CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SUFI SPIRITUALITY IN 17th-18th CENTURY CHINA: THE ROLE OF LIU ZHI (c. 1662 – c. 1730)

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

Contextualization of Sufi Spirituality in 17th-18th Century China: 
The Role of Liu Zhi (c. 1662 – c.1730)

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Islamic literati actively translated and wrote Islamic texts in Chinese for use by Hui Muslims and the Scripture Hall Education System in China. They used Confucian terms extensively to explain Islamic thought. This phenomenon has been interpreted recently in China as a process of Confucianization of Islam. Consequently, it is claimed that Islam in China is distinctive because it is Islam with Chinese characteristics.

This is a study of the issue of the Confucianization of Islam in China from the perspective of contextualization. Liu Zhi (c. 1662 – c.1730) is one of the most well known Hui Islamic scholars. Both his acclaimed trilogy and his short treatises, including a Sufi poem, are examined by using two foundational themes, namely the concept of unity of existence and Sufi spirituality. Firstly, this study shows that Liu Zhi’s concept of unity of existence is based on the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition which has been influential in Chinese Sufism. Liu Zhi translated Persian and Arabic Islamic texts and interpreted the concept of unity of existence by primarily using Confucian terms with the aim to make difficult Islamic concepts more comprehensible to his readers.

Secondly, this study shows that Liu Zhi’s Sufi spirituality is in active conversation with the Chinese cultural contexts. Sufi spirituality is contextualized primarily, but not exclusively, as Confucian self-cultivation. The Sufi path is also interpreted as a Buddhist concept of ‘vehicle’ (乘). The goal of Sufi spirituality is the return to the Real by the empowering role of the prophet Muhammad who is contextualized as the Utmost Sage.
Finally, contrary to the common understanding that Liu Zhi has Confucianized Islam, this study shows that Liu Zhi contextualized his Islamic tradition by using a composite translation-conversation model of contextualization. He was always faithful to his Islamic tradition and contextualized the Sufi spirituality as practical wisdom.
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1.0 Chapter One: Methodological Introduction

1.1 General Aims

Liu Zhi (c.1662 – c.1730) is known as one of the greatest Muslim scholars to have lived in China and his teachings on Islam are still influential among Muslim people today. The Qing dynasty in China with its dictatorial emperors in the 17th and 18th century allowed limited religious freedom to Muslims in China. Local rioting was not uncommon in the fight for religious autonomy. In such a historical context, Liu met his challenges by translating the Qur’anic materials, classical Persian and Arabic texts in medieval Islam into Chinese and simultaneously re-interpreting the source materials using Confucian language and religious concepts, making Islam more comprehensible and less threatening for the Chinese authorities; thus allowing greater freedom for Islamic teaching. Ibn ‘Arabi and his followers have exerted great influence in Chinese Sufism. Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240) was born in Murcia, Al-Andalus and his writings had an immense impact throughout the Islamic world and beyond. Liu Zhi’s translation of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition was far from literal. Liu Zhi was both a neo-Confucian and Islamic scholar, well trained in both traditions. In order to reach out to more Muslims who could not read any Qur’anic or Islamic text in Arabic or Persian, he insisted that the Chinese language should be used to propagate the Islamic faith. A general aim of this study is to analyze Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islam using Confucian concepts.

The general research questions of this study are: firstly, while Liu Zhi attempts to reach out to a majority of the Muslim people using Confucianism, what is his model of contextualization? How is he affected by the cultural, political, religious and philosophical contexts? Secondly, Liu Zhi adheres to the rich resources of traditional materials. Are there

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1 Sun Zhenyu is the only scholar who attempts to date the time of Liu Zhi. He suggests the year of birth around 1662. Z. Sun, A Critical Biography of Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2006) 211. No scholar is able to date precisely the year of Liu Zhi’s death. Many Chinese scholars simply speculate around the year of 1730. Liu Zhi’s last work is dated around 1724.

any successes and dangers in his use and interpretation of sources and traditions? Critical analysis needs to be made and evaluation is required. Thirdly, the question of getting Islam to be acceptable means that Liu Zhi has to integrate doctrine, religious spirituality and culture. What sort of integration? Is it adaptation, accommodation or Confucianization? These issues will be revisited in the final concluding chapter of this work.

1.2 Specific Objectives

Liu Zhi transmitted the ancient texts in Arabic and Persian into Chinese, a language that was inaccessible to most Chinese Muslims. The first objective of this study is to examine the major and minor works of Liu Zhi including his translation work.

Liu encouraged Muslims to pursue personal virtue in a form of Islamic spirituality known as Sufism or mysticism. Is Sufism mystical rather than spiritual? A. Johns argues that there is no need to equate spirituality with mysticism. Undoubtedly, mysticism has many negative connotations and may give a misleading impression to many. The mystics had great passion in their quest for spiritual rigours. For Liu Zhi, such pursuit of closeness with God was grounded on the concept of the unity of existence of God. The second specific aim is to examine critically Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Sufi spirituality by using a Confucian concept of self-realization.

It should be noted that the two specific objectives are inter-related. Liu Zhi’s translation makes extensive use of Confucian terms and his teaching of Islamic spirituality is articulated using the Confucian wisdom of self-realization. Liu Zhi’s goal is to persuade Muslims in China that Islam is a living faith. For a living faith to grow, develop and persevere, people of faith must understand the divine revelation through the ancient text and the tradition. This is the primary task of Liu Zhi as the transmitter of tradition. Then, the people of faith must draw close to God by embodying the practical wisdom inspired by

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the written text. Sufi spirituality provided the way for practical wisdom in 17th-18th century China. This is the secondary task of Liu Zhi and other similar transmitters to explain how doctrines would be expressed in Islamic spirituality.

1.3 Previous Relevant Studies

Many contemporary scholars, especially those in China, agree that Liu’s Islamic works have made a valuable contribution to Chinese philosophy, especially the later Confucian, namely Neo-Confucian, tradition. Through Liu Zhi and other Islamic activities, the Chinese philosophical and cultural tradition has been enriched to become a diverse, multi-ethnic Chinese philosophy, integrating Islamic thought in Chinese into Neo-Confucian culture. Against this common consensus, there are recent and differing voices that should be taken seriously. A Malaysian Chinese, Zheng Wenquan has disagreed in his dissertation with the concept of the so called ‘sinicized Islam’ in China. Furthermore, he asserts that 17th-century Chinese Islam belonged to Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufism which had existed in China, i.e. Sufism in China (emphasis on the word ‘in’) rather than sinicized Islam in China (emphasis on the word ‘sinicized’).

Sachiko Murata gives a modern English translation of Jami’s Lawa’ih and argues that while Liu’s translation of Lawa’ih was far from literal, Liu Zhi did not overtly betray its Islamic origin. Later, Murata further published a very significant and substantial treatment of Liu Zhi’s Nature and Principle in Islam. Her recent works continue and build on her previous scholarship on Liu Zhi. However, this present research study examines another important work of Liu Zhi, namely The Rules and Proprieties of Islam, which has been acknowledged as one of the most contextualized or Confucianized works of Liu Zhi. While The Nature and Principle in Islam is concerned with the nature of God, cosmogony, humanity and

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Two scholars have written substantial studies on *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Liang Xiangming writes in Chinese and James Frankel in English. They have offered their own accounts of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. This present study will determine a model of Liu Zhi’s contextualization that is more convincing than the two accounts offered by Liang and Frankel.

**1.4 Method of Study: Engaging Islamic Texts with Chinese Culture**

**1.4.1 Contextualizing the Religious Message**

As a religion, Islam has a religious message and theology to communicate. The Islamic message needs to be contextualized in China. What is contextual theology? In a general sense, theologians realize that all theology is contextual. A classic example is the emerging Christian liberation theology in Africa in the 1960s. Theologians in post colonial Africa and Latin America have usually focused their study on justice-seeking theologies which express very clearly their political, cultural and social stances. Thus, ‘theologians have always been influenced by their context and to varying degrees some have demonstrated an awareness of the influence that their own specific context and experiences have had on the theologies they develop.’ In a specific sense, contextual theology means more than merely ‘all theology is contextual’. Angie Pears asserts that theology is contextual when a theologian ‘explicitly places the recognition of the contextual nature of theology at the

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forefront of the theological process.’¹⁰ That is, theology is contextual when it ‘is explicitly shaped, if not driven, by the recognition of the contextual nature of theology with all of its potentially controversial and problematic implications.’¹¹

This present study aims to show that Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islam in China is not merely contextual in the general sense. He consciously and explicitly shaped his works by using Chinese philosophical and cultural concepts. He was aware of potential controversial and problematic implications. However, such contextualization was common among Hui literati in the early Qing dynasty. Practitioners include Wang Daiyu (c. 1580 - c.1660), Ma Zhu (c. 1640 – c. 1711) and others in 16th – 18th century China. When they engaged with Islamic texts in Persian and Arabic, they needed to translate and equally important to interpret the texts.

1.4.2 Engaging with Islamic Texts: Exoteric and Esoteric Interpretation of Islamic Text

According to A. Knysh, philologists face a difficult task in translating Qur’anic technical words and philosophical concepts. Part of the reason is the notion that the Arabic language is the repository of God’s final revelation and this makes the interpretation of that revealed text highly sensitive and contested. In their philosophical reconstruction, Ibn ‘Arabi often used Qur’anic verses to support their concept of the unity of existence. That is, the Qur’an is the foundational source of their understanding of the unity of existence. However, verses taken out of their context may yield themselves to widely different or even diametrically opposed interpretations.¹² A well-known Islamic theologian and philosopher al-Ghazali (1057-1111) argued that interpretation created new meaning.

¹⁰ Pears, Doing Contextual Theology, 1.
¹¹ Pears, Doing Contextual Theology, 1.
Martin Whittingham, in his study of al-Ghazali’s hermeneutics, observes that on the one hand, al-Ghazali affirmed the idea of an authoritative text and authorial intention. On the other, he ‘could be said [to be] a prime example of an interpreter producing meaning.’ Whittingham argues that it is not the context and preconditioning that al-Ghazali identifies; rather it is al-Ghazali’s preconceived worldview which uncovers meanings in the Qur’an. It is the interdependence of the visible and invisible realms of the cosmos and this leads to his affirmation that ‘both exoteric and esoteric interpretations are necessary and that esoteric interpretations supplement and build on exoteric exegesis, rather than replacing it.’ He did not favour one above the other. Rather, he insisted on the connection between the two meanings, that is, between the pearl and the shell. In addition, al-Ghazali gave two sets of rules for the understanding of the meaning of the revealed text, namely, external and internal rules. External rules are concerned with the physical condition of the reader and the internal rules the mental condition of the reader. Furthermore, according to Muhammad Kamal, al-Ghazali notes that the degrees of textual interpretation are parallel to five degrees of existence.

1. Essential existence, as the highest degree of existence, corresponds to the entities beyond the domain of sensory experience and human understanding.
2. Sensory existence, which includes all sorts of images produced by the mind while dreaming or daydreaming.
3. Imaginative existence, which is the image of an object when it is absent from the senses or when it is not perceived directly by sense experience.
4. Mental or intellectual existence, which is able to represent the essence of an object.
5. Analogical existence, which is something that does not exist in the senses, imagination or intellect but exists as a property or attribute of something, such as mercy or anger, which are used in relation to God.

14 Whittingham, *Al-Ghazali*, 64.
Kamal concludes by stating two contributions of al-Ghazali’s hermeneutics. Firstly, the priority of tradition or certain schools of thought to get access to the essence of the Qur’an is rejected. The reader needs to have a presuppositionless mindset before reading the revealed text. Secondly, the readers are encouraged to apprehend the meaning of the Qur’an on their own and arrive at an independent understanding.\(^{17}\) According to A. Knysh, al-Ghazali’s method is classified as a moderate or shari’a-oriented approach to Qur’anic exegesis.\(^{18}\) For Knysh, ‘al-Ghazali is convinced that the depth of one’s understanding of the Qur’an is directly linked to one’s level of spiritual purity, righteousness and intellectual progress.’\(^{19}\) It should be noted that al-Ghazali was the teacher of Ibn ‘Arabi when he was in Baghdad.

Ibn ‘Arabi’s exegetical skill can be shown in his comment on Sura 42:11: ‘there is nothing like unto Him.’ This verse is often understood as underscoring God’s transcendence and being the fact that He is beyond any comparison with the world. However, Ibn ‘Arabi noted that there were two ‘ likening’ words in Sura 42:11. ‘It literally says: “There is nothing like (\textit{ka}) His likeness (\textit{mithlihi}).” The expression thus actually affirms God’s likeness, but denies that that likeness is any way commensurable with anything else.’\(^{20}\) For Ibn ‘Arabi, God’s likeness referred to the perfect man in Sufi cosmology.\(^{21}\) Toby Mayer asserts that according to Ibn ‘Arabi, ‘the revealed scripture … must be respected as a text, not used as a pretext. Correspondingly, Ibn ‘Arabi’s intensely esoteric hermeneutic of the Qur’an is often strictly in line with the literal sense of the text.’\(^{22}\) Thus, the key feature of Ibn ‘Arabi’s hermeneutic may be called ‘esoteric literalism’. However, in the view of Knysh, Ibn ‘Arabi’s exegesis aimed to bring out the spiritual quintessence. When he expounded Sura 24:35, there were three levels of understanding of its meaning: ‘the metaphysical and

\(^{19}\) Knysh, ‘Sufism and the Qur’an,’ 151.
\(^{22}\) Mayer, ‘Theology and Sufism,’ 282.
cosmological, the analogical (built around the implicit correspondences between the universe and the human individual) and the existential-experiential based on the notion of unity of God, humankind and the universe.

It is clear that both al-Ghazali and Ibn ‘Arabi emphasized both exoteric and esoteric interpretation of the Qur’an and did not play esoteric interpretation against exoteric, always seeking the unveiling of the text with orthodoxy and orthopraxis. They could both be considered “moderate” Sufis because their exegesis was not characterized by a visionary and ecstatic approach to Qur’an interpretation. As asserted by W. Chittick, Sufis ‘stress inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction.’

Liu Zhi did not belong to any Chinese Sufi sect. However, Sufi thought influenced Liu Zhi and he took seriously both exoteric and esoteric meanings of Islamic texts. He paid careful attention to the full range of meanings of the sacred texts. In his translation of text and conversation with the Chinese culture, he might create or expand new meaning with the goal to make these Islamic texts in Chinese comprehensible to the Muslim and non-Muslim readers. Not only did Liu Zhi interpret the text, he also interpreted his Neo-Confucian culture.

1.4.3 Engaging with Chinese Culture: Interpreting and Conversing with the Neo-Confucian Culture

Liu Zhi translated and interpreted the Islamic texts using Confucian terms. Also, he engaged with the Neo-Confucian context. His contextualization moved from text to context. However, it is debatable whether Neo-Confucianism is theistic. Does Neo-Confucianism provide a theistic worldview and monistic lexicon for Liu Zhi to translate the Islamic texts into Chinese?

23 Knysh, ‘Sufism and the Qur’an,’ 155.
Julia Ching, a Neo-Confucian scholar, gives an affirmative answer. Firstly, the debate whether Neo-Confucianism is theistic or not is ongoing. However, the more important point is that the philosophical system of Neo-Confucianism is religious or religio-cultural enough to enable Liu Zhi to carry out his program of contextualization. In her study of Zhu Xi (1130 - 1200), who developed Confucianism into Neo-Confucianism in 12th-century China, Ching avoids the excessive use of terms like monist and dualist while admitting that Zhu Xi’s concept of *li* (principle) and *qi* (vital energy) seems to suggest dualism. Ching asserts that the concept of Great Ultimate with many manifestations can exclude Neo-Confucianism from strict dualism. For Ching, Zhu Xi’s system of thought was architectonic. That is, it contains many parts that are held together by certain main concepts. Ching believes that in Chinese thought, the question of whether Zhu Xi is a theist or atheist is not important. Rather, ‘the quest for an ultimate or absolute remains the strong motivation for his religio-philosophical pursuit.’ It is to be shown that Liu Zhi contextualized Zhu Xi’s Great Ultimate of Neo-Confucianism as the Real Ruler of Islam.

Secondly, Neo-Confucian thought began in 11th-century China, peaked in the 13th-century and began to decline in 16th-century. By the time of Liu Zhi, Neo-Confucianism had a long and flourishing tradition. At the same time, it was highly diverse and dynamic. Liu Zhi could selectively use Confucian terms to interpret the religious message of Islam.

Thirdly, at the time of Liu Zhi, there were not many Chinese translated Islamic works. Murata notes that the Islamic languages have numerous theological and philosophical terms that ‘translating these called for a good knowledge not only of Islamic thought but also of

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25 Fung Yulan argued that Confucianism could not be considered as a religion within the traditional understanding of the word religion. See Fung Yulan, *Short History of Chinese History* (Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2007) 4. Huston Smith argues that from a broader perspective, the distinctive character of Chinese religion is its social emphasis. Lean on Paul Tillich’s definition of religion as ultimate concern, Smith then justifies that Confucianism is theistic because it is ‘social as it is religious. Huston Smith, ‘Chinese Religion in World Perspective,’ *Dialogue & Alliance* 4.2 (1990) 6. The contemporary Neo-Confucian scholar Tu Weiming also argues that Neo-Confucianism is theistic.

the Chinese intellectual tradition.'

This academic capability almost perfectly fits the credentials of Liu Zhi. He did not make a literal translation of the Islamic texts. Rather, he made use of the opportunity to define, delineate and invest intensively Islamic terms with Neo-Confucian meanings.

1.5 Models of Contextualization

D. Hesselgrave simply defines contextualization as ‘the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation ... and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts.’

Stephen Bevans prefers the term contextualization to inculturation or indigenization because it emphasizes the need ‘to interact and dialogue not only with traditional cultural values, but with social change, new ethnic identities and the conflicts that are present as the contemporary phenomenon of globalization encounters the various peoples of the world.’ This present study of the concept of Liu Zhi’s contextualization owes much to Bevans’s works. Bevans’s published work *Models of Contextual Theology* has been so popular that his book has been the standard textbook of contextualization in the Roman Catholic tradition. More importantly, Matteo Ricci (1552 - 1610) and other Jesuits had a successful period of Christian mission in 17th and 18th-century China. Thus, such a method of contextualization as developed in China during that period can offer an insight into Liu Zhi’s works. Bevans delineates six models of contextual theology. They are the translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic (or conversation), transcendent and countercultural models. Bevans asserts that ‘models are constructions, either theoretical positions without any concrete expression or abstraction from actual concrete positions ... The process of contextualization is a complex one, and must take into account all four factors of Scripture, tradition, culture and social change.’


contextualization is not rigid. It is a tool of theological reflection and analysis. Each of his six models has different emphases. Bevans also says that since the process of contextualization is a complex one, it is common for a combination of models to be operative in such a process.

Bevans provides a diagram of his models as follows:\textsuperscript{31}: 

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (trans) at (0,0) {Transcendental Model * * * * * *};
  \node (anth) at (3,0) {Anthropological Model *};
  \node (prax) at (6,0) {Praxis Model *};
  \node (conv) at (9,0) {Conversation\textsuperscript{32} Model * *};
  \node (trans2) at (12,0) {Translation Model *};
  \node (count) at (15,0) {Countercultural Model * *};

  \node (context) at (0,-2) {Experience of the Present (Context) \hspace{2cm} Experience of the Past};
  \node (human) at (0,-4) {Human experience (personal, communal) \hspace{2cm} Scripture};
  \node (culture) at (0,-5) {Culture (secular, religious) \hspace{2cm} Tradition};
  \node (social) at (0,-6) {Social location \hspace{2cm} Social change};

  \draw[->] (trans) -- (anth);
  \draw[->] (anth) -- (prax);
  \draw[->] (prax) -- (conv);
  \draw[->] (conv) -- (trans2);
  \draw[->] (trans2) -- (count);

  \draw[->] (context) -- (human);
  \draw[->] (human) -- (culture);
  \draw[->] (culture) -- (social);

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{31} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 32. 
\textsuperscript{32} Bevans uses ‘synthetic’ but this study prefers conversation or dialogical model.
On the right side of the diagram is the countercultural model which emphasizes the experience of the past. However, it takes seriously the present local culture. It is not anticultural. It emphasizes true encounter and engagement with the context through respectful yet critical analysis. For any imported religion to take root within a people’s context, the workers of that faith feel the need to challenge that context. Bevans says that the fundamental tenet of faith ‘is used as a lens through which to interpret, engage, unmask, and challenge the experience of the present, the context of the individual and social experience, secular and/or religious culture, social location, and social change.’ Generally speaking, this model is often associated with religious exclusivism.

On the left side of the diagram above, the transcendental, praxis and anthropological models do not emphasize tradition or scripture in the past. Rather, these models emphasize the present context or the subjective experience.

The transcendental method was pioneered by Immanuel Kant who emphasized that religion was a reality beyond the realm of human knowledge. The transcendental approach asserts that the process of coming to know reality is the present authentic experience of the subject. Bevans explains that this model works ‘through a model of both sympathy and antipathy—sympathy in that a person of integrity might learn much from another person of integrity from another context; antipathy in that if a person analyses why he or she is repulsed by or not attracted to a particular way of doing theology, he or she has already taken a first step to doing contextual theology as such.’

The praxis model has been closely associated with many liberation theologians in Latin America in the past. The present experience and future possibilities are their paramount concern of this model. The inspiration is neither from classic texts nor classic behaviour. The model does not follow the process of ‘faith seeking understanding’. Rather, it is a process of ‘faith seeking intelligent action.’ Bevans explicates that by ‘first acting and then

reflecting on that action in faith, practitioners of the praxis model believe that one can develop a theology that is truly relevant to a particular context.\textsuperscript{35}

The anthropological model emphasizes the good, holy and valuable human context. Even divine revelation is embedded and conditioned at all times by the various cultures. The practitioner of this model ‘looks for God’s revelation and self-manifestation as it is hidden within the values, relational patterns, and concerns of a context.’ Generally speaking, this model is often associated with religious pluralism.

The above four models do not fit into Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization. His method is neither outright exclusivism nor pluralism. A more detailed discussion is provided on two more models, namely, translation and conversation.

The translation model is a conservative approach: the basic tenets of a belief system are understood as an unchanging message which is supracultural. Bevans stresses that translation incorporates not only form but also meaning. Thus, the meaning of the basic tenet of belief is translated into culturally appropriate terms.\textsuperscript{36} While culture is important, culture is subordinate to the basic tenet of the belief system. In this model, the basic tenet is clearly prioritized over culture. Bevans emphasizes the basic and undifferentiated message of the belief system that is sought to be translated and thus it is a reduced minimal message. It is short and cannot be questioned. During the process of translation, culture is encountered. However, its role is neutral and not valued for its difference or uniqueness.\textsuperscript{37}

The following diagram summarizes the major contents of the translation model.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 74.
\textsuperscript{36} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{37} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 37-53.
\textsuperscript{38} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 42, 44.
Bevans describes the conversation approach as a middle-of-the-road model.\(^{39}\) This model maintains the value of the translation approach in emphasizing the truth and unquestioned basic tenets of a belief system. Simultaneously, it values the significance of culture and the role culture may play during the process of contextualization. The practitioner of contextualization is always conscious of this model’s dialogical nature and the changing

nature of experience and culture. Thus, this model should be regarded as an ongoing theological movement. There are two closely related elements in the practice of this model. Firstly, a careful balance must be made between commitment to tradition, scripture and to the contemporary local context. Secondly, synthesis is the goal. It is developed between the practitioner’s own cultural point of view and the points of view of others ‘in the Hegelian sense of not just attempting to put things together in a kind of compromise but of developing, in a creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints.’

Bevans also avers that the process is very complex and the practitioner may need to juggle several cultural values sensitively and smoothly. ‘One needs, rather, to place emphasis on message at one point, while at another point one needs to emphasize cultural identity. At one point traditional practices might need to be cultivated. Perhaps in another set of circumstances they need to be resisted.’ Thus, one always needs to keep in creative tension between the scripture, tradition in the past and the cultural and religious experience in the present. Bevans is fully aware of the built-in weakness of this model. The ‘model is always in danger of “selling out” to the other culture, tradition, or social location … the theologian must always be aware of the power and subtle manipulations of a dominant culture as well.’

The word ‘conversation’ is preferred to Bevans’s use of ‘synthesis’. It is a better word in the case of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. While conversation emphasizes the broad basis and nature of dialogue, synthesis emphasizes more the resulting interaction between cultures. Moreover, the conversation model can easily accommodate more than two dialogical partners. Secondly, conversation is preferred because the encounter may be carried out in a formal or informal way. Synthesis or dialogue may seem too academic or formal for ordinary Muslims. Finally, conversation ‘does not imply an equality of status of the participants that might be implied by “dialogue.” Mutual respect between conversation partners may be highly desirable, but a conversation may still take place where the balance

40 Bevans, Models, 90.
41 Bevans, Models, 92.
42 Bevans, Models, 94.
of power is very much tilted toward one partner.’ In the context of Liu Zhi, he contextualized his Islam by extensive conversation with the all powerful Neo-Confucian culture which had the support of the imperial ruler.

The following diagram summarizes the major contents of the conversation model:

![Diagram](image)

Alternative Titles: dialogical model; analogical model

Basis in Tradition: development of doctrine

Revelation: elements of (1) propositional (2) tends to be understood as personal presence (3) envisioned as God at work in the world, calling men and women as partners

Scripture/Tradition: culturally conditioned; incomplete

Context: ambiguous and incomplete

Method: conversation with all partners

Analogy: cross-pollination

Critique: Positive: attitude of dialogue; emphasis on ongoing progress; witness to universality; easy to dialogue with other religions

Negative: danger of ‘selling out’; might seem ‘wishy-washy’

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44 This is a revised and composite diagram of two diagrams in Bevans, *Models*, 93, 95.
This study has found the works of Bevans helpful in formulating a model of Liu Zhi’s contextualization for the following reasons. Firstly, part of his study involves cross-cultural contextualization in Asia, in particular his discussion of the conversation (or synthetic according to Bevans) model. Bevans uses Kosuke Koyama’s contextualization in Asia to explain the details of the conversation model. Thus, it has regional relevance. Secondly, while Bevans writes from the Christian tradition, his model is valid for the contextualization of Islam cross-culturally also. Both religious traditions are monotheistic in nature and have their own sacred and authoritative scripture. Finally, there is no substantial examination of cross-cultural contextualization of Islam in China. The contextualization model of Bevans is a helpful idea to start with. Moreover, Bevans is well aware of the limitation of his model in studying contextual theology. He gives six models of contextualization. He asserts that his model is not fixed or beyond development or change. ‘Though each model is distinct, each can be used in conjunction with others … In the same way, it is my contention that no one model can be used exclusively and an exclusive use will distort the theological enterprise.’

