Pu Shougeng and Hai Rui are uncovered by the rediscovery of the book of Utsat genealogies.

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<sup>22</sup> Apart from Ha (哈) and Hai (海), which were and still are the common surnames of many Chinese Muslims, the other newly-changed surnames were all ordinary Han Chinese surnames.

### 3.4 Some Observations

Despite the fact that family members of Pu Shougeng and Hai Rui did immigrate to Hainan, it has been proven that both famous persons were genetically unrelated with the Utsat. However, there is no doubt that probably due to the convenience of practicing Islam, from the ancient times down to the present, there are many ordinary mainland Muslims who moved to the already-existing Utsat community to live, and gradually, incorporated into the Utsat community. Notwithstanding most of them are unrecorded, many clues are still available. There are two pieces of ethnographic data I have collected in the field which will be described below. They might have something to do with the early mainland Muslim immigrants, particularly from Southern Fujian and Guangdong.

In history, the migrants from Guangdong and Southern Fujian to Hainan Island were great in number, one obvious evidence is the Hainan dialect is classified as a branch of Hokkien (the Southern Fujian language, 闽南语系). The Muslims migrants might have been included in such a mass immigration. Between 20 to 22, November, 2009, I traveled to Fujian and saw a popular custom in some areas of Southern Fujian --- women wearing a certain kind of head ornament in festivals (see figure 3 the Xunpu bride [Chen 2007:61]), which is very similar to what I had observed in the Utsat wedding (see figure 4 the Utsat bride).



Figure 3: The Xunpu bride, Fujian (photographed by Chen, 2007).



Figure 4: The Utsat Bride, Sanya (photographed by author, 2009).

In Hainan Island, the Utsat is the only one ethnic group that practices this custom. When I was in the field, I asked many Utsat about the origin, but all of them said that “we want to know too, because it is quite different from the Muslims of other places in China.” The only thing they know was that this custom is passed down from the ancestors. And the Southern Fujian is the first case that I found similar to the Utsat. I bought a book about the life of a Xun Pu (蠃浦, a place of Southern Fujian, near Quanzhou) woman, in which provides the origin: “‘Xunpu Auntie’ wearing fresh flowers came from the adjacent Yunlu small hill village. In the Song and Yuan period, the famous Arab businessmen Pu Shougeng brothers lived here. They planted various types of jasmine shrubs shipped from Arabia. The villagers’ living depends on their flowers and dress, from generation to generation. It is obvious that ‘Xunpu Auntie’ flower-wearing custom originated a long time ago (p.29)”. Interestingly, among the Utsat, although the head ornaments that they now use for the bride are not made of flowers, the name of this ritual is “Chahua (插花)”, which literally means wearing flowers.

Therefore, histories are always connected in unexpected ways, the relations between Utsat and the family of Po Shougeng appears again. As Lo stated why he includes Hainan Pu Muslims in her book of Fu Shougeng, “the P’u family of Sanya evidently had no direct relation with the P’u Shou-geng family. But both were probably of Arabic stock, both followed the Islamic faith; both took the surname of P’u and both were interested in overseas shipping and trade (Lo 1959:23)”. Therefore, “I currently

got the book of genealogies of Hainan Muslims, recording that their ancestors were came from overseas. But whether it belongs to the clan of Pu Shougeng remains uninvestigated. I includes this here is for the sake of data preserving and further related researchers (1959:165)". Similarly, here I am not saying that this Utsat custom is originated from Fujian or Arab, but I believe such similarity is worth mentioning for possible future and further investigations.

Another finding is a legend that I heard many times in the field. It says that during the Tang dynasty, Abu Waqqas (宛葛斯巴巴), the uncle of Mohammed, was sent to Guangzhou with thirty Arabs as missionaries, and some of them went to Hainan. This legend shows the possibility of Muslim immigrants from Guangzhou. Hence the linkage between the Utsat to the Southern Fujian and Guangdong in history should neither be limited in the connections to the clans of Pu Shougeng and Hai Rui, nor the evidences from historical documents only. In my view, one of the possible ways to map the past is to embrace multidisciplinary evidences and perspectives, integrating ethnographical data with historical records as well as archaeological findings.

Apart from the immigrants of Guangdong and Fujian, Muslim immigrants from other provinces in China are worth mentioning. For example, many Utsat villagers recalled that around four or five decades ago, more than half of the imams in the villages were invited from the mainland, such as Henan and Yunnan. I also met

several mainland Muslims in the field. A case in point is that a sixty-one-year old woman came from Shandong province. Having lived among the Utsat for more than thirty years, she speaks Tsat very fluently and has a strong sense of belonging to and of being an Utsat. I met her in a cemetery, where many ancient Muslim gravestones with exquisitely sculptured patterns were destroyed. She told me that it was during the Korban Festival<sup>23</sup> in 2008 when the villagers visited the cemeteries as usual and were all shocked by the horrible scene in front of them: almost all the tombs were rudely destroyed by the bulldozers. Soon they discovered that it was done by the navy which wanted the land to build a parachute training base.<sup>24</sup> From then on, several old Utsat villagers voluntarily guard the cemetery everyday from morning to night. This Shandong woman was one of them.

For any group of people, sad experiences as such or even worse are full of history. And it is always the disasters that strongly arouse peoples' sense of belonging and bond them closely. The Shandong woman, for example, had experienced many political events during the thirty years from the mid 1970s to 2008: in her early days there, she heard the horrible stories such as the Han pushed one Utsat's head onto raw pork (see also Pang 1992:245) during the Land Reform (1952) and Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Afterwards, together with the Utsat, she experienced the Era of Economic Reform (1978-present)<sup>25</sup> and witnessed the development of local

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<sup>23</sup> Korban Festival is Muslim's New Year Festival.

<sup>24</sup> See more details at:

<http://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/alerts/4390-Alert-China-Villagers-protest-against-destruction-of-ancient-Muslim-cemetery-on-Hainan-Island> accessed 22 November 2009.

<sup>25</sup> The Chinese economic reform (改革开放) refers to the program of economic reforms called "Socialism with

tourism that brought significant changes to the community. Having experienced countless pains and joys together over the centuries, at the local level, the Muslims from the ancient kingdom of Middle East, of Indochina, and of the vast areas in Chinese mainland have lived together and coalesced into an integrated Muslim group. At the political level, in the 1950s, this Muslim group was officially categorized as a group of people by the Communist Party of PRC, namely, the Hui (回) ethnic minority, a label that they shared with the vast majority of Chinese Muslims.

#### 4. Being Hui

In China, Hui (回) is the term that has long been used to refer to Muslims since the Yuan dynasty (元朝, 1206-1368, a Mongol-founded Empire). Originated from the term Huihe (回纥) used by the Tang court in referring to its Uyghur allies, it has little to do with Islam at that time and evolved as Huihui (回回) afterward.

The first instance of the use of Huihui as an ethnonym appeared in a battle verse of Song dynasty, collected in Mengxi Bitan (梦溪笔谈 Shen 1957): “flag bearers form a sea of polished silk brocade, armored troops charge downhill to battle the Huihui (旗队浑如锦绣堆, 银装背嵬打回回)”<sup>26</sup>, sung by Song soldiers at Yanzhou (延州,

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Chinese characteristics (中国特色的社会主义)” in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) that were started in December 1978 by pragmatists within the Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) and are ongoing as of the early 21st century. The goal of Chinese economic reform was to generate sufficient surplus value to finance the modernization of the mainland Chinese economy.

<sup>26</sup> This English translation is from Internet. Muslim Heritage. 2008. “The Islamic Heritage in China: A General Survey.” At <http://www.muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=992>, accessed 30 May 2010.

present day's Yanan [延安], Shaanxi Province [陕西省]). It is widely accepted that Huihui in this context refers to a group of Uyghurs in the Buddhist Kingdom of Gaochang (高昌回鹘), located in the areas of today's Xinjiang (新疆). Although how exactly this name of non-Muslim Uyghurs became that of the Muslim Huihui remains in academic debates, the fact is, during Mongol-period, Huihui came to be used as a term to refer to Muslims in general, especially to signify the Muslim Uyghurs and Muslims from central Asia.

From then on, Huihui explicitly stood for the ethnic-religious identity of Muslims in China who gradually, became one of the five main categories of people in Chinese history. In the state's racial ranking system (“满汉蒙藏回” Man, Han, Meng, Zang, Hui) of the Qing dynasty (清朝 1636-1911, a Manchu-founded empire), Muslims were listed at the bottom: 1). Man (Manchu); 2). Han; 3). Meng (Mongolians); 4). Zang (Tibetans); 5). Hui (Muslims) (see Yu 2003).

And soon after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Sun Yat-sen (孙中山), who established the Republic of China (中华民国 1912-1949), immediately pronounced one of the major principles upon which the state was founded, namely, “Five Nationalities under one Union” (五族共和论), emphasizing the harmony of the five major ethnic groups in China as represented by the colored stripes on the national flag: The Han



(red), the Manchu (yellow), the Mongols (blue), the Hui (white)<sup>27</sup>, and the Tibetans (black). It symbolized that the country belonged equally to these five kinds of people.

Right after the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949, the state embarked on a monumental endeavor to identify and recognize nationalities from those who qualified among the more than 400 groups applying for national minority status. Teams of researchers, social scientists, and Communist Party cadres were sent by state planners in Beijing to every corner of China. Groups qualified for recognition if they could meet the Stalinist criteria<sup>28</sup> of the "four commons": a common language, locality, economy, and cultural makeup, which resulted in that there are 56 nationalities in China today, one ethnic Han majority and 55 ethnic minorities.

Interestingly enough, despite the fact that "they generally do not have their own language, peculiar dress, literature, music, or the other cultural inventories (Dru 1991:98)" which clearly failed to meet the Stalinist criteria for recognition, the Hui was among the first minorities to be recognized. On this account, Dru (2004:156)

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<sup>27</sup> The symbolic meaning of this five colored flag remains unclear. When the government of the Republic of China was established on January 1, 1912, such "Five-Colored Flag" was selected by the provisional Senate as the national flag. Sun Yat-sen, however, did not consider the five-colored flag was appropriate, reasoning that horizontal order implied a hierarchy of nationalities as in the imperial times, and the relations between the meaning of colors and the nationalities that symbolized were also ambiguous, such as yellow for Manchu. (data comes from Dr.Sun Yat-Sen Academic Research Site: [http://sun.yatsen.gov.tw/content.php?cid=S01\\_02\\_03](http://sun.yatsen.gov.tw/content.php?cid=S01_02_03))

<sup>28</sup> Stalin defined a nationality as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." (quoting from J.V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in *Works*, Vol.2, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, pp. 307)

argues that the Hui identity is a state-imagined notion, whereas many Chinese scholarly publications interpret otherwise, saying that the application of Stalinist criteria should be flexible to adapt to the situation of China: although the Hui are the most widely distributed minority people, and exhibit a large diversity of languages as well as economic lifestyle, they all have a strongly sense of belonging to Islam, which is of the greatest importance in ethnic identification (e.g. Yang 2000).

In this regard, since the 1950s onward, Utsat has been identified by the state and gradually by themselves and others as Hui People (回族). But the rationale for classifying Utsat population as Hui is unknown, Pang stated (1992:30):

I was not been able to get any satisfactory answers to this question from a prominent scholar at the Central Institution Nationalities (Zhongyang Minzu Xueyuan) in Beijing (Song Shuhua 1989: personal communication). The views of these scholars who may also be ranking cadres is clearly important to the enactment of minority policies. One Utsat religious scholar and leader, who graduated from Beijing Islamic Center and who is currently on scholarship study in Saudi Arabia, also reported that he had often wondered about the same question himself but could not get an official explanation as to why they were classified as Hui.

Having been integrated as a people despite coming from different backgrounds, the Utsat today lives a life of a shared language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture, which perfectly matches the definition of an independent nationality according to the Stalinist criteria. Pang thus argued, “by all the pertinent Stalinist criteria adopted by the Chinese Communist Party to classify and enumerate China’s minority non-Han populations, Utsat should have been classified a separate Muslim minority nationality as the

Uighur or Uzbek were so classified (1992:30).”

In fact, although the Utsat are apparently different from the mainland Hui, and might be improperly classified in the ethnic identification, nowadays, Hui is generally accepted by the Utsat themselves as the ethnic identity. During my stay in the field, “Hui Min” (回民, Hui people) is the term used by the local Han and Utsat themselves. Many Utsat villagers do not know it was the state politics of ethnic identification that made “Hui” their name. Nor do they know clearly that apart from Hui and Uyghur, there are another eight Muslim ethnic groups<sup>29</sup> in China. In the local context, rather than signify a particular ethnic group, on many occasions, the Utsat usage of Hui refers to Muslims in general, sometimes even to the Muslims all over the world (see Chapter 3). In a word, the Utsat have no problem of being categorized as Hui.

However, Pang (1996) argued that this does not mean the issue of Utsat identity is that simple. Actually, “cultural practices provide the basis for the constructions and reconstruction of their multiple ethnic identities”. First, “Hui identity is born out of the state’s official identification”; Second, “Huan-nang (番人)<sup>30</sup> identity is constructed largely from their long-standing historical relations with the local Han, Li, and Miao”; Third, Utsat identity connotes being Muslims in general as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Totally, there are ten Muslim ethnic groups in China: the Hui(回族), the Uyghur(维吾尔族), the Kazakhs(哈萨克族), the Kyrgyz(柯尔克孜族), the Uzbeks(乌兹别克族), the Tatars(塔塔尔族), the Salars(撒拉族), the Bao’an(保安族), the Dongxiang(东乡族), and the Tajiks(塔吉克族).

<sup>30</sup> In Hainan dialect, “Huan-nang” (番人) means foreign barbarians.

forging a new ethnic identity as Chams. Consequently, being Hui, Huan-nang, and Utsat simultaneously shows that the Utsat identities are produced by the interplay of traditions of descent, state policy, and ethnic relations, which resonates with Keyes's viewpoint (1981:28) that there are two main aspects of ethnicity: culturally defined notions of descent and sociopolitical circumstance. In a word, being Hui is only one of the layers of the Utsat identities. But meanwhile, this is also a powerful label, bonding the Utsat together with the other Muslim groups in China.

One good case in point is the Utsat statement of "we Hui prefer wheat food". It is widely acknowledged that the staple food in North China is usually made of wheat and millet, while it is rice in South China. I was born and raised in Hainan Island, where "we southern people prefer rice" is the statement that is often expressed by many Hainanese friends of mine as well as I myself when we are asked to make choice between rice and wheat food. Surprisingly, in the Utsat village, what I heard was the preference for wheat food. But this does not mean that the Utsat staple food is made of wheat or millet, it means something ethnically special.

The first time I heard this was in a noodle restaurant of Huixin village, namely, Lanzhou Handmade Noodle (兰州拉面), when I went with Yan for lunch. Naturally, I thought this was aimed at the tourists, not for the locals. But as soon as I stepped in, I heard someone speaking Tsat. This surprised me very much. I then asked Yan whether the Utsat usually eat noodles and other wheat food. "Not really always, as

you have seemed, most of the times, we eat rice. But wheat food is the traditional food of Hui. So we have no problem eating it.” I was shocked by the answer, for I never thought a Hainanese person would claim wheat food as part of his eating “tradition”. I thus asked a cluster of questions: Have you been eating noodles since you were born? Do the villagers make noodles for festivals or rituals? Is there any special meanings attached to having wheat food? Yan had no answer to most of them, but what he remembered only was that there were no noodles at festivals.

This made me think that having noodles may not be an Utsat tradition, but a tradition of the Muslims in Northwest China. As Dillon (1996:54) states in his book: “although it is usually assumed that rice is the most staple food in China, wheat and millet are grown widely in the north, and northern Chinese of all ethnic groups often eat bread and noodles of various kinds in preference to rice.” Thus, the distinction between wheat and rice eating is actually the distinction between the south the north China rather than the distinctions between Han and Hui in Hainan Island.

However, the Northwest area of China is such a meaningful place for this case. It is regarded as the Islamic “center” in China as well as the birthplace of the Lanzhou Handmade Noodle. Being the most wide-spread Muslim chain restaurant in China, the Lanzhou Handmade Noodle restaurant serves many kinds of wheat food, especially the most famous one, a certain kind of handmade noodle, *Lanzhou lamian* (兰州拉面). According to the chain restaurants’ history, this noodle is originally

invented by a Muslim in 1915, Ma Baozi (马保子), who lived in a Muslim community of the Lanzhou region. And because almost all the restaurants of *Lanzhou lamian* are opened by Hui, it is widely perceived as a Hui food place.

Under the reform policy, more and more Utsat villagers have opportunities to travel elsewhere for various purposes, such as education and business. However, China is a predominantly Han society. Most of the places that the Utsat traveled to are non-Muslim places where they can hardly find qingzhen food except for the Muslim-owned Lanzhou lamian restaurants. Gradually, the wheat food that was served in Lanzhou lamian became the symbol of qingzhen, not only to the different kinds of Chinese Muslims, but also to the majority of Han people. As Sidney Mintz correctly points out that “ ... food preferences are close to the center of their self-definition: people who eat strikingly different foods in different ways are thought to be strikingly different ...” (1986:3). Consequently, the Utsat preference for wheat food is largely the result of the PRC ethnic identification project, which categorized Utsat as Hui.

## **5. Summary and Analysis**

To sum up, Utsat is an integrated Muslim group of complex origins. What bound them together for centuries to live as one is the continuity of practicing Islam. Today,

the Utsat are very proud of their long history of being Muslims and regard this indicates their religious authenticity as well as the deep degree of faithfulness. “Our community is a very ancient one on Hainan Island” was the statement that I frequently heard in the field, spoken by both Utsat men and women, ranging from primary school kids to old people with white hair. This is how the traditional “past” locates its position to shape the present. It deeply implants in the Utsat’s mind that they are born as pious Muslims and should be so all through their life. As one Utsat woman once said to me, “my life is forged this way from birth.”

However, as seen from the Utsat history presented above, ever since the Arab-Persian merchants and travelers accidentally became slaves in the island, they never stopped encountering changes: the mass-immigrants from Champa, the changing ruling class of different dynasties, the Sino-Japanese War, the Cultural Revolution, the three-year Communist Famine, and so on.

As noted previously, the Utsat generally refer all the periods before the development of local tourism as the “past”, representing a powerful Islamic “tradition”. Because it strongly shows that no matter what happened, the Utsat never gave up their religion. But such a long continuous history does not stand for a lasting deep degree of religious faithfulness. We never know whether this group of people had faced religious crisis before. One thing for sure is that Islam survives among them for centuries, regulating their ways of life to a large extent and maintaining their ethnic

distinctiveness from other groups of people. In a word, it is the continuous Islamic practice that makes Utsat to be an ethnic group as such. Past is therefore ideologically powerful and significant in shaping the present.



## Chapter 3: The Contemporary Utsat Community

In chapter 2, we have seen how the long-established Islamic tradition represents the deep degree of religious faithfulness of an Utsat *past*. To examine how this *past* functions to maintain the continuity of Islamic belief in contemporary Utsat life, this chapter provides an ethnographic background of the Utsat social settings, particularly after the mid 1980s, when it is perceived as *the changing present* in the local context.

### 1. Location and Demography

This community comprises two villages, namely, Huixin (回新) and Huihui (回辉). Both villages are located in Fenghuang township (凤凰镇 literally Phoenix township) of Sanya Region, which is about half an hour's drive from downtown Sanya. In the past, this area was called Yanglan (羊栏 literally Goat Railing), a place name specifically referring to the Muslim villages, because the Muslims raised goats. Although the name was changed to Fenghuang in 2001, the older generation in Sanya still use the term Yanglan. During the time of my fieldwork, the Utsat population was around 8,000 to 9,000<sup>31</sup>. About 5,000 lived in the Huihui village and about 3,000 in the Huixin village.

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<sup>31</sup> According to Hainan Statistical Yearbook 2009 (pp.53, Beijing: China Statistical Pres), the registered population of Sanya Hui at the end of 2008 is 8273.



Figure 5: A view of Huihui village, Sanya (photography by author, 2009).

## 2. The Local Religious Practice

### 2.1 The Mosques

During the Tang and Song dynasties, the distribution of the Muslim population on Hainan Island was wider. There are a number of related historical records on the mosques, such as in the regions of Danxian (儋县), Wanning (万宁), and Sanya. For example, *Qiongtai Gazetteer of Zhengde*<sup>32</sup> ([正德琼台志] records that in Sanya:

... around 50 kilometers (一百里) away on the east from Yazhou (崖州), there is a mosque built during the period of Hongwu (洪武 1368-1398, the Ming dynasty) ... among the believers, those

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<sup>32</sup> “Zhengde” was one of the titles of emperor’s reign during the Ming dynasty, lasting from 1506 to 1521.

who can read their foreign holy book are called 'teachers (先生)'. Just like Huihui, they dress in the white, sitting on the ground of the mosque to read their holy book ... (cited in Jiang & Dong 1992:16, translated by author)

Today, accompanying the lost of Islamic practices and Muslim identity, most of those ancient mosques outside Sanya Region have disappeared in time. Only the ones which were built within the Utsat community still exist, distributed in the two villages. In the Huihui village, there are four mosques, namely, Northwestern Mosque (西北大寺), Northern Mosque (北寺), Old Mosque (古寺), and New Mosque (新寺). And two are in the Huixin village, namely, Southern Mosque (南寺) and Nankai Mosque (南开清真寺).

Of these, the New Mosque was built in 1979 with thirty-year history. The rest were all originally built in the late 15th century (the Ming dynasty). These were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and rebuilt in the 1980s. According to many historical documents, as elsewhere in China, the original Utsat mosques were built in classical Chinese architectural style, for example, the following photo (figure 6) was taken by a German ethnologist in the 1930s. This is one of the very rare photos showing the Utsat mosque before the Cultural Revolution<sup>33</sup>. Today, the rebuilt mosques exhibit varied architectural styles, some still remaining classical Chinese (see figure 7) and some adopted with Arabic style (see figure 8).

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<sup>33</sup> This picture is copied from Hans. Stübel. 1937. *Die Li-Stämme der Insel Hainan: Ein Beitrag zur Volkskunde Südchinas, unter Mit- wirkung von P. Meriggi*. Berlin: Klinkhardt and Biermann. And the mosque in the picture was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.



Figure 6: The yard of the Western Mosque, Sanya (photography by Hans Stubel, 1937).



Figure 7: The bower in the yard of the Northwestern Mosque in Huihui village, Sanya (photography by author, 2009).



Figure 8: The entrance to the prayer hall of the Old Mosque in Huihui village, Sanya (photography by author, 2009).

## 2.2 Core Duties and Beliefs

Regardless of the destruction of the mosques in history, “for thousands of years, our practice of the Five Pillars of Islam and the Six Articles of Faith (五功六信) have never changed”, Imam Hai told me. The Utsat believe that the Five Pillars are the core beliefs that shape Muslim thoughts and behaviors. A Muslim who fulfills *Shahadah* (profession of faith), *Salah* (prayers), *Zakah* (giving to the poor and needy), *Sawm* (fasting during Ramadan) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) will have the chance to enter paradise.

Firstly, according to my interviews with several Utsat imams, achieving *Shahadah*

(profession of faith 正信) requires believing in the six articles. There are: 1). Belief in the oneness of God; 2). Belief in the angels of God; 3). Belief in the revelations (books) of God, including the Torah, the Psalm of David, the Gospel of Jesus and the Qur'an; 4). Belief in the prophets of God, such as Noah, Moses, Solomon, Jesus and Muhammad; 5). Belief in resurrection after death and Day of Judgment; 6). Belief in pre-measurement of God.

Secondly, praying five times a day is required of all Utsat. In the village mosques, the specific times for daily prayer were posted on the wall. Everyday, Imams of each mosque use loudspeakers to call the villagers to prayer. Those who are supposed to pray in the mosque were only males, females should pray at home. But most of the Utsat do not pray five times a day. They explained to me that their work schedule did not allow them to fulfill all the requirements, but many Utsat still tried their best. For example, many people would attend the noon prayer, because that was the most convenient time for most of them who worked nearby the villages. But the fact is that not every Utsat man attends the noon prayer everyday, sometimes even when he is free.

Apart from the daily prayers, a prayer gathering on every Friday noon is significant to all the Utsat men, namely, *zhuma* (主麻), which means collective prayer. In general, most of the Utsat men would be present at *zhuma*, including those who do not pray every day; otherwise they will be blamed by the elders. In the villages, one

of the ways to describe a non-pious Muslim is to mention his frequent absence at *zhuma*. Additionally, every year, during the Korban Festival and Lesser Bairam<sup>34</sup>, the Utsat imams lead all the villagers including men and women, the young, the old to get together in an open field to pray, namely, *huili* (会礼), which means festival prayer. No one would be absent except for those who are not in the villages.

Thirdly, giving to the poor and needy is *tianke* (天课), which is very well practiced by the Utsat. *Tianke* originated from an Arabic term *zakat*, which refers to purity. It means that by giving *tianke*, one's private properties will be purified. The Utsat imams and respected elders in the villages are responsible to collect and distribute *tianke* to the needy and the poor from time to time, especially during the period of festivals. Although this is not mentioned as a required duty, most of the Utsat families are willing to donate money.

Fourthly, fasting during Ramadan is required to all the Muslims. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar as well as the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and indulging in anything that is in excess or ill-natured from dawn until sunset. During Ramadan, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds. In

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<sup>34</sup> Korban Festival and Lesser Bairam are the two most important annual festivals to the Muslims. The former is the Muslims' New Year and the later is a celebration of the end of their fasting month (Ramadan). According to the Islamic calendar, Corban Festival falls on the 10<sup>th</sup> December and Lesser Bairam is 70 days before the Corban.

2009, the Ramadan was from 22 August to 21 September, I observed three days of the Utsat practice in the villages. My host family had two meals a day, one was at dusk, and the other was around four o'clock in the morning, so did the other Utsat families. In the village, the frequency of mosque prayer was higher than ordinary days, but I did not observe the prohibition of smoking.

Finally, pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) is highly encouraged for all the Utsat, and those who have experienced *hajj* are greatly honored, because it is a moral obligation that must be carried out at least one time in their lifetime by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it. It is viewed as a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people and their submission to God. Pilgrimage to Mecca has long been a tradition among the Utsat. *The Book of Utsat genealogies* (通屯族谱全书) keeps a name list of the Utsat pilgrims during the Qing dynasty and the period of Republic of China. But for some political reasons, the *hajj* had stopped for a long time after the liberation (1949). Until 1985, an Utsat named Jiang Zhenying (江振英) joined a team of Chinese Muslims to Mecca which was organized and supported by the Muslim World League (MWL). He is remembered as the first Utsat *Hazhi* (哈只)<sup>35</sup> of the PRC period. Since the 1990 onward, as the local economy has improved, more and more Utsat could afford the pilgrimage. Villagers told me that more than one hundred Utsat had been to Mecca during these recent two decades. In 2002, the number was forty two, because the pilgrimage was financially supported by the King

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<sup>35</sup> *Hazhi* (哈只) is the term for pilgrims.



of Saudi Arabia<sup>36</sup>.

### 3. Education

#### 3.1 Religious Education

The influence of family and community is no doubt significant in personal life. Anderson (2005:155) argues that “in the real world, virtually everybody comes into his or her faith as a young child learning it from parents, or as an older child and young adult learning it from peers.” In Utsat life, girls are taught to wear headscarves since nine years old and boys should start to pray in the mosques since twelve years old. One hot afternoon, I walked into the Huihui primary school (回辉小学) and met some Utsat girl students in Grade Five (around 11-12 years old). I asked them “do you truly feel comfortable to wear the headscarf in such a hot day?” They replied “It’s fine because we have already got used to it. Of course it was uncomfortable at the beginning, but we have no choice, otherwise our parents will be blamed.”

Also, the mosque-based religious education starts among the Utsat kids at a very early age, normally around 8-10. Every year during the summer and winter vacations, mosques organize imams and those who have studied the Qur’an (念过经的)<sup>37</sup> to open courses. For instance, the courses of this summer in the North mosque (清真北

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<sup>36</sup> According to imam Jiang Qingquan (江青全) and imam Pu Zongli (蒲宗礼).

<sup>37</sup> Most of them are Utsat young men like Ha, who have formally studied in the mosques of other big Muslim communities in other provinces, such as the Shadian (沙甸) community in Yunnan Province. Additionally, although there were young Utsat women who also studied formally in the mosques of other provinces, I did not observe female teachers in the Utsat mosques.

大寺) were from 5 July to 22 August, including Arabic, religious knowledge, reading Qur'an and Hadith, and Islamic etiquettes. The study schedule was quite full, containing three sections from Monday to Saturday: 8:00 -12:00 in the morning, 2:00-5:00 in the afternoon, and 7:00-10:00 in the evening.

However, this busy schedule did not guarantee the quality of teaching. As mentioned above, many teachers were not the official imams of the mosques, but were Utsat young men in their twenties who had shortly studied in certain mosques. According to Ha's father, some of them are far from qualified to teach, for they were too young to be aware of how influential their behaviors observed would be. He always reminded his son to never imitate those who smoked during the class break, played computer games late into the night, and date non-Muslim girls in downtown Sanya. "These bad influences all came from the development of tourism," many old Utsat villagers thought. But meanwhile, no one would deny that it was the tourism that brought them a good life. Thus the Utsat are encountering the question of how to keep their Islamic lifestyle in the changing circumstances.

### **3.2 Secular Education**

There were three kindergartens, two primary schools, and one middle school in the community. Preschool education was provided by both the kindergartens and primary schools. Kindergartens enrolled 3 to 6 year-old kids, and divided the kids into four

levels: small class (小班), middle class (中班), big class(大班), and preschool class (学前班). There were two in Huixin village and one in Huihui village. The biggest kindergarten located in Huixin village, namely, “Huileilei Art Kindergarten” (回蕾蕾艺术幼儿园). It was a private kindergarten, opened in 2003 by a non-Muslim Han. There were eight teachers, half Han and half Utsat, teaching courses of Mandarin, English, Arabic, piano, electronic organ, dancing, painting, and abacus computation for around one hundred Utsat kids. The other two kindergartens provided similar courses, but they are much smaller.

Additionally, the two primary schools also opened the preschool class with focus on the basic knowledge of language (Mandarin and English) and Mathematic. According to my observation in two kindergartens, the number of girl students was slightly more than boy students. This is not because the Utsat girl children are more important, but because the number is bigger. For the Utsat, having sons is still very significant. A male child means a true offspring (真正的后代) and a heir. Thus if the first child of an Utsat couple is female, they would continuously produce children until a boy is born. Although the “One-child Policy” is strictly implemented in China, it does not apply to ethnic minorities, which allows the Utsat couple to try many times until they get a boy child. This is why many Utsat families have more daughters than sons.

For those who were born after the mid 1980s, both the Utsat male and female, getting

the education of primary school is very common, because at that time, most of the Utsat families could afford sending all the children to school. Unlike those who were born before the 1980s, when the local economy was much less advanced, many Utsat families could not afford education or could only afford supporting one or two children, reading and writing is not a common ability. Among them, those which can read and write are mostly the males.

During the time of my field work, almost all the school aged Utsat kids could go to the primary school. About half of them studied in the two village schools, and half went to the non-Muslim Han schools in downtown Sanya. Interestingly, the non-Muslim Han schools were slightly more preferred due to the higher educational quality. "Not everyone can go to the schools in downtown Sanya, they are more competitive and more expensive," noted an Utsat primary school teacher in Huihui village. This preference matches my observations and interviews among several Utsat families.

When it goes to the middle school level, the educational quality becomes more important. In the community, there is one middle school located in Huihui village, namely, Fenghuang Middle School (凤凰中学). This is a junior middle school, which follows the Chinese educational system to divide students into three grades: junior one (初一), junior two (初二), and junior three (初三). About one third of the students in the school were Utsat, the rest were Han and Li. However, rather than

hoping the children to stay in this Muslim school, many Utsat parents preferred to send the children to study in downtown Sanya, where the best middle schools in this area are located in. Hence apart from the Fenghuang Middle School, the Utsat students also study in several top non-Muslim Han schools, such as the Sanya No.1 Middle School (一中), the Sanya No.2 Middle School (二中), and the Middle School Affiliated to Sanya Harbor Bureau (港中).

According to my observations among seven middle class Utsat families, at this stage, particularly when it goes to the high school level, the Utsat male students were slightly more than the females. Aying was an Utsat mother of four children, whose second daughter was sixteen. When I was in the village, the girl just completed her junior school education and decided to quit school to do business. Aying noted that:

Many good friends of my daughter have already started their own business, so my girl follows them. If she wishes to go on her study, I am willing to pay for her. But the fact is that she does not want. After all, I believe her education is enough to make her a good earner and to live well.

This case echoes the fact that every year in the Fenghuang Middle School, “there are Utsat girl students who quit school at each grade,” noted an Utsat Chinese teacher.

In this respect, the Utsat males get more chances than the females to receive university education, albeit the Utsat female college graduates do exist. The first Utsat university student is Lin Anbin (林安彬), who entered The South Central University of Nationalities (中南民族大学) in 1959. After graduation, Lin started his career as a government officer in Sanya. I interviewed him in 2005 for writing the

biography of outstanding alumni of the South Central University of Nationalities<sup>38</sup>.

At that time, he was an influential government person as well as a successful business man<sup>39</sup>. Lin's career path has been followed by many Utsat who entered the universities. During the time of my field work, there were around two hundreds Utsat university graduates. Most of them chose to go back to Hainan Island after graduation and about one third of them worked in the different institutions of the local government.

In brief, before the mid 1980s, when the Utsat family budget could not afford supporting all the children to go to school, it was the boys who usually got the chance. After the promotion of Sanya tourism, when many Utsat families could afford to pay for all the children's education, the Utsat girls usually engaged in businesses at an early age (around 14 to 16) and so stopped their education. Hence compared with the females, the Utsat males in general have more chances to get access to education. This implies the Utsat males are more authoritative than the females in the sphere of professional knowledge. The case of interpreting Islamic food laws described in Chapter 3 best illustrates this fact.

#### **4. Kinship and Communal Interaction**

The Utsat kinship system is largely a result of their marriage pattern. The Qur'an

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<sup>38</sup> I also graduated from The South Central University for Nationalities in 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Lin runs the biggest sour fish soup restaurant in the community.

sets very clear guidelines on marriage that Muslims should marry “believers” (2:221). Although the term “believers” are interpreted as not only Muslims, but also pious Jews and Christians<sup>40</sup>, to marry Muslims only is widely practiced among different Muslim societies all over the world, including the Utsat. Thus the first preference of marriage is community exogamous. Especially in the past, this kind of marriage was extremely popular when there were very few non-Utsat Muslims on the Island. The name-changing phenomenon described in Chapter 2 best exemplifies this. Even today, most Utsat marriages are still community exogamous. A government official who worked in Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Hainan Province once expressed his worries about this phenomenon<sup>41</sup>, but he concluded, “after all, we can not change their customs by forcing them to marry non-Muslims.”

After the mid 1980s, as the Utsat got more and more chances to contact the outside world, marriages between Utsat and non-Utsat Muslims appeared. When I was in the villages, I observed and heard several cases. For example, the fourth sister of Ha married a Shandong Hui, and moved to Guangzhou to live. This young woman told me that when she was dating with her husband in Guangzhou, she called back almost everyday to persuade her parent to agree this marriage, because “it would be a life far away from home.” This reveals that in general, to marry non-Utsat Muslims is acceptable but slightly less preferred than to marry Utsat.

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<sup>40</sup> In the Qur’an, Jews and Christians are referred as “people of the Book”, because they share similar religious outlooks, a belief in the oneness of God and follow the commandments of Allah.

<sup>41</sup> A private interview conducted in Haikou, 2005.

The third kind of marriage is to marry non-Muslims who are willing to convert to Islam. Compared to marrying those who were born as Muslims, this is much less recommended<sup>42</sup> but still acceptable. In this kind of marriage, there is a huge difference between “marry in” (娶进) and “marry out”(嫁出). The former means to have a non-Muslim woman convert and marry into the Utsat community, and the later means an Utsat woman marry a newly converted man who was not born as a Muslim and move out of the community. Although both the male and female non-Muslim spouses should convert to Islam, the Utsat much prefer “marry in” to “marry out”. Actually, for a long time, “marry out” was almost forbidden, as an Utsat old saying goes, “do marry in but do not marry out” (嫁入不嫁出 translated by author).

Practically speaking, this is quite understandable. According to both traditional Chinese and Islamic opinions, once a woman gets married, she should follow her husband (随夫). The question is where to go, live in a Muslim community or not. The difficulties for an Utsat woman to live in non-Muslim settings are easy to imagine, in spite of her newly converted husband. There is no Muslim friend and relative to celebrate festivals together, no imam to conduct life rituals and educate the children, and no *qingzhen* food on the socializing table, etc. All the social and religious facilities are gone the day that she leaves her own community. This is why the community exogamous marriage is still popular today, which makes all the Utsat

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<sup>42</sup> The reason is discussed in Chapter 4.



relatives and the whole community similar to a lineage.

As such, the Utsat communal interactions were very intense in everyday life, which was not only showed in the collective religious activities, but was also expressed in many life rituals. For example, the wedding ceremony was very important for communal socializing. During my days in the village, almost every week, there were couples getting married, sometimes even two or three. The news boards of each mosque were always full of wedding invitations (see figure 9).