There are possible pitfalls with both translation and conversation models. With regards to the translation model, the translators tend to emphasize the supracultural or supracontextual nature of the basic tenets of belief. They attempt to keep the basic doctrine and try to get rid of the cultural context. ‘The problem, however, is to know the exact difference between the two.’ It is impossible to access the key doctrine without any human formulation. Another possible problem of the translation model is the over-emphasis of the inspired and revealed text, the Qur’an, at the expense of the Islamic tradition. The Qur’an is not merely a list of doctrines and propositions. Tradition plays an important and valid part in wrestling with faith and religious practice. With regard to the conversation model, Bevans asserts that proponents of this model may also encounter built-in dangers because the basic tenets of belief have the danger of being inculturated. ‘Openness is a good thing, and it cannot be

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discarded, but the theologians must always be aware of the power and subtle manipulations of a dominant culture as well. 47

1.6 Original Contribution to Knowledge

Beginning from the late 17th century, the imperial rulers of China increasingly became less tolerant of Islam. Politically, Muslims had to struggle for survival under such a government. Religiously, they were not pietistic and had only a basic knowledge of Islam. Faced with the threat of acculturation and sinicization, Liu Zhi determined to confront the challenge of his times by translating and paraphrasing the ancient Persian and Arabic Islamic texts. His writings were to re-establish the Islamic tradition in Neo-Confucian contexts.

The original contributions of this study to the present knowledge of Liu Zhi and his works may be listed as follows:

1.0 This present study determines Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization of Islam. It is argued that his method is translation-conversation.

2.0 This study investigates Liu Zhi’s application of his contextualization method in his works. After examining some specific texts, the translation-conversation model gives a more convincing account of his contextualization than contemporary scholars have offered so far.

3.0 This is the first ever full English translation of Liu Zhi’s poem, Five Sessions of the Moon which is still commonly taught and memorized by many Hui Muslims.

4.0 This is the first ever full English translation of the first five chapters of Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam.

5.0 This is the first ever English translation of selected sections of Liu Zhi’s The Explanation of the Five Endeavours.

47 Bevans, Models, 94.
6.0 A modern translation of selected sections of Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* is provided, taking more seriously into consideration Liu Zhi’s Islamic background.

The study is important for the following reasons:

1.0 While Chinese scholars in China have published extensively on Liu Zhi’s work in Chinese, they have not engaged with Western scholarships. So far, only a few English research essays have been translated into Chinese. Thus, this present study makes available Chinese language scholarship to an English readership.

2.0 The present study is the most extensive examination of Liu Zhi’s works in English, examining his trilogy especially *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* in greater detail. It also captures present scholarly debate about the nature of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*.

3.0 This study examines his long treatises as well as short Confucianized works, like *Three Character Classics* and philosophical works for teachers of Islam as well as popular works for the general public.

4.0 A critical assessment of both contemporary Western and Chinese key scholars of Liu Zhi is provided. This work chooses substantial published works by both Western and Chinese contemporary scholars and engages with them critically. Other minor works in academic journals are also consulted when appropriate.

5.0 This present study provides an up to date account of the state of research and scholarship on Liu Zhi by Chinese scholars who have written so far in Chinese only.

1.7 Summary of Each Chapter

The first chapter outlines the methodology and research questions of this study. Examination and discussion are primarily based on the major and some minor works of Liu Zhi. The aim of this research is to determine Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization.
The second chapter provides a historical background of Islam in 17th-18th century China. This chapter discusses the historical, philosophical and Islamic contexts that Liu Zhi experienced. This is important background material to understand the works of Liu Zhi.

The third chapter gives a comprehensive survey and examination of Liu Zhi’s writings, followed by a critical assessment of recent scholarly discussions of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. This chapter gives a broad perspective of the overall writings of Liu Zhi.

The fourth chapter investigates the first aspect of Liu Zhi’s contextualization, namely his engagement with the concept of unity of existence of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Two of Liu Zhi’s works will be examined. Firstly, the relevant parts of his short and concise Three Character Classic will be translated into modern English. It demonstrates that Liu Zhi’s Islam followed the concept of unity of existence in that the Real Ruler began the great transformation in the innate heaven and eventually in the acquired heaven. Muslims are encouraged to return to the Real Ruler by following the way of Islam. Liu Zhi’s Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm is a paraphrased translation of Abd al-Rahman Jami’s Lawa’ih. This demonstrates Liu Zhi’s contextualized translation of Islamic text. He added explanation, re-interpreted and edited Lawa’ih freely using Neo-Confucian terms in order that his readers may understand the teaching of Lawa’ih.

The fifth chapter examines the second and more important aspect of Liu Zhi’s contextualization, namely, his Sufi spirituality in conversation with the Neo-Confucian culture in China. Two of Liu Zhi’s works will be translated. Firstly, his complete poem of The Five Sessions of the Moon will be translated into English for the first time. Examination of this poem demonstrates that Liu Zhi’s Islam is influenced by the theoretical Sufi tradition in his times in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Secondly, a relevant section of Liu Zhi’s True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam is translated into English. This is a modern translation which improves on an old translation of a century ago. In this, on the one hand, Liu Zhi’s Islam emphasized the concept of unity of existence. On the other hand, he emphasized that seekers on the way of return to the Real Ruler must follow the five endeavours of Islam. These endeavours are not interpreted legalistically. Rather, he
contextualized them by using Neo-Confucian wisdom which was understood as self-cultivation.

The sixth chapter gives a more specific perspective of Liu Zhi’s works with the main focus on his interpretation and teachings of the rites of Islam. It provides for the first time an English translation of the first five chapters of Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. While his shorter *The Explanation of the Five Endeavours* gives only concise teaching of the rites of Islam, this longer work provides a more thorough and deeper discussion in terms of Neo-Confucianism. It is to demonstrate unmistakably that he used Neo-Confucian self-cultivation to explain the rites of Islam, in particular, the five pillars of Islam. The chapter will end by critically examining two recent scholars who have studied this particular work. The translation-conversation approach is argued to be a more convincing model than other options suggested by the two scholars.

The seventh and final chapter concludes with a discussion and summary of Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization. It also provides a contemporary relevance of this study.
Chapter Two: The Historical, Philosophical and Islamic Context in China

Muslims in China were marginalized and often persecuted by the imperial Qing dynasty in 18th – 19th century China. However, they have survived and grown with little imperial or state support for the two last centuries. The most conservative estimates of numbers of Muslims in China vary from 18 to 23 millions\textsuperscript{51} and yet Islam in China has been considered to be at the periphery of the Islamic world. This chapter considers historical, philosophical and Islamic context at the time of Liu Zhi.\textsuperscript{52}

2.1 Historical Context

\subsection*{2.1.1 Islam in Pre-Modern and Modern China}

There are Chinese sources that show both trading and diplomatic relations between China and Persia from 455 to 651 AD. Thus, there was communication between the Far and Near East prior to the founding of Islam.\textsuperscript{53} Arab-Chinese contacts started around 651 AD.\textsuperscript{54} Islam came to China not long after the death of the prophet Muhammad. Arabic sources strongly support the presence of Muslims in the province of Guangzhou, Southeast China in 916.\textsuperscript{55} The evidence of the early spread of Islam was fragmentary but it seems clear that Middle Eastern and Central Asian Muslim traders introduced the new faith to the Chinese. The traders came through the well-known old Silk trade routes and also by sea routes via

\textsuperscript{51} It is very difficult to give an accurate number and the number of Muslims is increasing. E. Alles, ‘Chinese Islam: Unity and Fragmentation,’ Religion, State and Society vol. 31 no. 1 (2003) 7, 32. The ten Chinese Muslim ethnic nationalities are Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tatar, Bonan, Dongxiang, Tajik, Uzbek and Salar. The Hui comprise at least 9 million. Many western and Chinese studies mainly focus on the Hui and secondarily on the Uyghurs.
\textsuperscript{52} The Chinese name convention is surname first followed by other names. This rule applies throughout our study. Also, Liu Zhi has been known by other names. They are Liu Yizhai, Liu Jielian, Lieo Kai Lien and Liu Chih.
\textsuperscript{53} Donald D. Leslie, The Integration of Religious Minorities in China: the Case of Chinese Muslims (Canberra: the Australian National University, 1998) 4. This work by Leslie is the most informed, supported by historical sources and yet suitable for general readership.
\textsuperscript{54} Li, Xinghua 李興華, Huibin Qin 秦惠彬, Jinyuan Feng 馮今源 and Qiuwen Sha, 沙秋真 (eds.) 合著, 中國伊斯蘭教史 History of Islam in China (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1998) 4.
\textsuperscript{55} Leslie, Integration of Religious Minorities, 15.
the South China Sea. Through the Silk routes, the traders brought Islam to the Northwest region, i.e. Xinjiang province and then to other main trading cities, including the capital city. Later, northwest China was occupied by Muslims of Turkic descent, comprising mainly the Uyghurs. Through the sea routes via the Malacca strait, the traders brought Islam to Southeast China, first to various port cities and later gradually further inland. The main group of Muslims was known as the Hui from the Yuan dynasty onwards, occupying mainly the Northwest province of Gansu (east of Xinjiang) and the southwestern province of Yunnan.

The founding of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279 – 1368) ushered in a golden age for the growth of Islam in China. The emperors did not have the administrative and financial skills to rule the expanding territory. They did not rely upon the Han Chinese. The emperor Khuilai Khan imported Muslims from various parts to help govern China. He gave them senior positions as the financial ministers of the government. As the Mongols continued to expand and invade, they turned to the Muslims to raise the required revenue. Eventually, mosques were built and Muslim communities with hospitals were established all over China. Muslims were speaking in Arabic and Persian. In the southwestern region and under the leadership of Sayyid ‘Ajall Shams al-Din, a government minister, Muslims intermarried with natives and became the ancestors of the modern Muslim community of Yunnan. They were allowed to recite the Qur’an, fast during Ramadan and circumcise male infants. In 1345, a Muslim trader named Ibu Battutah visited a Southeast China seaport and recorded that Muslim musicians were able to perform songs in Arabic and Persian. Islamic representatives, Shaykh (Shaikh) and a Qadi (judge) were allowed to judge and rule the local administration with an indirect power over religion. Yang Zhijiu’s careful study is a detailed examination of the Hui’s contribution to the Yuan dynasty.

58 Berlie, Islam in China, 1.
Yang asserts that the Hui originated from diverse backgrounds in Central Asia speaking in Persian and Arabic. They were traders and travellers who immigrated into China long before the Yuan dynasty and settled down. By the time of the Yuan dynasty, Hui became an ethnic nationality in China, comprising only Muslims. For Yang, then, the Hui were not a homogeneous group but all were Muslims. Hui were distinguished from other Chinese Muslims by their competence in the Han Chinese language. The Mongols exploited the Hui who assisted the Mongols to rule the empire. It is during the Yung dynasty (1271-1366) that foreign Muslims who had settled in China no longer considered themselves as overseas nationals. Sinicization officially began from this era. However, from the later Mongol rule about 1320, the Muslim position deteriorated as new laws cancelled the special privileges and tax exemptions of all religions including Islam. These anti-Muslim laws and subsequent popular sentiment against Muslims led to a reaction. Mongols and also the Han Chinese disliked the food law of the Muslims.

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the native Ming dynasty (1369-1644) did not mistreat the Muslims but wanted Muslims to be acculturated. The founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanyang 朱元璋, had three well known army generals who were Hui Muslims. The Ming emperors recruited the Hui as envoys, translators and interpreters. Muslims were renowned as explorers, philosophers and military leaders. The well known Hui imperial fleet admiral was Zheng He. Mosques were built with imperial approval. In general, Muslims sought peaceful co-existence with the ordinary Han Chinese people.

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62 Leslie would not call these Muslims Chinese Muslims. He prefers the term ‘Muslim settlers in China.’ See Leslie, Integration of Religious Minorities, 19.


64 Leslie, Integration of Religious Minorities, 23.

65 Leslie, ‘Living with the Chinese,’ 185.

during the Ming dynasty. Muslims were not aggressive in their religious duties and generally did not attempt to convert the Han Chinese. However, the number of Hui gradually dropped because fewer Arabs and Persians arrived by sea and more Turkic speaking Muslims arrived from Central Asia. These Uyghurs and similar ethnic groups began to form a larger percentage in the northwest of China. The Ming emperors gradually began to compel the Muslims to accept some Chinese ways. Muslims, especially the Hui, adopted Chinese dress and started to learn the Chinese language. They even had to assume Chinese names. However, these attempts had limited success because Muslims united themselves behind local leaders and the mosque served to reinforce a separate identity. In the late Ming dynasty, some Hui ulama became both Islamic and Confucian scholars or literati. They began to transmit, paraphrase and interpret Persian and Arabic Islamic texts using the terminology and vocabulary of traditional neo-Confucian thought. Donald Leslie argues that it ‘is only with the Ming (1369-1644) that we can talk confidently of integration into Chinese society and use the term “Chinese Muslims” or “Muslim Chinese” rather than “Muslims in China”.’

The late Ming and early Qing dynasty saw the first of several waves of Chinese Islamic scholars who propagated the Islamic texts translating them into meaningful religious spirituality for ordinary Muslims who could no longer read the ancient text in Arabic or Persian. As argued by Ben-Dor Benite, these Hui scholars ‘were at once fully Muslim and fully Chinese … That is to say, these individuals used textual production as a way to create for themselves a space that overlapped Chinese culture and Islamic tradition.’ Notably, the first mention of the Qur’an was about 1368.

The last imperial dynasty was ruled by the Manchus and was known as the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). By 1758, the Qing government also ruled the Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. The Manchus made policies that were difficult for the Muslims and compelled the Muslims to assimilate. The government sometimes imposed heavy taxes and other obligations on the Muslims and contravened the regulations of the court to impede the Muslims’ practice of their religion. Starting from the late 18th and the

67 Leslie, Integration of Religious Minorities, 27.
19th century, the Muslims in both northwest and southwest China rebelled against the Qing government. However, the early Qing rulers were more tolerant. The 17th century Muslim scholars like Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi were able to anticipate the threat of the Qing emperors. They made use of Neo-Confucian thoughts in their Islamic teaching but later 18th century Chinese ulama were more radical. One such leader named Ma Mingxin (1718 – 1781) in Gansu, North China was hostile to Neo-Confucianism. He studied in the Middle East and returned to China to introduce the new teaching, advocating a different form of the Sufi teachings. Ma’s view was to establish a Muslim state along China’s borders. Ma led revolts against the imperial ruler in 1781 and was killed. Sporadic ongoing revolts continued into the next century. The most devastating rebellion erupted in Gansu in 1862. The leader was Ma Hualung and he also advocated the new and untainted pure teaching. The whole rebellion was defeated by the Qing army in 1877. Another equally severe rebellion took place in southwest China, Yunnan province between 1855 and 1873. These revolts led to an erosion of trust in the Muslims among the Chinese public and the imperial Qing government.

Today, the largest Muslim ethnic group is the Hui, commonly found in Gansu and Yunnan provinces. The second largest Muslim ethnic group is the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province. There are tensions due to conflict between Chinese cultural practices and Islamic ideals. The history of Muslims in China during the last two centuries from the beginning of the Qing dynasty has shown that there were various ways of dealing with the conflict. They ranged from integration with traditional Chinese society to isolation in the form of a return to an Arabicised pure Islam. After Tang Xiaoping’s reforms in the 1990s, the government

69 An excellent historical study for this period in northwest China based on various sources from Russian, Chinese and Western scholars has been done by H. Kim. His work is highly praised for his meticulous research on sources. Hodong Kim, Holy War in China: the Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

70 Compared to other Muslim nationalities in China, most Hui are closer to the Han Chinese in terms of demographic proximity and cultural accommodation. The Uyghurs are the least integrated Muslim minority. Uyghurs believe firmly that their ancestors were indigenous people in the Tarim Basin occupying most of the present province of Xinjiang. Another small ethnic group living in Xinjiang is the Tajiks whose language distantly relates to old Persian. See Dru C. Gladney, ‘Islam in China: Accommodation or Separatism?’ China Quarterly 174 (2003) 453-55.

71 Gladney, ‘Accommodation or Separatism?’ 466.
of the People Republic of China has taken positive steps to help the Muslims in China. Qur’ans have been printed, mosques rebuilt and monuments repaired and preserved. The government has avoided heightening the conflict and tried to work at reconciliation. Today, while most Hui are not highly conversant with the tenets of Islam, they still perceive themselves to be different from the Chinese Hans after centuries of living in China.\(^{72}\) They are not totally sinicized and readily identify themselves with the larger Islamic world community. Two scholars have demonstrated this unusual phenomenon. After extensive field research in the ‘80s and under the watchful eyes of the Chinese authority, Dru Gladney developed a more nuanced conclusion that while there is remarkable diversity among the Hui, they regard themselves as one family and one united nationality.\(^{73}\) After examining a century (1850-1950) of Christian-Chinese Muslim interaction, Raphael Israeli concludes that not only Christian missionaries were aliens, the Chinese Muslims, too, felt alienated from the Chinese mainstream and at times even rebelled against it.\(^{74}\) Needless to say, the Uyghur Muslims and other smaller Muslim ethnic nationalities in the Xinjiang province of Northwest China have found it difficult to identify themselves as Chinese Muslims since their native languages are not Chinese.

In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, studies of Chinese Islam were carried out by western scholar missionaries with the aim of converting Chinese Muslims to Christianity. Marshall Broomhall carried out research among the Muslims in China in 1910.\(^{75}\) Other studies by Rudolf Loewenthal\(^{76}\) and Isaac Mason\(^{77}\) were more interested in the sociological data on

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\(^{77}\) Isaac Mason, ‘The Mohammedans of China: When, and How, They First Came,’ *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 60 (1929) 1-54; Isaac Mason (trans.), *The Arabian Prophet: A Life*
Muslims in China. Very little work was done between 1949 and 1960 when China closed the door to any western interest in Chinese study. Scholarly studies on Islam in China resumed around 1970 and have been carried out by J. Lipman\textsuperscript{78}, F. Aubin\textsuperscript{79}, R. Israeli\textsuperscript{80} and D. Leslie\textsuperscript{81}, followed recently by D. Gladney.\textsuperscript{82} Scholarship from the Chinese, mostly Hui Muslims, began from the early 1990s; this has made rapid progress.\textsuperscript{83} Chinese Islamic studies have covered a very broad area including sociological, theosophical, Sufi, political and historical themes. Substantial works on Liu and his contemporaries in both journals and book-length studies have been published during the last twenty years by Han and Hui scholars alike.

\subsection*{2.1.2 The Scripture Hall Education System}

The early Muslims came from the West through the ancient Silk Road to Northwestern China and also by sea to the Eastern part of China as long ago as the time soon after the death of the prophet Muhammad.\textsuperscript{84} In the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), the status of Muslims was elevated and this brought a new wave of immigrant Muslims into China.\textsuperscript{85} While Muslims were scattered, there was in Nanjing (including the greater region Jiangnan) a more concentrated and localized Muslim group in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. Nanjing in the Ming dynasty was an important city, centrally located with fertile conditions for agriculture

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\textsuperscript{81} During this period, only two studies by western scholars focus on Liu and his contemporaries. One of them is a very scholarly historical study by Leslie and Wassel. See D. Leslie and M. Wassel, ‘Arabic and Persian Sources used by Liu Chih,’ \textit{Central Asiatic Journal} 26 (1982) 78-104; J.F. Ford, ‘Some Chinese Muslims of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,’ \textit{Asian Affairs} 61 (1974) 144-56.


\textsuperscript{83} The most well known and prolific Hui scholar is Jin Yijiu who has written many articles as early as the 1980s and a book-length study on Liu Zhi.

\textsuperscript{84} The most authoritative history of the Hui is a two-volume edited work by Bai Shouyi. Bai Shouyi, \textit{The History of Chinese Hui Ethnic Minority} (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book, 2003).

including silk cultivation. This was also the capital city of the Ming founding emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398). This brief historical context will not cover the major area in Northwestern China of Xinjiang province especially the Uyghur Muslims because of the nature of this study focusing on the Hui Muslims. The historical background will focus on the Hui Muslims near Nanjing and the Eastern more prosperous part of China. This school of Chinese Muslims is called the Nanjing school. Under the Ming rule, the city of Nanjing and the region of Jiangnan became a principal centre for various religious institutions and philosophical traditions. However, in 1424, emperor Yongle (1403 – 1424) moved the capital to Beijing. By the 17th century, Nanjing remained prosperous. It was estimated that Muslims accounted for about one hundred thousand people. In addition, educated Hui Muslims were trained in both Chinese and Islamic philosophy.

The Scripture Hall Education System was the key institution that contributed to the growth of Muslim education in various subjects of Islamic knowledge. It was started by Hu Dengzhou (c. 1522 - c. 1597) in Shan Xi, northern China as early as the mid-sixteenth century. During the Ming dynasty, Shan Xi was a prosperous region and had fertile agricultural land. Muslims were farmers, tea growers and established their financial resources. Hu learnt Chinese when he was young. He was taught Islam by an overseas Arabic master when he was grown up. Hu was disappointed that few Islamic materials were available and Muslims did not understand Islamic works. Hu began teaching in his home and later set up teaching centres in the mosque. Pupils could learn for free or partially subsidized. This was the prototype of the later Scripture Hall Education System. The education was divided into primary, secondary and university level. Children studied in the primary level. Adults without education or beginning in Islam studied in the secondary level. University level was to train future Islamic teachers, namely Ahong.

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87 Hu Dengzhou 胡登洲 in Shan Xi 陕西.
88 Michael Dillon gives a comprehensive survey of Sufi orders and the Xi Dao Tang education system. See Michael Dillon, China’s Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects (Richmond: Surrey, 1999) 91-152.
By the time of Liu Zhi, there were at least two school networks among the Scripture Hall Educational System. One school network was based around Shan Xi and the other in Shandong, Northeastern China. Owing to the fact that there were few standard textbooks, transmission of tradition was heavily dependent on the experience and charisma of each Islamic teacher (Ahong). It should be noted that Liu Zhi belonged to the Shan Xi School and yet he made contact with the Shandong school. This demonstrated the effort made by Muslim literati eager to establish networking between different places and school networks.

The key feature of 16th and 17th-century Chinese Islam was vigorous activity by the Hui Muslim literati producing scholarly Muslim literature in Chinese and in parallel with it an impressive development of the Scripture Hall Education System. The need of Islamic literature in Chinese and the Scripture Hall Education System was due to firstly a desire for a better understanding of Muslim faith and secondly for clearing any misunderstanding from the Hans and ruling Manchu imperial court, who were increasingly suspicious of Muslims’ rites, with regard to their loyalty to the ruling imperial power. With such cultural and political pressure, the Hui Muslim literati stood up to the cultural and political challenge. They translated their received Islamic tradition into Chinese texts and encouraged further development of various networks of the scriptural hall educational system into the eastern part of prosperous China. Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi in the 17th-18th century China were Hui Muslim literati who were competent in both Neo-Confucianism and Arabic/Persian Islamic traditions in China. To understand the translated and edited Islamic works in Chinese was no easy task for the common Hui people, let alone to read the source materials in Arabic or Persian. For the sake of Muslim education, the task of translation was the necessary first step to facilitate the propagation of the Islamic faith. Hui Muslims in general needed to be taught. Translating the Islamic text and educating the ordinary Hui Muslims to understand the texts by the learned teachers or Ahong were two

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89 Jin, Chinese Islam, 3.
90 Sha, Islam in China, 62.
91 For a short history of the scripture hall educational system, see Li Xinghua, Qin Huibin, Feng Jinyuan, and Sha Quizhen, History of Islam in China (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Science Press, 1998) 415-454.
different tasks. Yet, they were to be done simultaneously in 17th-century Islamic scholars in China.

One should not think that the Hui Muslim literati could succeed in the task effortlessly. Firstly, traditionalists would always concern themselves with, and sometimes actively resist, translating sacred received Islamic traditions in Persian or Arabic into local languages. Secondly, compared to the majority Hans, most Hui were not good readers of written work in Chinese. The literary competences of Hui Muslims living in less developed areas like North and South-western China were even worse. Nevertheless, Muslim literati like Liu Zhi wrote, and edited scholarly Islamic works and translated them into Chinese. Liu also wrote Sufi poem and popular Islamic short tracts that could be rhymed for quick memorization even among children. It was and still is today common among Hui children that they can memorize Liu Zhi’s poems and tracts even before they can understand the meaning of the poems and tracts. The rise of the education system in the mosque was a native development among the Chinese Muslims. The Chinese language has been the educational language in addition to being a social language. Hui people could have the opportunity to learn Arabic or Persian should they desire to do so and be taught by the master, Ahong.

2.1.3 Islamic Text Transmission in Chinese

The translation of Arabic and Persian Islamic works into Chinese began in the 16th century and continued through to the 19th century. These few centuries of Islamic activities laid the philosophical and theological foundation of modern Chinese Islam. This foundational period may be further divided into two stages. The first stage is represented by Wang Daiyu (c. 1580 – c. 1660), Ma Zhu (c. 1640- c. 1711) and Liu Zhi in Nanjing and the second stage is led by Ma Dexin (1794-1874) and Ma Qixi (1857-1914) in Yunnan, in the southwestern

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92 This might contribute partly to the fact that Uyghurs in Northwestern China are not much influenced by the 17th-century Islamic reform. For the Uyghurs, Han Chinese is not their native language.
93 In addition to the social Han Chinese language, Hui have developed a modified Chinese scripture language that is primarily used within the education system in the mosque.
region of China. The first stage took place in Nanjiang city and the greater Jiangsu region. Islamic work in Chinese primarily focused on philosophy, religious rituals, creeds, Islamic histories, Hadith and Sufi materials. The second stage which took place mainly in Yunnan encompassed Islamic work in both Chinese and Arabic covering other areas, including linguistic usage, astronomy, geography and the Qur’an in Chinese.