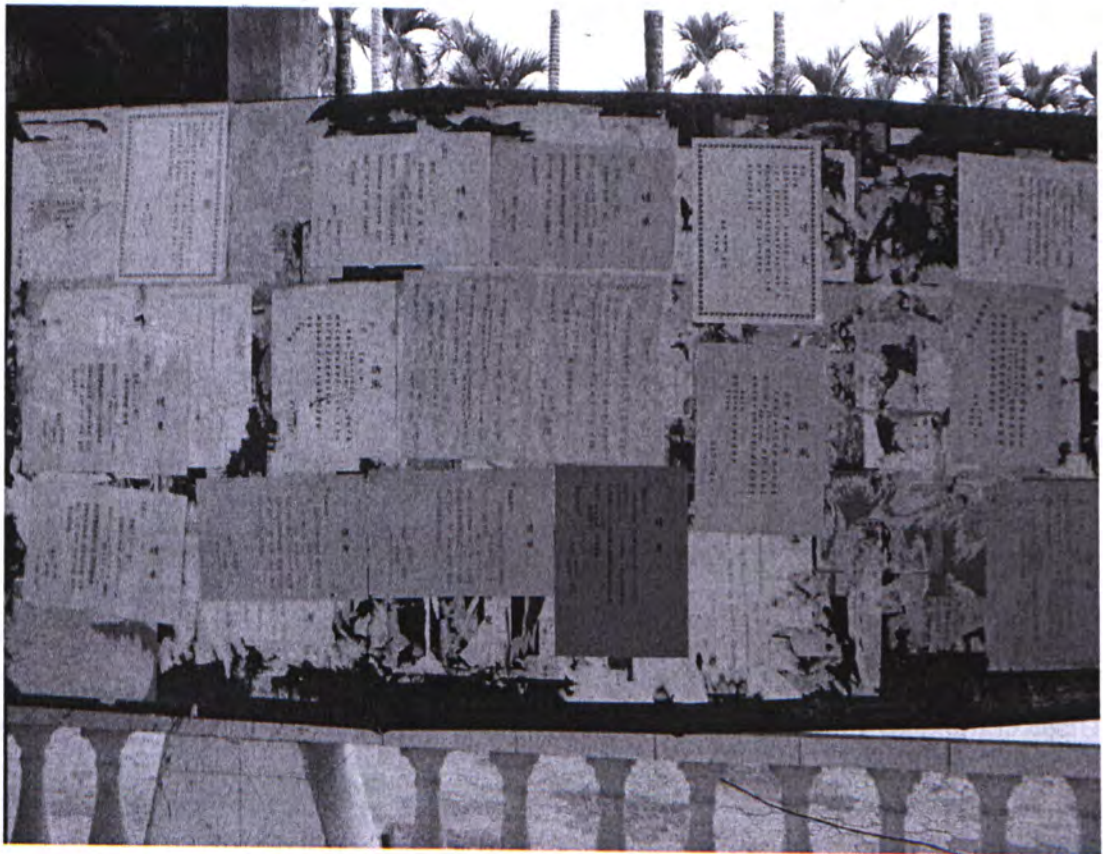


Figure 9: The news board of the North Mosque in Huihui village, Sanya (photography by author, 2009).

An Utsat wedding ceremony lasts for four days, usually from Thursday to Sunday. It begins on the night of Thursday. The groom's family brings betel nuts and snacks as

betrothal gifts to the bride's home. The acceptance of these foods symbolizes the completeness of engagement. After that, the bride shall walk out and give the foods to all the villagers she meets. At the same time, a simple shed is built in front of the house of the groom or the bride, under which there are chairs and tables, serving tea and snacks for the guests. Most of the villagers would come to have fun, they chat with each other and singing songs over the night. This gathering would last for the following two nights.

Then it comes to the day for the groom to get the bride (接新娘). On Sunday morning, the groom's family invites friends and relatives to have a food gathering (餐会), and give betel nuts<sup>43</sup> to all the guests. After this, the groom's family member and the guests form a group to get the bride. In the afternoon, the bride should follow the groom's family to the mosques to invite the imams to conduct rituals, and after that, to give snacks and betel nuts to all the guests again, which marks the end of the wedding ceremony. In this way, one can get together with his or her close friends and relatives at least once a week, and the weddings are only one of the many ways of Utsat communal interactions. In a word, the social connections among the Utsat were very close.

## **5. Tourism and the Local Economy**

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<sup>43</sup> Chewing the betel nuts has been a custom among the Utsat for generations. Hence giving the betel nuts to friends and relatives is one of the important ways in Utsat socializing.

In the late 1980s, as Hainan became the youngest province and the largest Special Economic Zone in PRC, many economic industries started to develop in several areas on the Island, including Sanya, where the local tourism was greatly promoted. Enjoying such a privileged location, almost all Utsat families are actively engaged in the tourist business rather than maintaining fishing and farming, the traditional occupations. This greatly improved Utsat material living standards and, tremendously changed their life in many aspects, in particular, the female status.

Before the promotion of Sanya tourism, the Utsat community was fishing villages. Their major livelihood was fishing and selling seafood plus growing and selling some vegetables and fruits. Although there are very few records on the Utsat life before the 1980s, both historical documents and the Utsat oral tradition show that the Utsat villagers had been fishermen for centuries. For example, a tablet of the Qing Dynasty<sup>44</sup> records how the local government arbitrated a dispute over fishing territory between Utsat and Han. Also, in many Utsat traditional songs and proverbs, their fishing life is vividly described, such as “ceasing fishing in the sea, raising the price of pond fish” (海里休渔, 塘鱼起价, translated by author).

When recalling the days before the 1980s, many Utsat villagers told me that they were much poorer than today. At that time, in most of the Utsat families, husbands went fishing on the sea and wives sold seafood and grew vegetables. In addition to

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<sup>44</sup> This tablet is entitled “Zheng Tang Jin Bei” (正堂禁碑), now erects in the courtyard of the Old Mosque in Huihui village.

these, some families ran small businesses or engaged in transport service. Their major income came from fishing and selling seafood, which was very unstable and sometimes even not enough to support the family. Because fishing very much depends on seasonal conditions, sometimes they just could not work, like in the season of typhoon.

This situation was completely changed by the advent of Sanya tourism development in the mid 1980s. The tourism market offered opportunities for Utsat to do a variety of businesses which brought much higher incomes than fishing and farming. According to my data of ten middle class Utsat families, the average income of an Utsat couple was about 3,000 to 7,000 per month. Many Utsat men became taxi or tourist bus drivers. Especially since the Sanya Fenghuang airport was built in 1994, which is about only five minutes' drive from Huihui village, more and more Utsat men engaged in this transport service. At the same time, the Utsat women became sellers along the streets of downtown Sanya and in the areas of famous sight spots. They sold accessories which are made of Hainan special products, like coconuts, sea shells and crystals. From then on, Utsat women began to work as independent earners and became striking features in Sanya tourist market.

## **6. Summary**

To sum up, the contemporary Utsat life is largely shaped by the local religious tradition and the development of Sanya tourism. Although the tourism has brought many changes in their life, such as the improved living standard and the transforming gender relation, Islam is continuously practiced among them. And in spite of the increased frequency of interacting with the various non-Muslim groups in economic life, including the inter-ethnic marriages, the Utsat still firmly maintain their Muslim identity. This is different from the case of Chendai Hui (陈埭回族) in Fujian province, where the Hui people gradually lost their Muslim identity and Islamic practices by intermarriages, frequent interactions with non-Muslims in economic life, and the participation in the imperial examinations (Fan 1990). Thus the contemporary Utsat identification is, as it has been, centered on Islam.

## Chapter 4: Qingzhen and Islamic Food Laws

In China, *qingzhen* (清真) is a core concept in defining Muslim identity as well as an important term in describing a Muslim's religious faithfulness. Although the meaning of *qingzhen* is historically complex and multi-faced, interestingly, this concept is translated to predominantly address the food sector more than any other institutions in contemporary daily practice. As a result, food and eating becomes the best representative of *qingzhen* and of Utsat religious practice. Examining the current Utsat religious faithfulness, this chapter therefore turns to the religious aspects of contemporary Utsat foodways.

### 1. The Meaning of Qingzhen

Surprisingly enough, the term *qingzhen* has had a long history that had nothing to do with Islam until the Ming dynasty. In ancient China, *qingzhen* referred to one who attains a noble state of mind or, something that bears a nice quality in being pure and true. As early as the Southern dynasty (南朝 420-589 AD), a statement (Liu 2002:59) in *A New Account of Tales of the World* (世说新语 Shishuoxinyu) reports that “as long as one's heart is pure and true, his/her will is unchangeable” (清真寡欲, 万物不能移, translated by author). For a time, *qingzhen* used to be an elegant word favored by many educated people, particularly poets and elites. For instance, a poem written by Lu You (陆游), one of the most outstanding Chinese poets in the Song dynasty,

stated that (Lu 2005:939): “of the thousands of gorgeous flowers that I have seen, only this one smells pure and true” (阅尽千葩白卉春，此花风味独清, translated by author).

Moreover, *qingzhen* has always been popular in naming objects which are considered of nice quality. For example, in the Song dynasty, *Verses of Pure and True* (清真词 *qingzhenci*) was the title of a poetry book (Zhou 2008). And in the Qing dynasty, “pure and true house in foggy moonlight” (清真烟月楼, translated by author) was a well-known site of Yuanmingyuan Garden (圆明园 Garden of Perfect Brightness, an imperial garden of the Qing court), which inspired one of the most famous emperors in Chinese history ---- Qianlong (乾隆) to write a poem (Zhu & Li 1992:190): “Waking up from the dreams in Vanity Fair, I eventually realize that the real essence of a man’s life is to be pure and true( 判却三千花鸟梦，惟余二字曰清真, translated by author)”.

How did *qingzhen* become an Islamic term? In fact, as a non-local religion in China, for hundreds of years, Islam had been practiced without a unified name ever since its arrival on Chinese land. Searching for appropriate Chinese words to express the spirit of Islam had long been a task for Muslim scholars. Finally, this ended in the Ming dynasty. It is clear that in the middle period of this dynasty, the word *qingzhen* was largely associated with Islam. But who first made this connection remains a mystery.

Some argue that Zhu Yuanzhang (朱元璋), the founder of Ming dynasty might be the one, but there is yet no solid evidence for this. Indeed, no matter who first made this connection, it is clear that Emperor Zhu did play an important part in the process. Historians agree that Emperor Zhu's attitude towards Islam is obviously respectful. As early as 1386 AD, right after he ascended the throne, Zhu wrote a poem (Liu 1995:463) to praise Allah, namely, *Praising The Holiness* (至圣百字赞). In his writing, Islam is a religion named *qingzhen* that all demons and wicked beings are willing to submit to (降邪归一, 教名清真 translated by author). Interestingly, there are a lot of clues to indicate that the Ming royal family was deeply intertwined with Islam, such as many of Zhu's closest associates were Muslims, the Ming official calendar was the Islamic calendar and so on. As a result, some scholars even suspect that Zhu had secretly converted to Islam<sup>45</sup>. No matter what these legendary stories might be, the point is that gradually, *qingzhen* came to refer to Islam since the Ming dynasty.

Today, many Chinese scholars view *qingzhen* as a brilliant, comprehensive translation of "Islam", because it beautifully and precisely represents the traits of Islam instead of directly translating the word itself. The original etymology of Islam is an Arabic term "الإسلام", which literally means peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious sense, it means submission to the will of God and obedience to the laws. Although only part of this meaning is selectively captured by

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<sup>45</sup> A Master's thesis titled "On the Relationship between the Kings of Ming Dynasty and Islam" (Tan 2004) is a case in point.



*qingzhen*, the Chinese Muslims believe that the core of Islam is sufficiently expressed, that-is, to be pure and true. This meaning of *qingzhen* is slightly different from the original Arabic meaning of Islam.

Therefore, Islam is a religion of truth and purity, namely, *qingzhen* religion (清真教). Accordingly, mosque is a *qingzhen* temple (清真寺), and Muslim food is *qingzhen* food (清真食品). In this respect, *qingzhen* is equal to Islam. But, the reality is far more complex than this equation. Among the Utsat, *qingzhen* is first identified as an Islamic term and, at the same time, is usually used to refer to Muslim food. This matches the observation of many anthropologists who have conducted fieldwork among Chinese Muslims. For instance, in her work on Xi'an Hui, Gillette states, "When I asked residents to explain what *qingzhen* meant, most people responded by talking about food" (2000:118).

## **2. Qingzhen and Islamic Foodways**

In general, *qingzhen* food is defined according to Islamic food laws. Islamic beliefs and regulations derive from the Qur'an (the holy book of Islam) and Hadith (records of the activities and sayings of Mohammad, the last messenger of God), the most original and authoritative sources of this religion. In both texts, there are teachings from the God and the prophet on food and eating, which laid the foundation of Islamic foodways. The Qur'an was originally written in Arabic, which is the only

“correct” version in the eyes of Muslims, who say it can never be adequately translated. As to the Hadith, there are several versions, written by many different followers of the holy prophet. Of these, the Sahih Al-Bukhari’s collection is considered as the most comprehensive and authentic version, which was originally written in Arabic, too. Since I do not read Arabic, I selected a Chinese version (Ma 1981) and an English version (Ali 2000) of the Qur’an, as well as an English version (Khan 2007-2009) of the Sahih Al-Bukhari’s Hadith as references.

There is a rich array of food-related statements, containing eating rituals, taboos, etiquette, health knowledge, the prophet’s favorite food, so on and so forth. For example, in the hadith, there are three independent chapters particularly to discuss the “Food, Meals” (Volume 7, Book 65, Number 286-375) , “Drinks” (Volume 7, Book 69, Number 481-543), as well as “Medicine” (Volume 7, Book 71, Number 582-673). Also, in the holy Qur’an, a number of similar sayings are distributed in separate chapters. Among these, significantly, a pair of concepts of utmost importance emerges, namely, *halal* and *haram*, both of which are Arabic terms. *Halal* means lawful and permissible, and *haram* means prohibited and illegal. They create the basic categories of the Islamic food laws. Muslims should follow this dietary code: foodstuffs that meet the code are *halal*, those that fail to do so are *haram*. But what is the reason for setting up such regulations?

Clearly stated in the Hadith is the following verse “Ask Allah for pardon and health,

for none is given any thing better than health after faith”<sup>46</sup>, hence distinguishing the lawful from the prohibited is for the sake of keeping healthy. It says, “O you who believe! Eat of the good things (*halal*) that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah if Him it is that you serve (2:172)” According to the Qur’an, all good and clean foods are *halal*. Consequently, the vast majority of plant and animals in the planet are available for Muslims to eat. In chapter 80, verses 25-32, it says:

We poured down rain abundantly,  
Then We cracked the earth open under  
pressure (of germination)  
And We made corn grow,  
And grapes and herbage,  
Olives and dates,  
Orchards thick with tress,  
And fruits and fodder:  
A provision for you and your cattle.

Correspondingly, some substances which are considered as harmful are explicitly prohibited: “He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. (Qur’an 2:173)”. And, “alcoholic drinks were prohibited (by Allah) (Bukhari: Vol 7 Book 69 No 485)”, “whoever drinks alcoholic drinks in the world and does not repent (before dying), will be deprived of it in the Hereafter (Bukhari: Vol 7 Book 69 No 481)”. In summary, there are four basic food taboos: 1). Carrion and improperly slaughtered animals; 2). Blood; 3). Pork, lard and all by-products; 4). Alcohol and other intoxicants. This seems like a simple set of rules but it raises a great number of

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<sup>46</sup> Ahmed 46, 51- Book of Supplications, *Jami Tirmidhi*. Sunan al-Tirmidhi is one of the Sunni Six major Hadith collections. They were collected by al-Tirmidhi.

debates, which mainly come from different opinions on what to eat within different Muslim schools of jurisprudence.

In time, as the Muslim population expanded to span the globe, Islamic legal practice became sophisticated. Certain schools of Islamic jurisprudence would further forbid or encourage Muslims to consume certain items. For example, a Sufi master Ibn al-‘Arabi was once reported to have said, “be careful of your diet. It is better if your food be nourishing but devoid of animal fat” (Hoffman 1995:473).

Even within the four branches of Sunni Muslims, opinions on this account failed to share a common agreement. Whereas the Shafie, Maliki, and Hanbali regard most of the seafood to be *halal*, the Hanafi school only allows fish to be consumed from the sea, and all other creatures like crabs, prawns, etc. are considered as non-*halal*. For example, according to Dorairajoo’s paper (2003), in southern Thailand, the predominantly Shafie Malay-Muslim did not marry the Hanafi Muslim of Pakistani descent because the Malays who were traditionally fishermen ate seafood such as crabs and shrimps which the Hanafi considered *haram*. In sum, to use Mahmasani’s words, (1982:181), “there are other sources acknowledged by some schools but refuted by others. They are based on necessity, custom, and equity; such as *istihsan* (appropriateness) in the Hanafi school, *al-masalih al-mursalat* (expected interests) in the Maliki school, and the like.” In this vein, foods are further classified into four categories: *halal* (lawful), *haram* (unlawful), *mashbooh* (questionable), and *makrooh*

(dislikeable).

The differentiations among the Islamic sects reveal the huge diversified Islamic practices in varied time and space. To use Asad's words, Islam is "a discursive tradition" (1996:398). Hence not surprisingly, the meaning of *qingzhen* in China is quite a complicated issue. First of all, the two Chinese characters, *qing* (清 pure) and *zhen* (真 true), powerfully articulate and construct an image of hygienic cleanliness. In comparison, the corresponding Arabic word *halal*, clearly and specifically delivers a message of lawfulness. Apparently, the imagination towards these two concepts is different. It is such image of cleanliness that largely characterizes the Chinese Muslim foodways and therefore shapes the ethnic boundaries in some way.

The Muslims, in general, believe that their food is much cleaner than the Han's. "Even a cup of tea, the most common form of hospitality offered to guests in China, was unacceptable to a Hui if it were given by a Han (Gellette 2000: 121)." To borrow a wonderful example from Dru Gladney (2003:1), when he was a language student at Beijing University in 1982, "one of the first Hui Muslims with whom I became acquainted came to my room but refused a cup of tea I offered. The cup, he said, was not "pure and true enough" (*bu gou qing zhen* 不够清真)." Seen from the cases as such, the practice of *qingzhen* bears many layers and different degrees, which has little to do with the laws regulating forbidden foods.

Thus it seems to a certain extent that people's first reaction to Muslim food is its cleanliness implication, not religious lawfulness. For example, Dru Gladney (1991:13) who conducted his fieldwork in four geographically distinct Hui communities, argues that in general, *qingzhen* stands for ritual cleanliness, moral conduct, authenticity, and legitimacy. In the northwest, Hui expressed *qingzhen* as "Islamic ritual purity," whereas in the southeast, Hui limited their concern with *qingzhen* to the authenticity of their genealogical claims to descent from foreign Muslim ancestors (1991:332). This, in fact, marks the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. In a word, central to Muslim identity and ethnic boundaries in China is the early Chinese translation and interpretation of Islam, which is inherently associated with notions of cleanliness and purity.

However, apart from this basic meaning, *qingzhen* has been practiced differently among different Chinese Muslim groups. In Xi'an (西安), for instance, according to Gillette, "*Qingzhen* influenced how Hui prepared their food, what they ate, who they ate with, who they socialized with, how they expressed their religious commitments, and how they did business. This was often manifested in ways that had little to do with the Qur'an or Islamic doctrine (2000:15)." Therefore, decoding the meaning of *qingzhen* within the local context is of great significance.

### **3. The Utsat Understanding of qingzhen**

To the Utsat, apart from the above-stated cleanliness and purity, *qingzhen* is also a concept that supported Islamic laws and associated with religious-ethnic identity. First of all, *qingzhen* food is perceived as the lawful food of Muslim. Secondly, it is understood as a label of ethnic cuisines.

### **3.1 Our Hui Food**

On many occasions, when I asked my informants to explain what *qingzhen* meant, most people responded that it means “our Hui food”, and many of them would further explain that just as every ethnic group has its own dietary customs, and *qingzhen* characterizes theirs. In the beginning, I accepted this answer without further questions. However, the longer I lived among the Utsats, the more I became confused over the meaning of “we Hui (我们回族)”.

For a time, I considered that “we Hui” meant the vast majority of Chinese Muslim, including Utsat. Because I took for granted that everyone knows “Hui” is a Chinese term for Muslims, and therefore everybody understands that once this term is used, it refers to Chinese Muslim only. Nevertheless, this is far from common knowledge among the Utsat. In reality, the concept of “Chinese Muslim” seldom emerges in their mind. To them, Hui connotes the whole Islamic world.

One typical example is as follows. One afternoon, when chatting at home, Wen said

to me, “studying in Kong Hong, such a modern and highly internationalized city, you must have met many foreign Hui (外国的回族).” Suddenly, I realized that in Wen’s mind, “Hui” is identical with Muslim. The “foreign Hui” means non-Chinese Muslims. In this vein, rather than referring to the Utsat food in particular, “our Hui food” is used to indicate Muslim food in general. This matches the Utsat usage of the term “Hui” in many other different occasions. But what is “Muslim food” and what is Utsat food?

Among the villagers, the most common answer to “what is Muslim food?” is that “we have religious regulations on the lawful and the prohibited of eating (我们的教法有规定能吃的和不能吃的).” What are the regulations? I got different answers from different people. These answers are characterized by contradictions and complexities, firstly shown in the lawfulness of some seafood, and later, in the gendered perceptions, which will be fully explained as follows.

### *3.1.1 Seafood and the Rules of Sunni Hanafi*

As mentioned earlier, the rules on food and eating varied slightly among the different Islamic schools of jurisprudence. One of the distinctive opinions of the Hanafi school that Utsat practice is the prohibition of eating some forms of non-fish seafood based on the hadith of the prophet Muhammad: “Two types of dead meat and two types of blood have been made lawful for your consumption (without being properly



slaughtered): fish and locust, liver and spleen.”<sup>47</sup> This is to say that from all the creatures of the sea, only fish is permissible. However, while proclaiming the Sunni Hanafi is the orthodox Islamic school, many kinds of seafood apart from fish is consumed by almost all the Utsat, including shrimp and crab and so forth. Why do they act in such a contradictory fashion?

On this account, I interviewed many people. Surprisingly, most of the villagers are not aware of the strict seafood taboos of Hanafi school but believe that most of the “normal (常见的)” seafood are lawful. According to them, only a few are prohibited, such as shark, turtle, and sea snake, due to the fact that they are fierce and abnormal. “After all, because they are abnormal<sup>48</sup>, we don’t have many chances to behave wrongly,” one Utsat noted. This is to say, because most of the banned seafood items are difficult to get access to, the Utsat have very slim chances to break the rules even though their knowledge of the Hanafi seafood taboos is insufficient. Practically speaking, there is no big difference between those who know the rules in detail and those who do not. But obviously, such an answer is not convincing in explaining why, as the “true Muslims”<sup>49</sup>, they are not completely aware of this issue.

I then turned to some imams. They told me that around ten years ago, there was a small argument on this account, which was raised by an Utsat imam who had studied

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<sup>47</sup> Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Majah.

<http://www.emro.who.int/publications/HealthEdReligion/Slaughter/Chapter3.htm> Accessed 23 June 2010

<sup>48</sup> These sea creatures can hardly be found in the Utsat village market.

<sup>49</sup> This Utsat community has a very good reputation in faithfully practice Islam, see “Introduction”.

in northwest China, arguing that only fish can be lawful among the seafood. But soon his voice was ignored by the majority. “I don’t think this is a big deal, you know, seafood is so important to our daily life,” one Utsat imam said, “additionally, according to the Qur’an, all the creatures from the sea are lawful.” This sounds reasonable. Overall, Muslims agree that the Qur’an is the most primary of all sources and has precedence over all other religious texts and resources, including the hadith. It is believed that the sayings in the Qur’an are the word-for-word message of God, whereas the hadith are vast collections of narratives of what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or permitted (*Sunna*), which might have been misinterpreted in the process of recording. Perceptively as Mahmasani (1982:182) noted, “What brought disagreement in law is the fact that the Prophet did not order the writing of *Sunna* as he did regarding the Qur’an. On the contrary, he prohibited such an action by saying: ‘Don’t write down from me, and whoever wrote down from me other than the Qur’an should have it destroyed.’ (*Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 8, p.229)”

However, what this reveals at the same time is the situated nature of Utsat’s religious practice. When I was in the field, the Qur’anic quotation of the lawfulness of all sea creatures was heard several times when the issue of seafood was discussed. From my point of view, this is where the significance of environmental issues comes in: religion regulates what is edible, but ecology decides what is available. Although the Utsat do have the choice to eat fish only, the importance of seafood in Utsat life should be seriously taken into consideration.

Seen from a historical perspective, the Utsat has long been closely associated with the sea. Before their Cham ancestors moved to Hainan Island, fishing and shipping had already been the dominant occupations of the Champa kingdom (Phuong 2000:8). Upon their arrival, among the successive historical documents, only three food-related points are mentioned: the pork taboo, fasting month, and fishing (Ma 2003:225-228). In the 1980s, fishing as the main occupation was replaced by tourist industry related businesses. Thus in this case, Utsat religious interpretation is quite flexible in adapting to the physical and social ecology, and it is hard to distinguish between the religion and ecology, as to which is a more powerful determinant. They intertwine in producing the contradictory seafood situation in the Utsat foodways.

### *3.1.2 Gendered Perceptions*

Apart from the issue of seafood, the gendered receptions of what is “Muslim food” are worthy of discussion. Very often, the answers from women were quite simple. Irrespective of her age, educational background, or social class, the most common answer I obtained was: “things that are permissible.” Normally, a woman showed very little interest in further explaining what items were permissible or forbidden, unless I kept asking. And when I did, most of them would say, “things like pork, animals killed by Han ... Oh, please, go to ask an imam, or those who graduated from universities. I can tell right and wrong in my mind, but I have no idea how to explain to you.” Such responses aroused my curiosity. As food makers, do the Utsat

women truly know the laws in practice? My attention was thus drawn to their domestic chores: where do they buy food stuffs, what and how do they choose what to buy?

Most of the time, I ate at home with Ha, Wen and Lily. Lily cooked two meals a day, normally, one dish for both breakfast and lunch, and one or two dishes for supper. There is a market located in the middle of the village, which takes only three minutes to walk from their house. Lily goes there once every two days. I went with her several times. She told me that almost all the sellers in the market are Hui, only a few are Li (黎族)<sup>50</sup>. Since people knew this was Hui region, pork or lard could hardly be found. According to my diary, what Lily bought from the market were mainly vegetables, eggs, beef, and seafood. Sometimes at night, her husband goes with her to buy some freshly caught fish and shrimp at the sea shore. “They are not fished by the Utsat but are very fresh and delicious”, Wen said. And every weekend, Wen and Lily took their children to a big shopping mall in Sanya city, Bright Pearl Plaza (明珠广场), where the kids could play in the amusement park, Wen and Lily would buy some daily necessities from the big super market inside, including some supplementary food, such as instant noodles, cookies, preserved pickle, and sausages<sup>51</sup>. Hence the constituents of our daily meals came from the village market, the non-Muslim fishermen, and the Bright Pearl Plaza supermarket.

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<sup>50</sup> Li (黎) is another ethnic minority in Hainan. There are several Li villages next to the Utsat's.

<sup>51</sup> *Qingzhen* branded sausages are not available in Sanya. They choose non-pork ones, like chicken, beef, or fish sausages.

In order to further understand what is “lawful” in the daily practice of Utsat women,

I kept a week-long record of our family meals.

17 / Jul / 2009      Friday

Breakfast and lunch: Stir-fried beef with potato, xifan (稀饭, rice porridge)

Supper: Stir-fried beef with pumpkin, white gourd soup, xifan.

18 / Jul / 2009      Saturday

Breakfast and lunch: Sautéed-string green beans, marinated duck egg, and xifan.

Supper: Lily went back to her parents' home. Wen said he didn't want to eat, and gave me a bag of instant noodle and a bag of preserved pickle (榨菜, zhacai).

19 / Jul / 2009      Sunday

Breakfast and lunch: Stir-fried eggs with balsam pear, xifan.

Supper: Stir-fried beef with pumpkin, xifan.

20 / Jul / 2009      Monday

Breakfast and lunch: Stir-fried chicken sausage with preserved pickle, xifan.

Supper: Stir-fried chicken with ginger, xifan.

22 / Jul / 2009      Tuesday

Breakfast and lunch: Stir-fried chicken with green beans, xifan.

Supper: Stir-fried shrimp with cauliflower, stir-fried Tofu with pickled Chinese cabbage (酸菜, suancai), stir-fried eggs with tomato, xifan.

23 / Jul / 2009      Wednesday

Breakfast and lunch: Blanched small fish with tamarind, xifan.

Supper: Blanched small fish with tamarind, stir-fried eggs with green beans, xifan.

24 / Jul / 2009      Thursday

Breakfast and lunch: Stir-fried preserved eggs with leek, xifan.

Supper: Stir-fried beef with pumpkin, xifan.

Of these, some of the foodstuffs are worth a closer analysis. Firstly, during the long, hot summer, xifan is the most common staple food for most of the Hainanese, including the Utsat. It is similar to rice porridge (粥) but somewhat different. Literally, xifan means “thin rice”, which is simply made by adding some water into the already-cooked rice (干饭), unlike the porridge which refers to rice cooked in water. Furthermore, xifan is always eaten after it turns cold, whereas the porridge is always eaten when it is still warm. Located at the south end of China, Hainan is a tropical island with an average temperature above 28°C in the summer, and for more than 20 days in a year the temperature can be higher than 35°C. Hence food made with more water is an adaptation to the hot climate.

Secondly, some factory-made food without the *qingzhen* label such as chicken sausages and instant noodles which contain animal by-products are, strictly speaking, still not *halal*. This is because non-*qingzhen* products are made by non-Muslims, who cannot slaughter the animals in the name of Allah. But in Utsat daily life, these kinds of food are consumed regularly in almost every family. Hence although the Utsat are aware of the nature of these foods, they do **not** consider these products as *haram* in practice, because, they are convenient foods. Wen once complained that “unlike many other places on the mainland, where the Muslim population is considerably large and the *qingzhen* products are found everywhere, in Hainan, we Utsat are a small number and always ignored by the market”. Additionally, he told me that because of the absence of *qingzhen* products, he has to pay much attention to

selecting food items, a practice that is energy-consuming. In this respect, for the Muslim buyers, being able to tell “right and wrong” is especially meaningful.

This record explicitly shows not only what and how food items are selected by an Utsat wife (albeit with her husband sometimes), but also to what extent the Islamic food laws are practiced by Utsat. It is shaped by the religious regulations, market, as well as the local geography and ethno-history. Particularly, while the sources of foodstuffs are both of Muslim and non-Muslim (the village market, the non-Muslim fish men, and the Bright Pearl Plaza), the *haram* stuffs (refers mainly to pork) are consciously avoided, which, to a certain degree, verifies the previous quotation from an Utsat woman: “I can tell the right and wrong in my mind”.

On the contrary, men exhibited a strong passion toward explaining how and why the Islamic laws regulate Muslim diet. Some of them even recommended readings on the subject to me. “Except the pork taboo, what else do you know” is the question that I was asked many times in the field. If I say “tell me please”, most of the time, I got a very long and messy speech in return, that stretched from the birth of the prophet to the current Sanya government. And if I said that I did know something more such as alcohol, blood, and improperly slaughtered animals, they would reply, “oh! Great! But we have something more than that, like frog, hawk, eel, and many other strange things .....” “Strange?” I asked why. “Don’t you feel they are fierce, ugly, and frightening?” Man answered. But when I kept asking how they are explicitly

regulated in the verses of Qur'an or Hadith, again, many of them suggested I ask an imam or the old people in the village. "It is for the sake of your research. And I might make mistakes on some details", one of them said.

This shows that for many Utsat men, the knowledge system of Islamic food laws is loosely constructed. How loose? On a "boring" afternoon, in a café, I got a simple list from Yan:

- (1). Things that are avoided most:  
Pork, alcohol, blood, improperly slaughtered animals, and carrion
- (2). Strange things:
  - a. Amphibious animals, e.g. frog
  - b. Birds with claws, e.g. hawk
  - c. Fishes without scales, e.g. eel
- (3). Animals that are abnormal to eat:
  - a. Pet, e.g. cat and dog
  - b. Insects
  - c. Immoral beings, e.g. rat.

Although Ha told me this is too simple to be a "complete statement" of Islamic food laws, according to my observation, this list and its manner (the ordering and categorizing) usefully represent the average level of religious food knowledge among the most Utsat men. The order ---- the "Strange" and "Abnormal" categories come after "The Most Avoided" category, which echoes a previously cited statement that "because they are abnormal, we don't have many chances to behave wrongly." Therefore, remembering detailed taboos seemed less important.

But what is the "complete statement"? When I was in Yunnan, Ha's friend bought me some books as gifts, one of which is *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (《论



伊斯兰教律中的合法事物与非法事物》 al-Qaradawi & Ma 2003). After my return, Ha highly recommended me to read this book, for he believed that this is one of the most reliable accounts on Islamic laws. He told me that this book is found everywhere among the different Muslim communities all over China, and it is also very common to see it in the Utsat villages. “It may not be found in each family,” he said, “but at least, you can find it in any of imam’s house.” Why is this book so popular? Who wrote it?

Searching for it on internet in Chinese, I found this book is really influential among the Chinese Muslims. It was written by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (translated as “优素福·格尔塔威” in Chinese), an Egyptian Muslim scholar as well as a preacher. In “Islam Book” (中文伊斯兰学术城), one of the biggest Muslim websites in China, an article of his biography states (originally in Chinese, translated by author):

“Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a famous scholar of Islamic Law. Many of his works are regarded as the leading authority on the subject, for his strength in settling the problems in modern society according to Qur’an and Sunnah. Having been a man who did not seek fame and wealth, he is definitely a scholar of high-minded principles, who weighs protecting the Islamic spirit more than his personal benefit and even safety. As such, he is highly respected in the Arabic world and in many Muslim communities in Europe. But meanwhile, because of his straightforwardness, this great scholar is hated and always threatened by Post Zionists and American Imperialists ..... His masterpieces are known to Muslims in every corner of the world, such as *The Lawful and the Prohibition in Islam* .....

(<http://www.islambook.net/xueshu/list.asp?id=3514>)

However, since outstanding Muslims scholars number greatly, why is his work so widely accepted? I failed to find the answer among the Utsat, who just simply reported as “it is everywhere and recommended by many imams”. The only one

meaningful reply that I got so far was from an imam in Yunan, who stated “differently from the classical writers, he is one of the earliest Muslim scholars who focus on applying Islamic principles to deal with modern problems. And of course his viewpoints are quite reasonable.” This is the basic background of the authoritative, complete version of Islamic food laws, according to the Utsat men, which matches Mahmasani’s viewpoint that “the provisions of Islamic jurisprudence are based less on the texts than on interpretations of the jurists (1982:183).”

Whatever the fact might be, this book is worth a careful read. For the sake of convenience, I use an English version (al-Qaradawi 2001) for discussion. In fact, this is not a book which particularly concentrates on food, but only two parts relate to food. They are Chapter 1 “The Islamic Principles Pertaining to the Lawful and the Prohibited” (p.6-36), and the first section of Chapter 2, “Food and Drinking” (p.37-76). However, although this book is the most frequently mentioned reference, it does not figure that much in reality, simply because such a “complete statement” is unnecessary and thus does not exist in the minds of most Utsat. Comparatively, the list from Yan, which specifies what and why certain food items are prohibited, is closer to the reality.

There are countless examples. I pick only three to illustrate. Firstly, some items in Yan’ list are totally missing in al-Qaradawi’s book, such as insect and rat. I asked why they are considered as *haram*. The replies I obtained were that they were

abnormal or immoral. Not even one could cite any Islamic work to support their argument. Secondly, some banned items in al-Qaradawi's book are missing in Yan's list, such as drugs and cigarettes, which al-Qaradawi states, "the consumption of harmful things is *haram*", because "it is *haram* for the Muslim to eat or drink anything which may cause his death, either quickly or gradually, such as poisons, or substance which are injurious to health or harmful to his body" (p. 75). In fact, drug users are very common in the villages. Although I did not collect the exact statistics, according to my observation, many families have close relatives or friends consuming drugs, such as heroin<sup>52</sup>. In this regard, the high percentage of smokers is easy to imagine. They are everywhere (except in the mosque) in the villages during the daytime. Here the important point is that the Utsat agree using drug and cigarette is harmful, but they seldom think of these are *haram*. Thirdly, certain tabooed items are interpreted differently. In Yan's list, among the "Things that are avoided most", blood is listed as the third, which means all forms of blood are prohibited. According to many Utsat villagers, it is because that "blood carried diseases." But in al-Qaradawi's writing, it clearly states that only flowing blood is prohibited, which means, consuming its non-liquid form is permissible (p.41). When I mentioned this argument, most of my Utsat male informants were very surprised. This reveals that actually, very few Utsat had read this book carefully.

In brief, Utsat men and women will agree that law-abiding is at the core of *qingzhen*.

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<sup>52</sup> This can not prove that there were many Utsat drug users in the community, because almost all the Utsat villagers know each other and are genetically related.

Cooking meals everyday, consciously or unconsciously, abiding by the religious food rules is deeply implanted in the minds of Utsat women, albeit they seldom talked about it. Whereas the Utsat men, who are more “educated” in religious knowledge, naturally exhibit a strong interest in discussion but, without a “complete statement” of food laws in mind. At first glance, it appears that men are more “religiously passionate” than women, which complicates the local perceptions of *qingzhen*.

Overall, seen from the complexities and contradictions in the lawfulness of some seafood and the gendered differentiated behaviors, I conclude the answers to “what are the regulations of Muslim food” as follows: 1). basically, *qingzhen* food means lawful food; 2). the way to define lawfulness is flexible in adapting to the local conditions. 3). the perception of lawfulness is complicated by gendered perceptions.

### 3.2 Ethnic Food

As noted previously, in the local context, *qingzhen* is always regarded as “our Hui food” among the Utsat. Apart from the avoidance of religious food taboos, on certain occasions, the phrase “Hui food” or “*qingzhen* food” means otherwise. Since two decades ago, the Utsat gave up their traditional occupations and actively engaged in the tourism industry. One of their businesses is running small-scale family restaurants, selling an ethnic “Hui dish”<sup>53</sup>, namely, “sour fish soup (酸鱼汤)”, which we have seemed already in the meal-record of my host family. It is made using

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<sup>53</sup> In Mandarin, the Utsat is referred as Hui.

tamarind (酸角) to give a sour flavor, which is not common in most part of China, where people always use vinegar. For example, in Guizhou province, there is another kind of sour fish soup (酸菜鱼), which use pickled vegetable and vinegar to create its sour flavor. In the field, I tried to figure out the historical origin of this way of cooking, but all the answers that I got referred to a contemporary business story.