(1) Wang Daiyu (c. 1580 – c. 1660)

Wang Daiyu claimed to have Arabic ancestry, whether in Central Asia or the Middle East was not certain. His ancestors came to China to pay respect to the emperor and eventually settled down in Nanjing in the 14th century. During Wang Daiyu’s time, Ahong might be trained to read Arabic and Persian and not necessarily Chinese. Wang Daiyu grew up under the mosque training educational system and learnt Arabic but hardly any Chinese. At the age of 20, he began to study Chinese. By the age of 30, he was reading Chinese history, philosophy and also Buddhist and Daoist books. He often used Islamic truth to criticize non-Islamic philosophies. He lived in Beijing in his later life. His three famous works have been recently collected and published together in one single volume. The goal of Wang Daiyu was to use Neo-Confucianism to explicate and propagate the Islamic faith. He defended his approach by arguing that words and languages were merely earth and wood. These were part of the building materials to build the mosque. Thus, contemporary Chinese scholar Liu Yihong labels Wang Daiyu’s methodology as ‘using Neo-Confucianism to explain Islam.’

94 The year is approximate and few scholars have argued for a definite year.
While Ma Zhu was born in Yunnan, he traveled widely in China because of political uprisings in Yunnan. He grew up in a poor family and was eager to learn and write. At the age of 20 he began to write. At 30 years of age he left for Beijing and his stay there was a turning point in his life. At 43 years of age, he left Beijing and travelled all over the country, networking with other Islamic scholars and teachers in various parts of China. Liu Zhi’s father wrote a preface for his book. He tried three times to submit his book to the imperial court and hoped to win imperial approval. His motive was to raise Islam to legitimate status. His book was popular and being read by more people than Wang Daiyu’s works. Liu Yihong asserts that Ma Zhu’s main goal was to illustrate that both Neo-Confucianism and Islam are mutually illuminating traditions. While Liu Zhi spoke highly of Ma Zhu’s writings, he did not adopt his methodology. Rather, he borrowed from Wang Daiyu and further developed his concept of divine Ruler.

One of the earliest Islamic texts in Chinese was written by Wang Daiyu. The Muslim literati began to propagate the basic tenets of the Islamic faith by translating and commenting on Islamic texts in Chinese. These early Muslim writers sought to use Neo-Confucian, Daoist and even Buddhist ideas and terms in their writings. Wang Daiyu was one of the two Chinese Muslim writers who were prominent in the 17th-18th century, the other being Liu Zhi.

Wang Daiyu was the first well-known scholar who wrote important texts in Chinese on Islam using Confucian terms and concepts. Most of his Muslim contemporaries had only a scant knowledge of Islam. He argued that both Islam and Neo-Confucianism had similar views of personal virtue, brotherly love, social and filial relationships. He prepared to adopt the dualistic concept of yin and yang from Daoism. The five Confucian virtues of benevolence and wisdom were appropriated with the five cardinal responsibilities of a Muslim. However, he was critical that Neo-Confucianism was unwilling to accept monotheism. Undoubtedly, Wang did not disclaim Neo-Confucianism. Rather, he used it

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100 Jin, *Chinese Islam*, 5.
for the sake of clarifying and championing Islamic belief. In addition to those of Liu Zhi, the works of Wang have been studied enthusiastically in recent years by both contemporary Western and Chinese scholars.\textsuperscript{101}

Wang Daiyu wrote three main works. The longer work is known as \textit{The Real Commentary on the True Teaching} and two shorter treatises, \textit{The True Answers of the Very Real} and \textit{The Great Learning of the Pure and Real}.\textsuperscript{102} These works cover the essential teachings of the basic tenets of Islamic belief in terms of Neo-Confucianism and are intended for an elementary level of learning. In terms of length and details, they are comparatively shorter than the works of Liu Zhi and more basic than Liu Zhi’s work. \textit{The True Answers of the Very Real} is written in a question and answer format. It is a collection of dialogues in which Wang answers questions put to him by a variety of enquirers. It also provides a quick and easy reference to basic teachings of Islam for beginners.

\textit{The Great Learning of the Pure and Real} is the shortest of the three main works and explains the basic concepts of the Real One, Numerical One and the Embodied One.\textsuperscript{103} The Real One is God in himself and the Numerical One is the first principle of creation. Murata asserts that ‘Wang’s discussion employs terminology drawn largely from Neo-Confucianism showing that he felt it to be the most adequate of the Chinese traditions to explain the nature of things.’\textsuperscript{104} In Liu Zhi’s influential work, \textit{The Nature and Principle in Islam}, Liu Zhi continued what Wang had begun. Not only did he explain in greater details the beginning of the world by using Wang’s terms of Real One, Numerical One and the Embodied One, he added diagrams to make clear what he wrote in the text. Liu Zhi’s work

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\textsuperscript{102} These three works are often combined together and published as one book. Wang Daiyu, 余振貴點校 Yu Zhengui (ed.), 正教真詮. 清真大學. 希真正答 (Ningxia, Ningxia People Publisher, 1988).

\textsuperscript{103} Murata has translated the text and commented briefly on the Islamic concepts. Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 69-79.

\textsuperscript{104} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 72.
is longer, more comprehensive and intended not primarily for an elementary level of teaching and learning.

*The Real Commentary on the True Teaching* is divided into two parts. The first part begins with the explanation of the Real One, continues with the Utmost Sage and ends with the five endeavours. The second part begins with human relationships, continues with filial piety and ends with the afterworld. Thus, Wang firstly discussed the essential doctrines of Islamic beliefs and secondly he contextualized his teachings in a Neo-Confucian context. He explained what the ways of Muslim living should be in a Chinese society in terms of human relationship, diet, Islamic endeavours and so on for a Muslim living in a non-Muslim country. Liu Zhi again continued what Wang had begun. Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* followed a similar format to that of Wang’s work. Again, *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is longer, more comprehensive and contextualized even more thoroughly with Neo-Confucian ethical teachings. The first five chapters follow similarly the content of part 1 of *The Real Commentary on the True Teaching*. The sixth to twentieth chapters cover similar content to Wang’s part 2. Liu Zhi continued and further contextualized Wang’s Islamic teaching into his Chinese contexts.

(2) Liu Zhi (c. 1662 - c. 1730)

Liu Zhi was a prolific writer and was able to leave a significant legacy for the later generations of Chinese Muslims. He pursued studies in Islam, Neo-Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Like Wang, he borrowed religious concepts from these ideologies and applied them to his Islamic writings. While he borrowed religious and philosophical terms available to him, his writings presented Islam as a unique religion and different from other ideologies. While he was interested in Sufism, his main views were in accordance with the Hanafi school of law within Sunni Islam. After a careful analysis of the Arabic and Persian sources used by Liu Zhi, Donald D. Leslie and Mohamed Wassel give the

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105 J. F. Ford notes that while Liu was indebted to the Hanafi school, he also used at least four works which were definitely Sufi. See J.F. Ford, ‘Some Chinese Muslims of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,’ *Asian Affairs* 61 (1974) 151.
following summarized comments. Firstly, two key Arabic texts, namely *Wiqaya* and *Aqaid*,
used by Liu Zhi are standard Sunni Hanafite texts of law and ritual, influential in the 19th and 20th centuries. Secondly, very few, if any, are *Shi’a*. Thirdly, most works, especially those in Persian, are Sufi. Finally, Leslie and Wassel postulate that the geographic sources of Liu’s work are Central Asian, Persian and the original Arabic.\(^\text{106}\) It should be noted that both the teaching of Wang and Liu were popular in Nanjing during the 17th and 18th centuries. Their works have gone through various re-printings through the last two centuries.

The legacy of Wang and Liu is unquestionable. Often, their publications have been bound together and used as a standard textbook for basic Islamic materials. Suffice to mention at this moment three scholars indebted to Liu’s legacy. Firstly, Ma Lianyuan, 馬聯元 (1840-1903) in Yunnan, eagerly promoted Islamic education in that province. He was fluent in both Arabic and Chinese and encouraged bilingual Islamic teaching in both languages. Ma translated Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* into Arabic. His translation of Liu’s text was very free and should be regarded as a paraphrase of Liu’s own work. This indicated the popularity of Liu’s writing. Secondly, another Chinese Muslim scholar, named, Ma Qixi 馬啟西 (1857-1914) championed Islamic learning in the province of Gansu, North China. He initially set up tents in his house for the sake of easier access to Islamic learning. This setup later became a community centre. He used Liu’s writings as his teaching materials. His students came from far and near, even sacrificing their livelihood in order to learn from Ma. Not only was Ma well acquainted with Liu’s writings, he also advocated the *Jahriyya* Sufi order which was the largest among the four Chinese Sufi movements (*menhuan* 門宦).\(^\text{107}\) With his emphasis on Islamic education, Ma established a unique and rapidly expanding Muslim community, called Xi Dao Tang 西道堂 with teaching staff and learning centres. This community was not merely a *madrasa*. The community centre also operated


Ma extended branches into other big cities including the Chinese capital. The Xi Dao Tang began to decline by the mid-20th century. However, Xi Dao Tang still exists today and has contributed towards the modernization of China.

Finally, not only Liu’s writings were translated into Arabic by Ma; Liu’s teaching on the life of the prophet Muhammad was translated into English by Isaac Mason in 1921. While Liu began his career in Nanjian, his teaching and writings live on both in the provinces of Yunnan and Gansu, both areas densely populated by the Hui today. There is a clear resurgence of interest in Liu’s writings. Research theses on his writings have been published recently in book length as well as in many academic journals. Some earlier copies of Liu Zhi’s works are on public display in Beijing Niujie mosque today.

(3) Ma Dexin (1794 – 1874)

Ma Dexin was born in the southwestern province of Yunnan in the late Qing dynasty and led a group of Hui Muslims into political rebellion in Kunming city against the Qing government in 1857. He acquired a thorough and comprehensive education in Arabic and Persian both in Yunnan and Shan Xi province. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca at the age of 50 and made use of the opportunity of seven years of pilgrimage to search, copy and collect important Islamic manuscripts. Ma’s works are in both Chinese and Arabic. His Chinese works are significant in that they intentionally complement the Islamic activities of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi.

111 See for details, Yang Guiping, A Study of Ma Dexin’s Thoughts (Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2004). Yang argues that Ma’s works sought to identify Islamic culture and thoughts with the Confucian culture. Ma attempted to persuade the Hui people to obey their traditional Islamic principles and
His two well-known Chinese works are *An Explanation of Four Classics* and *The Final Return of the Great Transformation*.\(^{112}\) In the preface, Ma lamented that both the works of Wang and Liu did not give adequate exposition of the doctrine of return to the Real.\(^{113}\) So, his works sought to supplement both of their works. In particular, he wrote a commentary on Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* (天方性理注釋). One of his followers, Ma Lianyuan wrote a commentary of *The Nature and Principle in Islam* in Arabic.

Ma Dexin’s Islamic works represent the second and final stage of intensive Islamic activity in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Ma continued the translation and interpretation of Islamic texts using Confucian terms. Two of Ma’s distinctive contributions are his emphases on the concept of return to the Real and enthusiastic support of the unique role of Prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage. He translated the *Poem of Eulogizing the Prophet Muhammad* (天方詩經) in Chinese with clear divisions of former life, present life and afterlife of the Prophet Muhammad. This poem originally was written by an Egyptian Sufi poet, al-Busiri (c. 1212 – c.1294) and the work is known as *Qasida al-Burda* (Poem of the Mantle). Ma got the copy during his pilgrimage and then under his supervision, he and his pupils translated the poem. In comparison with Liu Zhi’s works, Ma’s translated poem included a clear and more detailed explanation of the significant role of the Prophet Muhammad.\(^{114}\) The original poem has 162 lines. Ma reorganized them into ten chapters and a total of 161 lines.

The intense Islamic activities of the above three Islamic scholars in 17\(^{\text{th}}\)-19\(^{\text{th}}\) century China are consistent in their methodologies. They use Confucian terms to explain Islamic teaching, simultaneously they should recognize and respect the dominant Chinese culture. Yang, *Ma Dexin’s Thoughts*, 2.

\(^{112}\) In Chinese, 四典要會, 大化總歸 respectively.


Their teachings of the unity of existence and the role of the prophet Muhammad are within the Sufi tradition in accordance with the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi.

2.2 Philosophical Context

Daoism, Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism are commonly regarded as the Three Teachings in China. The Ming and early Qing dynasties (c. 14th-18th centuries) were a golden era for both Neo-Confucianism and Daoism because the ruling classes encouraged literature studies and literati were able to earn ministerial offices through various government-arranged examinations. The form of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties is known as Neo-Confucianism. It is not easy to define Daoism because it has assumed different aspects within its philosophical and religious system. Fung Yulan 馮友蘭 asserts that Neo-Daoism comprised both rationalists and sentimentalists. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, occasionally the emperors would favour Neo-Daoism for various pragmatic reasons. However, Neo-Confucianism dominated Chinese culture at the time of Liu Zhi.

2.2.1 Daoism

Daoism is the most ancient of the Three Teachings. The founder of Daoism is Lao Zi (c. 571 – c. 471 B.C.E.). His work is called the book of Lao Zi or Daodejing (Classic of the Way and Power, 道德經). It may be divided into two section, the teaching of dao (way) and de (power). The school of classical Daoism was further developed by Zhuang Zi (c.369 – c.286 B.C.E) and his representative work is called the book Zhuang Zi.

The formative concepts of Daoism consist of some general principles of governing the world and man, the antithesis of yin and yang, the complementary aspects of the dao as natural order, mysticism and finally emphasis on afterlife. Several aspects of Daoism

resonate with Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islamic thought. The most important philosophical teaching of Lao Zi is dao or the way. In Western philosophy, universals lie beyond shapes and features. It is a philosophical concept that represents the property of visible things. Red and green apples are visible things. However, red or green colour or the ‘colourness’ itself is called a universal which is invisible. Lao’s dao is similar to the concept of universal but unlike universal, the dao cannot even be named. ‘The Dao that can be comprised in words is not the eternal Dao; the name that can be named is not the abiding name. The unnamable is the beginning of heaven and earth; the namable is the mother of all things.’\footnote{116 Daodejing, the first chapter.} In Lao’s observation of the existence of things, the dao belongs to non-being which is unnamable and by which all things come to be. Thus, the dao is an ontological and yet not a static concept. ‘From Dao there comes one. From one there comes two. From two there comes three. From three there comes all things.’\footnote{117 Daodejing, the forty-second chapter.} It is clear that from non-being comes being. H. Moeller comments on this passage and says that ‘Oneness is the immediate “product” of the Dao —it is thus, as unity, at the “beginning” of the cosmic process. It is the foundation of twoness, the basic duality (Yin/Yang) that constitutes the rhythm of the cosmic course.’\footnote{118 Hans-Georg Moeller, Philosophy of the Daodejing (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) 40.}

Zhuang Zi continued the teaching of Lao’s dao and asserted that at the beginning there was Non-Being. It had neither being nor name and was that from which came the One. When the One came into existence, there was the One but still no form. When things obtained that by which they came into existence, it was called the De [power or ability]. De is what makes us what we are. It may be interpreted as the ability of human nature. Zhuang Zi explained the moral teaching of the dao and de. In chapter one of Zhuang Zi called The Happy Excursion, Zhuang outlined the way of achieving absolute and relative happiness. Relative happiness could be achieved by the free development of our human nature. When humans allowed their natural ability to be fully and freely exercised, they are in a state of happiness. However, absolute happiness could only be achieved through higher
understanding of the nature of things. Zhuang distinguished between what is of nature and what is of man. Chinese philosopher Fung Yulan explains the distinction that

“What is of nature,” [Zhuang] says, “is internal. What is of man is external. …That oxen and horses should have four feet is what is of nature. That a halter should be put on a horse’s head, or a string through an ox’s nose, is what is of man.”

Things are different in their nature and their natural ability is also not the same. What they share in common, however, is that they are all equally happy when they have a full and free exercise of their natural ability.119

It should be noted that both Lao and Zhuang did not give clear systematic exposition of the concept of dao. Lao did not equate dao with the mind. The dao is regarded as mystery of mysteries. This present work is to show later that Liu Zhi’s contextualization occasionally made use of some Daoist concepts in particular the concept of dao and the moral implication of dao and de (the way and natural ability). Furthermore, within the mysticism of Daoism, there is a concept of the perfect man in later Daoism.120

2.2.2 Buddhism

Buddhism first entered China via Central Asia in the first century and continued to expand in influence. The most influential period is in the 6th-10th century. Its growth is due to the effort of non-Chinese missionaries from India into China and the gradual collection of imported Buddhist texts or sutras and later translation of these sacred texts into Chinese. Buddhism grew because it effectively absorbed other Chinese religious and philosophical concepts including Confucianism and Daoism.

Inculturation in late Ming dynasty was not the monopoly of any religious group including the successful Jesuit missionaries in the Ming imperial court. A Buddhist monk, Zhixu Ouyi (1599-1655) contextualized the Daoist classic Yijing (Classic of Change) by writing

119 Fung Yulan, Short History, 170.
numerous works, including a Buddhist commentary of *Yijing*, namely a *Chanist Explanation of the Changes*.\(^{121}\) While a Buddhist usually emphasized release by emptiness of the mind, Zhixu was attracted to *Yijing* by the concept of Shen (wonder or god). ‘Shen is the efficient cause that translates the knowing capacity of the mind into actual understanding.’\(^{122}\) Yuet Keung Lo offers an insightful analysis of Zhixu and his contextualized commentary. Lo labels Zhixu as an eclecticist rather than a syncretist. In his commentary of *Yijing*, Zhixu began to realize the multifarious nature of Change in the teaching of *Yijing*. ‘The ultimate truth is dynamic, revealing itself in changes. Ultimate transformation in personal terms lies in understanding the revelation of Change by virtue of the inscrutable power of the shen inspired by the mind in a uniquely and idiosyncratically personal way.’\(^{123}\) Thus, his adaptation was ethically based and for the sake of personal transformation which was fundamentally the Buddhist goal. Therefore, the late Ming dynasty was clearly a period of religious openness as illustrated by the successful inculturation of Catholicism and adaptation of the Buddhist’s emptiness of mind into the Daoist’s ultimate truth.

By the early Qing dynasty, the trend of ecumenical and syncretic openness to various religio-cultural traditions began to stifle. The Qing emperor Yongzheng (1678-1735) acknowledged that Buddhism, Daoism and Islam derived from the same source and he asserted that each had its own specialties, strengths and areas of inadequacy. However, his tolerance was merely pragmatic and political motivated. His aim was to discourage any rivalry between religious aristocrats or court officials taking sides. By the 1730’s, any

\(^{121}\) Ouyi Zhixu is considered one of the four great Buddhist masters of the Ming dynasty. In his youth, he engaged in Confucian studies. At 24, he became a Buddhist after he had had a great insight. He was famous for his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy*. In this work, he vehemently criticized the teaching of the Jesuits. He argued that there was a clear difference between Christianity and Confucianism. See Ouyi Zhixu, Charles B. Jones (tr.), ‘Pi Xie Ji: Collected Refutations of Heterodoxy by Ouyi Zhixu (1599-1655),’ *Pacific World* 11 (2009) 351-407.


\(^{123}\) Lo, Change Beyond Syncretism,’ 290.
creative interaction between religions was effectively stifled among the elites and other intellectuals.\textsuperscript{124}

There are different schools of Buddhist teaching in different parts of Asia. Sacred texts that are translated into Chinese belong to the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) school which had major impact of Buddhism in China. Within Mahayana Buddhism, there exist different schools of thought. In general terms, two major philosophical concepts of Buddhism in China are oneness of reality and enlightenment. The concept of oneness of reality is a theory expounded by Daosheng (d. 434) who advanced many revolutionary theories. This oneness means an individual could identify with what is called the Buddha-nature. It is the self-consciousness of the individual’s original identification with the universal mind. Humans could achieve Buddhahood by means of enlightenment. Fung Yulan explains this concept succinctly as follows:

Every sentient being has the Buddha-nature; only he does not realize that he has it. This Ignorance (Avidya) is what binds him to the Wheel of Birth and Death. The necessity, therefore, is for him first to realize that he has the Buddha-nature originally within him, and then, by learning and practice, to “see” his own Buddha-nature. This “seeing” comes as a Sudden Enlightenment, because the Buddha-nature cannot be divided; therefore he either sees it as a whole or does not see it at all. Such “seeing” also means to be one with the Buddha-nature, because the Buddha-nature is not something that can be seen from outside.\textsuperscript{125}

The Buddhist enlightenment has moral and practical aspects. It is more than merely an acquisition of merits through good works. It is a transcending understanding that can see through this world of illusion and perceive the reality behind this world. Enlightenment consists ‘of the intuitive experiencing of truth with one’s whole being — an act through which the experience becomes merged with that Truth.’\textsuperscript{126} It should be noted that at this


\textsuperscript{125} Fung, \textit{Short History}, 412.

\textsuperscript{126} Fung, \textit{History of Chinese Philosophy}, 238.
period of Chinese philosophy, the universal mind or Buddha-nature remains at the level of psychological understanding.

### 2.2.3 Neo-Confucianism

The foundation of Neo-Confucianism was laid in the Tang dynasty (618 – 907) and took on a significant importance beginning from the 12th century. Buddhism cross-pollinated with Confucianism from the early period. By the time of the Song Dynasty in the 11th century, Daoism as religion and philosophical thought began its influence upon Confucianism. Thus, there was considerable intermingling of ideas between the three major philosophical thoughts. One of the most conspicuous Confucians who adopted religious Daoism was Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073). In his diagram of the Great Ultimate, Zhou explained the beginning and end of all things. His diagram and explanation of *yin* and *yang* were inspired by the *Book of Changes*.

Neo-Confucianism comprised two main schools of thought, the School of Principle and the School of Mind. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) belonged to the School of Principle. He is sometimes known as a synthesizer of early Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism. He did not merely gather, organize and harmonize his tradition. Rather, he developed a coherent metaphysical system by selecting and introducing his own innovative elements into such concepts as the Great Ultimate which Zhu called *chi*, the ultimate. He defined *tai chi* or Great Ultimate as the sum both of the principles of all discrete phenomena and the highest principle within each of them. It was beyond the realm of human affairs and included all affairs within the universe. The whole universe was one universal whole. At the same time, he emphasized that each phenomenon was endowed with its own defining principle, i.e. the principle was one but its manifestations were many. This emphasized the organic nature between phenomena and also the generative and creative ability of the Great Ultimate. The ‘Great Ultimate’ embodied principles of activity and tranquility. It was out of these

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127 Qi Wei argues that Zhu Xi was a great philosopher because he managed to import religious ideas from both Buddhism and Taoism into neo-Confucianism. In so doing, his neo-Confucianism surpassed the other two philosophies. Qi Wei, ‘Zhu Xi’s Philosophy and Religion,’ *Studies in World’s Religions* 38 (1989) 31.
principles that the material forces of *yin* and *yang* naturally ensued. Zhu’s philosophy of principle was opposed by another school of Neo-Confucianism, namely, the School of the Mind.\(^{128}\)

A key proponent of the School of the Mind was Wang Yangming (1472-1529).\(^{129}\) This school conceived the mind (literal: heart) as morally self-sufficient, endowed with the innate knowledge of good and the innate ability to do good. For Wang, then, the universal was a spiritual whole, in which there was only one world, the concrete actual world that we ourselves experience. Thus there was no place for that other world of abstract ultimate principle. ‘According to [Zhu’s] system, all the *Li* [ultimate principles] are eternally there, no matter whether there is mind or not. But according to Wang’s system, if there was no mind, there would be no *Li*. Thus the mind was the legislator of the universe and was that by which the *Li* are legislated.’\(^{130}\) The most significant contribution made by Wang was that he asserted a doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action. That is, knowledge was limited to moral knowledge and must have its logical expression in action. Action must be firmly based in knowledge. He tied moral knowledge to action and upheld the paramount importance of mind rather than metaphysical principle called *li* by Zhu. Modern scholars do not see the two schools as opponents but both of them were continuations of the great Neo-Confucian tradition of the Chinese history of philosophy.\(^{131}\) It should be noted that Liu Zhi’s emphasis on the role of heart is likely influenced by the School of Mind.

During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Zhu’s philosophy always dominated Wang’s. In 1644, the Qing imperial rulers reaffirmed the philosophy of Zhu and the school of ultimate principle as the orthodox teaching. Zhu’s commentaries on Confucius were upheld and formed the basis for the civil service examinations. In the late 17\(^{th}\) century,

\(^{128}\) In Chinese 心学. The literal word of mind is heart (*xing*). Scholars usually call this school as the school of mind and not the school of heart.


\(^{130}\) Fung, *Short History*, 508.

\(^{131}\) This includes Fung Yulan and other contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars.
Neo-Confucian scholars tended to compromise between the perceived rationalism of Zhu and the idealism of Wang.

2.3 Islamic Context

The Scripture Hall Education System began in Shan Xi in the 16th century. It gradually developed and established a teaching syllabus of about thirteen approved textbooks. Only a few of these textbooks belong to the Sufi tradition. In Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, he gave a list of about sixty books that he had referred to. However, Murata asserts that about six books were influential for Liu Zhi. Four of them are Sufi writings. The fifth book in Arabic, *al-Mawaqif fi’ilm al-kalam* (The Standpoints in the Science of Theology) is quoted nine times and the sixth book is a well-known commentary of the Qur’an by Baydawi (d. ca. 1300). The most frequently quoted Sufi text by Liu Zhi is Razi’s *Mirsad al-‘ibad* (cited thirty times). The second Sufi text is Jami’s *al-Lama’at* (cited fifteen times). Jami is a supporter and follower of Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings. The third Sufi text is Nasafi’s *Maqsad-i aqsa* (cited fourteen times). The fourth Sufi text is Jami’s *Lawa’ih* (cited eleven times). Liu Zhi translated *Lawa’ih* into Chinese and interpreted this short Sufi work.