It was in 1988, when an Utsat villager Hai Yeying (海业英) and his wife started to run a small food stall in front of their house, selling mainly fried noodles, supplemented by some soup. But surprisingly, it was the most simple, ordinary family soup that customers liked. Afterwards, in 1993, they opened the “*Qingzhen* Restaurant (清真饭店)”, particularly for selling this tamarind fish soup and soon made a fortune. As a result, many Utsat “sour fish soup” restaurants opened. At the time of research, there were around ten sour fish soup restaurants in the villages, and several in Sanya city. It has been further promoted as one of the “Sanya dishes” and appeared in the menus of many non-Muslim hotels in the downtown area. Even in Haikou (海口), the capital of Hainan province, I observed a small restaurant named “Sour Fish Soup of Sanya Hui (三亚回族酸鱼汤)”, which was in fact opened by Han, who imitated the Utsat cooking. Today, visiting the Utsat community to try this soup is highly recommended by many tourist guides as well as many Hainan travel guides. Although it is easy to get in downtown Sanya, the Utsat community is believed as the “original place” which preserves the most “authentic flavor”. Among these, the first restaurant that was opened by the Hai couple became the most famous

one. It has been renamed “Old *Qingzhen* Restaurant (清真老饭店)”.

According to Hai Yeying, the recipe of “Utsat sour fish soup” (see figure 10) in his restaurant is recorded as below, translated by the author:

Ingredient:

White mullet fish (other kinds of fish can be also used), sour star fruit, tamarind, tomato, pickled bamboo shoot strips, ginger trips, spring onions, vegetable oil, salt, MSG.

Directions:

- (1). Pour 1500 ml. water into an iron pot. When the water is about to reach boiling point, add fish slices (around 2-4 centimeters each), and then cook under high heat until it starts to boil.
- (2). Add appropriate amount (according to personal preference) of sour star fruit, tamarind, tomato, pickled bamboo shoot strips, ginger strips, vegetable oil, and salt. Cook under high heat for two minutes, then reduce the heat and simmer for three to five minutes. Wait for another half minute, then remove the cover and ladle soup into a large bowl.
- (3). Sprinkle with spring onions and MSG to taste. Serve hot with steamed rice.

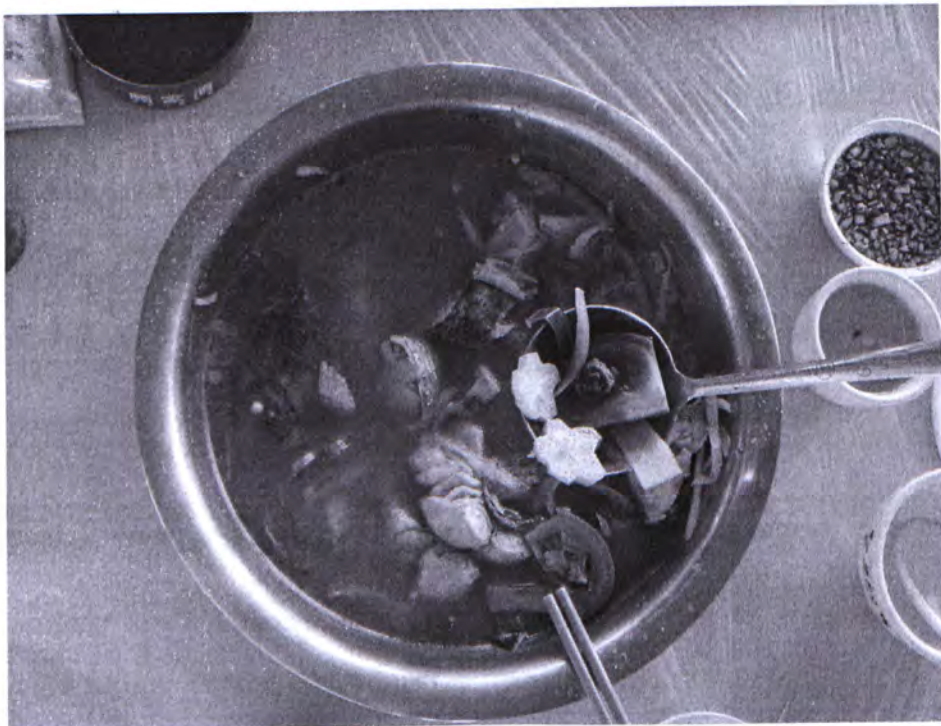


Figure 10: Utsat Sour Fish Soup, Sanya (photographed by author 2009).

However, this story does not provide any historical information. All I found in the field was that this dish is a traditional Utsat family dish, which has been passed down through generations. At least by now, no one knows or cares about its exact historical origin. In the eyes of many, powerful is the business story, showing that in the current market, being “ethnic” means a way of being wealthy. It is, probably, because of the success in promoting the “sour fish soup” that gradually made the Utsat sensitive about any “ethnic” item that can possibly bring financial benefits. They link the general Islamic foodways to “ethnic characteristics (民族特色)”. Instead of mentioning the religious factors, when the Utsat are speaking to tourists, frequently, *qingzhen* is interpreted as “the cultural traits of we Hui (清真是我们回族的文化特色)”.

In this context, it is the ethnic aspect that is worth emphasis. For example, “*Qingzhen* Flavor & Ethnic Characteristics (清真风味 民族特色)” is written on the advertising board of one Utsat restaurant near my host’s house. I once asked the owner why he regarded *qingzhen* as a kind of ethnic flavor instead of a religiously regulated foodways. He replied, “Try the sour fish soup, then you will know how characteristic our Hui food is. I won’t mention our religion to the tourists, only if they ask, like you. You know, it is always the good taste and special flavor that the guests care the most. Anyway, everybody knows we Hui practice Islam.” Accordingly, in this respect, *qingzhen* means the Utsat ethnic food, in particular, the sour fish soup.

#### 4. Summary

As a core concept in describing Utsat Muslim identity and the religious faithfulness, *qingzhen* is essentially expressed as the lawful food of Muslims and a label of ethnic cuisine. This reveals first, the emphasis on obeying Islamic laws is one of the most important ways of continuing Utsat religious practice as well as maintaining their ethnic identity. Secondly, seen from the seafood issues, and the promotion of an ethnic dish, I conclude the Utsat understanding of *qingzhen* is highly characterized by many local conditions, such as ecology, ethnicity, gender relations, and market.

Of these, we see that the two most significant factors are religion and market. A changing market usually causes changes in religious practice. Since the mid 1980s onward, the development of local tourism brought great changes to the local economy. Correspondingly, the Utsat religious practice undergoes changes, including the practice of *qingzhen*. As Anderson stated (2005:186), “Foodways are created by dynamic process. We usually think of them as ‘ethnic,’ but ethnicity is not a God-given trait. It is politically defined. It changes constantly with shifting patterns of politics, conquest, and trade.” The following chapter concentrates on the embodiments of changing religious faithfulness in the Utsat changing practice of food laws.



## Chapter 5: Tourism and Law-breaking Behaviors

It is true that man becomes bad when he gets rich.

----- Ha's Mother

As noted earlier in chapter 1, many Utsat regard that the rapid economic growth they have experienced from the early 1980s onwards brought a lot of allurements, intensively testing people's morality and ability of self-control. In this context, to measure whether the Utsat religious faithfulness has been changed under the impact of tourism and its complicated consequences, this chapter focuses on the current Utsat practice of *qingzhen* through observing their changing foodways, in particular, the law-breaking behaviors.

### 1. The Development of Sanya Tourism

#### 1.1 A General Background

The rise of Sanya tourism industry in the mid 1990s was attributed to national politics and local situation. Beginning in December 1978 onwards, the Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) has implemented the "Economic Reform and Opening-up Policy (改革开放)", aiming at transforming the "Planned Economy" to "Market Economy", motivating workers and farmers to produce a larger surplus to finance the modernization of the mainland Chinese economy. To achieve this goal, one of the important strategies was to "Let some

people and places (those better able to do so) get rich first, and let the early rich help the later rich to ultimately achieve common prosperity (Deng 1993:166, translated by author).”

Hainan Island was one of the areas which were designed to get rich first. Having being part of Guangdong for centuries, in 1988, Hainan Island was announced to be the youngest province as well as the largest Special Economic Zone (SEZ 经济特区)<sup>54</sup> of China. There has long been a strong desire to obtain a separate status on the island, because the Hainanese believe that the interests of Hainan are not necessarily best served by the island’s administrative subservience to Guangdong Province. Therefore, this “would appear to be the fulfillment of a long-cherished local desire for greater autonomy” (Feng and Goodman 1997: 53).

Furthermore, being the SEZ offered a golden opportunity for local development. This meant a huge amount of capital from both the Chinese government and foreign investors poured into the island, bringing a dramatic period of high economic growth rates, particularly, from 1988 to 1993<sup>55</sup>. At that time, a great number of people were involved in real estate business and became millionaires overnight. Nevertheless,

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<sup>54</sup> A Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a geographical region that has economic laws that are more liberal than a country’s typical economic laws. Usually the goal of a structure is to increase foreign direct investment by foreign investors, typically an international business or a multinational corporation (MNC). In the People’s Republic of China, Special Economic Zones were founded by the central government under Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s. Currently, the most prominent SEZ’s in the country are Shenzhen, Xiamen, Shantou, Zhuhai and Hainan Province. The most successful Special Economic Zone in China, Shenzhen, has developed from a small village into a city with a population over 10 million within 20 years.

<sup>55</sup> During 1988-1993, the province’s GDP growth rate averaged 14 per cent annually; the annual growth rate for national income has been 11 per cent; and the annual growth rate for local financial income has been 47.6 per cent. (Feng and Goodman 1997: 72)

such a striking speed of development was soon arrested by the real estate bubble in 1994. Suddenly, the provincial economy was cooling down, which took almost ten years (1995-2005) to recover. During this long period, the government was taught to adjust their development strategy to fit the island's special resources, in particular, the high-efficient tropical agriculture and maritime tourism.

Being the largest ocean island of China, Hainan has long been known for its great beaches and tropical scenery. Plentiful rainfall and comfortable living conditions in winter make Hainan an ideal vacation spot, especially the city of Sanya. Located in the south, it is a region of dense famous scenic spots, such as Yalong Bay, Haitang Bay, “the End of the Earth” (天涯海角), Luobi Cave and so on. Most of these scenic spots lay along Sanya's beautiful beach, stretching nearly one hundred kilometers from east to west. And the Utsat community is located in the middle (see figure 11)<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> This map is from internet: [http://www.sanyaweb.com/sanya\\_map/images/Sanya-Map-Sanya.jpg](http://www.sanyaweb.com/sanya_map/images/Sanya-Map-Sanya.jpg), I highlight the location of Utsat community by red color.

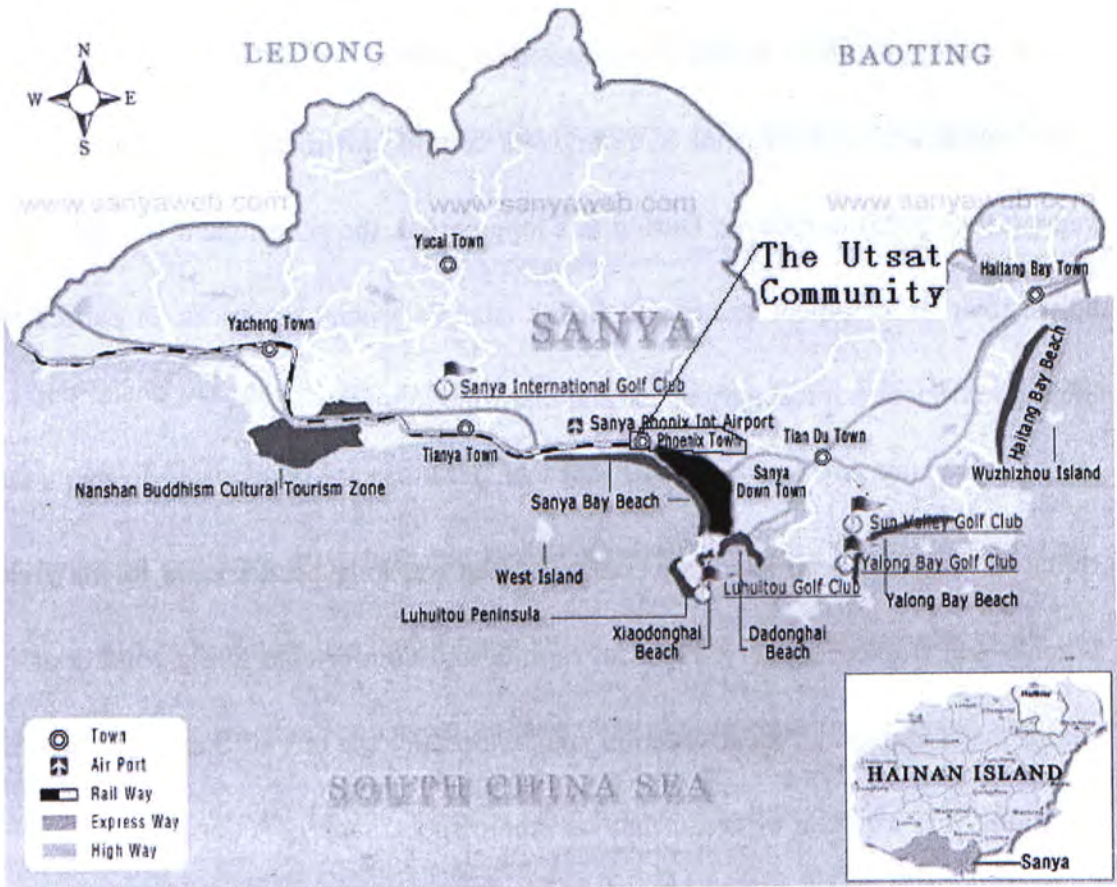


Figure 11: The map of Sanya

Today Sanya is well-known to the world as “The Oriental Hawaii”, where tourism has become the most important local industry as well as one of the leading sectors of the provincial economy. Every year in the winter, Sanya receives a large number of Chinese and international tourists, especially from Russia and Korea. Most of restaurants in Sanya city have three or four languages on their sign boards: Chinese, English, Russian and Korean. It is noteworthy that by hosting the Miss World contests in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007 as well as the Elite Model Look in 2008, Sanya became more and more well-known both within China and to the world.

Enjoying such a privileged location, almost all Utsat families are actively engaged in

the tourist business rather than maintaining fishing and farming, the traditional occupations. This greatly improved Utsat material living standards, tremendously changed their life in many aspects, particularly, female status. The following part will illustrate this with a personal story.

## **1.2 Making a Fortune: A Success Story of an Utsat woman**

The Utsat women are not, as might be expected, the so called “Mrs. Bosses (老板娘)” who assist their husbands only, but are the bosses themselves who handle the business independently. “They are never the ladies in the background with a veil on,” according to my male Utsat informants. Ever since Sanya became a famous tourist city, the Utsat women have become striking features in the market, a phenomenon which have been widely documented in newspaper reports, magazine interviews, online-articles, and academic writings.

They are in charge of many kinds of tourist businesses, ranging from selling fruits and small items on the street to running hotels, restaurants, and factories. One of the typical example is the story of Ha Yumei (哈玉梅), whose experience has been widely reported on the newspapers. The following is one of the newspaper reports which was recommended by the Utsat villagers (originally in Chinese, translated by author):

Sanya Hui: Female Business Bosses

[HAIKOU, 12/8/09] Chewing betel-nuts, wearing a yellow headscarf,

she is a middle aged woman, with her rotund body wrapped in a flowery silk suite. If she is not introduced by the locals, I hardly believe this typical country woman is a billionaire.

Traditionally, it should be the Muslim men who go out for business, but in Sanya now, it is the Muslim women who play the leading roles in businesses. According to Gao Yuqing, the vice-director of Sanya Bureau of Ethnic & Religious Affairs, such a special group of business women is largely a result of the rapid development of local tourism, and Ha Yumei is one of the outstanding models.

She owns a company processing and marketing crystal products, namely, "Sanya Century Changyuan Center of Crystal Culture Co., Ltd" (三亚世纪昌源水晶文化中心有限公司), located on the way to a famous scenery site, "the End of the Earth." Right now is the peak season of tourists, as the reporter observes, outside her s centre, tourist buses come and go one after another, whereas inside, the eyes of consumers gaze upon hundreds of kinds of the crystal products.

In addition to this exhibition center, Ha said, in Guangzhou, she has another processing factory. She told this reporter that her company is worth more than 200 million RMB. This exhibition center alone receives 4-5,000 tourists per day.

All these achievements, she recalled, began as a thirteen-year-old girl who carried a basket and followed the tourists to sell accessories. It was twenty-two years ago. "I am the eldest sister in my family, and because my family was poor, I had to quit school in the first year and went out to do business to support the family", she said. "After the foundation of Hainan province (1988), a huge number of tourists came to this island; then, I began to sell things to tourists at bus stations and sight spots during the day and followed some tourists to hotels to sell things there when the day turned dark."

Sun Wu, the head of cultural center of Sanya Fenghuang town, offers a historical explanation: The Hui people in Sanya, with a history of more than eight hundred years, were fishermen in the past. At that time, while the men went fishing in the sea, their wives were responsible for selling seafood. This is how the tradition of women doing business forms. After the China's Reform, Sanya became a famed coastal tourist city. Nowadays, almost all the Hui families take part in the tourist market. They process and sell pearl, crystal, shell, jade, and silver products as well as many kinds of local specialties, like ethnic clothes. Also, they opened more than ten grand restaurants

and twenty eight family hotels. Almost all the business is managed by Utsat women.

This report was published in “Xinhuaneet (新华网)”<sup>57</sup>, an online news service of Xinhua News Agency (新华社), the official press agency of the government of the PRC. Although this is very much a typical “official report”, aimed at showing the beneficial effects of China’s ethnic policies, it emphasizes that the gender arrangement is quite unique in Utsat economic life, that is, Ha Yumei’s husband is absent throughout the story. Living in the village, I got to know that Yumei married in her twenties and according to many villagers, “that is always a nice family”. In this regard, the most likely condition is that her husband’s role is insignificant in the business.

This matches the conditions of many Utsat families that I observed. My host family is a good example: Ha told me several times that he wishes to be a decent man like his father in all aspects except his inability in making money. “Business also requires talent,” Ha said, “my father tried many times, but never succeeded.” According to him, it was his mother who raised her eight children by selling various small items, such as accessories and betel-nuts. His father, after many failed attempts, finally decided to give up, and devote himself to religious activities. He helps at the mosque, prays for the family, and educates the children. “Praise God, my father is a religious man,” Ha always said, “some Utsat men use their wives’ money for gambling, or

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<sup>57</sup> <http://china.zjol.com.cn/05china/system/2009/12/08/016134704.shtml> accessed at 23 May 2010

even worse, for their Han mistresses.”

Therefore, the absence of Ha Yumei’s husband seems just like the absence of the wives in many reported stories of successful business men. Generally the readers would not feel strange because traditionally, women are not necessarily expected to be significant in money making. Even today, “in many ways, women’s lives are marginal to the dominant story of China’s economic modernization, affected adversely by a simultaneous increase in opportunities and burdens (Blum & Jensen 2002:15).”<sup>58</sup> But the Utsat story does not reflect the typical Chinese situation. In another report<sup>59</sup>, the portrait of Utsat female prominence in business runs to an extreme. In the opening paragraph, it says that “The Utsat women are really influential, overshadow their husbands. We Sanya people call their villages ‘a kingdom of women’.” This was posted on “The Website of Chinese Religion and Ethnic Groups”, powered by “China Ethnic News”, a newspaper office of The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of PRC, titled “A Kingdom of Hui Women on Hainan Island.”<sup>60</sup> Obviously, this is another “official report”, which is always supposed to be more objective, measured, and less emotional in tone.

Not surprisingly, such uniqueness of gender relations has attracted much academic attention. Although the number of studies on Utsat is small, almost all researches after the mid 1980s addressed this gender issue, including Ma (1998), Chen (1999),

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<sup>58</sup> Blum and Jensen are talking about some features of contemporary China gender relations.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.mzb.com.cn/html/report/34796-1.htm> accessed at 23 May 2010.

<sup>60</sup> The original title in Chinese is “海南岛上有个回族 ‘女儿国’”



Wang (2008), etc. Among these, the most detailed one is Pang Keng-Fong's Ph.D thesis (1992). In short, the special gender relations is identified by the Utsat themselves and a number of outside observers as one of the most important features of the current social change in Utsat society.

### **1.3 Islam, Gender, and Social Change**

In order to better comprehend the Utsat case, I did a brief review on Muslim gender issues in social change. Let's begin with the woman's status in religion. The advent of Islam brought significant improvement to the position of women in ancient Arabia and to some extent in the neighboring countries. But in general, the inferiority of women to men remained deeply rooted and amply documented in Muslim scripture, tradition, and law. For example, a woman's testimony as a witness is worth only half that of a man: "And get two witnesses, out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her (Qur'an 2:282)." Also, the law regarding inheritance specifies gender differentiations: "if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the male having twice the share of the female (Qur'an 4:176)." These reveal a basic view that women are less important than men both in intelligence and economical significance.

Having been converted to Islam for centuries, Utsat is a group of people whose life

is deeply founded upon basic Islamic ideologies. Is it possible that within the past two decades, Utsat women's status have definitely changed so much? Drawing upon the cases from different Islamic societies all over the world, in the "Introduction" of *Islam, Gender, & Social Change*, Esposito (1998:xv) stated:

During the twentieth century, significant changes occurred in the lives of many Muslim women. Influenced by the West and by Islamic modernism, legal reforms, voting rights, and educational and employment opportunities altered and broadened women's role in society. In addition to being wives and mothers, women have entered many areas of public life, ranging from politics to the professions. Admittedly, this is true for a relatively small percentage of women and it varies greatly from one region of the Muslim world to another (and often from urban to rural settings).

But meanwhile, what is also true:

However much countries adopted Western political economic, social, and legal institutions and codes, family law remained untouched at first, and then it was reformed rather than replaced. Failure to replace family law with Western codes was a tacit, if not explicit, recognition of the importance and sensitivity of issues of women and the family in Islamic history and tradition.

This universal sensitivity of women's issue in Muslim social transformation implies that the true condition of Utsat gender relation is probably far more complicated than what we have seemed on the surface. Immediately, it reminds me of the beer-selling restaurant, which broke the Utsat myth of being the "very true Mohammedans", suggesting that social phenomenon is always multi-faced and so it could be analyzed at different levels. The beer-selling case reveals that issues of relational and ideological levels must have their embodiments in material forms, such as food and eating. It is always these material manifestations that allow us to capture the delicate nature of truth. Therefore, the true conditions of Utsat changing gender relation will

be examined through the observation of their changing foodways in the following section.

## **2. The Changing Utsat Foodways**

As a result of the frequent interaction between the Utsat community and outside world in the recent two decades, it is not surprising that the Utsat foodway has undergone a wide array of changes. On the one hand, some Utsat dishes became well-known to the outside world, such as the “sour fish soup”. On the other hand, many new ways of eating have been introduced into the Utsat community. These include food stuffs such as factory-made foods, localized inland cuisines, and some prohibited stuffs, such as beer, cigarette, and drugs (heroin). In a word, the changing Utsat foodways reflect a mutual interchange between the Utsat community and the Han society. This section mainly focuses on the newly introduced foods in Utsat life, because some forbidden items are included, which is crucial to measure whether their religious faithfulness has changed. In this regard, I shall discuss these changes according to two categories: the “lawful” and the “law-breaking”.

### **2.1 Lawful Ways of Changing**

#### *2.1.1 Mass-produced, Factory-made Food*

Mostly, the factory-made foods are snacks and drinks, which are not produced by *qingzhen* enterprises. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, instant noodles and chicken

sausages without *qingzhen* brands were included in the meal record of my host family. This is because, according to Wen, the Utsat population is too small to finance a *qingzhen* market in Sanya. Hence they have to consume some non-*qingzhen* labeled products by making sure that they do not contain the prohibited ingredients.

In general, those consumed by the Utsat are the same as the popular ones in the majority Han areas. As Davis described, in China, “Throughout the 1980s, economic reforms fundamentally changed the experience of shopping and the dynamic of food retailing. The expanded food offerings of the 1990s and the end of rationing, therefore, created an environment in which grocery shopping became a lively social context for observing the consequences of the consumer revolution (2000:7).”

For example, the most common drinks are the various products from three powerful companies, such as Green Tea, Ice Red Tea (冰红茶), Orange Juice (鲜橙多) of Kang Shi-fu (康师傅 Master Kang) company, the dominant Taiwanese brand of drinks and instant noodles in Chinese market since the early 1990s. And U-Yo Tea Milk (呦呦奶茶), Smoothie Tea Milk (思慕奶茶) of Wahaha (娃哈哈) company, another dominant brand of snacks and drinks in China since the late 1980s. Also, the many kinds of soda drinks of Coca-Cola Company and some other minor brands. For snacks, there are too many choices to figure out the dominant types and brands. A wide variety of cookies, chocolates, candies, and many other kinds of snacks are

everywhere in the villages: in children's hands, in grocery shops, and on family tables.

To conclude, the identity of these products is ambiguous. They are of course not *qingzhen* products because they are made by non-Muslims. But neither are they considered as *haram* due to the absence of prohibited ingredients. After all, they are mass-consumed in the Utsat daily life and it seems people seldom care about it. Conducting her fieldwork among Xi'an (西安) Muslims, Gillette observed a similar phenomenon and she argued that although the industrial processing produced foods looked unfamiliar, they are not considered as *haram*. More importantly, they represent a modern lifestyle, because, "the mass-produced snacks that Hui children and adults consumed were pork-free, non-Chinese, and machine-made. ... By consuming these food, residents made the West, prosperity, advanced technology, science, and modernization their own (2000:162)."

However, different to Gillette's emphasis on the pursuit of modernity in this phenomenon, I argue that consuming factory-made foods among the Utsat carries no such implication. As noted above, many popular food brands in the local market are the non-Western ones. According to my observation, the Utsat paid no attention to whether the factory-made foods and drinks are "non-Chinese" or not. Nor did they identify whether they are "Western style" or otherwise. Therefore, these mass-produced, factory-made foods do not convey the meaning of "the West,

prosperity, advanced technology, science, and modernization” to Utsat life.

Seen from a larger perspective, among the multiple visible and colorful outcomes of the Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s in China are the actively transforming food markets. One obvious effect has been the appearance of new foods on the market, including a wide variety of mass-produced, packaged snacks, produced by both Chinese and foreign enterprises. According to my observation on Utsat consumption, there is no significant difference between the Chinese-made and foreign-made products in either the price or the quality. Thus there is no obvious hierarchical ordering in the Utsat consumption of foods and drinks. But why is Gillette’s case is different?

One obvious reason is that Gillette’s fieldwork was conducted from 1994 to 1995, slightly more than one decade after the implementation of Reform Policy (1978), when the mass-produced, factory-made foods and drinks appeared. Quite possibly, they were considered as sort of “luxury” products at that time (Gillette 2000:151). Fifteen years later when I went to the field in 2009, China’s consumption and modernization have dramatically changed. Many “luxury” items in Gillette’s time are too common to symbolize the “modern” and the “advanced” in today’s China, including the mass-produced, factory-made snacks and drinks in the Utsat community.

### 2.1.2 Islamized “Inland” Dishes

Another obvious change is that many “inland” dishes were incorporated into the Utsat daily life, especially the several famous regional dishes, such as Duojiang Yutou (剁椒鱼头 Steamed Fish Head with Diced Peppers) from Hunan (湖南), Laziji (辣子鸡 Diced Chicken with Chillies and Nuts) from Chongqing (重庆), Shuizhu Nirou (水煮牛肉 Poached Sliced Beef in Hot Chili Oil) from Sichuan (四川), etc., which gain wide popularity throughout China. These kinds of changes were mainly observed in restaurant meals rather than domestic eating. Actually, these occurred not only among the Utsat, but in the whole Hainan Island during the recent two decades.

The reason why I use the word “inland (内地的)” instead of “non-local” lies in the special classification of people in the local context. Traditionally, almost all the local Hainan people, including Utsat, make a firm distinction between the Hainanese and non-Hainanese. While calling themselves “we Hainanese people”, the rest of Chinese are largely referred as “neidiren (内地人)” or “daluzai (大陆仔)”, literally means the inland inhabitants. Although mainland China has many coastal areas, the Hainanese still perceive that apart from Hainan and Taiwan, the rest Chinese mainlanders are inland inhabitants. These are the terms of negative meaning on many occasions. In general, when these two terms are used, they often refer to something strange, different, and non-understandable. Those which they refer to are not “ours”, and so they are acted out of the manner of “ours” and fail to share the same logic of “us”.

Therefore, a strong boundary between the insiders and outsiders is established by means of language. Although such boundary has been blurred to a certain extent in terms of the acceptance of food, the term “inland (内地的)” remains still in use.

This complicates the Utsat situation. On the one hand, being Hainanese as well, they naturally maintain a distinction between the Hainanese cuisine and the ones from the inland. On the other hand, as Muslims, they also make a distinction between Muslim food and the non-Muslim ones. Therefore, it would be very interesting to observe how these “inland cuisines” became Utsat food.

In the community, there were several small scale *qingzhen* restaurants. I categorize them into two types. The first type was opened by non-local Muslim immigrants, targeting tourists by selling a set of specific regional food, such as Lanzhou Handmade Noodle (兰州拉面) and Xinjiang Big Plate Chili Chicken (新疆大盘鸡). The second type was opened by Utsat, targeting both the tourist and the locals, combining many kinds of famous regional dishes with Hainanese food. This type of restaurants are patronized by the Utsat, I therefore focused on them.

Among them, the Fenghuang Restaurant (凤凰饭店 Phoenix Restaurant) was the most successful one, recommended by many Utsat villages largely due to the fact that “the chef is great and there are many kinds of dishes.” It was located in the middle of Huixin village (see figure 12). On the signboard shown as follows, there is



a picture of a mosque with the characters “qingzhen (清真)” on the left side, showing this is a Muslim food place, selling lawful food. At the bottom of the board is a list of what kinds of food it serves: 川 粤 湘菜 (cuisines of Sichuan, Guangdong, and Hunan), 海南风味 (Hainan flavor), 夜宵大排档 (food stalls for night snacks), 炒粉 炒面 (fried flat noodle & fried noodle).



Figure 12: The sign board of Fenghuang restaurant, Sanya (photographed by author, 2009).

Fenghuang restaurant was opened by an Utsat woman, a single mother of three children. Although she was the boss of the restaurant, she showed up only at night, selling barbequed meats and vegetables as night snacks. Most of the time, the restaurant was managed by a waitress and a chef. The waitress was a Muslim woman who came from Ningxia province with her husband. They have been working outside

Ningxia for few years and planned to return home after they had earned enough money to establish a good life at home. One year ago, they came to work among the Utsat community.

The chef was a non-Muslim Han man, whose hometown was Chongqing (重庆). Having been in Hainan for more than ten years, he was a highly experienced chef of small-scale restaurant and was capable of cooking not only all the “regular (常见的)” Chinese dishes such as Steamed Fish Head with Diced Peppers (剁椒鱼头) and Diced Chicken with Chillies and Nuts (辣子鸡), but also many Hainanese dishes, including the tamarind fish soup. He had worked in many different areas of the island previously and moved to the Utsat village one and a half years ago. He believed that *qingzhen* food is not necessarily cooked by Muslims, due to the fact that he understood the essence of cooking *qingzhen* food is only the avoidance of some prohibited ingredients, like pork and lard.

In order to investigate why Fenghuang restaurant was popular, I went there many times, and was very impressed by the wide range of dishes it served. There were more than one hundred items on the menu, organized into six major categories: 热菜 (Hot Dish), 凉菜 (Cold Dish), 菜类 (Vegetarian Dish), 干锅系列 (Dry-pot Dish)<sup>61</sup>, 主食 (Staple Food), and 汤类 (Soup).

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<sup>61</sup> “Dry-pot” is actually a way of cooking, originated from Yuanjiagang (袁家岗) district of Chongqing region. It is similar to “Hot-pot” but with more heat and without water.

As I skipped through the menu, I quickly recognized several famous regional dishes, which are often served in a huge number of restaurants throughout China. For example, the “Braised Duck with Beer (啤酒鸭)” of Guizhou (贵州), and the above-mentioned “Diced Chicken with Chillies and Nuts (辣子鸡)” of Chongqing as well as the “Steamed Fish Head with Diced Peppers (剁椒鱼头)” of Hunan.

Secondly, there were also many regular family dishes, which are cooked everywhere in China, such as “Steamed Fish”, “Stir-fried Egg with Tomato”, “Stir-fried Egg with Yellow Leek”, and so on. “*Chao* (炒)”; literally means “stir-fry” is one of the most common Chinese cooking methods, which is done by combining vegetarian ingredients with meat or egg. As pork has long been important for the majority non-Muslim Chinese, it is used in many regular stir-fried dishes. Interestingly, those dishes which typically incorporate pork, are replaced by mutton, beef and squid in the Fenghuang restaurant, such as “Stir-fried Beef with Bitter Gourd”, “Stir-fried Mutton with Garlic Sprout”, “Stir-fried Squid with Bean Sprout” and so on.

More interestingly, some of the dishes were obviously the chef’s own inventions, combining the multiple cooking methods and special ingredients from certain regional cuisines to make new ones. For example, the “Diced Duck with Chillies and Nuts (辣子鸭)” was obviously adapted from the “Diced Chicken with Chillies and Nuts.” Another prominent example was “Stewed Wenchang Chicken with Brown Sauce(红烧文昌鸡)”. Wenchang Chicken is a special type of chicken which

originated in the Wenchang region of Hainan Island, well-known for good quality chicken meat. It is the key ingredient in making the famous “Hainan Chicken Rice” overseas, which is also called “Wenchang Chicken rice(文昌鸡饭)” on the island. The cooking method is, to poach it first, and then slice it into pieces and sewed with special sauces (白斩鸡). But in this restaurant, the chef made it in a completely different way, combining the Hainan specialty with his own cooking preference<sup>62</sup>.

Evidently, the dishes served at Fenghuang Restaurant are varied, combining Utsat dishes, Hainanese specialties, inland cuisines, and the newly-invented dishes together, reflecting not only the experiences of cultural exchange, but also the results it brought: the changing meanings of lawfulness. As noted earlier, this is without doubt a *qingzhen* restaurant, because it was pork-free and opened by an Utsat, albeit the food was made by a non-Muslim Han. This is to say, the core of lawful food is pork-free, which matches my observations of many other restaurants which were also favored by Utsat in downtown Sanya, such as “Xinjiang People (新疆人)”, a popular Xinjiang non-Muslim restaurant and many seafood themed Han restaurants. “We won’t order pork,” an Utsat uncle said to me when he was inviting me for a dinner in a Han seafood themed restaurant of Sanya city. He is a friend of my family, working for the Sanya government for many years. According to him, as economic conditions improved, people favored eating out, resonating Davis’s observation that “one of the most telling indicators of China’s consumer revolution is the rapid proliferation of

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<sup>62</sup> Stew with brown sauce is one of the chef’s favorite cooking methods.

restaurants and the increasing percentage of household budgets ordinary families spent on eating out (2000:14).” After all, these changes in general were not considered by the locals as breaking Islamic food laws, for they claimed that they always carefully avoided forbidden foodstuffs wherever they ate.

## **2.2 Law-breaking Behaviors**

In Islam, as stated earlier, the most basic food taboos are carrion, improperly slaughtered animals, blood, pork, alcohol, and substances that are harmful to one’s health. But since the mid 1980s, some prohibited foodstuffs such as alcohol, cigarette, and drugs have been widely consumed in the Utsat community, mostly by the Utsat men. This section is going to examine on what occasion and for what reason that these religious food laws are broken.

### *2.2.1 Pork*

The forbiddance of consuming pork is explicitly stated four times (2:173, 5:3, 6:145, and 16:115) in the Qur'an. For example, “He hath only forbidden you dead meat, blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah. ... (2:173)”. From then on, the pork taboo became one of the most important features of Islam and has been fully recognized by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Gradually, the more emotional attachment associated with it, the more often it is involved in ethnic issues, particularly, ethnic conflicts.

During the period of Land Reform (1952-1955)<sup>63</sup> in China, Pang (1992:245) recorded one horrible incident: “Many village elders remember with anguish how one Utsat classified as a landlord was physically caught by Han and his head was pushed onto raw pork (with his mouth touching the raw pork) in front of many Utsat people.” When I was in the field, Ha also told me that the first time he beat a person was related to pork. It was eight years ago, he was a second-year junior high school boy, studying in a non-Muslim school of Sanya city. One day, after having the lunch, one of his Han classmates laughed at an Utsat girl, and said to her “Look at your greasy mouth, full of lard!” Suddenly, Ha felt that all his people (the Utsat) were deeply insulted. He then called several Utsat boys to beat that Han classmate. There are many examples like these, demonstrating that the pork taboo has long been fully identified by both Muslim and non-Muslim as one of the most significant boundary markers. Today, the Utsat still strictly follow this pork avoidance, but some subtle changes in their attitude did occur. Some examples are as follows.

On the first day we met, an informant told that he had eaten pork for half a year. “My junior high school was a non-Muslim one, located in downtown Sanya, far away from our villages,” he said, “so I have to eat in the school canteen, which served pork soup every morning.” I asked whether his family was aware of this situation.