2.3.1 Early Islamic Texts in Chinese

(1) Najm al-Din Razi\textsuperscript{134} (1177-1256) and *Mirsad al-‘ibad* (The Path of the Servant from the Origin to the Return)

*Mirsad al-‘ibad* is a required and approved Sufi textbook in the Scripture Hall Education System in 16th-18th century China. Najm al-Din Razi lived in turbulent times. Threats came

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\textsuperscript{133} Murata, *The Sage*, 11.

\textsuperscript{134} The work that Liu Zhi drew upon is Razi’s *The Path of God’s Bondsmen from Origin to Return*. That is , *Mirsad al-‘ibad men al-mabda ela’l-ma’ad*: a Sufi Compendium (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1982).
from the Crusaders in the West and the Mongols from the East. Razi’s writings focused on the exploration and analysis of the visionary states experienced by the seekers in the course of their mystical journey. His work *Mirsad al-‘ibad* in 1223 was intended as a gift to seekers and lovers of truth from a particular Sufi view. Razi’s Sufism took a middle course between the mystics who concentrated on ecstasy and raptures and made light of religious rituals and the ascetic mystics who emphasized worship through meticulous or excessive performance of religious duties. *Mirsad al-‘ibad* is divided into five parts and is written in a systematic and comprehensive manner. It begins with the origins and orders of creation, prophethood, the ritual practices and institutions of Sufi thought. The main discussion concerns different classes of people and different professions and trades who should follow the path and arrive at their destinations. In following the path, they reap spiritual benefit and heavenly rewards.

*Mirsad al-‘ibad* describes spiritual ascent through meditation upon various Qur’anic images of stars, moon and sun and also relates it to the condition of the heart. The heart becomes mirror-like and is able to reflect knowledge that has come from the spiritual world.\(^{135}\)

As for those lights that are seen in the form of heavenly bodies, — stars, moons and suns - they derive from the lights of spirituality that appear in the sky of the heart, in accordance with its degree of purity… It sometimes happens that the soul attains such purity that it appears to be like the sky, and the heart is seen in it like the moon. If the full moon is seen, the heart has become completely pure; if it is less than full, a degree of impurity remains in the heart. When the mirror of the heart attains perfect purity and begins receiving the light of the spirit, that light will be witnessed in the likeness of the sun. The brightness of the sun is in proportion to the degree of the heart’s purity, until a point is reached in which the heart is a thousand times brighter than the external sun. If the moon and the sun are witnessed

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together, then the moon is the heart, illuminated with the reflection of the light of the spirit, and the sun is the spirit.\textsuperscript{136}

Akиро Матsumoto opines that \textit{Mirsad al-`ibad} is preferred over other Sufi works of a similar genre in China because ‘in the last chapter of the book there is a call for people to fit into a society governed by temporary rulers in order to secure their religious life.’\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Mirsad al-`ibad} advocates a peaceful and harmonious way of life with the ruling class and other people of different cultures. For Matsumoto, this explains to a large extent its popularity. Thus, it is not coincidence that in his \textit{Five Sessions of the Moon} Sufi poem, Liu Zhi consciously uses the images of the moon, heart, purity and others as found in \textit{Mirsad al-`ibad} to expound his teaching of the Sufi path in Neo-Confucian terms. For Liu, heart means the locus of human awareness and consciousness.\textsuperscript{138} Also, Liu Zhi’s \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam} supports the legitimate rule of the Qing government and encourages Muslims to be obedient both the Qing emperor as well as the Real Ruler of Islam.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{(2) Abd al-Rahman Jami’s Ashi’at al-Lama’at (Rays of the Flashes) and Lawa’ih (Gleams)}
\end{itemize}

The contributions of Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414 – 1492) have been well known in Islam. He was a follower of the Naqshbandi Sufi order and was recognized by his contemporaries as a major authority in science, philosophy, astronomy, music, art and most important of all poetry. He was a great admirer of the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi. He greatly enriched, analyzed and also developed the school of Ibn ‘Arabi. He ‘has the ability to bring new life to the material by means of a style that is fresh, graceful, supple and highly distinguished ….’\textsuperscript{139} One of the important concepts in his Sufism is the unity of the existence of God. Jami stated “we and Thou are not separate from each other, but we need

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Razi, H. \textit{The Path of God’s Bondsmen}, 296.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Matsumoto, ‘The Sufi Intellectual Tradition’, 107.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Murata says that the Sufis prefer “heart” to the philosophers’ “intellect” when the subject concerned is self-realization. Murata, \textit{Sage}, 57. Liu is aware that \textit{The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon} should address the heart rather than the intellect as this poem is meant for general readership.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} C. Huart, ‘Djami’ in \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam} (Leiden: Brill, 1965 [new edn.]) 422.
\end{itemize}
Thee, whereas Thou doest not need us.” For Jami, love for the Prophet Muhammad was the fundamental stepping-stone for starting on the journey. Two of his works explain the unity of existence and are translated into Chinese. These works were used as part of the teaching syllabus in the Scripture Hall Education System.

Jami’s *Ashi‘at al-Lama‘at* is another required and approved Sufi textbook in the Scripture Hall Education System. It was translated into Chinese by She Yunshan (c. 1638 – c. 1703). A most recent translation in Chinese was published in 2001 and translated by Ruan Bin with commentaries. The work may be divided into two parts. The first part is shorter. It is the preface and gives not just the reason for the work. Jami gave over 20 different explanations of the concept of being in the preface. It explains the process of emanation from the beginning. These explanations become the foundation of understanding the flashes in the later major part of the work. The second part is Jami’s teaching about flashes which consists of twenty nine discussions. Thus, Jami wrote in order to make clearer the teaching of the unity of existence. The emanation begins in the innate heaven and later moves into the acquired heaven. This process is known as descent. The process continues from the acquired heaven back to the Real which is known as the ascent. These understanding of the cosmogony, descent into acquired heaven and ascent into the Real are common themes in Liu Zhi’s theosophy of Islam.

The second work is Jami’s *Lawa‘ih*. It is a reference textbook in the Scripture Hall Education System. Liu Zhi translated it into Chinese. This work will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

(3) Aziz al-Din Nasafi’s (d. c. 1300) and *Maqsad-i aqsa* (The Furthest Goal)

Aziz Nasafi’s *Maqsad-i aqsa* is a reference textbook of the Scripture Hall Education System. Nasafi was born in Central Asia and had followers in Iran. Nasafi’s work *Maqsad-i*...
*Maqsad-i aqsa* was produced probably before 1281, during the latter part of his life. It was a theological treatise on God's essence, attributes and acts. It also discussed views of God as taught by other philosophers, *ulama* and Sufis. His own worldview entailed an image of the four seas. Extant manuscripts are also found in India, Pakistan and China. *Maqsad-i aqsa* had a coherent writing style. The teaching of God's essence and attributes had a striking resemblance to Ibn ‘Arabi’s vision of God, in particular, understanding God as both incomparable (*tanzih*) and similar (*tashbih*) with the world. That is, God is both He/not He. The emphasis of this particular work by Nasafi is a detailed discussion of the levels of existence in the image of four seas, with an interpretation similar to Ibn ‘Arabi’s school. In *Maqsad-i aqsa*, Nasafi also discussed the perfect man as the divine presence. Clearly, his worldview was an ontological hierarchy of the four seas (levels of existence) and the perfect man who comprehended all the four seas. His last two chapters in *Maqsad-i aqsa* explain the four seas.

Liu Zhi’s works have been influenced primarily but not exclusively by Sufi thoughts. The main source of Sufi thoughts comes from primarily the Ibn ‘Arabi’s tradition through the works of Jami and Nasafi. Liu Zhi’s works contribute towards the Islamic teachings in the Scripture Hall Education System and they continue the moderate or *shari‘a*-minded Sufism.

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141 *Maqsad-i aqsa* was translated into Chinese in the seventeenth century by She Yunshan. It was summarized by Ma Fuchu in the eighteenth century. Matsumoto, ‘Sufi Intellectual Tradition,’ 107.  
2.3.2 The Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition and the Concept of Unity of Existence

(1) Some Foundational Principles of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Writings

The overarching principle of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Islamic thought is *tawhid* (unity of God) which can be understood by considering various complementary pair of ideas.\(^{145}\) Only two of Ibn ‘Arabi’s key thoughts will be discussed because they are more relevant to this study. The first pair is represented by bringing together (*kur’an*) and separation or differentiation (*furkan*). The second pair is incomparability (*tanzih*) and similarity (*tashbih*). Bringing together means that God brings all things together under his unitary creativity. Differentiation means that God has the knowledge and wisdom in all the differentiations of reality. Thus, God is one through his essence and many through his differentiated knowledge. This twin principle of the oneness of God and manyness of his knowledge gives existence to this cosmos. From the human perspective, the soul manifests the manyness of knowledge and the spirit the oneness of existence (*wujud*). Both the bringing together and differentiation ‘signify the two basic principles in terms of which God creates the universe and reveals himself in the “sign” (*ayat*) that are found in the three fundamental domains of manifestation: the universe, the soul and the Book.’\(^{146}\)

The second complementary pair in Ibn ‘Arabi’s key thought is based on two interrelated and yet balanced concepts: God’s incomparability (*tanzih*) and his similarity (*tashbih*). *Tanzih* ‘is to assert that God is pure and free of all the defects and imperfections of the creatures … [Tashbih] is to assert that God must have some sort of similarity with his creatures.’\(^{147}\) The twin perspectives of incomparability and similarity must be kept in view and balanced. God is far and he is also near. God is beautiful and stirs up love in the human


heart and yet this beauty is not like any created thing.\textsuperscript{148} Thus, in the midst of his nearness he is far. In the midst of his similarity, he is incomparable. According to Chittick, Ibn ‘Arabi’s insistence on the connection between \textit{tanzih} and \textit{tashbih} has great bearing upon his epistemology. ‘In brief, reason is innately constituted to set up distinctions and differentiations and thus to think abstractly… True knowledge depends upon seeing all things with both the eye of imagination and the eye of reason.’\textsuperscript{149} Based on these two key thoughts, Ibn ‘Arabi’s understanding of reality and existence should not be considered as a strict philosophical system of epistemology. It is an emblem (according to Chittick) or may be understood as a Sufi vision of existence. Such a vision is governed by his concept of God’s unity and affirms the necessity of both modes of knowing. God is one in his essence and many in his knowledge. He has the unity of his essence and the multiplicity of his names. He embraces incomparability and similarity, and “He” and “not He”. Ibn ‘Arabi criticized others who emphasized or overemphasized just one mode of knowledge.\textsuperscript{150} One should envision God with both eyes. Any single-eyed vision will suffer and distort the view of reality and is insufficient as a guide to God and as a judge of other viewpoints. It is important to keep both modes of knowing in healthy balance, both in the soul and in rational interactions. For Ibn ‘Arabi then, to say merely “All is He” is short-sightedness. It is not considered as the highest stage on the path to God because it is seeing with one eye.\textsuperscript{151} With the other eye also, the true Sufi can see that all is not He. Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufi vision of God’s existence is both “He/not He”.

(2) History and Development of the Concept of Unity of Existence in the Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition

According to William Chittick, oneness of existence is not the highest expression of Ibn ‘Arabi’s teaching. The term wahdat al-wujud was not used explicitly by Ibn ‘Arabi. Furthermore, Ibn ‘Arabi’s understanding of the concept of wahdat al-wujud was gradually developed in his late literature and should not be based on a single or a few scattered sayings. Chittick also insists that there is no doctrine of wahdat al-wujud as such in Ibn ‘Arabi. Rather, wahdat al-wujud was an emblem for Ibn ‘Arabi and ‘if al-‘Arabi was considered its founder, this simply indicates that his writings mark Sufism’s massive entry into the theological discussion of wujud that before him had been the almost exclusive preserve of the philosophers and the mutakallimun. The actual term wahdat al-wujud was developed by certain followers of Ibn ‘Arabi, including his pupil and stepson Sadr al-Din Qunawi (d. 1274). It is Sa’id al-Din Farghani (d. 1300) who gave wahdat al-wujud a technical and specific meaning. The meaning of the term eventually was established by the time of Ibn al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492), a propagator of Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysical teachings. Two works of Jami are included as reference texts in the Scripture Hall

153 William Chittick, ‘Rumi and wahdat al-wujud’ in A. Banani and G. Sabagh (eds.), Poetry and Mysticism in Islam The Heritage of Rumi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 73. Owing to a lack of careful reading of Ibn ‘Arabi’s works, Chittick argues that one may misinterpret and classify Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings as pantheism, panentheism, existential monism, pantheistic monism or the like, not only in a Middle Eastern but also in a Malay-Indonesian context.
156 Caner K. Dagli studies the concept of the oneness of being from a historical development of the meaning of wujud and wahdat al-wujud for four generations from Ibn ‘Arabi to Damud al-Qaysari (c. 1260 – c. 1350). He notes that there has been gradual adoption and sophistication of the technical language of the study of being i.e. ontology. This increased level of sophistication is due to Sufism’s effort to incorporate the prevailing philosophical and theological language of Islam. Thus, Dagli adopts a dynamic approach to the understanding of the oneness of being. While Ibn ‘Arabi uses wahdat al-wujud as a fundamental vision of reality or as an intellectual key to Sufi treading the spiritual path, his later Sufi disciples and Ibn ‘Arabi supporters interwove philosophy, theology and mysticism. See Caner K. Dagli, ‘From Mysticism to Philosophy (and Back): an Ontological History of the School of The Oneness of Being’ (PhD thesis, Princeton: Princeton University, 2006) vi-ix.
Education System in 16th-18th century China. The history of the term *wahdat al-wujud* is summarized by Chittick:

The term is not found in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi. For Qunawi, it has no specific technical sense … In Farghani’s writing, *wahdat al-wujud* is well on its way to becoming a technical term, but it does not stand on its own, since it needs to be complemented by *kathrat al-‘ilm*, the manyness of knowledge … other figures like Ibn Sab’iin and Nasafi were employing the term as a kind of shorthand to allude to the fundamental nature of things. Ibn Taymiyya seized upon the expression as a synonym for the great heresies of unificationism and incarnationism. By the time of Jami, and perhaps much before, *wahdat al-wujud* became the designation for an expression of *tawhid* that was typified by the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi and his followers.157

Chittick helpfully summarizes several possible meanings of the term *wahdat al-wujud* from both supporters and opponents of *wahdat al-wujud*.158 The meanings offered by supporters are:

1.0 Qunawi and Farghani would use *wahdat al-wujud* as a straightforward statement about *wujud* (existence or being) and make no reference to the complicated thoughts behind this term. For them, the divine being had manyness and plurality in his self-manifestation and such emanation or self-disclosure was affirmed by *wahdat al-wujud*.

2.0 In the later tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi, for followers like Ibn Sab’iin (d. 1270) and Aziz al-Din Nasafi (d. before 1300), *wahdat al-wujud* was a sufficient statement about the nature of things. Things in their multiplicity possessed a certain reality.

3.0 In the later tradition of Sufism and Islamic philosophy, the term meant *tawhid* and was used primarily by Sufis to express the unity of God.

While Chittick supports a distinction between *wahdat al-shuhud* and *wahdat al-wujud*, he disagrees with Massignon because he gave a simplistic dichotomy, namely static and dynamic, to these two terms. In addition, he failed to appreciate the highly complex


158 Chittick, ‘Rumi and *wahdat al-wujud,*’ 88-90.
doctrinal synthesis of oneness of existence and manyness of knowledge behind the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*. Chittick pleads for caution when people use the term *wahdat al-wujud*.

In general, sympathizers see *wahdat al-wujud* as a restatement of *tawhid* in the language of the advanced and refined intellectuality of later Islamic history, while detractors consider it a deviation from the supposedly clear distinctions drawn between God and cosmos by the early and relatively unsophisticated schools of theology. Nevertheless, the term *wahdat al-wujud* carries a good deal of baggage because of the long debate over its use. Thus all sorts of complications can arise that obscure what is at issue.\(^{159}\)

Mulla Sadra (c.1571 – 1650) is a significant figure in the history and development of the concept of unity of existence in the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. He transformed and developed Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufi vision into a theosophical and philosophical system. Sadra made several important contributions to the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and grounded his vision on more mature Peripatetic philosophical arguments.\(^{160}\)

Sajjad H. Rizvi clarifies Sadra’s teaching of divine self-disclosure. While God is the processual type of cause, he is also the processual sustainer. Divine self-disclosure indicates that God is both a transcendent, incomparable creator and immanent, participatory sustainer. That is, God is the one who participates in things and causes things to participate in him mutually. In addition, Rizvi explicates that rather than emphasizing God as the first cause, Sadra prefers to speak of the participatory immanence of God who introduces the one into all levels of the world-process. For Rizvi, Sadra is cautious to point out that it is not an equal mutual interpenetrated relation between two entities. Rather, ‘all that is other than God does not exist in reality. Things exist not because God causes them to exist but because He exists.’\(^{161}\) Thus, Sadra has provided a creative synthesis between the priority of existence and gradations of the reality of being to explain the relation between God and the world in the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition based on his theosophical system. While Rizvi describes

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\(^{159}\) Chittick, ‘Rumi and *wahdat al-wujud,*’ 91.

\(^{160}\) Dagli, ‘Mysticism to Philosophy,’ 31.

Ibn ‘Arabi as a rationalizing mystic, he calls Sadra the mystical philosopher because Sadra uses experience as a means of understanding, the grounds for explaining, the truth.\textsuperscript{162} That is, ‘experience is the ground for philosophy and philosophical discourse is a means for making sense of that experience.’\textsuperscript{163}

The philosophical contribution of Sadra to the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition has been confirmed by various contemporary scholars of Sadra in addition to Rizvi. According to Chittick, Sadra’s achievement is ‘an intellectual synthesis within which rational, philosophical speculation is combined with the mystical intuitions of the Sufis, the Koranic exegesis of the theologians, and a thorough familiarity with the Shi’ite hadith literature, which discusses the Divine Unity in technical terms peculiar to itself.’\textsuperscript{164} In addition, Ibrahim Kalim argues that the concept \textit{wahdat al-wujud} itself becomes a dynamic concept in Sadra’s realist ontology. Kalim asserts that Sadra’s central thought is ultimately God’s face turned to the world. Sadra’s ontology ‘is a step towards uncovering an aspect of the Divine, which, for Sadra, is the ultimate source of all being and knowledge.’\textsuperscript{165} Kalim asserts that Sadra’s principle of gradation has a hierarchical order of being in which substances move either upward or downward in accordance with their ontological state. A being intensifies its potential and attains perfection in terms of its properties and qualities. Kalim illustrates such an intensification with an apple which turns redder when it ripens. Redness is not an existential property of the apple for Sadra who argues that the ripened apple is another mode of existence of apple itself. Thus, Sadra ‘construes [things] as various modes and states of being in which a subject intensifies or diminishes.’\textsuperscript{166}

Rizvi summarizes succinctly Sadra's creative appropriation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s \textit{wahdat al-wujud}. ‘Mulla Sadra is thus not caught between monism and pluralism, but rather seeks to escape the paradigms offered by Ibn ‘Arabi by attempting to produce a synthesis based on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Rizvi, ‘Mysticism and Philosophy,’ 231.
\item Rizvi, ‘Mysticism and Philosophy,’ 231,\textsuperscript{162}
\item Chittick, ‘Mysticism versus Philosophy’\textsuperscript{,} 88.
\item Kalim, ‘Mulla Sadra’s Realist Ontology,’ 93.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the notion of grades of intensity of content in our experience of things, corresponding to
greater and lesser degrees of the manifestation of Being.¹⁶⁷

2.3.3 The Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition and Sufi Spirituality

Sufi thought, in particular Sufi spirituality, in the 17th and 18th-century has been widely
studied in western scholarship.¹⁶⁸ In 16th-18th-century China, Sufism was common.
However, Sufism today in China is no longer regarded as one of the mainstream branches
of Islamic thought and is now being sidelined.¹⁶⁹ In China, the political turmoil in the early
20th century and lack of religious freedom until the mid-20th century have stifled any
scholarly study on Islam in general, let alone Sufi thought. Despite these setbacks, studies
on Sufi thought in China have not been completely stagnant. Jin Yijiu in China has written
scholarly works on Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi and for the last twenty years also published
works on theoretical Sufism in China.¹⁷⁰ It should be pointed out that Sufi spirituality is an
expression of and also an interrelation with Liu Zhi’s understanding of Ibn ‘Arabi’s
tradition of the unity of existence. Sufi thought in China should be understood broadly and
not limited to mystical practices. Spirituality as understood by William Chittick, Annemarie
Schimmel and others embraces a broader dimension including the culture, literature and
arts of the Islamic world.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Rizvi, ‘Mysticism and Philosophy,’ 239.
¹⁶⁸ Sufism is usually regarded as the inner dimension of Islam and concerned with both the theoretical and
practical aspects of that dimension. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), Islamic Spirituality I Foundations (New
literature, art, dance and music.
¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Siriyeh says that the major factor in anti-Sufism after the 2nd World War is the state because of
some politically activist Sufis. Despite various pressures from the state and other leading anti-Sufi reformers,
both political and apolitical resentful Sufism continue to flourish in many areas of the Islamic world.
¹⁷⁰ Jin Yijiu, ‘Sufism and the Islamic Writings in Chinese 蘇非派與漢文伊斯蘭教著述’, Studies in World
¹⁷¹ A. Schimmel in her well known work, Deciphering the Signs of God, discusses Islamic mysticism from a
perspective of signs, ranging from natural environment like plants and animals, to less obvious signs such as
sacred time and space and eventually to ritual actions, worship and the order of the community. Annemarie
Schimmel, Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh
University Press, 1994).
Scholarship is plentiful on Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufism. A substantial monograph translated into English was written by the French philosopher-Islamist, Henry Corbin (1903-1978).\textsuperscript{172} He wrote from a phenomenological standpoint. At the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, two important scholars of Ibn ‘Arabi are well known for their acclaimed scholarship. They are A. Knysh and W. Chittick. Only Knysh’s work is to be outlined here as Chittick’s works have been discussed. Knysh has written historical studies on Sufism in general\textsuperscript{173} and Ibn ‘Arabi and his school in particular. Knysh’s work on Sufism takes its cue from the historical and socio-political contexts within which Sufism developed.\textsuperscript{174} In his study, he notes that in general, the Sufi tradition ‘contained vastly disparate if not diametrically opposed views and principles.’\textsuperscript{175} Knysh also discusses the relationship between Sufism and the Qur’an. ‘From the outset, the Qur’an was the principal source of contemplation and inspiration for every serious Muslim ascetic and mystic, whether formally Sufi or not.’\textsuperscript{176} However, their interpretations have always faced oppositions from Muslim leaders. From the start to the pre-modern period, Sufi teachings have gradually grown and become distinctive practices and beliefs. Sufis have a distinctive life-style and a system of rituals. While Knysh acknowledges that Ibn ‘Arabi’s uses of the Qur’an are rich and varied, he argues that Ibn ‘Arabi’s spiritual exegesis of the Qur’an is preconditioned by his concept of the ultimate realities of existence. It is customary for the Sufi masters to exercise their imaginative faculties in order to decipher God’s revelation through symbols and images.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{175} Knysh, \textit{Islamic Mysticism}, 326-27.
\textsuperscript{176} Knysh, ‘Sufism and Qur’an,’ 137.
\textsuperscript{177} Knysh, ‘Sufism and Qur’an,’ 154.
Summarizing the discussion of Ibn ‘Arabi, Knysh’s historical study of Ibn ‘Arabi affirms that the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi have been gradually developed into a tradition, a process which has been both supported and opposed. Chittick’s study of Ibn ‘Arabi’s overall writing affirms that the concept of the unity of existence is interrelated closely with Sufi spirituality, both in theory and practice.\footnote{178}

Discussion of Sufi thought and the way in which Ibn ‘Arabi influences Chinese Muslims have not been investigated in detail. This is due to a lack of interest by contemporary scholars who treat Sufism as a mystical and irrational pursuit of personal virtue. It should be noted that Sufi thought in China means traditionally shari’a-minded Sufism. According to Jin Yijiu, two of fourteen approved textbooks in the Scripture Hall System are clearly Sufi literature.\footnote{179} One of them is Jami’s Lawa’ih. Jin also discusses in depth Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought as well as the contributions made by Sufi thought to Chinese Islam.\footnote{180} Jin is fully convinced that Liu was greatly influenced by Islamic mysticism.\footnote{181} Wang Junrong 王俊榮 studies the ontology of Ibn ‘Arabi and discusses various similarities between Liu Zhi and Ibn ‘Arabi.\footnote{182} Wang’s work is the only book-length monograph investigating the teaching of Ibn ‘Arabi and his influence upon Chinese Islam.