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<sup>63</sup> The Land Reform Policy carried out in 1952. During that period, all households in China were classified into three major categories: first, the poor and lower-middle peasants (贫下中农), second, middle peasants (中农), and third, the landlords (地主). To make sure that all farmers could have their own land, the government abolished the land ownership of the few previous landlords and gave the land to majority peasants.

He replied, “Oh, I didn’t tell them. Because I myself did not know there was pork. You know, the school always stings on the ingredients, I never saw even one piece of meat myself. Hence for a long time, I thought it was a vegetarian soup.” Yan said when he realized that was a pork soup, it was already the end of that semester. He reasoned, “I was not supposed to be wrong because I ate it without knowing.”

Another case comes from an imam’s family. It was about an Utsat child sent to study in a non-Muslim middle school. The father of that child was a friend of my family, who worked in Haikou city. Before I went to the field, I contacted him and asked him to introduce me to his father, an old Utsat imam who lived in the village. Since his father spoke limited Mandarin, he asked his wife to help me. On the first day I arrived, I met this lady.

She invited me to a lunch at home, together with one of my friends, who drove me to the village from Haikou. We chatted with each other over the meal. She told us that she was quite worried about her son, who was going to take the entrance exam qualifying him to senior high school. “I hope he can get into the Hainan Middle School (海南中学)”, she said. Immediately, I realized that eating would be a problem for them. But I did not ask, for I was not sure whether it would make her embarrassed. Unfortunately, my friend was graduated from Hainan Middle School, clearly knowing that there was no *qingzhen* canteen. Moreover, that was a boarding school, allowing no student to leave the campus without special permission. He

worried about the same thing. “Don’t go,” he said, “we had pork everyday. Almost all the dishes are made of pork and lard. You don’t want your boy eat instant noodles everyday, right?” As soon as he mentioned pork, the lady turned pale. “Well, that’s a problem,” she admitted, “but we cannot be that strict all the time.” We then switched to another topic ...

These two cases are all about the conditions outside the community. How about inside the Utsat villages? During my days there, I didn’t see any pork or lard. But I sometimes heard people discuss them. Before I moved to the Ha’s family house, I frequently went to the Fenghuang Restaurant. One day after lunch, I chatted with the chef and the waitress:

The Chef: It’s boring to work here.

I: Why?

The Chef: Actually, only the busy seasons we can make money. But many times, the guests just left because we don’t have pork. I hate the feeling of watching money flying away.

I: What did they say?

The waitress: Many said pork is delicious. Without pork they don’t know what to order. Some even said without pork they always feel hungry.

The chef: To be honest, I myself miss pork too.

The waitress: Oh, please, you Han guys make me curious about the taste of pork. God forgive me!

The second time that I encountered such curiosity of pork was from Wen. One afternoon, Lily knocked on my door and asked me to eat with them. She bought some stewed cow foot with soybean from the neighbor. Ha, Wen, Lily, and I sat around on the floor, eating the dish with some xifan (稀饭). Wen told me that one



Utsat woman who lived nearby cooked this dish everyday, selling to some friends and relatives. The following is our dialogue:

Lily: This is really popular. It sold out every before four' O clock in the afternoon.

Me: We have this one too, but using pig's trotters. (This reminded me that we Han people have a very similar dish --- stewed pig's trotters with soybean)

Wen: Yes, yes, I heard it from my Han friends. How do you feel about ours? Is it as good as yours?

Me: I feel it is equally good. Actually, I can not tell the difference. If I don't know this was cow foot, I would have mistaken it for pig's trotters.

Wen: Really!?! (Wen seemed very excited. He then turned to Lily and said:) Now I know the taste of pork!

Seen from these observations, the Utsat current attitude toward pork has been slightly changed due to Han influences. But the one thing that has not changed is that pork still serves as significant boundary marker. To the non-Islamic world, the pork taboo is always the first thought when thinking of Muslims. Inside the Islamic communities and countries, the pork taboo still remains the most strictly obeyed law. To use Royce's term, it is the "double boundaries" of ethnicity, meaning "the boundary maintained from within, and the boundary imposed from outside, which results from the process of interaction with others (1982:29)."

### *2.2.2 Alcohol*

Most Muslims would agree that alcohol is forbidden, this is clearly stated four times in the Qur'an (2:19, 16:67, 5:90, and 5:91), for example:

They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: 'In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit.'

(2:219)

But, how to apply this prohibition is often unclear. It not only relates to the different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, but also depends on the definition of “alcohol” in the local context.

The majority of Utsat follow the jurisprudence of Sunni Hanafi. According to Hanafi jurists, the word *khamr* signifies several specific beverages. Hence only these specific beverages are forbidden, not necessarily others (2006 Michalak & Trocki:552-553). Differently said in *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (al-Qaradawi 2001), “all that intoxicates is *haram* ... Whatever intoxicates in large amounts is *haram* in any amount (p. 69).” In Chapter 2, we have already seen that although the Utsat articulated they are practicing Sunni Hanafi and regarded al-Qaradawi’s book as providing authoritative guidelines, in reality, they follow another set of local norms, including alcohol.

In general, the Utsat do avoid consuming many forms of intoxicants, such as beer, wine and whisky. Even the mention of the Chinese character “酒(*jiu*, alcohol)” is carefully avoided. For example, going a wedding banquet in China is widely referred as “*he xijiu* (喝喜酒)”, literally means drinking the wine of happiness. Interestingly, the Utsat called this “*he xicha* (喝喜茶)”, meaning dinking the tea of happiness. On such occasions, no matter it is “*jiu* (酒 wine)” or “*cha* (茶 tea)”, the single character does symbolize all the foods and social activities in the banquet. Hence the Utsat usage of “*cha* (茶 tea)” does signify a different set of foodways from the Han

Chinese.

However, among the many prohibited forms of intoxicates, there is one exception. In both Tsat and Hainan dialect, it is pronounced as *biang*. All the Utsat people, including women and children, are free to drink *biang*. This is a mulled yellow wine made from un-hulled rice from the mountainsides, traditionally by the Li ethnic minority (黎族). Utsat believed that *biang* should not be considered as alcohol, because “it cannot not make one drunk (那是喝不醉人的)”, additionally, “it is not named ‘*jiu*’ (人们都不叫它酒).”

In reality, the *biang* does make people drunk. I myself got drunk on *biang* once when I was a high school girl. It was a family dinner during the Chinese New Year. My uncle told me it was sweet, and of very low alcohol content. I tried, and found it was really tasty. Then I kept drinking, until I felt dizzy. Many Han Hainanese friends of mine also got drunk on *biang*. Even one Utsat girl also told me that she got drunk once. Originally, the word *biang* came from the Li dialect, meaning rice wine. Therefore, the Utsat interpretation of *biang* is totally a cultural illusion. As Esposito noted, “today, as in the past, the word of God has sustained multiple levels of discourse ...” (1998:xvii). After all, in the local environment, consuming *biang* is not counted as law-breaking behavior. But this does not mean that *biang* is the only one kind of alcohol that exists in Utsat life.

As mentioned in the “Introduction” chapter, several years ago, I had lunch in a beer-selling Utsat restaurant. Although that one had since closed, I found that selling alcohol was not a rare phenomenon in the Utsat food establishments. For example, the picture (figure 13) shown below was taken at the Fenghuang restaurant, displaying the cans of beer in a very prominent place. “Can Muslims drink beer?” I asked the waitress one day. “No,” she replied, “we have no choice but to serve it, otherwise the Han guests would go to other restaurants.” This is to say, selling beer is for the sake of survival. According to her, she never saw Utsat order beer in her restaurant. The drinkers were all the Han tourists and Han villagers who lived nearby. “Actually, not only in our restaurant but also in the community, no Utsat dare to drink,” she said. Does this mean that alcohol selling and serving is purely a business tactic? How about the Utsat themselves consuming alcohol outside the community?



Figure 13: Bottles of beer in Fenghuang restaurant, Sanya (photographed by author, 2009).

Long is a twenty-eight years old Utsat man, graduated from Hainan University five years ago, and now teaching Mathematics in a primary school in Sanya city. During my first week in the village, I met him at his neighbor's wedding, and we talked about the differences between Han and Hui in referring to wedding banquets (as mentioned above). He explained that because the forbiddance of alcohol is very strict in Islam, they only drink tea at weddings. But, he continued, "the first time I tasted alcohol was during my college days." I was shocked, but pretended not to be. The following is our dialog:

I: "How did it feel?"

Long: "Horrible, I drank too much, and I puked."

I: "Why did you want it?"

Long: "It's a show of maturity. I just wanted a try, and I did. That's it.

After I went back to the village, I never did it. I know many people drink. But none of them dare to drink within the villages."

His words, along with his attitude, made me assume that drinking alcohol is probably quite a normal thing among Muslims among his generation. Because the "sign of maturity" must have public meanings, as Geertz (1973) noted, symbols and their meanings are social and public. If so, and since most of them dare not do it in the villages, where and why do they drink?

This assumption was proved to be true after I got to know Yan, a mathematic teacher at Huihui primary school, who introduced me to the world of young Utsat men. One afternoon, on my way to the Old Mosque (古寺), I passed by the school. It seemed that there was a thorough cleanup. As soon as I walked into the school, several Utsat kids immediately stopped working and came to me to ask who I was. Very soon, I was surrounded by many kids. At that moment, one of them ran into a teacher's office on the ground floor of their classroom building. Afterwards, Yan came out to see what was happening. After I explained to him, he asked his three Utsat girl students to show me the way to the Old Mosque. At the same time, he asked for my cell phone number. From then on, I constantly received his text messages, inviting me to go out with him, mostly, at night. For the sake of safety, I had to say that I was busy writing and not go. Fortunately, in early July, my roommate Lin visited me. I then finally decided to go out with Yan once during her stay.

It was a Friday afternoon, when I received Yan's message, saying that he wanted to have dinner with me. I asked him whether I could bring a female friend of mine. He agreed excitedly, and told me that he had also invited several friends of his. At five o'clock in the evening, Lin and I waited in front of our hotel. One of Yan's friends, an Utsat young man in his thirties came to pick us up. Then he drove to Huihui village, picked up Yan and the other middle aged Utsat man. On our way to the food place, Yan introduced the first man as one of his best friends since childhood, the second man as his good friend, graduated from the Central University of Nationalities (中央民族大学), and now working as a journalist. Yan secretly told me in a very low voice that the first one is a very rich man, who owns a casino. That's why many girls like him. One of his girl friends is coming tonight. For the sake of convenience, I will call the first one, who drove us, as "the casino man", and the second one, who lived in the other village with Yan, as "the journalist".

Half an hour later, we arrived at a Mongolian hotpot Dapaidang (大排档) in Sanya downtown. Dapaidang is a special food place in China. Normally, it is a street-side and open air place, situated between restaurant and street food stall in both scale and price. At first glance, I noticed that it had a *qingzhen* sign board. But as soon as we sat down, the journalist called the waitress to order beer, which was absolutely non-*qingzhen*. During our discussion on what to order next, three girls came. One was the journalist's colleague who will be called as the female colleague in the

following statement, and the other two were the casino man's girlfriend and her friend. None of them was Muslim. Then we had eight persons at the table: Yan, the casino man, his girlfriend and her friend, the journalist, the female colleague, Lin, and me.

After a brief discussion, we ordered beef, mutton, fish ball, beef ball, needle mushroom, fuzhu (腐竹, bean-curd sticks), Chinese cabbage(娃娃菜), potato as well as some rice. In addition to beer, we also ordered bottled Green Tea and Coca Cola. Over the meal, all the men drank and smoked, and made many excuses to urge the girls to drink, especially the female colleague of the journalist, Lin and me. Moreover, Yan and the journalist frequently spoke close to our ears and touched our hands and shoulders. We talked about many topics that evening, most of which were about dating and marriage. In general, the three Utsat men all claimed that most of the Utsat girls were conservative and boring. Therefore, they preferred Han girls to Hui girls. At the moment, I felt this was probably not a simple meal. The girls seemed to be the purpose rather than the food.

However, as far as I know, to date or marry non-Muslims is actually not recommended among the Utsat. The Qur'an, stipulates, "Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she is alluring to you. ... Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire (2:221)." That is to say, in order to marry an Utsat, one must



convert to Islam. In fact, there were several such cases in the villages. But what existed at the same time was the argument that if one converts to Islam only for the sake of marriage, he or she can hardly be faithful as well as those who were born and grew up as Muslim. It is such incompatibility that makes the relationship unstable.

Additionally, it is believed that dating non-Muslims increases the possibility of engaging in pre-marital sex, which is forbidden in Islam. The Qur'an states that "Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace (24:33)." It is noteworthy that keeping chaste is not only meaningful to the woman, but also to the man. In the hadith, it says, "Allah's Apostle ordered that an unmarried man who committed illegal sexual intercourse be scourged one hundred lashes and sent into exile for one year (Volume 3, Book 6, No. 817)." Therefore, although inter-ethnic marriages did exist in the villages, the Utsat still considered these marriages as unreliable.

In this regard, I paid special attention to the three girls apart from Lin and me. The female colleague wore glasses, did not wear make up, dressed simply, and behaved politely. She was very quiet, seemed like a college student. She told me that she was twenty three, just left university a year ago. On the contrary, the other two girls wore sexy clothes and were heavily made up. Throughout the night, they kept smoking and telling erotic jokes. The girlfriend of the casino man was only nineteen, and came from a small town of Hubei province. Her friend was twenty one, her

hometown was somewhere in Hunan province<sup>64</sup>. Obviously, to the three men at the table, intimate relationships were expected. The religious regulations were not really a matter.

At around eight o' clock, we finished dinner. When discussing where to go next, the female colleague said she had another appointment. Although the journalist tried very hard to make her stay, she still insisted on leaving. "What a shame," watching her back, Yan said, "we are going to Kala OK." Fifteen minutes later, we arrived at a night club. I told Yan that I also had to leave after half an hour. He looked very disappointed, "please don't, it's a matter of my face," he said. But suddenly, it seemed an idea leapt into his mind, "I will make you stay," he said with confidence. Soon he wrote a message and sent it from his cell phone. "I am making an appointment with a Hui girl," Yan said, "she likes drinking at night, so probably she will agree. She is daughter of one of the richest families in the villages." Additionally, Yan told me that this girl spent her high school days in a private school in Haikou city, and so he believed that we would share many common topics because he knew that my middle school was also a private one in Haikou. In a sense, he was right. On hearing this, I decided to stay and was very glad to meet her. But not because of the reason Yan thought, but because I was eager to know what kind of Utsat woman dared to drink frequently in night clubs.

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<sup>64</sup> In Hainan, it is rumored that there are many girls who came from some poor areas in Hubei, Hunan, and Anhui provinces and went to Hainan and Guangdong as rich men's mistresses at a very young age.

Very soon, the girl sent a message saying that she would go out an hour later, but she would not join us. Yan told me she was not willing to hang out with the Utsat villagers except him, “because most of the Utsat are very conservative (太保守了), and could not understand her. I am her relative, more importantly, I am open just like her,” Yan said with pride. Lin and I then walked with him into the KTV room, planning to stay until the girl arrived.

Inside the room, there were some plates of fruits, a dozen cans of beer, and two bottles of Chivas Regal on the table. The casino man was talking with a club manager, the two girls were singing, and the journalist was answering a phone call. As soon as we stepped in, the club manager looked at Lin and me, then turned to Yan and said, “I know you must be here. Look at you, what a lady-killer!” Yan briefly introduced Lin and I as his new friends. The manager smiled and gave us his business cards. “Have fun, beauties,” he said, “call me if there is anything I can do for you.” He then left with a big smile. Obviously, both Yan and the casino man were his regular customers. And his own service plus his attitude indicated their importance, particularly, the casino man.

We stayed for almost an hour, which was really hard for Lin and me. As what happened during the dinner, both Yan and the journalist moved very close when talking to us, and touched our hands and shoulders occasionally. The journalist even asked Lin whether we wanted something special. However, Lin and I did not

understand what he meant. Yan explained that he was asking about “yaotouwan (摇头丸)”, a certain kind of ecstasy. Lin immediately refused and said that she wanted to go as soon as possible. At the same time, the casino man had a really good time with the other two girls. With his arm over his girlfriend’s shoulder, he drank and smoked while talking with the other one. Another friend of theirs who was also having a good time that night came in at this moment. Yan told me he was an imam of his village. I also remembered his face when I had previously visited one of the mosques in Huixin. Although I did not see him drink or smoke, his very appearance in such a setting was extremely unexpected to me. Soon after his arrival, Yan got a message from his female relative. We then left for another night club, “Famous Warship” (Mingjian 名舰), one of the most expensive bars in Sanya.

On our way there, Yan briefly introduced the girl: she was born into a rich Utsat family of real estate business, and left the community to go to Haikou city at a very early age. Hence she has very few personal contacts with the villagers. Yan became familiar with her only after her return to the village for marriage three years ago. It was rumored that the marriage was for the sake of the family business, but soon she divorced half a year ago. Yan told me not to mention this in the girl’s presence.

When we arrived at the bar, the girl was playing dice with a young man. After a brief introduction, Yan left for the previous club. I then played dice with the girl while talking. We recalled school days in Haikou, and found we shared several common

friends. Throughout the night, the bar waitress brought beer to our table three times, which were all paid by her friends who were also drinking in this bar. “Some of them are not really my friends,” she said, “but they want to establish guanxi relation (关系) with my family. Once you leave school, true friends are rare.” The following is our dialogue:

I: Are they Han, or Utsat?

She: Both, but most of them are Han, because my family business goes far beyond the Utsat world.

I: So most of your friends are Han?

She: You can say so. But as I said before, most of the people that I currently socialize with are not really “friends”. Anyway, all my real friends are Han, like those who I got to know during my school days.

I: You like drinking?

She: My father always said that drinking provides social cohesion. I agree. But drinking for me is more than that. It helps me to relax sometimes, particularly when I came back to the village, which is a strange world to me.

Probably because my appearance reminded her of good memories of school days, she was very friendly to me, not only paid the taxi fare for our return, but also reminded us to be careful when drinking with Utsat men at night. Her kindness, plus her politeness to everyone, including Yan, her “friends” at the bar, and even the waitress, naturally gave me a good impression of her. However, this is completely different from the majority Utsat villagers’ think of her. For example, Ha once said that people believed the reason for her divorce was because of her “immoral activities”, such as drinking. It was rumored that she drank every night and there was no exception even when she was pregnant. Finally, she miscarried and so her husband divorced her. “How can a woman behave like this, she must go to the hell

someday,” Ha’s mother said. I then mentioned that there were many Utsat men who drank too. But Ha’s family members thought the meanings of men’s drinking were different. Although both man and woman should not drink, the crime of woman drinker was believed much more serious. In a word, once an Utsat woman drinks, her reputation was destroyed immediately. This would not happen to an Utsat man, because the Utsat villagers hold a much more tolerant attitude toward men drinking alcohol than women.