\footnote{178}{It should be noted that often essays that are written on Ibn ‘Arabi are based on just one chapter or one written work of Ibn ‘Arabi. An undisputed contribution by Chittick is his effort to translate many passages of Ibn ‘Arabi’s works into English. His thematic study of Ibn ‘Arabi is often based on the overall writings of Ibn ‘Arabi.}
\footnote{179}{Jin Yijiu, ‘Sufism and Scripture Hall Education in China 蘇非派與中國經堂教育,’ Studies in World Religions (1994) 66.}
\footnote{181}{Jin, Chinese Islam, 283-324.}
\footnote{182}{Wang Junrong 王俊榮, The Unity of Heaven and Man, the Return of Material Beings to Reality: Exploring the Ontology of Ibn al-‘Arabi (Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2006), 73-121.}
(2) The Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition: the Concept of the Perfect Man and Muhammadan Reality

Before Ibn ‘Arabi, the teaching of Muhammad as light, the Muhammadan reality and its complement concept of the perfect man were a common theme among the Sufis. An Iraqi Sufi, Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896) interpreted Sura 33:46, 53:13-14. His commentary reads as follows:

That is, in the beginning when God, Gloried and Exalted is He, created him as a light within a column of light, a million years before creation, with the essential characteristics of faith, in a witnessing of the unseen within the unseen. He stood before Him in servanthood, by the lote tree of the Ultimate Boundary (53:14), this being a tree at which the knowledge of every person reaches its limit.¹⁸³

Muhammad belonged to the sphere of light which pre-existed the creation of the world.¹⁸⁴ God created Adam from the light of Muhammad. Ibn ‘Arabi is largely responsible for the central role of this light in later Sufism.¹⁸⁵

Also, Michel Chodkiewicz explains the distinction between the Muhammadan reality and the perfect man. The two terms

[ex]press different views of man, the first seeing him in terms of his primordiality and the second in terms of his finality. The kamal or perfection of the insan kamil [perfect man] should not be understood in a ‘moral’ sense (so as to correspond with the ‘heroic virtues’) but as meaning ‘fulfillment’ or ‘completion’. Properly speaking, this perfection is possessed only by Muhammad, the ultimate and total manifestation of the haqqa muhammadiyya [the reality of Muhammad]. Yet, on the other hand, it is equally the goal of all spiritual life and the very definition of walaya [sainthood]. Hence, the walaya of the wali [saint] can only be participation in the walaya of the Prophet.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Schimmel, And Muhammad, 127.
Muhammad was the manifested principle, the messenger was the manifesting principle and the divine name Allah was the principle. Not only did the prophet Muhammad reveal God, he also implemented the divine will in this world. He was active in divine self-disclosure and yet he was also the last prophet to appear in the flesh. While he might look like any other human person outwardly, he was also unique in humankind because ‘he carried the Divine Light, whose rays became increasingly visible as time passed.’

According to Chittick, Jami asserted three aspects of significance in the concept of the perfect man. Firstly, according to Jami, the ‘Name “Allah” is a unity in which was comprised all the divine Names. Therefore any heart which knows it knows all the Names. This is in contrast to the other Names, for the knowledge of not one of them entails the knowledge of the Name “Allah”.’ The manifestation of the name Allah was equivalent to the manifestation of the universe as a whole.

Secondly, the perfect man was the goal of creation. It was through the perfect man that God created the world. All other creatures depended upon him. According to Chittick, the implication is that through the perfect man, God sees unity in multiplicity. ‘In Himself He sees nothing but Unity, and in the world nothing but multiplicity. But in man Unity and multiplicity are combined in such a way that all of God’s Attributes are manifested within one unitary locus of theophany in the midst of the plurality of the world.’

Finally, the perfect man was God’s vicegerent. He was the vicegerent of “Allah” and of no other names of God. The perfect man contained the principles of all creatures. All that the world or the macrocosm contained, he or the microcosm also contained. The perfect man

190 William Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jami,’ *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979) 143.
was the intermediate or barzahkh between God and the world.\textsuperscript{192} Not only did he maintain the existence of the world, he also possessed the attributes of both. Chittick asserts that the perfect man is an isthmus who comprises the attributes of lordship and servanthood. ‘Through his attribute of lordship — i.e. his divine nature — he takes from God what the creatures demand. And through his attribute of servanthood he is able to establish contact with the other creatures and to see that they receive what they need from God.’\textsuperscript{193}

Furthermore, David Thomas succinctly avers that the prophet Muhammad is firstly ‘the channel of moral and ethical truth that enabled humans to live constructively and harmoniously together’.\textsuperscript{194} Secondly, Muhammad pre-eminently came to be seen as a source of wisdom that not only extended and supplemented the Qur’an, as for the legalists, or acted as a channel of revelation, but embodied esoteric wisdom in his very self, to the extent that knowledge of his ways and reflection upon his teachings opened possibilities of explaining the nature of reality and gaining proximity to God.\textsuperscript{195}

The concept of the perfect man has taken on a multi-faceted significance in Ibn ‘Arabi and his tradition.\textsuperscript{196} For Sufis, the prophet Muhammad who has embodied the concept has become the supreme example and channel of Sufi spirituality in gaining proximity to God.

For Liu Zhi, the prophet Muhammad embodied the Confucian idea of self-realization and transformation. Liu Zhi contextualized the perfect man of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition as the

\textsuperscript{192} Little, ‘Al-Insan al-Kamil’, 49.
\textsuperscript{195} Thomas, ‘Receiving and Acquiring,’ 43.
\textsuperscript{196} Chittick argues that the ‘underlying theme of Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings is not, as many would have it, wahdat al-wujud, “the Oneness of Being,” but rather the achievement of human perfection.’ That is, the overarching principle of Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings should be the concept of the Perfect Man. William Chittick, Ibn ‘Arabi: Heir to the Prophets (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005) 49-50. Alexander Knysh admits that since Ibn ‘Arabi’s writing has an open-ended and elusive discursive strategy, it is difficult to identify one single motif. Only several constantly reemerging motifs can be identified by experienced readers. ‘Paradoxically, the discursive windows through which Ibn ‘Arabi sought to highlight the various facets of his monistic worldview leave their peculiar imprint on the ideas and experiences Ibn ‘Arabi endeavours to convey.’ Knysh, Islamic Mysticism, 167.
Utmost Sage. It is in the final part of his trilogy, namely *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* that the superiority of the Utmost Sage is expounded by using carefully selected and edited narratives and discourses.

(3) The Twentieth Century Understanding of Sufi Thought and Islamic Knowledge

In 1975, Annemarie Schimmel wrote a substantial work on the mystical dimensions of Islam.\(^{197}\) Her work focused on some features of Sufism, both historically and phenomenologically. While her work was scholarly, it did not intentionally relate theory to practice, doctrine to religious rites and orthodoxy to orthopraxis. In the present work the Sufi work of W. Chittick is to be discussed because he approaches Sufi thought from doctrinal and metaphysical perspectives. He also integrates theory with practice. Such an approach enables one to connect the doctrine of the unity of existence with Sufi spirituality.

Chittick asserts that Islam is a religion that teaches people how to understand the world and themselves. Moreover, Islam also teaches people how to transform themselves so that they may come into harmony with the ground of all being.\(^{198}\) While a Sufi supports a theologian’s claim that the basis of faith must be the Qur’an and *Hadith*, he also asserts that a true understanding of the Qur’an is achieved by unveiling. Without unveiling, the view of the theologian is purely academic or based on rational explanation. Chittick gives the following succinct summary:

The theologians held that man must believe in the Koran, then follow its directives. The Sufis said that before one can attain personal and direct understanding of the Divine Truth through unveiling, he must ‘polish the mirror of the heart’, which meant both practising the *Shari‘ah* or exoteric Law and following the *Tariqah* or spiritual Way. As for the philosophers, they did not find it necessary to speak of practice in their purely philosophical expositions, although they often did in other works.\(^{199}\)

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\(^{199}\) Chittick, ‘Mysticism versus Philosophy,’ 90.
Sajjad Rizvi asserts that what Ibn ‘Arabi ‘proposed most explicitly was a Gnostic practice that would lead the seeker to an experience of the Truth … there is little sense of a philosophical system or method in his articulation either of rational knowledge or mystical experience.’ Thus, the unity of existence is a metaphysical and intellectual principle to assist the seeker to tread the spiritual path. Both Ibn ‘Arabi and his well-known disciple Qunawi hardly used the term unity of existence but their Sufi vision of reality and knowledge was clear enough. It is the later followers and supporters of Ibn ‘Arabi who developed and established the more mature and sophisticated concept of the unity of existence. The effort of these transmitters of the Ibn ‘Arabi school, namely Farghani, Jami, Nasafi and others did not merely regurgitate Ibn ‘Arabi’s teaching but interpreted and articulated the concept as a pre-modern Islamic theosophy. In addition, they contextualized it to their audiences according to their cultural and ideological settings.

Chittick asserts that Sufi spirituality is concerned primarily with right unveiling. It is right unveiling from the core of the Sufi’s heart and concerns the perfection of the innermost self. Right unveiling begins from the heart which is the centre of intelligence, consciousness and self-awareness and radiates forth to the whole self. It determines the Sufi’s thought and activity. The goal of the Sufis is inner awareness of the reality of things and they respond spontaneously before mental articulation to do the most wonderful thing

in the depths of their souls. Thus, Sufis strive towards aesthetic and spiritual perfection. Chittick explains the theoretical and practical levels of Sufi spirituality.

In order to reach human perfection, it is not enough to imitate others and follow religion blindly (taqlid). Rather, one must achieve a total awareness of the principles and the spirit that animate the religion, or, as the Sufis express it, one must realize the Reality itself (tahaqqua). On the theoretical level, the Shahadah\textsuperscript{204} becomes a concrete expression of the absolute reality of God, a sword that cuts away the illusory from the Real. On the practical level, the guidelines set down by the Sharia perform the same function, but here Sufis do not accept these guidelines “because they must,” but because of their awareness that these play a basic role in allowing human beings to act in accordance with revealed truth and avoid error.\textsuperscript{205}

The Sufi spirituality emphasizes right thinking, right doing and above all right unveiling which is achieved by following the Sufi mystical path. Furthermore, the concept of bearing witness (Shahadah) with its realization of the absolute reality of God is closely linked and rooted in Ibn ‘Arabi’s tradition of the unity of existence.

This present work has found Chittick’s understanding of Sufi spirituality most helpful in interpreting Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought in his writings. Sufi thought in Liu Zhi’s works aims firstly to understand the Islamic texts better (right thinking). Secondly, rules and proprieties of Islam are carried out properly in compliance with shari’a and yet expressed primarily in Confucian terms (right doing). Finally, right unveiling is understood as the return to the Real Ruler with great emphasis on the role of the prophet Muhammad who can empower Muslims in their right thinking and doing. Also, Liu Zhi consistently emphasized the important role of the heart in the return to the Real Ruler.

\textsuperscript{204} Shahadah means the testimony of faith or to bear witness. This testifies that firstly there is no god but God and secondly, Muhammad is his messenger. It is a key to understanding the Islamic perspectives in all domains of faith.

\textsuperscript{205} Chittick, Sufism, 15.
2.3.4 Liu Zhi’s Sufi Spirituality as Contextualized Neo-Confucian Wisdom

(1) Neo-Confucianism and Zhu Xi (1130-1200)

The philosophical thought in 17th-century China approved by the imperial court was that of Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200) and his School of Principle. Zhu Xi was a consummate scholar and superbly brought to completion the ideas of many previous Confucian thinkers. He also edited and annotated essential Confucian texts, namely the Analects of Confucius. He worked out a lasting renewal of the Confucian project and launched thirteenth-century China into Neo-Confucianism. Zhu Xi’s thought and his influence gradually diminished with the rise of Chinese scholars like Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) who rejected both the Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming schools of Neo-Confucianism. In the early Qing dynasty, Wang Fuzhi attacked both principle (Zhu Xi) and mind (Wang Yangming) schools and asserted that these schools were mainly responsible for the downfall of the Ming dynasty into the hands of the Manchu invaders.

Zhu Xi’s religious, cosmological and ethical teachings require exposition because many of Liu Zhi’s modern interpreters have argued that Liu’s teachings resonated with Zhu Xi’s writings. Interpreters also have asserted that Liu Zhi’s works borrowed heavily from Neo-Confucianism in general and Zhu Xi in particular. The key concepts of Zhu Xi’s teachings that bear religious connotations are *taiji* (the Great Ultimate), *li* (principle) and *qi* (matter-energy or energizing field). Although it is still debatable whether Zhu Xi is a theist, this thesis asserts that he is not within the boundary of the monotheistic Semitic faiths. Zhu Xi’s concept of the Great Ultimate was indebted to Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) who had written

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206 Chan Wing-Tsit asserted that Zhu Xi was able to give Neo-Confucianism a new character and a new completion. Wing-Tsit Chan, *Chu His: Life and Thought* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987) 104.


208 Under the concept of God’s creativity, John Berthrong takes the cue from Zhu Xi’s thoughts to defend the object-event creative view of A. N. Whitehead and against Richard Neville’s *creatio ex nihilo* view of God. See John Berthrong, *Concerning Creativity: A Comparison of Whitehead, Neville, and Chu Hsi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).
and explained the diagram of the Great Ultimate or Infinite. Zhou supplied Zhu Xi with ideas, concepts, philosophical vocabulary and metaphysical formulations. As noted by the modern Chinese scholar Julia Ching, the ‘concept of the Great Ultimate (T’ai-chi [Taiji]) marks the climax of Chu’s [Zhu Xi] philosophical system … The concept became famous especially with his own contributions, which transformed its meaning by relating it to li and ch’i [qi matter energy].

209 For a brief introduction to his life and thought, see Liang Shaohui, A Critical Biography of Zhou Dunyi (Nanjiang: Nanjing University Press, 1994).

Zhou Dunyi expounded the concept of Ultimate Non-being or Infinite in his diagram above, namely, the ‘Diagram of the Limitless or Infinite.’\textsuperscript{211} The diagram is to be interpreted from top to bottom. This diagram consists of a series of circles descending. The Ultimate Non-being transforms downward into interlocking, semicircular areas of light and darkness. This

\textsuperscript{211} This is also known as the diagram of Non Ultimate (\textit{Wuji Tu} 無極圖). The alleged source of this diagram was from the Daoist hermit Chen Tuan (c. 906 – c. 989).
is *Yin* (quiescence) and *Yang* (movement). The movement and quiescence of the two bipolar sides further transmit downward to a network of five small circles, identified by water, fire, metal, wood and the centre as earth. Beneath this network is the creation of male and female and then at the bottom of the diagram is the production and transformation of all things.²¹² Zhou Dunyi did not explain the diagram as to how and why the Great Ultimate effused in such a manner.

Prior to the Great Ultimate, Zhu Xi posits the Ultimate of Nonbeing *Wuji*²¹³ which is explicated as ‘the operations of Heaven have neither sound nor smell’. The Ultimate of Nonbeing has neither physical form nor spatial restriction. It exists prior to creation and yet is not absent after the creation of all things. It is omniscient without any smell or sound. The subtlety of Zhu Xi as compared with his source ‘the Diagram of the Infinite’ was noted by a well-known Neo-Confucian scholar, Chan Wing-tsit:

He [Zhu Xi] also said, ‘What is called ‘Wu-chi erh T’ai-chi’ [Great Ultimate as the ultimate non-being] does not mean that on top of the Great Ultimate there is separately an Ultimate of Nonbeing. It merely says that the Great Ultimate is not a thing, as in the saying, ‘The operations of Heaven have neither sound nor smell.’ Again, he said, ‘What is called wu-chi [ultimate of nonbeing] is to bring out the wonder of its being soundless and odorless.’²¹⁴

Thus, the Great Ultimate is the first principle which is both a creative principle as well as an explanatory principle that leads to an ordering of creation. Julia Ching helpfully explains that

[B]y analogy, we might say the Great Ultimate is like God or necessary being in Thomas Aquinas’s system, that which subsists, in and of itself, without depending on others, while all other exists, in and of the Great Ultimate. But the analogy is imperfect, as the Great Ultimate is, on another level, immanent

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²¹³ In Chinese 無極
as well as transcendent. It is above all things and yet present in all things. It is above motion and rest and yet involved in a cyclical cosmic process. The dialectic goes on.215

Zhu took insight from Zhou’s explanation and elaborated that the Great Ultimate existed as opposed to others and in dialectical relationship with the li (principle) and qi (matter or vital energy). The basic dynamic is that there is no mixing and yet no separation of li principle and qi matter energy in that they are mutually transcendent and interpenetrated without fusion or reduction. While li and qi are dialectically related, Zhu Xi gives ontological and logical priority to li over qi in his philosophy.216

This is a significant emphasis by Zhu. That is, li as a metaphysical concept serves as an organizing principle while qi serves as an actualizing principle. Chan Wing-Tsit expounds Zhu Xi’s understanding and asserts that while li and qi are never separated, ‘Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi] repeatedly said that there must be the principle [li] of thing before that thing can come into being.’217 For Zhu Xi, the Great Ultimate is the most perfect li which may be defined as the excellent and supremely good normative principle (tao-li).218

What is the relationship between the Great Ultimate and li? While the summation of the li of the universe as a whole is the Great Ultimate, the Great Ultimate is also immanent in the individual examples of each category of things. Zhu Xi said, ‘with regard to heaven and earth in general, the Great Ultimate is in heaven and earth. And with regard to the myriad things in particular, the Great Ultimate is in every one of them too.’219 In addition to cosmogony, the Great Ultimate also relates to humanity.

J. Ching explains concisely the subtle relationship between li and the Great Ultimate in terms of human cultivation. ‘I think it may be useful to see the immanent Great Ultimate as the fullness of li in the nature of sages. In other words, the identity between the Great

215 Ching, Religious Thought, 52.
216 Ching, Religious Thought, 41.
218 Ching, Religious Thought, 44.
219 Fung, Short History, 488.
Ultimate and *li* in the nature of sages is not true of ordinary humans. It can, however, be made so by a process of cultivation. Therefore, its manifestation is also in terms of degrees, depending on the person’s nearness to sagehood.¹²²⁰ That is to say, there is one principle with many manifestations. This immanence appears latent in many people but can be manifested and actualized by self-cultivation.

In almost all recent studies of Liu Zhi, especially the contributions by the Chinese scholars, it has been argued that Neo-Confucianism in general and Zhu Xi in particular have influenced Liu Zhi. Later, this thesis will argue that while this Neo-Confucian background is important, Liu Zhi’s Islamic work does not Confucianize or sinicize his Islamic message.

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(2) *The Relationship between Religion, Chinese Culture and Self-Cultivation*

Confucianism and Buddhism are sometimes regarded as philosophical systems rather than religions. However, Christianity and Islam have always been regarded as religions. How is Chinese religion defined? It is often defined in broad and inclusive terms. Yao and Zhao define Chinese religion as referring ‘to religious ideas, belief and practices of the Chinese people, which developed in history, are continually pursued and practised in today’s personal and communal life, and have therefore become an important part of the Chinese way of life.’¹²²¹ Like many other Chinese scholars, Yao and Zhao assert that ‘religion is part of culture and must be understood in its cultural context. Many Chinese beliefs and practices are phenomenologically meaningful only in relation to their cultural background and expectation.’¹²²² For Yao and Zhao, there is no need for a clear distinction between religious and cultural studies. ‘In fact religion is part of culture, and culture is itself consolidated through religion … place Chinese religion in its cultural contexts, and examine Chinese culture against its religious orientations.’¹²²³ Thus, cultural religion means

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¹²²¹ Yao and Zhao, *Chinese Religion*, ix.
¹²²² Yao and Zhao, *Chinese Religion*, x.
¹²²³ Yao and Zhao, *Chinese Religion*, 22.
a religious system that is ‘deeply woven into the broad fabric of individual, family and social life, and is an integral part of Chinese culture.’ Religious culture means that ‘religion has influenced all aspects of daily life such as food, clothing, shelter, travel, marriage, birth, death and life crises. Historiography and philosophy are under the influence of religious interpretation.’ It should be noted that Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization is to interpret Islamic spirituality creatively as a legitimate Chinese cultural religion because it fully complies with the spirit of Neo-Confucian culture and yet without any compromise with the basic tenets of Islamic belief.

The Three Teachings, namely Neo-Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, have had far reaching practical implications in Chinese culture for many centuries. Paracka Jr. gives a simple diagram of the inter-related or triangulating relationships between the three philosophical systems. The diagram below also shows moral concerns and emphases of each of the Three Teachings.

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224 Yao and Zhao, Chinese Religion, 79.
225 Yao and Zhao, Chinese Religion, 83.
Generally speaking, ‘Daoism focuses on living in harmony with the natural rhythms, flows and forces of life. Through careful observation, Daoists seek balance among alternating complementary and contrasting ideas such as night and day, masculine and feminine, yin
and yang.' For practising Daoists, longevity is about immortality or avoidance of the death-event. It ‘was to attain an exalted state of existence through diligent cultivation of the world’s deeper realities. Such attainments were generally predicated upon a process of personal purification and an enhanced awareness of reality.’ ‘Buddhism focuses on how ignorance, greed and craving produce suffering in an interdependent world. It calls for compassion and understanding in order to build up karma, which may eventually lead to an end to one’s participation in the cycle of rebirth and suffering.'

On a practical level, Neo-Confucianism focuses on harmonious relationships among people, in the state and even with the environment. Social order reinforced by rites and merits is understood to be the vital pre-requisite for peace and prosperity. Both Daoism and Buddhism encourage self-cultivation and the exemplar of moral cultivation is known as the perfect man and holy sage respectively.

(3) Sufi Spirituality as Contextualized Neo-Confucian Wisdom

Neo-Confucian self-realization is occasionally known as practical wisdom. Wisdom and religion are closely related terms, but they do not mean the same thing. Religion is a loaded word often associated with powerful, greedy totalitarian regimes; sterile observance of rigid rules; and obsolete creeds filled with archaic terms that lack contemporary relevance. While wisdom may sound mystical to some, it is a word associated with the practice of human self-cultivation and transformation according to Confucian thought. As Kirill Thompson puts it, Confucius understood wisdom to be knowledge of the actual state of affairs. Thus, the wise person is able to penetrate obscurity and change to comprehend the hidden, true state of affairs. Thompson asserts that while Zhu Xi’s notions of knowledge and wisdom

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227 Paracka Jr, ‘China’s Three Teachings,’ 75.
229 Buddhism adopts the theory of reincarnation. ‘The deeds or karma of each sentient being in successive past existences determine what he is to be in existences still to come.’ Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 237.
230 Paracka Jr, ‘China’s Three Teachings,’ 75.
231 Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 231-36.
were to inform life practice, Zhu’s purpose in seeking and exercising wisdom was ‘to cultivate a nuanced, holistic, responsive sensitivity to the immanent patterns of change and transformation.’

Yao Xinzhong also asserts that Confucian wisdom is a ‘progress from “what is below” to “what is above” and the interrelationship between knowing human nature, human destiny, and heaven . . . “higher realms” that are initially beyond the reach of ordinary people but can be fully realized in their effort to know, understand, and appreciate.’ Furthermore, after exploring the concept of Yi (righteousness) in Confucius’s Analects, Yu Jiyuan concludes that

While appropriateness [righteousness] is about practical affairs, wisdom seems to be both theoretical and practical. It is theoretical because it is knowledge of the ming [destiny] of heaven, the ontological premise of the good life; it is practical because at A. 12:22 . . . wisdom is to “know one’s fellow human beings” . . . Wisdom is about what is appropriate [righteous] in human affairs . . . to have wisdom is to know the social rites and their ontological grounds, while appropriateness [righteousness] is more closely associated with the agent’s choosing and determining.

Clearly, wisdom in Neo-Confucian contexts has a minimal religious connotation but an extensive ethical-moral character. It can be acquired by practice and becomes a habitual attitude. Liu Zhi creatively contextualized Islamic proprieties as Neo-Confucian wisdom. The Qing emperor was convinced that Islam, like Buddhism and Daoism, had made contributions to the life of people in his country. So, Liu Zhi’s Islam did not alienate itself from the imperial ruler.

Liu Zhi’s task of contextualization was not easy because he argued that one could be both a Muslim and a Chinese under an increasingly oppressive Qing imperial rule. On the one hand, he distinguished Islam and the Chinese culture by stating that Islam belonged to the wisdom of the west, founded by a western sage, the

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235 Liu Zhi clearly taught that civilians and court officials should obey the imperial rule and be faithful to the emperor. The emperor should seek the well-being of the citizens because they are the basic units of the country. Liu Zhi 劉智, The Rules and Proprieties of Islam (Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books House 天津古籍出版社, 1988) 130-34.
prophet Muhammad who received direct revelation from God. Thus, he separated Islam as a religion from Chinese social culture. On the other hand, he argued that Islamic belief and Chinese socio-religious culture were compatible.\textsuperscript{236} Thus, Islam witnessed to the richness of Chinese cultural traditions, especially self-realization and transformation. That is to say, the cultural religion of Islam as contextualized by Liu Zhi in the form of Confucian wisdom has enriched Neo-Confucianism into a multi-ethnic tradition.

Liu Zhi encouraged Muslims to be faithful witnesses of their faith and obedient to imperial rulers in their civil duty. They practised their Islamic faith in the midst of Han communities. They should express their Islamic faith in both Islamic and Chinese communities. Liu Zhi rejected totally the mentality of ‘us vs. them’. In addition, he also emphasized Sufi spirituality and taught Muslims to seek Sufi masters and follow the Sufi path. Sufi thought revitalized the faith of the individual beyond mere ritualistic observation of the proprieties of Islam. The strategy of Liu Zhi’s contextualization is ultimately to raise the legitimacy of Islam as a cultural religion in China in continuation with the Neo-Confucian tradition.

\textbf{2.4 Summary and Conclusion}

This chapter provides the contexts in which Liu Zhi’s works can be better understood. He contextualized his Islamic message by triangulating the text, Chinese culture and wisdom. This means that Liu Zhi took the revealed texts and interpreted them in Neo-Confucian terms so that Hui Muslims would understand them meaningfully in their context. From that existential context, he encouraged all Hui Muslims to continue to live in the \textit{dao} of Muhammad and eventually ascend or return to where the Real Ruler wants them in terms of Neo-Confucian wisdom. The table below provides a pointer to the following chapters in order to demonstrate the contextualization of Liu Zhi.

\begin{table}[h]
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\textsuperscript{236} Any conflict between Islamic and traditional Neo-Confucian teachings is due to deviations and cults within Neo-Confucianism. Appendix \textit{III.ii}.\[\]

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The spread of Islam in the history of China is possibly due to a dynamic process of cultural, commercial, political, philosophical and religious factors. There is ample historical evidence to show that the 17th-18th century was a period of intense Islamic activity in China. This particular era was a period of vigorous Islamic activity of teaching, writings and translation. The leadership of some ulama determined to transmit the Islamic traditions which they had received. This chapter has examined the historical and religious context of Liu Zhi. He faced political, philosophical and religious challenges. His teachings and writings have brought forth the growth of Islam and had long-lasting effects in later generations.