This unequal judgment is quite a common phenomenon among Muslims. For example, when I talked to a senior imam in the courtyard of White House Mosque, Yunnan province, he said, “Faith is a perfect gift, but religion maybe flawed, because man is flawed.” He made this reference in lieu of the many Muslim young men today consuming alcohol. In explaining why some Muslims became drinkers, he said, “faith (信仰) is the belief that ultimately the universe is governed by a spiritual, powerful being through a set of laws. In ancient China, people called this being ‘laotianye’ (老天爷, the lord of sky), in Islam, it’s our ‘Allah’. But religion (宗教) is only the practice of that belief, complicated by many factors, which can hardly be perfect.”

In his disagreement of judging Islam from some Muslims’ improper behaviors, I argued, how can people get drunk and get out of control with such a perfect faith inside of them? He then replied with a slight sadness, “I have to confess, Islam is not

a faith to every Muslim, but only a religion to the many. In fact, most of us didn't have the chance to make a choice. They were simply born to be Muslims. Thus for some of these people, Islam is a lifestyle (生活方式), or even less, a habit (习惯), which does not go as deep as a worldview (世界观). This happens a lot, in other religions too. That's why we are organizing religious education, helping people to understand the gift from God ...”

This imam was a very respectable Qur'anic teacher in that mosque, which receives Utsat students every year. According to him, the reason why some Muslim men break religious laws lies in their inefficient understanding of faith. And it is such weakness that enables the improper beliefs and values to occupy their hearts. Therefore, they need help to guide them go back to the right path. From these observations, we see that when a man breaks Islamic laws, he is considered as an improper Muslim but, still, a Muslim. However, when a woman does the same, she is not regarded as a Muslim any more. People would rather choose to abandon her rather than tolerate her.

Consequently, even though the Utsat women today play an active role in the financial transactions of their families, giving them more of a say in terms of purchasing power and decision-making authority, still, they are treated unfairly with regards to food and eating, and drinking. An old Utsat imam explained this by saying that “the Islamic framework provides women with equivalent rather than equal rights

within the family.” No matter it is rooted religiously or not, I do agree with him in a sense that the Utsat gender inequality is ubiquitous in my law-breaking observations, not only in the drinking behavior, but also in the consumption of cigarettes and drugs.

### *2.2.3 Cigarettes and Drugs*

Smoking and consuming drugs were very common among the Utsat men, which greatly shocked me because the Utsat had been portrayed completely different completely different in the literature I read before I went to the field. In Wang’s book (2008), when discussing the importance of betel nuts in Utsat social life, especially in the wedding, he stated, “because cigarette is not used in the wedding among the Hainan Hui people, the (social) functions of betel nuts is particularly prominent and significant (p.169, translated by author).” This explicitly articulates that the Utsat society is smoke-free.

However, on the second day of my fieldwork, I attended a wedding and observed many Utsat male villagers, (see figure 14 and 15), ranging from young men in their twenties to old people in their seventies smoking at the ceremony. All of the smokers behaved very naturally, without any embarrassment. This reveals two points: smoking is very common in the community and it is not considered as a serious crime, or even considered as lawful. But is it really halal?





Figure 14: The Utsat smoking men A, Sanya (photographed by author, 2009)



Figure 15: The Utsat smoking men B, Sanya (photographed by author, 2009)

This is a highly controversial question. On the one hand, it is not listed as a tabooed item simply because cigarettes did not exist at the Prophet's time. But on the other hand, it is widely acknowledged that smoking is harmful to people's health.

According to Qur'an and hadith, those which are harmful to one's body should not be consumed. That is why smoking is generally believed as *haram* theoretically but the least *haram* in reality. For example, an article in "China *Qingzhen* Website (中国清真网)" is titled "Smoking is harmful, Islam Prohibits Smoking (吸烟有害, 伊斯兰禁止吸烟)"<sup>65</sup>, concluding as follows:

In Muslim societies, the number of smokers is not small. Some of them even argue for their behaviors, such as tobacco is not considered as "drug", and it is not as harmful as heroin. It can be said that one hundred years ago, the science was not advanced enough for people to know how destructive the tobacco was. But what we should believe now are the evidences of modern science. Therefore, the cigarette which is harmful both to one's body and soul should definitely be defined as *haram* in Islam. (translated by author)

To support the argument, the author cited not only from the Qur'an and the hadith, but also from some contemporary Islamic scholars:

And spend your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good (2:195).

... nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you most Merciful! (4:29)

The Prophet said: "he who is willing to poison and thereby kill himself, will always consume poison in the fire hell." (translated by author)

The one who is addicted to tobacco, becomes a slave. The poison of tobacco destroys his body from heart, and then causes a series of sickness. (quoted from an Egyptian Muslim doctor, translated by author)

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65 See <http://www.musilin.net.cn/2010/0417/36498.html>, accessed 18 April, 2010.

This article is very representative. A number of smoking-related writings that I read are argued in a similar vein. But still, many Muslims regard it not a big deal, in the words of my Utsat informants, “of course it is not good, but not a serious crime.” Although this is widely accepted by both Utsat men and women, I didn’t observe or even hear of one single Utsat female smoker. I asked Yan and Ha about how the villagers would feel about women smoking. They both replied that if that woman is an Utsat, she would be considered “indecent”(不三不四) and thereby no man would marry her.

This gendered differentiation is similar in the issue of drug consumption, which was comparatively invisible because it is illegal according to the PRC law but yet, a common phenomenon according to my observations. On the very first day of my arrival, one of my Han friends who worked in Sanya City said to me, “do not go out at night alone, for there are many drug users in the villages.” Several days later, the chef of Fenghuang restaurant told me the same.

Probably because using drugs was a secret and shameful thing, I did not witness any drug-using behavior. But I frequently heard people talk about them, and even point out the drug-users to me. For instance, before I moved to Ha’s house, I went to the Fenghuang restaurant almost every day. I noticed that a middle aged Utsat man always went there too, especially for lunch. One day he spoke to me and asked whether I came to work in the village. It was a very short talk, no more than one

minute. But as soon as he left, the chef and the waitress seriously told me that man was a drug user and so his wife left him and that was why he had to eat out everyday. “Never, never have contact with him,” they warned me.

This reflects the only one condition of breaking up between Utsat dating couples that Ha once mentioned. On day, I went with Ha and his two male Utsat friends to a café in downtown Sanya. Chatting over tea, when one of Ha’s friends was talking about his girl friend who was doing her masters degree in Malaysia, I asked whether he had confidence in such a long distance relationship. “Why not?” He replied. Ha then explained, “We Utsat dating couples cannot break up. Once they begin to date, it means marriage, unless the man is a drug user. That would be understandable for his woman leave him.” I then asked about the case if the woman was the drug user. “Oh, no such woman! That’s impossible.” They all laughed.

In many daily conversations as such, the drug issue was often mentioned, indicating the number of Utsat drug users was probably not small. And the more I got to know the villagers, the more frequent I heard about drug use in the villages. “No body has counted the actual number, but I can tell you that almost every Utsat family has at least one very close friend or relative who is a drug user,”<sup>66</sup> said one of my close informants. Also, Ha told me now the conditions were better. The most serious period was in the late 1990s, when the province was experiencing its highest

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<sup>66</sup> In fact, all most all the villagers are relatives because intra-ethnic marriage has been popular among the Utsat for generations.

economic growth rates. Ha's mother commented that "people always become bad when they get rich." Additionally, Ha's youngest brother said the Utsat controlled the largest percentage of the drug market in Sanya. No matter this is true or not, it mirrors a close relation between drug use and Utsat daily life. In sum, both smoking and drug consuming became common phenomena after the development of tourism industry, and associated with Utsat males only.

### **3. Summary & Discussion**

The promotion of Sanya tourism in the recent twenty years provided opportunities for Utsat to improve the standards of living but, at the same time, made a threat to their traditional Islamic lifestyle. In this process, what stands out is the prominence of the Utsat woman's role in the economic life, and the comparatively high female status in Utsat society. But through the lens of food and eating, it appears that the men are more often the religious law breakers than women and are more easily forgiven.

These law-breaking behaviors reveal that firstly, Utsat religious faithfulness in general is experiencing changes. The pork examples best illustrate this. Secondly, the complexity in changing gender relations captures Utsat social change. The business story of the female boss and the observations on alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs consumption jointly show that the Utsat men are still privileged in spite of their

women being the breadwinners in many cases.

These men's privileges are best exemplified in the consumption of alcohol and drugs. As long as they are not in the community, Utsat men can drink or use drug to show case maturity, negotiate business, and even for relaxation and entertainment. The Utsat community does not condemn male consumers of alcohol. They can still make friends, establish a family, and pray in the mosques. On the contrary, if it is a female, she can hardly survive the bad reputation imposed on her.

Hence despite the fact that the Utsat have redefined the private and public roles of men and women to respond to the local realities of modernization which brought changes to Utsat gender relations, traditional beliefs about womanhood remain firmly in place. This matches many observations on other Islamic societies. For example, among the Egyptian Muslims, "despite the multiplication of the number of professional women in the public arena," Hatem noted, "their professional consciousness did not routinize or internalize relations of equality or empowerment. These modern professional identities associated authorities and leadership with maleness. Femininity was defined in opposition to masculinity as a subordinate status (1998:88)."

Based on all these facts, I conclude that although the Utsat female status has been improved, the traditional perception of femininity and masculinity has not changed

that much. Therefore, the changes in Utsat religious practice are essentially shown in the male performances, which mark the line between the “traditional past” and the “changing present”. This points out a way to theorize the nature of Utsat social change according to what has changed and what has not and why.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### 1. The Nature of Utsat Social Change

Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening-up policy since 1978 definitely brought great changes in China, both economically and socially. In a great number of social science studies, the issues of social change have been heavily addressed during the recent decades. Accompanying this trend are several key phenomena such as industrialization, modernization, and globalization, etc, which have been repeatedly used to explain the transforming lifestyles. Admittedly, the wake of industrialization led to great social changes in almost every corner of the world. But at the same time, no one would deny the basic fact that our societies and cultures are always changing over time. In this regard, "what is the nature of social change" becomes an important question.

Examining local meanings of the "traditional past" and the "changing present", I conclude the some basic facts of Utsat social change as follows: first, economically, great changes did take place within the community, which are apparently observed by the transformation of their major livelihood from fishing and farming to tourism service. Second, this shift of financial structure leads to corresponding changes in many other aspects, of which the betterment of life and improved female status are the most obvious as well as the most often reported traits. In this economic sense, "structural change" did happen to the Utsat community. Third, admitting they are



experiencing significant social changes, the Utsat in general are worrying about another “bigger” and “fundamental (根本性的)” shift in their life, that is, the decreasing faithfulness in practicing Islam. This reveals that from an emic perspective, the economic transformation is not the fundamental change. But rather, it is the religious matter that is the greatest concern, which has been less portrayed than the improvement of material life and female empowerment. In this respect, “structural change”, from the perspective of my Utsat informants, has not happened yet.

This research thus examines the changing faithfulness of practiced religion under the changing economic environment through the lens of food and eating historically and in contemporary time. In the previous chapters, we have seen how religious faithfulness is emphasized in the Utsat community as a reaction to such changes. An intensive discussion of the Utsat Islamic history in chapter 2 revealed that the never-changing deep degree of religious faithfulness is actually a myth, a myth that functions to maintain the continuity of Islamic believing. Chapter 3 analyzed how such myth operates to achieve its goal in contemporary Utsat life by setting rules and standards to regulate people’s daily activities. Focusing on the perception of lawful food, this chapter reveals a flexible space between the religious doctrine and local practice. This space is actually the localization of Islamic food laws, which reflects not only the historical continuity of this group of people, but also mirrors the current social changes they are experiencing. Chapter 4 dealt with how the promotion of

tourism disturbs the operation of food laws and reveals that the law-breaking phenomena are largely associated with Utsat males. In a word, the key difference between the “traditional past” and the “changing present” lies in the changing religious practice of Utsat males.

These “differences”, in the eyes of many Utsat people, are the “signs” of loss of Islamic traits, representing an emerging dangerous tendency of degeneracy. Such awareness forces them to take action before it is too late. They extensively organize religious activities, strictly emphasize traditional etiquettes, and actively invest in Islamic education. That is why a number of outside visitors were highly impressed by the six mosques in the two villages, the daily Qur’anic study of school kids, and the headscarf-wearing women in their long-sleeve dress, etc. It is such impressions that made the Utsat become the legendary “true Muslims” who live on “the edge of the sky and the corner of the sea”. And to a certain extent, this is not wrong, because the collective awareness of being in “danger” as well as the collective effort to maintain the religious identity makes them deserve the name.

Therefore, the emphasis of keeping religious faithfulness is actually a way to reproduce the religious life. In this sense, what the changes mean to Utsat people is an encounter of religious crisis, just as an Utsat imam stated, “Life is mysterious ... We all pray that it doesn’t challenge us with hard choices. But it is when we face hard choices that we become in touch with our true natures which give the definition

of who we are.” In my view, the need for maintaining Islamic practice is both instrumental and symbolic. It is instrumental because Islam has functioned in uniting the community. And it is such communal unity that provides them a sense of belonging. Islam is therefore a symbol of their ethnic distinctiveness.

Evidently, because of their religious practice, Utsat obtained the status of being an ethnic minority, which is instrumental for economic achievement also. The success of promoting tamarind fish soup as an ethnic Hui dish best illustrates this. In China, especially after 1978, there is a fever of promoting “Ethnic Tourism (民族旅游)”<sup>67</sup>, such as the famous Mosuo people in Yunnan, with their special marriage custom, namely, “visiting marriage (走婚)”<sup>68</sup>. It attracts a huge number of tourists from all around the world. This brings an obvious betterment of life which gives a very practical reason to keep such custom, at least, for the sake of economic benefits.

But the Utsat case is not like this. The emphasis of Sanya tourism is natural beauty, not ethnic culture. The only benefits that the Utsat get from their minority status are by running restaurants serving tamarind fish soup. Hence the function of keeping Islamic practice lies largely in the community unity, not the economical betterment.

We can thus see more clearly that the reproduction of religious life is symbolically

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<sup>67</sup> “Ethnic Tourism” is translated from a Chinese phrase *minzu lvyou*. In English literature, the similar concepts are “Aboriginal Tourism” or “Indigenous Tourism”.

<sup>68</sup> Visiting marriage (also called walking marriage) is widely adopted by the Mosuo people of China. In this custom, the couples do not marry to each other’s family but, both stay in their own matrilineal family for their whole life. The marriage and propagation of offspring is realized through “visiting” males. The women open their doors to their lovers every evening, and the men walk home to work in their mother’s household every morning. The woman and man in this relationship call each other A-xia, which means lovers in the sense of husband and wife. Children of such relationships are raised by the mother and her family (See Yuan, Lu, and Mitchell Sam. 2000. “Land of Walking Marriage.” *Natural History* 109 (9): 58-65.).

meaningful in the reproduction of social life. In sum, to a larger extent, the current Utsat social change is actually an encounter of religious crisis, which the locals realized very well. In this process, the market and religion are the two most important factors which frame the Utsat changing life. These changes were essentially centered on their religious identity and were reflected in the changing foodways.

## **2. Reflections on the Study of Social Change**

Seen from the Utsat case, among the analyses on the interplay of market and religion in their changing foodways, the intricate gender relation appears to be an important arena that captures some features of social change in the Reform period. The Utsat women, on the one hand, are powerful in the local economic life. But meanwhile, they are the powerless in the religious tradition. Why is it contradictory? What does this contradiction can tell us about social change?

In fact, the case of the Utsat woman is not the only case of using opportunities to prosper and take charge of the domestic economy after 1978. Ding Yuling (2006:163-183), for example, conducted a study among of Xunpu women<sup>69</sup> in the Reform period, where the people practice a similar wedding custom to the Utsat as mentioned in chapter 2. According to Ding's observation, influential is the role that the Xunpu women play within an otherwise patriarchal tradition. They not only work

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<sup>69</sup> Xunpu (罾埔) is a fishing village of southern Fujian in China.

hard on the oyster farms, but are also in charge of fish trading while their husbands are responsible for deep-sea fishing, which is extremely similar to the Utsat life before the development of tourism economy. In the words of Ding, “their involvement and achievement in the economic sphere have contributed greatly to raising their social status (p.181).” But, still, “the Xunpu women have not tried to change the patriarchal system, for the practice of patrilineal inheritance still prevails (p.181).”

A parallel situation is observed in the unfair treatment of Utsat law-breaking behaviors regarding food and eating. Ironically, the strategies to prevent the religious practice from destruction, such as Islamic education, are all conducted by Utsat males. There is no female imam, although the Utsat women are allowed to pray in the mosques. Although they probably have prominent power in the economic sphere, they are powerless in religious space. The Utsat male’s access to religious power is actually an important means to control women, maintaining the continuity of a patriarchal society. It is the dramatically improved female status yet and persistent gender inequality that makes the Utsat gender relation so complicated.

However, it shows that gender relation is such a fascinating area to study social change. As Ohnuki-Tierney correctly pointed out, “when treating the question of change versus stability in a society, it is important to identify the level at which changes take place ... (1990:7).” This is not to say that tradition always holds its

deepest roots in gender issues, but rather, implies again that social change is taking place in an imbalanced way. Both in quality and intensity it happens differently in different areas.

This is why we need to “distinguish between changes or transformations at the basic level and those at a more superficial level (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990:7).” Or, to use Firth’s words, there are distinctions “between structural change, in which basic element of the society alter, and detail change, in which social action while not merely repetitive, does not alter the basic social forms (1954:17).”

Back to the Utsat case, while the development of Sanya tourism transformed the structure of the local economic life, changes in other aspects simultaneously took place, including the religious practice, which is significant to their self-identification and is central to the local people’s perception of the depth of change. Although the Utsat have fully realized the changing state of Islamic practice, to be less religious or more, they still firmly believe it is Islam that defines who they are and gives them a way to live. Therefore, although the tradition of a group of people is always changing according to the changing circumstances, some basic features and functions of it are “needed, and will always persist, because they give continuity and form to life (Giddens 2001:62).”

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## Appendix I

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>
1.Ha	male	22	student and informal imam	junior high school
2.Wen (Ha's brother)	male	26	businessman	junior high school
3.Lily (Wen's wife)	female	25	businesswoman	junior high school
6.Ha's mother	female	early 50s	businesswoman	illiterate
7.Ha's father	male	early 50s	informal imam	illiterate
8. Ha's eldest sister	female	47	housewife	illiterate
9.Ha's eldest brother in law	male	49	driver and businessman	primary school
10. Yan	male	31	primary school teacher	college
11. Yan's relative	female	25	businesswoman	university
12. Ke (the Casino man)	male	30	businessman	senior high school
13. Teng (the journalist)	male	32	journalist	university
14. Ya	female	26	primary school teacher	university
15. Ya's husband	male	27	primary school teacher	university
16. Ya's father	male	middle 50s	Government official and businessman	college
17. Ya's mother	female	middle 50s	businesswoman	primary school
18. Xue	female	19	university student	university
19. Xia	female	17	waitress	junior high school
20. Gao	male	27	businessman	university
21. Gao's wife	female	23	housewife	senior high school
22. Gao's sister	female	22	businesswoman	senior high school
23. Li	male	early 70s	businessman and official imam	Primary school
24. Chen	male	early 70s	businessman and official imam	junior high school
25. Huang	female	early 70s	businesswoman	illiterate



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