This chapter of Liu Zhi’s contexts has provided several pointers for the arguments in the following chapters:

1.0 In the concept of the unity of existence, Liu Zhi’s interpretation and contextualization
of Islam has been aided by Daoism’s oneness of reality and Neo-Confucianism’s combination of *Yin/Yang* thought and the concept of Great Ultimate. Several previous studies have asserted Liu Zhi’s contextualization is eclectic. However, this present work aims to show that Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence is primarily influenced by Neo-Confucian and secondarily Daoist influence.

2.0 In the concept of Sufi thought, Liu Zhi’s exposition of *shari‘a*-minded Sufism is to be proposed as right understanding, right thinking and right unveiling. Previous works have asserted that Liu Zhi’s thoughts are influenced by Sufism. This present work is to point out that his Islamic rules and proprieties are understood as Sufi spirituality in terms of primarily Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and secondarily a Buddhist escape from impermanence and a Daoist exalted state of existence.

3.0 The role of the prophet Muhammad is vitally important for Muslims to return to the Real Ruler. Previous studies of Liu Zhi have said little about the role of the prophet Muhammad in Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought. The role of the prophet is understood in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and is contextualized as the Utmost Sage of the Neo-Confucian tradition.
Chapter Three: An Examination of Liu Zhi’s Writings

This chapter provides an overview of the major and some minor works of Liu Zhi. The second part of this chapter introduces the contemporary discussion of Liu Zhi’s works in Chinese and English. Finally, a discussion will be provided of contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi’s contextualization.

3.1 Liu Zhi’s Trilogy: a Brief Overview

Jin asserts that the majority of Liu Zhi’s writing is expositional and commentary work rather than translated work.\(^{237}\) Liu Zhi used Arabic or Persian source materials available in his time. Then, he translated these source materials into Chinese and explained them. He also composed Islamic poems in Chinese and tracts for easier memorization. While he wrote, he freely used and selectively edited his source materials. The literary structure and topic divisions were Liu Zhi’s own creation. In addition, his commentary on each topic was his own exposition. More precisely, then, Liu Zhi’s work should be described as a fairly free exposition of or commentary of selected Islamic traditions in China at the time of his writing. Undoubtedly, Liu Zhi’s trilogy is by far the most significant. His trilogy is listed as follows:

- *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*\(^{238}\) and
- *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*\(^{239}\)

Liu Zhi explained the close relationship between his three books. *The Nature and Principle in Islam* explains the nature and principle of the Islamic *dao* i.e. the concept of God, the divine disclosure and the Islamic worldview. The *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* explains

\(^{237}\) Jin, *Chinese Islam*, 16-17.
\(^{238}\) Liu Zhi, *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* (Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books House 天津古籍出版社, 1988). The first five chapters of this work have been translated into English in Appendix IV
\(^{239}\) Liu Zhi, *The True Record of Utmost Sage of Islam* (Beijing, China Islamic Association, 1984). Selected sections of this work have been translated into English in Appendix II.
the meaning of Islamic rituals. *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* explains the origin of Islam. He emphasized that these three works should actually constitute one whole grand meta-concept of Chinese Islam.

Other works include

- **Sufi works:** *the Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* and *An Explanation of the Arabic Alphabets*
- **Translated work:** *Displaying the Concealment of the True Realm*

His writings on the popular level are as follows:

- **The Three-character Classic** similar to *The Nature and Principle in Islam* in content but shorter and easier to read
- **The Explanation of the Five Endeavours** similar to *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* in content but shorter and easier to read

Liu Zhi’s trilogy has often been re-printed with increasing prefaces by well known supporters/admirers throughout the past several centuries. The latest printing is published in modern and simplified Chinese for the contemporary readers. The more popular shorter works of Liu Zhi are often accessible from the internet.

### 3.1.1 The Nature and Principle in Islam

*The Nature and Principle in Islam*[^240] is the first of the trilogy by Liu Zhi. He stated that the aim of this work was to show the whole world the evidence of the way in its totality.[^241] Literally, the way is the *dao*. Liu Zhi discussed the metaphysical concept of the *dao* of Chinese Islam. The work is broadly divided into two sections. The first section has just one

[^240]: In Chinese 天方性理. Murata has translated this work into English. Murata, Sage, 102-580.

[^241]: In Chinese 示天下以證道之全體也.
volume with five chapters and is known as the root classic. This comprises the solid and complicated concepts including the Great Ultimate, transformation of one into many, the innate and the acquired heaven and return to the Real One. The second section takes up the major bulk of the book. This section has five volumes. Each volume in the second section explains in detail each corresponding chapter in the first section. In total, sixty diagrams are added into the second section to aid the explanation. Readers are expected to examine the diagram while reading the text to assist their understanding.

The core teaching of the work is the multiplicity and unity of God. From this foundational concept, Liu Zhi expounded various doctrines of ontology, epistemology, cosmology and anthropology. Liu Zhi also briefly mentioned the uniqueness of the prophet Muhammad. Muhammad had a pre-creation metaphysical existence. He was the archetypal human example that all Chinese Muslims should follow. Liu Zhi’s contemporary, Wang Daiyu regarded Muhammad embracing ‘in unitary fashion all the realities and principles that give rise to the infinitely diverse universe. Thus the Muhammadan Reality is God inasmuch as human beings are created in his image.’ This work has been extensively studied and many essays in journals and a few book-length studies have been published in both English and Chinese. Murata also gives a reliable and full English-Chinese translation of the first five volumes or the root classic which is the foundational material of this work.

3.1.2 The Rules and Proprieties of Islam

The second work in the trilogy is *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* that teaches the rationale and various religious practices of Islam. It consists of 20 volumes. The first 4 volumes recapitulate the Islamic philosophy including the concept of God, knowing God

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242 This is the foundational section of the whole work and known as the ‘root classic’ (*Benjing* 本經). The first chapter summarizes the whole root classic. The subsequent section serves to expound the meaning of the root classic. Murata, *Sage*, 82-84.
243 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 75-76.
244 Murata, *Sage*, 93-152.
and Islamic worldview. These few chapters recapitulate the main teaching of root classic in *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. The fifth to the tenth volumes give an account of the five meritorious works or endeavours. The rest of the book is concerned with religious and ethical practices and rites. This book was selected and collected into the *Annotated General Catalogue of the Compendium of the Four Treasuries, Authorized by the Emperor*. Such inclusion into the imperial catalogue has raised Liu Zhi’s literary work to national status beyond the ethnic status of the *Han Kitab*. It is the only work in the *Han Kitab* to have achieved such imperial status. The first five volumes or more commonly known chapters will be translated and discussed in greater detail in the sixth chapter of this present study.

### 3.1.3 The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam

The third and last major work is *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* in which Liu Zhi gave a fairly comprehensive account of the life history of the prophet Muhammad. Liu Zhi’s purpose in writing is to explain the profound origins of Islam and its teaching. Liu Zhi’s portrayal of the prophet came close to divinizing the prophet. This biographical work of Muhammad has been the most popular work by Liu Zhi. These three works form the trilogy and can be regarded as the *magnum opus* of his writings. *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* was translated into English in the early 20th century. In the first half of the twentieth century, the English version was translated into Russian and French. In 1941, the Chinese version was translated into Japanese.

In Isaac Mason’s edited translation of Liu Zhi’s *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*, Mason translated only sixteen volumes. He followed closely the original Chinese text in the

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247 Liu, Zhi 劉智, *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* 天方至聖實錄 (Beijing, China Islamic Association, 1984). Selected texts of this work have been translated into English in Appendix II
248 Both S. Murata and D. Leslie have discussed briefly the source of this work. Leslie asserts that the original work is the fourteenth-century Persian work, *Tarjama-yi mawlud-i Mustafa* by ‘Afīf ibn Muhammad Kaziruni. Murata says that Liu Zhi’s work ‘retells many of the stories in ‘Afīf’s work and follows the same general order, he also condenses the text drastically and adds material from other sources.’ Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 34.
beginning. By the seventh volume, he became increasingly selective because he found the account tedious and ‘omitted somewhat irrelevant portions to keep the book within moderate limits.’

A typical version of *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* in traditional Chinese contains sixteen volumes with four additional volumes which are really appendices. In 1984, a simplified Chinese version was printed. It also has twenty volumes. The preface gives an account of different ways of presenting the prophet, namely portraits, books and others. The first volume narrates the ancestral records of Muhammad, namely fifty generations in total from Adam the first human being to the prophet Muhammad. The second volume explains the various traditions that Muhammad inherited from or belonged to, namely the tradition of human ancestry, nation, prophet and human nature. The third volume gives a concise summary of major events in the life of the prophet. These few introductory volumes are important because Liu Zhi put the prophet and Islam at the centre of human existence including history and religion. In addition, he could also claim legitimacy for Islam in the Chinese culture and orthodoxy in all other religions.

From the fourth volume to the sixteenth volume, Liu Zhi gave a fairly comprehensive record of the life of the prophet Muhammad from his birth to death. The seventeenth volume was originally written by Ma Zhu in accordance with the Chinese Sufi tradition. Liu Zhi’s comments keenly supported Ma’s understanding of the role of the prophet. The commentary is about the eulogizing of Muhammad and Liu Zhi added this extra volume to complete his account of the life and role of the prophet in Islam. The eighteenth volume gives a record of the appearance, worship, fasting and other aspects of the prophet’s life and his way of dealing with various human relationships. Extra information about the land of the origin of Islam is provided in the nineteenth volume.

While some Western scholars showed keen interest in this work in the first half of the twentieth century, recent research of Liu Zhi in both China and the West has paid little

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attention to this last work of Liu Zhi’s trilogy. In 1995, a paraphrased version was printed in modern simplified Chinese in China. Interestingly, this latest version deletes all the beginning prefaces, three introductory volumes and additional four volumes of appendices at the end and solely narrates the life history of the utmost sage according to Liu Zhi.

3.2 Other Works of Liu Zhi: An Overview

3.2.1 The Explanation of the Five Endeavours

This is not a long work, about 14,000 Chinese words. It is also known as The Book of Propriety: the Explanation of the Five Endeavours. It explains the five pillars of Islam in Neo-Confucian terms. It consists of 63 short chapters, equivalent to 63 years of the age of the prophet Muhammad. It is divided into three sections. The first seven chapters explicate the origin, basics and goals of the five endeavours. The second section covers from the eighth to the thirty-second chapter and explains the meanings and the regulations of such endeavours. The final section covers chapters from the thirty-third to sixty-third. It explains in details the meanings of endeavour from a religious and ethical perspective. The length of such chapters may vary from a short chapter under 20 Chinese words (for example, forty-third chapter) to the longest thirty-third chapter about 420 words. Each chapter begins with a chapter title. This work is a valuable, easy to read and concise summary of Liu Zhi’s understanding and contextualization of the proprieties of Islam in Neo-Confucian terms.

In the first section, the first chapter affirms that the origin of the five endeavours is based on the unity of existence and Islamic worldview in accordance with Liu Zhi’s received Islamic tradition. The goal of Muslims is to recover the mandate and return to the Real. Return is the end of the spiritual way. The second chapter covers more basic doctrines of the proprieties. This is followed consecutively by chapters of love and hatred, external sensory organs, inner virtues, nature of the heart and lastly the seventh chapter of uprightness and distortion.

250 禮書五功釋義.
The second section teaches the rite, method, meaning, principle and ultimate goal of the five endeavours, namely bearing witness (shahadah), ritual prayer (salat), fasting, alms tax and pilgrimage.

The last section provides more detailed meaning and explanation from religious and ethical perspectives. It should be noted that Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam covers similar teachings to the Explanation of the Five Endeavours. Compared to his Rules and Proprieties of Islam, three particular points are more explicit in the third section of this shorter work. Firstly, this third section emphasizes that the five endeavours are spiritual progress (in the fifty-eighth chapter) and yet this progress is ongoing in a cyclic manner and never coming to an end (in the forty-fourth chapter). Secondly, the benefits of the five endeavours (in the forty-second, forty-third, forty-fifth and fifty-first chapters) have both real physical and spiritual well being. Lastly in the fiftieth chapter, the Utmost Sage, namely the prophet Muhammad, is unique. His endeavours are most subtle and he can see through the principle and image of things.

3.2.2 Other Works: the Three-character Classic, Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm, Explanation of the Meaning of Arabic Alphabets and Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon

The teaching on the unity of existence and divine disclosure is clearly found in The Three-character Classic and Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm. Both of these works will be discussed in the next chapter.

There is no reason to doubt Liu Zhi’s competence to understand the Qur’an in Arabic. His knowledge of Arabic could be partly demonstrated by his work, An Explanation of the Meaning of Islamic Letters.\(^{251}\) It should be noted that this is not a grammatical introduction to the Arabic language. In this work, Liu Zhi explained the theological meaning of the

\(^{251}\) Liu Zhi. 天方字母解義 Explanation of the Meaning of Arabic Alphabets, N.P. (ca. 1704).
Arabic alphabets within the framework of his cosmogony as expounded in his *Nature and Principle in Islam* from the perspective of Sufi mysticism. With regard to the explanation of the Arabic alphabets, Liu Zhi acknowledged his indebtedness to previous sources, namely, *Subtle Analogy Classic* (妙喻經) and *Alphabet Classic* (字母經). According to Jin, Liu Zhi employed more Neo-Confucian concepts than any other Muslim literati.\(^{252}\) Jin asserts that Liu Zhi’s contemporary Xu Lan (藍煦) in his work *The Proper Meaning of Islam* 天方正學, also explained the meaning of the Arabic alphabets. While Liu Zhi was indebted to his sources, he differed from Xu Lan’s interpretation. Xu Lan affirmed that the dot of the Arabic alphabet was identical to the Real One. However, Liu Zhi asserted that the dot represented the substance (*ti* 體).\(^{253}\)

Liu Zhi explained that the dot was the origin of all Arabic alphabets. These alphabets come into existence by the disclosure of the dot. The process of disclosure is understood mystically in accordance with mystical Sufism.\(^{254}\) He argued that from each dot of the alphabet, emanated something similar to the self-disclosure of the Real Being. The shape of the alphabet was the beginning of the word. The word was the manifestation of both dot and shape. Thus, Liu Zhi argued that an essay was a multiple manifestation of words and the word was a multiple manifestation of both dot and shape of each alphabet.\(^{255}\) Jin Yijiu notes that for Liu Zhi, the Arabic word for Muhammad could be analyzed and deduced that he was the perfect man in the disclosure.\(^{256}\) This work clearly demonstrates Liu Zhi’s Sufi thoughts.

The other Sufi work is *The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon*. It will be fully translated into English and discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis.\(^{257}\) The poem is still very popular among Hui Muslims and easily accessible on the internet. While many

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\(^{257}\) The full English translation is found in Appendice I.
scholars are able to point out that *The Rules and Propieties of Islam* is quite Confucianized, only Jin briefly states that the *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* is very eclectic with frequent use of Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian terms.\(^{258}\)

3.3 Contemporary Scholarship on Liu Zhi’s Works and a Critical Assessment

3.3.1 An Overview

(1) *Works in English*

Before the critical assessment of contemporary scholarship, it is appropriate to give a historical survey of research by both English and Chinese scholars. The last few decades have witnessed intense scholarly study of 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\)-century Chinese Islam in general and Liu Zhi in particular. Certainly, the scholarly interest will continue throughout this century as China continues to seek political friendship and trading opportunities with the Western and especially Middle Eastern Arabic countries. However, the relationship between China and other countries a century ago was totally different. Owing to missionary endeavours at the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century, missionaries anticipated an open door opportunity to Muslims in China. To facilitate such Christian mission, Marshall Broomhall wrote a scholarly work on Islam in China.\(^ {259}\) In addition to a book-length work, other essays were published promoting a better understanding of the neglected people, Hui and Uyghurs and other Muslims in China. Isaac Mason wrote several important essays. Relevant to this thesis is his abridged translation of Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*.\(^ {260}\)

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Interest in Chinese Islam went through a quiet period from 1949, when the communists came to power, with the founding of the People Republic of China. Then, most of the research, translation and publication work of Chinese Islam continued outside the Peoples’ Republic of China, namely, in Taiwan, Australia, Japan and other Southeast Asian countries, Europe and America. In 1974, J.F. Ford’s historical study of Chinese Islam focused on the Chinese Muslim literati including Liu Zhi in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 1980s, fuelled by the open-door policy of the Chinese government, study of Chinese Islam in general and 17th-century Chinese Islam in particular resumed momentum. F. Cotter and L. Reichelt translated into English in the early 20th century Liu Zhi’s *The Three-character Classic*. Donald Leslie began his life-long work in the late 70s on historical study of Chinese Islam, often paying particular attention to 17th-century *Han Kitab* work by the Chinese Muslim literati. Most relevant to this thesis is his joint work with M. Wassel. They trace the various Islamic sources that Liu Zhi used and are able to identify most of the sources as Arabic and Persian. They conclude that Liu Zhi had diverse Islamic sources as follows:

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261 During this period, some classics of 17th-century Islamic literature in Chinese were published in more modern Chinese in Taiwan.
262 The Australian National University has made tremendous advances in historical Chinese studies of both Jews and Islam, under the leadership of Donald Leslie.
265 F.J.M. Cotter and L. Reichelt (trans.), ‘The Three Character Classic for Moslems by Liao Kai Lien of Nanking,’ *Moslem World* 8 (1981) 10-15. Liu Zhi’s original work was a tract which can be rhymed for easy and quick grasp of Islam. Each phrase of the tract consisted of three Chinese characters, covering a very broad spectrum of subjects from creation, the Koran, the five virtues and worship to the unique position of the prophet Muhammad. Liu Zhi’s work in Chinese was published in 1704.
1.0 Most of the texts in Arabic are standard Sunni Hanafite texts of law and ritual.

2.0 Many works in Persian are Sufi. The influence of the Naqshabandiyya and Kubrawiyya orders is significant.

3.0 There are more works in Persian than in Arabic. Most of the works are extant in the West.

4.0 Possibly, the sources are primarily from Central Asian Muslim sources and secondarily Persians and lastly original Arabic sources.267

A ground-breaking study on 17th and 18th-century Chinese Muslims comes from a Japanese scholar who studied Persian Islam, now teaching in America, Sachiko Murata. Her work on Wang Daiyu’s Great Learning of the Pure and Real and Liu Zhi’s Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm is the first ever English language book-length study and is recognized as the standard work for all subsequent historical study.268 She is undertaking more translation of Liu Zhi’s writings.269 Admittedly, she is the most able contemporary interpreter of Liu Zhi’s Islamic philosophy and Sufism in the West. Her most recent work on Liu Zhi is The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms.270 Another book-length study was published in America by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite in 2005.271 Benite admirably notes the cultural history of Islam within the educational network in late imperial China, paying attention to the Chinese Muslim literati and the Chinese Islamic school in Nanjing. A recent PhD thesis focusing solely on Liu Zhi was done by another American, James Frankel, in 2005.272 He has studied Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam. Later, Frankel published his research.273 In America, a recent thesis has been done

268 Murata, Chinese Gleams. All book reviewers conclude that Murata has provided the Western world with a foundational work in English on 17th-century study of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi.
270 Murata, Sage.
271 Benite, Dao of Muhammad.
272 Frankel, Liu Zhi’s Journey.
273 James D. Frankel, Rectifying God’s Name: Liu Zhi’s Confucian Translation of Monotheism and Islamic Law (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011).
on Wang Daiyu by Kristian Petersen. Apart from the Americans, a few works on Liu Zhi’s Chinese Islam come from Western Europe. One notable inclusion is the German, Barbara Stöcker-Parnian, who studied the Scripture Hall Education System in 17th to 19th-century China, paying brief attention to various Chinese Muslim literati including Liu Zhi. It should be noted that Europeans, Americans, Australian and Japanese have made great advances in academic scholarship in the fields of historical, cultural, ethnic, comparative social and social science study on the Hui and Uyghurs. However, these studies have only indirect relevance to this present research apart from the works of Murata and Frankel.

(2) Works in Chinese

While the scholarship of Islam in China in the West has made gradual progress throughout the last century, the scholarship of Islam in China by Chinese scholars in Chinese has made rapid progress especially during the last few decades. From the People’s Republic of China, the last twenty years have witnessed a flood of book-length studies and numerous essays on Islam in China and also on general comparative study between 17th- and 18th-century Islam and Neo-Confucianism in Chinese. Sadly, the Chinese scholars do not usually interact with the published works of Western scholars and there has been little sign of constructive dialogues. Only a few of Murata’s formerly published essays in English are translated and published in Chinese and have appeared in a few Chinese journals. This present work

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makes contributions by introducing recent scholarship of Liu Zhi’s works in Chinese into the English world.

The most substantial overview on Liu Zhi’s Islam is carried out by the prolific writer Jin Yijiu in Chinese. In 1999, he published a book-length study on Liu Zhi’s overall Islamic faith and practice, including an introductory study on Liu Zhi’s Sufi teaching. This is a classic and has become a foundational textbook for all subsequent study of Liu Zhi in Chinese. The second book-length study was written by Sha Zhongpin in 2004. He differs from Jin by narrowing his study to Liu Zhi’s doctrine of God and humanity. The third book-length study was done by Liang Xiangming and he wrote a general study on Liu Zhi’s Islamic teachings in 2004. His account of Liu Zhi follows Jin’s textbook but he is not as articulate and comprehensive as Jin Yijiu. While Jin focuses more on Liu Zhi’s philosophy, Liang focuses more on Liu Zhi’s Islamic rules and proprieties. While Jin has continued to publish works on Liu Zhi, both Sha and Liang have diversified their research interests into other aspects of Islam in China.

Apart from research works which focus on Liu Zhi alone, there have been other works that discuss several Muslim literati during that period of Islam in China. Two more book-length studies were published in 2006, namely by Sun Zhenyu and Liu Yihong. Sun’s work covers only three Muslim literati. They are the well-known Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi and Ma Dexin. While Sun’s work is descriptive of each Muslim literatus, Liu Yihong examines the dialogue between Neo-Confucianism and Islam in the work of each Muslim literatus. Liu’s work selects five Muslim literati. They are Wang Daiyu, Wu Zunqi (伍遵契, c.1598 – c.1698), Ma Zhu, Liu Zhi and Ma Dexin. Both studies have focused on some key thinkers during this important period of Islam in China.

Other recent and substantial book-length works related to this present study were carried out by Wang Junrong (王俊榮) in 2006 and the prolific Liu Zhi scholar Jin in 2012.

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277 Jin, Chinese Islam, 283-324.
278 Sha, Chinese Islam.
279 Liang Xiangming, A Study of Liu Zhi and His Islamic Thought (Lanzhou: Lanzhou University, 2004).
Wang’s work discusses the ontology of Ibn ‘Arabi. Her work makes occasional references to Sufi thought in China and the works of Jin on Liu Zhi. She also introduces briefly the dialogue on Ibn ‘Arabi’s ontology between the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and the Islam in China. The prolific writer Jin continues to make unique contribution to Islam in China by publishing a substantial work on Sufism in China, giving a very comprehensive account of its history and teaching including the development of the Scripture Hall Education System. He discusses various aspects of Chinese Sufism within the context of the Scripture Hall Education System and the emergent development of Han Kitab from the 16th-century China.

In addition, many academic essays in Chinese on Liu Zhi’s works have appeared in periodicals and journals in different parts of China during the last twenty years. The key scholars are Jin, Sha and Liang. In addition, other Chinese scholars have written on various aspects of Liu Zhi’s works. One can safely say that academic study on Liu Zhi’s works has come to a new stage of research. The recent secondary literature of the work of Liu Zhi in Chinese can be grouped under the study of sources, various influences, ontology and worldview, rites of Islam and the most popular topic, namely the relationship between Liu Zhi’s Islam and Neo-Confucianism. This may be broadly classified as follows:

- The identification of the Persian and Arabic sources of Liu Zhi’s works.
- Greek and other philosophical influences upon Liu Zhi.
- Comparison between Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism and Liu Zhi’s Neo-Confucianism.

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Comparison of the Islamic concepts used by Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi and of their use of Confucian terms.\textsuperscript{285}

Comparison of the ethical and moral teachings between Liu Zhi’s rites of Islam and Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and spiritual wisdom.\textsuperscript{286}

The Confucianization or sinicization\textsuperscript{287} of Liu Zhi’s Islam and Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{288}

It can be noted from the above brief historical account of the study of Liu Zhi that firstly, compared to the recent study of the works of Liu Zhi in English, the study of Liu Zhi in Chinese has covered a wider scope of interests. Secondly, the Chinese scholars have a keen interest in comparative study between Liu Zhi’s Islam and Chinese culture. Finally, little study has been made by scholars in both English and Chinese on Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought and in particular the role of the prophet Muhammad in Liu Zhi’s overall teaching. Part of the reason may be due to the fact that Liu Zhi’s True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam has not recently received much serious academic interest.

3.3.2 Discussion of Liu Zhi’s Works by Scholars in English and Chinese

(1) Works in English

The three main scholars of the works of Liu Zhi in English are Sachiko Murata, James Frankel and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. However, their research on Liu Zhi’s works is diverse and there is little room for debate between them in their published works. Benite’s work is a cultural study and he has not studied any of Liu Zhi’s works specifically in detail but he pays sufficient attention to Liu Zhi. Frankel studies specifically a part of Liu Zhi’s Rules


\textsuperscript{287} Sinicization of Chinese Muslims may be defined simply as ‘the acculturation, the penetration of Han culture into the Hui’s everyday life.’ Jean A. Berlie, Islam in China (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004) 8.


Zvi Ben-Dor Benite\textsuperscript{289} produces an admirable study based on a primary source\textsuperscript{290} on the cultural history of Muslims in late imperial China. His study is firstly to establish various networks, based on Islamic educational movements involving thousands of people between the mid-sixteenth and eighteenth century. Benite also links the network of Ma Zhu\textsuperscript{291} born in Yunnan (ca. 1620) with Liu Zhi’s father,\textsuperscript{292} Liu Sanjie who wrote the preface in Ma Zhu’s work.\textsuperscript{293} It should be noted that Liu Sanjie was a teacher in the Yuan school in Nanjing, led by Yuan Ruqi.\textsuperscript{294} Benite believes that the emerging and flourishing Hui Muslim literary work was not due to accommodation of Islam to Chinese culture. Rather, these scholars presented their scholarship out of the context of their educational networks. Thus, Benite argues that Chinese Muslim scholarship in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century must be studied and understood ‘against the backdrop of broad Chinese intellectual trends and within the context of their intellectual networks, educational system, lineage, and pedagogy…’\textsuperscript{295} He also insists that the Muslim school ‘has as its starting point a filiation in Islam but insists that Islam be viewed through the lenses of dominant Chinese cultural categories.’\textsuperscript{296} Benite’s work has established the significance of any 17\textsuperscript{th}-century Hui Muslim literary work within the well-established intellectual networks and education system. Secondly,

\textsuperscript{289} Benite, The Dao of Muhammad.
\textsuperscript{290} The primary source is known as the Register of Lineage and Transmission of Classical Learning. It is named by Benite as genealogy 經學系傳譜, authored by Zhao Can 趙燦 before 1697, consisting of 26 chapters and three appendices, covering 150 years between 1550 and 1700. It is a study of various networks with biographical details for some teachers and scholars. Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 30-31. Another source is Yuan Guozuo’s 袁國做 (b. 1717) bibliography, namely, An Introduction of Collected Islamic Books in 1780. See Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 155. Yuan also published Liu Zhi’s books. Yuan undertook the task of compiling a bibliography of Muslim Chinese books written up to his time. In addition, he also provided biographical information on these authors and the network, i.e. teachers and students or intellectual relationships. See, Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 27; 154-159. Both Liu Zhi and his father Sanjie belonged to the Yuan’s network.
\textsuperscript{291} Chinese name 馬注.
\textsuperscript{292} Chinese name 劉三傑.
\textsuperscript{293} Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 28.
\textsuperscript{294} Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 145.
\textsuperscript{295} Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 123. Certainly, the religious and political contexts should not be ignored.
\textsuperscript{296} Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 125.
Benite’s study establishes that the Chinese Muslims have understood themselves formally
to be simultaneously Chinese and Muslim, i.e. Chineseness is as central as Muslimness. For
Benite, then, one cannot assert that Liu Zhi’s works diminish the Muslimness of Chinese
Islam.

It should be noted that Benite has also studied the uniqueness of Muhammad in Liu Zhi’s
work.297 According to Benite, Liu did not just write a mere biography of the prophet. Benite
asserts the content and the purpose of Liu’s writing as

a characterization of the Islamic world, and Chinese historical documents pertaining to Chinese
Islam, … Liu Zhi’s perception of the Huihui people as a group who had contributed to the
stability and strength of several Chinese dynasties and as a group who in the Qing were to make
their most significant contribution to Chinese greatness through scholarship … By embracing
the very cultural categories that stood as markers of Confucian literati dominance, Chinese
Muslim intellectuals were able discursively to create a space for themselves and their tradition
at the very centre of Chinese society … Paradoxically, through the adoption of the specific
ingredients most essential to ‘Chineseness’ (the preservation of tradition, the study of Dao [real
being], the veneration of the sages, and loyalty to the state), Chinese Muslims solidified their
identity as Muslims as well.298

Thus, Benite argues that Liu’s effort is to affirm his readers’ Muslim identity and they
should seek to be fully Muslims as well as fully Chinese. They should also be loyal subjects
to serve the imperial Qing government though this government might not be tolerant to
Muslim practices. The principal argument in Benite’s work is sound and he puts forward
his case convincingly based on primary sources. To summarize, it is necessary to appreciate
the importance of the Scripture Hall Education System and the intellectual networks in the
18th century. Benite gives support to the idea that the Muslim literati, including Liu Zhi, did
not attempt to accommodate their Islamic works into Chinese cultures. Primarily, they
attempted to establish the Hui identity, namely as both Muslims and Chinese.

297 Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 208-213. Ben-Dor Benite examines Liu’s 天方至聖實錄 True Record of the
298 Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 210-13.
In 2005, James D. Frankel examined the metaphysics and contextualized theology of Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* and finished with a PhD thesis from Columbia University. Frankel argues that Liu Zhi and his contemporary Chinese Muslim literati in late imperial China created a viable expression of Chinese Islamic ideology and identity, forming a *Han Kitab* genre, or canon. Such a canon is widely acknowledged as authoritative by many Hui Muslims. Frankel agrees with the common consensus that Liu Zhi was ‘an epitomic figure in this history, contributed significantly to the refinement, legitimization and popularization of this aspect of Chinese Islamic culture, residing rather comfortably in the space where two civilizations meet.’ Frankel’s argument about Liu Zhi’s contextualization is nuanced and will be critically examined in the sixth chapter of this present work.

The best-known interpreter of Liu Zhi’s Islamic teaching in English is Sachiko Murata. She has made substantial contributions to Liu Zhi’s works in English for the last two decades. Murata would not agree that Liu Zhi’s works sinicize Islam into Chinese culture. While Liu Zhi’s doctrine belongs to the Sufi tradition, Murata notes that ‘clearly the Sufi works along with Neo-Confucianism that form the basis for Liu Chih’s explanation of Islamic teachings.’ Also, Murata argues that Liu Zhi’s *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* would not ‘overtly betray its Islamic origin.’ Furthermore, Murata explains that ‘Liu Chih’s constant mention of the term “Real” is perhaps the major indication of the book’s Islamic provenance. He speaks repeatedly of the “Real Being” (*chen-yu*), an expression that is not employed in the Chinese classics.’ When Murata examines Liu Zhi’s translation of 18th Gleam of *Lawa’ih*, she notes that Liu Zhi added a long paragraph to introduce the Gleam using Neo-Confucian terms. According to Murata, the addition is not mutual dialogue or integration of Chinese philosophy with Islamic philosophy. While

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301 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 121.
Liu Zhi added an extra introductory paragraph, he also removed Jami’s Greek philosophy in the 18th Gleam. Liu Zhi used Neo-Confucian terms like substance, function, principle and vital-energy to make clear to the Chinese readers very much the same philosophical scheme as written by Jami. That is, Liu Zhi’s translation is the dynamic equivalent meaning of the text achieved by using Neo-Confucian terms and concepts as a linguistic tool. In her most recent work, Murata competently demonstrates that in order to explicate Liu Zhi’s work thoroughly and its continuity with Middle Eastern medieval Islam, it is important to be informed of Liu Zhi’s Arabic and Persian source materials, in particular the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition.

It can be seen that works in English generally agree that Liu Zhi’s works do not deliberately adapt or sinicize the Islamic tradition that he received into Neo-Confucian culture. Liu Zhi’s contextualization is to use Confucian terms to communicate the Islamic message so that the Muslims may have the right understanding, thinking and unveiling in their return to the Real.

(2) Works in Chinese

Although works in English are not as plentiful and there is limited debate among scholars in their understanding of Liu Zhi, works in Chinese are more numerous and there is a spectrum of different opinions among scholars in China. One of the most common discussions is Liu Zhi’s contextualization. As this topic is relevant to the present study, it is singled out in our discussion here.

Many Chinese scholars advocate that Liu Zhi’s works have adapted Islam in China into a Confucianized Islam. The majority of scholars support the idea that Liu Zhi’s Islam is not the traditional Islam but an adapted or Confucianized version of Islam. Some scholars can put the argument in a nuanced manner and others may not be so articulate. One such attempt by using a sociological approach is not convincing. Na Qi asserts that when two

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304 Murata, Sage.
civilizations meet, namely Islam and Neo-Confucianism, the three natural steps of interaction are difference, conflict and integration. Na Qi believes that the 17th-century sinicization of Hui Muslims was the inevitable end product and the final step of all encounters between two civilizations. Really, Na argues that Hui Muslims are justified sociologically to be classified as one of the Chinese ethnic minorities. His argument is far from convincing because of limited historical evidences.

A thoughtful approach is undertaken by Ding Kejia. Rather than examining Liu Zhi’s trilogy, Ding examines his Sufism. Ding compares Liu Zhi’s own translation of Jami’s Lawa’ih, namely Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm with Jami’s original work. Ding argues that while Liu Zhi was faithful to Jami’s work, he creatively transformed it in his free translation by using Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Not only was Liu Zhi able to explain the concept of unity of existence, he also transformed the Persian Jami’s Sufi teaching into the Chinese language context and made Sufism attractive as a very practical and yet transcending, self-exalting and ideal religious practice. Thus, Liu Zhi’s Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm was able to provide both intellectual and practical meanings within the Chinese language context for Sufism. When the Persian Sufi concept was freely translated and used in explaining the Hui Islamic rites within the Chinese language context, the two cultural contexts then had mutual learning, understanding and dialogue. The result is fusion and exchanges. For Ding Kejia, then, Persian Sufism was sinicized by Liu Zhi’s editing work. Ding’s analysis is better than Na because Ding has examined the translated text of Liu Zhi and they both agree with the majority view.

Other Chinese scholars are more articulate than Na and Ding. They have written substantial monographs on Liu Zhi. They are Liang Xiangming, Liu Yihong and Sha Zhongping. While Liang accepts there are minor different emphases in ethics between Hui Muslims and

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Neo-Confucians, he asserts that Hui Muslim literati virtually adopted almost all the moral self-cultivating ethical principles of Neo-Confucianism as expressed by Zhu Xi.\(^\text{307}\) In his book study of Liu Zhi, Liang argues that Liu Zhi absorbed and adapted Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist philosophy so that Islamic philosophy was enriched. The resulting effort of Liu Zhi’s contextualization was that while Islam was different to other religions, Islamic truth was not separable from other religions. In addition, Liu Zhi used Buddhist and Daoist theosophical concepts to explain divine transformation, effusion of the oneness and multiplicity of the real being.\(^\text{308}\) Liang’s thesis is that broadly speaking, Liu Zhi’s works succeeded by integrating Hui Islam into Neo-Confucianism. However, he admits that Liu Zhi’s teachings still retained some of the basic tenets of Islam like the existence of one supreme God.

Liu Yihong’s comparative study between Chinese Islam and Neo-Confucianism provides a methodological analysis of the works by Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi and Ma Dexin.\(^\text{309}\) She argues that three models of dialogue can be identified. Firstly, Wang Daiyu used Neo-Confucianism to explicate Islam, i.e. explaining the doctrine of Islam through Neo-Confucianism. Wang Daiyu still maintained Islam was unique. Secondly, Liu Zhi perceived Neo-Confucianism and Islam as mutually complementing each other. In addition, fading Neo-Confucianism could experience revival when it was combined with Islamic philosophy. Thirdly, Ma Dexin believed that Islam could enhance Neo-Confucianism. It enriched certain aspects of Neo-Confucianism especially Islamic teaching on afterlife.\(^\text{310}\) That is a model of explication, mutual complement and enhancement. While Liu Yihong’s model is perceptive, the conclusion of her study at the end of her book seems one-sided and contrary to her data, especially concerning Liu Zhi’s work.

\(^{310}\) Liu Yihong, *Dialogue*, 11-12.
While it is necessary [for the Chinese Muslim literati] to integrate Islamic and traditional Chinese philosophy, certain unsolvable problems of Islamic philosophy can be better explained by borrowing the wisdom of Chinese thoughts. Mystery is then solved and propagation of Islam is then enabled. This lays the foundation for Chinese Islam to spread and develop. The creative element of Chinese Islamic thought is due to the result of dialogue between cultures and civilizations.  

On one level, Liu Yihong argues that Chinese Islam is enhanced and enriched by Confucian thoughts. On another level, the articulate and architectonic system of Neo-Confucianism provides not merely the linguistic and conceptual tools to infuse rigorously the meaning of difficult Islamic terms. It also enables Arabic and Persian Islamic metaphysical terms to be imbued with creative and fresh meanings. When adaptation applies to Hui Islam, Liu Yihong interprets it as sinicization. Her view belongs to the majority view that Liu Zhi’s Islam was Confucianized. Such a process began from the 17th century, has continued to the present and made Chinese Islam different from the Middle Eastern Islamic tradition. Such localized Islam with Chinese characteristics is understood as sinicized Islam. Chinese Islam is adapted and different qualitatively from its Middle Eastern origin.

Sha Zhongping investigates Liu Zhi’s doctrine of real being and humanity in The Nature and Principle in Islam. He focuses on the latter part of this work and analyzes Liu Zhi’s diagrams. Liu Zhi used these diagrams to explain the teachings in the former part of his work. Sha asserts that Liu Zhi’s Islam has been Confucianized. Firstly, he explains generally that the spirit of the age is expressed by philosophy. The linguistic terms are tools like cloth that clothes the spirit. Secondly, he avers that Liu Zhi used Neo-Confucian lexemes and concepts as his cloth, following the spirit of his age. Cloth covers the content. Sha then argues that Liu Zhi used Neo-Confucianism as the cloth that covered the content which was Persian Islamic philosophy, especially the Sufi teaching of Jami.

The subtlety of Sha’s argument can be demonstrated in his explication of Liu Zhi’s doctrine of divine being. The Qur’anic divine name Allah was converted by Liu Zhi to ‘Real Ruler

311 Liu Yihong, Dialogue, 178.
312 This phrase is commonly found in popular Chinese religious literature 有中國特色的伊斯蘭教.
313 Sha, Chinese Islam, 281-82.
or Lord’. For Sha, the first step is that the object of Islamic faith transformed from Allah to Real Ruler. This step is a contextualizing of naming. The second step is a transformation of the content. The Real Ruler becomes Real One. Again, the concept of Real One is initiated by Liu Zhi’s predecessor Wang Daiyu who has taught the great transformation in terms of the Real One, Numerical One and the Embodied One. The concept of the Real One expresses the content of Confucianized Islam.\textsuperscript{314} Then, Sha concludes that Liu Zhi combined medieval Arabic Islam with the school of principle (\textit{li}) of Neo-Confucianism under the archetypal principle of ‘Real One’. ‘Eventually, the concept of Real One forms the intellectual basis of Chinese Islamic philosophy.’\textsuperscript{315} The proof of sinicization of Chinese Islam is Liu Zhi’s concept of Real One that takes over the Arabic divine name Allah.

Liang, Liu and Sha build up articulate and nuanced arguments in different ways that Hui Islam was sinicized by Liu Zhi’s works. Other Chinese scholars have also attempted in other ways to support the thesis that Neo-Confucianism enriched Hui Islam and that Liu Zhi succeeded to a large extent in the sinicization of Chinese Islam.\textsuperscript{316}

The minority camp disagrees with the common consensus about the sinicization of Hui Islam in 17\textsuperscript{th} century China by the Hui Muslim literati. There are not many of them and they have published short essays in Chinese journals. A few of them are discussed to present an overview of the minority view.

\textsuperscript{315} Sha, ‘Confucianism and Islam Fused,’ 58.
A critical work in Taiwan was done in Chinese by Zheng Wenquan. He argues that Liu Zhi’s philosophy of Islam is not a sinicized Chinese Islam. He asserts that the philosophical system of Liu Zhi was still Islamic and it is a mistake to claim that Islam has been sinicized by Liu Zhi. From a philosophical methodology, Zheng Wenquan emphatically disagrees with the majority view. His main argument is that the concept of Real One does not originate from Neo-Confucianism which the other side of the debate often takes for granted. Zheng asserts that such a concept already existed among Sufis in 13th-century Asia. Secondly, it is not so much that Islamic philosophy has been sinicized by Neo-Confucianism, Liu Zhi’s work really re-interpreted Ibn ‘Arabi’s cosmology and humanity. Thirdly, while Liu Zhi used many Neo-Confucian terms, the dynamic meaning of the translated terms remains Islamic and not Chinese. It is just natural for Liu Zhi to use Neo-Confucian linguistic tools because there was no other available. Furthermore, Zheng argues that the Hui Muslim literati in the 16th – 17th century achieved the beginning of a new age of Chinese Islamic philosophy for the Hui. It was an existential Islamic philosophy in the Chinese language context that included primarily a re-presentation of Ibn ‘Arabi-like philosophy and secondarily a dialogue with non Ibn ‘Arabi philosophy current at that time.

The second writer is Min Wenjie. It is often argued that Liu Zhi’s Islamic teaching of five ethical relationships is so closely related with the Confucian five relationships that Liu Zhi’s Islamic ethic was again sinicized. Min is able to identify at least five differences between Liu Zhi’s Islamic five relationships and the Confucian five relationships i.e. basis, order, content, goal and afterlife. He cautions the need for care and more thorough research and avoids reading Liu Zhi’s works as simple resonance and parallels with Neo-Confucianism.

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320 Min Wenjie, ‘Comparison,’ 36.
The third writer is Yang Huaizhong who provides the Ming dynasty Islamic context of the Hui and the attitude of the Hui towards contextualization. Owing to stricter imperial control, forcing the Muslims to adopt Han names and dress, Yang argues that the Hui became more open minded, willing to study Neo-Confucianism. The eventual attitude of Hui intellectuals at the end of the Ming dynasty was ‘do not betray Islam and do not be tied down by Islam.’

That is a sound judgment by Yang who provides a context that fits best the effort of the Chinese Muslim literati. The revival spirit of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi that reflects in their work is more than mere survival and strengthening of the Hui Muslim identity. It is also to make exoteric aspects of Islam into esoteric spiritual discipline, namely, reform by inner transformation.

The last and most persistent opponent to a superficial reading of Liu Zhi’s work is a Chinese scholar in China, Yang Zhongdong. He examines the comparative study between Zhu Xi and Liu Zhi and also studies Liu Zhi’s Sufism. Yang Zhongdong emphatically asserts that Liu Zhi commonly used the Confucian terms but he infused such terms with Islamic meanings. While Liu Zhi’s teachings of the return of humanity and reunion with the divine being by a/the Sufi path might have parallels with Zhu Xi’s union with the principle li, Liu Zhi clearly had a specific goal of union with the divine being. Thus, Yang Zhongdong asserts that familiar Confucian terms did not carry the same meaning after Liu Zhi’s redefinition.

Yang Zhongdong argues that Liu Zhi’s Islam was firmly rooted in Sufi mysticism. He traces the Sufi source of Liu Zhi’s concept of divine transformation. The source was Nasafi’s *The Furthest Goal* and definitely not Neo-Confucianism’s concepts of li and qi or the concept of yin and yang.

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Yang identifies that various Islamic concepts in Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* can be traced to six Sufi works available at the time of Liu Zhi. Yang Zhongdong asserts two implications. Firstly, Sufism in China was widespread in 17th-century China. It was not limited to several institutions or schools of Sufi thought. Certainly, it was common in Northwest China and also among Uyghurs. Secondly, Liu Zhi’s Sufi Islam was fundamentally different from Neo-Confucianism. Sufi Islam was not merely mystical ritual. 17th-century Chinese Sufi Islam was grounded profoundly in Ibn ‘Arabi’s philosophy. Yang Zhongdong’s conclusion is very similar to Zheng Wenquan’s. Yang argues that Liu Zhi’s Islam is existential Sufi Islam because Liu Zhi used selectively and edited freely his Sufi source materials. This formed his core materials and philosophical framework. To express the Islamic philosophical framework, Liu Zhi used Neo-Confucianism as his tool. Then, he edited his core materials and philosophical framework to fit into the usage of Chinese language.³²⁴ For Yang Zhongdong, then, it is permissible to say that the Chinese language context affected Liu Zhi’s choice of Sufi and philosophical core Islamic materials. Nothing more can be said beyond that about Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Hui Islam. At this moment, the minority camp is not gaining any ground in this debate because more substantial research is needed to make this view more convincing.

### 3.3.3 Remark and Comment

Firstly, while the Chinese scholars contribute numerous essays on Liu Zhi’s contextualization, the few English scholars have not written much and yet it is sufficient to see the emergent point of view. Murata has not paid much attention to Liu Zhi’s contextualization. She supports the view that Liu Zhi’s interpretation of Islam in Confucian terms is sophisticated and articulate. Frankel has studied Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Frankel says that Liu Zhi’s trilogy reflects ‘an acceptance of the essential ethical and metaphysical harmony of Islam and Confucianism, and thus represents the heights of

Muslim intellectual accommodation to the Chinese cultural paradigm.\textsuperscript{325} Frankel further opines that ‘Liu Zhi downplayed the role of revelation, rather expounding theological concepts with frequent reference to natural law.’\textsuperscript{326} Frankel supports the view that syncretism ‘in the realm of ideas is then the obvious, logical product of the evolution of a genuine simultaneity of identity and consciousness. Such is the case of Chinese Muslims generally, and of Liu Zhi more specifically, whose heritage of accommodation and assimilation produced a simultaneity that resulted in the sophisticated syncretic thought found in the \textit{Han Kitab} literature.’\textsuperscript{327} While there is little dialogue between Western and Chinese scholars on Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islam into Confucianism, it would be simplistic to divide scholarly opinions into mere Western and Chinese camps.\textsuperscript{328}

Secondly, it should also be noted that while Liu Zhi’s works are often studied and analyzed, Wang Daiyu’s works are likewise earnestly studied by both Chinese and English contemporary scholars. Both Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi initiated the first important stage of translating and interpreting Islamic texts into Chinese using Confucian terms and concepts in 16\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} century China. Thus, Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi are occasionally studied comparatively. While Murata studies the two scholars comparatively in one single monograph, Jin publishes two monographs, firstly on Liu Zhi and secondly on Wang Daiyu.\textsuperscript{329} They are studied together to enforce the argument that both of them attempted to expound the fundamental tenets of Islam using Confucian concepts and terms. Wang is known for his three works on Islam.\textsuperscript{330} Various research works on Wang have been done by Chinese scholars and they share a broadly similar point of view.\textsuperscript{331} The common consensus

\textsuperscript{325} Frankel, \textit{Liu Zhi’s Journey}, 10.
\textsuperscript{326} Frankel, \textit{Liu Zhi’s Journey}, 11.
\textsuperscript{327} Frankel, \textit{Rectifying}, xvii.
\textsuperscript{328} It should be noted that even within the Chinese works in Chinese, scholars are not accustomed to interacting with opposing views and examining critically various points of view.
or the majority view among recent Chinese scholars is that Wang was a highly educated sinicized Muslim and great expositor of Islamic doctrines, in particular the doctrine of divine unity. He made great efforts to write and preach to his fellow Muslims who were fast acculturated into Chinese culture. Wang’s endeavours were to enable his fellow Muslims to continue and hold fast to their religious theory and practice. Thus, both the works of Wang and Liu are interpreted similarly by the Chinese scholars in the majority camp.

Thirdly, the Chinese scholars in the majority camp are over-confident that Hui Islam was unavoidably integrated both into the Chinese language context and the architectonic philosophy of Zhu Xi of Neo-Confucianism during the translation of the Islamic texts. They prejudge that the overpowering sinicization of Buddhism, Daoism and the almighty Chinese syncretism in the form of Neo-Confucianism can do the same to Liu Zhi’s and other scholars’ works. However, Liu Zhi set his heart not to betray Islam and simultaneously not be tied down by it. This was the context in which Liu Zhi and other Muslim literati operated.

Finally, a preliminary study of Liu Zhi’s Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon later in this present work can demonstrate that while Liu Zhi employed Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian terms, his concern was to integrate Islamic doctrines with Sufism. He used these concepts as linguistic tools. Thus, his work was in the spirit of Hui Islamic reform using the Chinese language context as a God-sent opportunity to modernize Islam and the traditional Chinese Sufism using Neo-Confucian concepts. After critically examining the contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi, the most likely theory is that in the spirit of reform, Liu Zhi worked to reformulate and construct a pre-modern and existential Hui Islamic philosophy and Sufism within the Chinese language context.

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3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of almost all Liu Zhi’s works including both long and short treatises. It has given a brief account of Chinese scholarship on his works especially the debate of Confucianization of Liu Zhi’s work into Chinese culture. In addition, this chapter has introduced recent scholarship of Liu Zhi by Chinese scholars to the English speaking world.

This chapter begins by introducing almost all extant works by Liu Zhi, not only his trilogy but also easy-to-read shorter tracts and treatises. Although research work in English and Chinese often focuses on his trilogy, this chapter provides an overview of Liu Zhi’s theosophical and Sufi works. The final section of this chapter gives an account of recent scholarship in English and Chinese in Liu Zhi’s work. There has been intense research interest in the works of Liu Zhi in recent years. It is hoped that the following chapters can make a significant contribution.
Chapter Four:

4.0 Liu Zhi’s Engagement with the Concept of the Unity of Existence of the Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition

The chapter will give an account of Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence in his short work, namely the *Three-character Classic* and longer work, namely his trilogy. It will then discuss this concept in his translated work, namely *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*. His translated work complies with Jami’s scheme of the unity of existence in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and yet Liu Zhi gave a contextualized translation and made the work easier to understand for his Chinese readers. This chapter will end by giving a new perspective of the thematic analysis of the unity of existence in Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*.

4.1 Liu Zhi and the Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition of the Unity of Existence

4.1.1 Wang Daiyu and the Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition in China

The foundational principles of Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings are the unity of existence, the perfect human being, microcosmic and macrocosmic worldview. These principles form the basics of Islamic teachings in 16\(^{th}\)-18\(^{th}\) century China. Wang Daiyu’s works were influenced by Ibn ‘Arabi and his Sufi thought. In Wang Daiyu’s famous work, *The Real Commentary*, Wang said that his ancestors had lived in Arabia and come to China three hundred years earlier.\(^{332}\) Wang did not know any Chinese when he was young and later he was able to master the intellectual ideas and even have dialogues and debates with other Chinese scholars on their own terms. Wang began to write Islamic texts in Chinese in the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi and use various eclectic Neo-Confucian concepts to convey Islamic teachings.

Wang’s core teaching was concerned with *tawhid*. ‘Tawhid demands that all of existence be governed by a single, supreme Reality.’

‘Wang conceived God in terms of three basic grades or levels, namely, the Real One, the Numerical One and the Embodied One.’ Three such Ones served an explanation of *tawhid*. God is one and nothing is like God. The three Ones express oneness in manyness. Murata provides a succinct summary of Wang’s concept of the three Ones.

“Real One” knows in itself the principle of all manyness. This principle of manyness is called the “Numerical One,” because it gives rise to the multiplicity of the universe just as the number one gives rise to all the numbers. But the universe can only reach the fullness of its possibilities through being brought back to the One from which it arose. This is the function of human beings, who, among all creatures, are uniquely qualified to be the “Embodied One.”

Murata argues that one should interpret Wang’s concept in the light of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Most of Murata’s explications of Wang’s writings are based on probable parallel concepts between Wang and Ibn ‘Arabi. Her argument is persuasive as Sufi thought has been deeply influential on Islam in China.

As pointed out by Jin Yijiu, Wang is influenced by Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept of the perfect human being. One of the common Ibn ‘Arabi schemes of divine disclosures has five grades. The fifth grade is the perfect human being, ‘the full manifestation of the human reality, which brings together, actualizes, integrates, and synthesizes all realms of being.’

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334 Tu Weiming says that ‘technical terms such as “embodied one,” “numerical one,” and “real one” are perplexing to Confucian moral and religious reasoning, but the implicit anthropocosmic vision is Confucian to the core.’ *Murata, Sage*, 615.

335 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 75.

336 *Sufi teachings have been popular since the founding of the Madrasah education system in the late 16th century in various parts of China. Persian works on Sufi ethics and the philosophy of the unity of being are adopted as the text books in the Madrasah. Akira Matsumoto, ‘The Sufi Intellectual Tradition among Sino-Muslims’ in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Sufism: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies* (London: Routledge, 2008) 101-119, citing 111. Also, Jin, *Sufism in China* (2012).*


338 Murata, *Sage*, 47.
Wang often called the perfect human being the human ultimate. Thus, Wang and others including Liu Zhi are set firmly in the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi.

The following tables analyse and summarize the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi’s understandings of the unity of existence and divine disclosure by Murata and Wang Junrong. Murata outlines a very basic scheme common among all the followers of Ibn ‘Arabi. Wang Junrong presents a scheme that is common among Chinese Muslim literati. The table below illustrates the various grades of existence and the continuity between the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and the Chinese tradition supported by the Chinese Muslim literati.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade of Disclosure</th>
<th>Ibn ‘Arabi’s Basic Scheme (Murata)</th>
<th>Chinese Traditional Scheme (Wang Junrong)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First grade: God in itself</td>
<td>God is unknown to anything other than itself</td>
<td>The substance of Real Ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second grade: God and the creator of universe</td>
<td>God is known by a diversity of names; grade of divinity</td>
<td>The names and attributes of the Real Ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third grade</td>
<td>God brings the many into existence based on its own knowledge of its infinite reality</td>
<td>The will and power of the Real Ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>The world of images and imaginations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>The world of thoughts or spiritual beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>The visible world of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Murata further elaborates and explains the continuity between the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and Wang Daiyu’s concept. The basic concept of Wang’s divine being is expressed by three grades, namely the Real One, Numerical One and Embodied One. Murata demonstrates the similarities in structural framework between Wang and the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. The following table shows the continuity between the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and Wang Daiyu’s concept of divine disclosures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unity and Multiplicity of the Divine Being</th>
<th>Wang Daiyu’s Interpretation in Confucian terms</th>
<th>Wang Daiyu’s Reconciliation with the Ibn ‘Arabi Tradition (Murata)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God in itself (oneness)</td>
<td>Real One: root origin of the non-Ultimate; the unique One</td>
<td>The divine essence (<em>dhat</em>) is not to be properly designated by any name or attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the level of the origin of universe (still at the grade of oneness)</td>
<td>Numerical One: If this existence is perceived in negative terms, it is the non-Ultimate; in positive term, it is the Great Ultimate. This is the principle of multiplicity</td>
<td>The divinity (<em>uluhiyya</em>) can be discussed in terms of names and attributes. The divinity embraces all principles(^{343}) and it is the pattern or logos for all of creation(^{344})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the grade of multiplicity</td>
<td>Embodied One: humans alone are able to bring the</td>
<td>The human perfect being (<em>al-insan al-kamil</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{341}\) It is called the Reality of Realities (*haqiqat al-haqa’iq*). Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 49.

\(^{342}\) It is called the Muhammadan Reality. Murata asserts that Wang refers to both the Reality of Realities and Muhammadan Reality as the Utmost Sage. Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 75.
The following table illustrates further the content of Wang’s *Great Learning of the Pure and Real* which primarily teaches the concept of existence in terms of the three Ones.\(^{345}\) It shows Wang Daiyu’s concept in greater detail.\(^{346}\)

| The doctrine of the three Ones | The Real One: the unique and independent One; the Real Lord; at root the Real has nothing to do with the ten thousand things | 1.0 Root nature 本然 (substance): the Beginningless Original Being  
2.0 Root allotment 本分 (function): attribute; movement and quietude of the root nature  
3.0 Root act 本為: (act) the surplus of the unique and independent One, possessing all the subtlety of the formless |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | The Numerical One: the one root of ten thousand things and the chief summit of the Powerful Being; this root origin is called the Non-Ultimate | 1.0 Original honoured 元勳 (substance): the Utmost Sage; great fountain of nature and mandate  
2.0 Representative 代理 (function): opening and issuing forth of ten thousand spirituals  
3.0 Scribe 代書 (the act): surplus of the Pure Essence; and it is the naturally issuing disclosure to the outside or the Great Ultimate. |
|  | The Embodied One: at the human level of the oneness of recognition with | 1.0 Recognition with knowledge 知認 (substance): to inquire about and to imitate the sages and worthies  
2.0 Recognition with seeing 見認 (function): |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>body</th>
<th>while with the body, humans recognized the Real Ruler with the body.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0 Recognition with continuity 繼認 (the act) :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to conquer entirely both selfishness and opinions of self, returning completely to the fountainhead and recognizing the Real Ruler with body while depending on no-self.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table contains additional information that the previous two tables have not shown. While Murata has provided a helpful English translation of Wang’s text and a few comments on Wang’s Islamic concepts, she has not analyzed in details the scheme of the three Ones. The following comments should be noted.

Firstly, it gives a clear description of existence in accordance with Wang Daiyu’s work and also an account of human existence. Contrary to the usual five or seven grades of divine disclosures in the Malay-Indonesian world in the 16th and 17th-century, Wang’s scheme of three Ones seems to be simpler. However, each grade of the One is further divided into sub-grades, namely substance, function and act. Wang’s scheme is in fact still complex.

Secondly, Wang’s concept of the three Ones at the second grade includes not only the divine disclosure of the Real but even at the first sub-grade of the Embodied One, humanity or rather the perfect human being can recognize this grade and return to the Real Ruler from this grade. Each grade of the One has three further sub-grades. These grades are in descending order. However, humanity can ascend and return to the Real. Wang specified a process of ascent which emphasized the ‘recognition with continuity’ (the act) at the third sub-grade of the Embodied One. It shall be explained later in the sixth chapter of this present study that Liu Zhi asserted that the prophet Muhammad had a very unique nature of

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continuity. He is indeed the perfect human being. Liu Zhi contextualized the prophet as the Utmost Sage in the Neo-Confucian context.

Finally and in addition to the above tables, in Wang’s *Real Commentary of the True Teaching*, it says that there are three types of heart, namely real, human and animal. ‘According to the Hadith, heaven and earth encompasses Me not, but the heart of the true believer does encompass Me.’[^348] People have seven grades which are desire, wisdom, humanity, seeing, enjoying, mystery and the utmost grade. Only Muslim people have all these grades. Worldly people have only three grades: desire, wisdom and benevolence. Animal has only one grade, namely desire. While Wang did not give great emphasis to the role of heart, Liu Zhi made use of Wang’s scheme of three Ones and revised it with greater emphasis on the role of the heart.

The next section will examine Liu Zhi’s shorter tract, *The Three-character Classic*, his translated work *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* and his longer works, the trilogy. By making a more comprehensible examination of both short and long works, one can present and demonstrate a more convincing case of Liu Zhi’s contextualization than previous studies have made.

### 4.1.2 Liu Zhi’s Theological Conversation with a Neo-Confucian Classic: The Three-character Classic

*The Three-character Classic* is a short tract for general readership by Liu Zhi and the text has 1334 Chinese words; each phrase in three Chinese characters and total 448 phrases of three characters. It should be noted that from the time of the Song dynasty (960 – 1279), Chinese literature work for educating beginners often was structured into three characters to help easier memorization. It was a common type of pedagogy in primary education. Not only did each phrase have three characters and taught a simple idea, but the tone might also

vary. Some had rhymed arrangement and might have continuous meaning.\textsuperscript{349} They were purely designed for easy understanding and memorization. The three-character style began in the late Song dynasty and became a fundamental element of literacy throughout the Qing period.

Liu Zhi wrote \textit{The Three-character Classic} not only for easier memorization; it was intended primarily for beginners and novices of Islam. He adopted the Neo-Confucian three-character literary style into his Islamic work. It should be noted that this work was very popular and repeatedly copied in the Qing dynasty. It is divided into four sections.

The first section begins with the knowledge of the Ruler. It is the foundational teaching of this work. The Ruler is the creator and the origin of the heaven and earth. In addition, the Ruler does not occupy space, without any form and nothing resembles the Ruler. Liu Zhi also described his attributes as omnipresent, omniscient and almighty. The Ruler created humankind who was the pinnacle of creation. Only humankind had a soul. Humankind through himself could understand the subtle function and the existence of the Ruler. ‘The self serves as a reflector of God and a mirror of life.’\textsuperscript{350}

The second section gives an account of the origin and history of Islam. The transmission is through the holy sages and eventually to the Utmost Sage who is the seal of the sages.

In the third section, Liu Zhi explained Islamic rules and proprieties in terms of Neo-Confucian ethics. These included obedience to teachers, respect to the elderly, watchfulness of speech and action and many others. Clearly, Liu Zhi contextualized Neo-Confucian ethics with Islamic rules and rites. However, there are two distinctive differences. Firstly, the coming of the Utmost Sage, the prophet Muhammad is highlighted. On his arrival, Islam is complete. It is in contrast with Confucianism which is not a completed tradition. Confucianism has been developed into Neo-Confucianism and there would be further

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{350} The Chinese text reads, ‘參造化, 鑒本身’.
\end{flushleft}
development. Secondly, the Ruler is invisible and nothing is like the Ruler. To bear witness to the Ruler means that the Ruler is one and Muhammad is the messenger. Islam is unique in its monotheism and with its emphasis on the role of the prophet Muhammad.

In the final section, Liu Zhi reminded Muslims that they needed to hold firm to the way of Islam. He also gave warnings that they should persevere in learning and practising the five endeavours. Continuous learning and practising could bring nobility of character and blessedness.

Any careful reader can note one of the main characteristics of this work, namely Liu Zhi’s pedagogical technique. He used discourses in the first half of the work to expound the knowledge of the Real Ruler, the importance of the prophet Muhammad and the teaching of the way. In the second half, Liu Zhi turned to the teaching of the rites and proprieties of Islam using Neo-Confucian ideas. His teaching technique changed to question and answer once in a while. He anticipated a number of commonly encountered queries from both beginners and outsiders of Islam. Questions like ‘why are you a Muslim’? He gave a very direct and short answer without any deliberation. According to Liu Zhi, ‘I am a Muslim by the grace of God.’ Similarly, the five endeavours are simply clearly listed and each endeavour is supported with one reason only. Thus, Liu Zhi’s sole purpose in this work is for the general public to get a good idea of the basic tenets of Islamic belief and the foundational principle of the rites and proprieties of Islam. The belief in one God of Islam leads to obedience to that God in rules and proprieties of Islam.

The complete Three-character Classic was translated into English by F. Cotter and K. Reichelt in 1918 without any comments on Liu Zhi’s Islamic background. There was no analysis provided by Cotter and Reichelt. Part of Liu Zhi’s Three-character Classic is now translated below and this selected translation is provided in parallel format to illustrate the

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351 The Chinese text reads, ‘品卓高’.
352 The Chinese text reads, ‘真致福’.
three-character Chinese literary format. The three-character format is clearly shown on the right hand side of the following parallel translation.

**The Three-character Classic**

At the beginning of the heaven and earth, ten thousand things were to be formed. The supreme being had existed and was called the Real Ruler.

It governed the innate heaven, ordered the principle and vital energy. It divided light from darkness; transformed heaven and earth.

It set the foundations of mountains and rivers; called into life grass and trees; foreordained calamity and fortune; gave brightness to the sun and moon.

...

The first of the way is to bear witness. There is no god but the Real Ruler.

Muhammad was sent by the Ruler to be the messenger. The essence of the way is to read the Qur’an.

The teaching of the Hadith is very clear. Everything has its essence and the essence of Qur’an is the 36th Sura.

......

The Qur’an says, ‘watchfulness leads to realization of the way to eternity. Be watchful not to lose it.’

The core of the way is to know the will of return. When
it is clear, other endeavours can begin.

The foundation of the way is sincerity. If you have sincere thoughts, other endeavours can succeed.

The way resides in the heart. It is inside the Muslims’ heart. The heart is the dwelling place of the Lord. Are you in the way? Is the way in you? If one asks you, you should say, ‘I am in the way and the way is in me! Your answer should be without any doubt or uncertainty.

The above selected translation can illustrate some general and specific aspects of Liu Zhi’s work. From a general perspective, firstly Liu Zhi’s understanding of Islam adheres closely to the basic tenets of Islam. The divine being is a pre-existent being and the creator of all existents. All creatures are created by the divine being and humankind is an exceptional creature because only humans have the heart. Secondly, he also held to the unique status of the Utmost Sage, Muhammad who is the accomplisher of the way of the Real. The Qur’an also has a unique status because it is divinely revealed through Muhammad. Thirdly, Liu Zhi’s contextualization is based on his use of contemporary literary structure to convey directly the teachings of Islam. These general teachings of Islam according to Liu Zhi are: the Real is supreme; the prophet Muhammad is unique and humanity has a heart which is indwelt by the way and able to return to the Real.

From a specific perspective, Liu Zhi clearly upheld the Real Ruler as the creator of all things, including humankind. The Utmost Sage, Qur’an, Hadith and the five endeavours point to the way of Islam. For Muslims, the way begins with a sincere and watchful heart. Then Muslims can begin with a firm foundation and seek the way of return to the Real. The
role of the heart is repeatedly emphasized in all short and long works of Liu Zhi. He used question and answer format: ‘Are you in the way? Is the way in you? If one asks you, you should say, I am in the way and the way is in me! Your answer should be without any doubt or uncertainty’. Questions are used to sharpen the reader’s thinking and understanding of Islam. All these questions can find detailed answers in Liu Zhi’s trilogy and translated work.

4.1.3 Liu Zhi’s Translation: Abd al-Rahman Jamī’s Lawa’ih (1414-1492) and Liu Zhi’s Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm

The fact that Liu Zhi translated Jamī’s work further suggests that he supported the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Jamī’s Lawa’ih was translated by Liu Zhi into Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm. Abd al-Rahman Jamī was a famous Sufi, a follower of the Naqshbandi Sufi order and a poet-theologian of the school of Ibn ‘Arabi. He popularized Ibn ‘Arabi’s tradition of wahdat al-wujud (the unity or oneness of existence) and played an important role in the spreading of his teaching. He expounded a number of teachings about the Sufi path. Jamī emphasized that love for the prophet Muhammad was the prerequisite stepping-stone to starting the spiritual journey. In Jamī’s Lawa’ih, he expounded the teaching of Ibn ‘Arabi in an attractive style and balance of poetry and prose. Murata comments that

The practical issue is the devotional imperative of turning one's full attention towards the One. The theoretical issue is discerning between the One and the many, or God and the world. In practical terms,

355 A detailed discussion of the role of heart according to Liu Zhi is given in the sixth chapter of this present work. Liu Zhi is influenced by the School of Mind of Neo-Confucianism.
357 Matsumoto says that both Jamī’s Lawa’ih and Ashi‘at al-lama‘at (Rays of the “Flashes”) have been popular in Madrasah education. He also says that the Persian version of Ashi‘at al-lama‘at has exerted great influence than its Chinese version. Matsumoto, ‘The Sufi Intellectual Tradition’, 107.
Jami is telling his readers that it is necessary to see things correctly in order to be able to remember God as he should be remembered. In theoretical terms, he is differentiating between existence (wujud) per se, or the reality of God, and the existence that is ascribed to the cosmos.\textsuperscript{358}

This work consists of thirty six Gleams\textsuperscript{359} in total. The major theme from the thirteenth Gleam to the end of the treatise is to explain the self-disclosure of God into the external and sensual world. In the fourteenth Gleam, Jami distinguished two meanings of existence. Firstly, existence could mean a concept or a mental assertion. However, Jami supported the second meaning. That is, existence is ‘a Reality that has being through Its own Essence, while the rest of the existents have being through It. In reality, there is no existent other than It in the eternal world.’\textsuperscript{360} Thus, to say that God is existence or God is being really means that God is the ultimate reality that undergirds all of reality. In the twenty-fourth Gleam, Jami said that there were six levels of self-disclosure by the true existent which was not more than one. The first level was the level of unboundedness or nonentification. The last level was ‘the engendered level’s differentiation, which was the level of the cosmos’.\textsuperscript{361} Murata concludes her analysis of Jami’s \textit{Lawa‘ih} by saying that

Jami addresses three basic theoretical issues. One is Being per se, the second is Being’s self-disclosure, and the third is the nature of the things that appear through self-disclosure. Being is the utterly undifferentiated original reality that brings forth all secondary reality, self-disclosure is the bringing forth, and the things are what has been brought forth…The text speaks of the movement from the absolute unity of God to the infinite multiplicity of the universe, a movement that has stages and can be conceptualized.\textsuperscript{362}

Liu Zhi’s \textit{Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm} in Chinese is a free translation of Jami’s \textit{Lawa‘ih} and is far from literal. At the end of each Gleam, Jami provided quatrains which served to clarify the philosophical discussion of the gleam by the use of poetry. Liu Zhi simply deleted all Jami’s poetries in \textit{Lawa‘ih}, usually situated at the end of each Gleam.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{358} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 116.  
\textsuperscript{359} Gleam means flash. It is Jami’s reflections on Qur’anic wisdom and spirituality.  
\textsuperscript{360} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 154.  
\textsuperscript{361} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 182.  
\textsuperscript{362} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 118,}
Thus, Liu Zhi was only interested in the philosophical discourse and did not want any poetry to digress from his explication. Liu Zhi called each of Jami’s Gleams a chapter and thus his translated work has thirty-six chapters.

The following table is a brief and selected summary of *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*. Observations and remarks demonstrate Liu Zhi’s edition, revision and interpretation of Jami’s work. A more detailed analysis of the translated work will be given after this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Chapter or Gleam</th>
<th>Title of Liu Zhi’s Chapter</th>
<th>Observations and Remarks of Liu Zhi’s <em>Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                       | One heart                 | 1.0 From the first to the thirteenth chapter, this work emphasizes the practical aspect of the unity of existence or ‘the endeavour of seeking and cultivating the *dao*.’
                                      |                           | 2.0 Liu Zhi put Jami’s affirmative statement into a question, namely ‘Why do you not have one heart and one bearing, reject the things, and run to the Lord?’
                                      |                           | 3.0 Liu Zhi wanted to challenge his readers to be single-minded in their practice of Islam. The reason for single-mindedness is due to Jami’s prior statement that the Lord entrusted humanity with one heart only. |
| 2                       | Collectedness and division| 1.0 Collectedness ‘means to return from the image to the One with clear seeing.’ |

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364 The Chinese text reads ‘言求道, 修道之功.’
2.0 In Jami’s Gleam, the text reads: ‘they stayed in endless dispersion.’ Murata translates Liu Zhi’s text as ‘their hearts were finally drifting into division.’ Although Liu Zhi’s text does not have the word ‘heart’, Murata’s paraphrased translation with the word ‘heart’ is appropriate and justified because the prose at the end of this Gleam specifies explicitly the spiritual condition of the heart.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>3</th>
<th>Seeing the <em>dao</em></th>
<th>Humanity needs to see what the Real sees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4 | Alteration and perishing | 1.0 The Real Lord is hidden and other existents are illusory in the sense of being transient.  
2.0 In contrast to Jami, Liu Zhi emphasized the role of the heart in two aspects. With a pure heart, let go with all material things. With a dedicated heart, care for and be united with the Real Lord. |
| 5 | Completion and beauty | The surplus light emanates and gives rise to the completion and beauty of the ten thousand levels. |
| 6 | Search and examination | 1.0 The practice is to guard the *dao*. One needs to forget oneself and all things.  
2.0 While Jami used ‘soul’, Liu Zhi translated this into heart. The practice of *dao* is to transform the heart.  
3.0 Jami used ‘the bounded becomes the Unbounded, and “I am the Real” turns into “He is the Real”.’ Liu Zhi interpreted as ‘preserving self is preserving the Lord, and portraying self is portraying the Lord.’ |

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| 7 | Storing and piling up | While Jami’s text emphasizes constant and unceasing relationship with the Real Lord, Liu Zhi emphasizes preserving ‘the heart’ and self-awakening.  
| 8 | Conquering Self | The existent has substance, nature and form. One needs to forget the form, examine the nature and substance. The way of *dao* is conquering self and leaving selfishness.  
| 9 | Conquering the conquering | While Jami discussed annihilation, Liu translated and interpreted it as conquering awareness of external things. The heart should dismiss any awareness of external things.  
| 10 | Returning to the One | The unity of existence means the heart to be united with the One.  
| 11 | Uplifting the awareness | While Jami did not mention the word ‘heart’, Liu Zhi explained that the uplifting of awareness is by the purification of the heart.  
| 12 | Real guarding | While Jami emphasized the guarding of relationship with the Real, Liu Zhi focused on the guarding of the heart.  
| 13 | Real Being | From the thirteenth to the last chapter, it clarifies the theoretical aspect of the unity of existence or ‘the hidden and manifest meaning of the Real Principle’.  
| 14 | Being | 1.0 Liu Zhi edited and simplified several difficult concepts in Jami. 
2.0 He just asserted that being had two meanings. They are illusory being and the Real Being. ‘Illusory’ is defined as transient existence and does not go beyond human rational understanding and manifested images.  

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367 In the Chinese text, 務必心存, 無令虛度.
368 In the Chinese text, 克己者, 真有勝, 顯於心, 而不覺外物也.
369 In the Chinese text, 隱顯之事務, 淨於其心.
370 In the Chinese text, 明真理隱著之義.
| 15 | Substance and function | Liu Zhi replaced Jami’s essence and attributes with substance and function respectively. |
| 16 | Names and similatives | 1.0 Liu Zhi replaced Jami’s first, second and third grade of self-disclosure with first, second and third movement.  
2.0 Jami emphasized the role of light which revealed the hidden into manifested. Liu Zhi simplified Jami’s scheme of disclosure. |
| 17 | The origin of transformation | Liu Zhi selectively translated and simplified the process of transformation or disclosure according to Jami. |
| 18 | The total order | 1.0 Liu Zhi added an extra beginning paragraph to explain the total order of the visible and invisible world. Plentiful Confucian terms are used, namely substance, principle, power, vital-energy and others.  
2.0 He edited the second and other following paragraphs of Jami extensively and deleted all Neo-Platonic concepts. He emphasized that the ultimate existence was the principle and nature of the Real. Other existents depended on the Real for their existence. |
| 19 | The subtle container | 1.0 Liu Zhi explained the relation between oneness and manyness similarly to Jami but with easier to understand examples from daily living. He followed closely Jami’s concept of oneness. |
| 25 | The grade of the Real | 1.0 Liu Zhi followed closely Jami’s work in his translation from the 20th to the 24th Gleams.  
2.0 Jami gave an account of six grades of divine disclosure and Liu Zhi complied with the six grades and translated them quite closely.  
3.0 Liu Zhi translated closely Jami’s work from the 26th-
Jin, the Chinese scholar of Liu Zhi, has studied briefly Liu Zhi’s *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*.\(^\text{371}\) While Murata has translated Liu Zhi’s *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* into English and made a few helpful comments on Islamic concepts,\(^\text{372}\) the following comments from the above table are additional new analyses that Murata and Jin have not noted. By observing and analysing the way Liu Zhi translated and interpreted Jami’s *Lawa’ih*, one can deduce some characteristics of Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence and his contextualization of this concept in Confucian terms. Our analysis will be made from both a general and a specific perspective.

Firstly, generally speaking, *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* is definitely not for beginners or novices. It is intended for readership at the intermediate level between the *Three-character Classic* and *Nature and Principle in Islam*. It is longer than the *Three-character Classic* and less difficult to read than *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. Some Chinese literati might be able to benefit and find similarities between Islam and Neo-Confucianism because Liu Zhi used many Confucian terms in his explanation.

Secondly, one of the official Chinese textbooks of Sufism in the Scripture Hall Education System at the time of Liu Zhi is Jami’s *al-Lama’at*. The Chinese translator of *al-Lama’at* did not use Confucian terms.\(^\text{373}\) The preface in the 1927 edition described the book as articulate. Even Confucian literati in academic institutions might not be able to comprehend. Jin asserts that Jami’s *al-Lama’at* and the Chinese translator used the difficult Neo-Platonic

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\(^{371}\) Jin, *Sufism in China*, 87-100.


\(^{373}\) A recent edition of Jami’s *al-Lama’at* with brief comments in modern Chinese was published in 2001 in Beijing. The style of the translator, Bin Ruan, is very different from Liu Zhi. Ruan’s approach is fairly literal. Ruan follows the modern style of verse-by-verse brief commentary, in addition to his own translation. He even comments on Jami’s poems that Liu Zhi totally ignored in *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*. When Ruan comes across difficult philosophical concepts, he will explain them in greater detail. Compared to Liu Zhi’s translation, Ruan’s work is easier to read for modern Hui Muslims but some Sufi ideas are still difficult to understand. Jami, Bin Ruan (tr.), *al-Lama’at* 光輝的射綫 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2001).
concept of divine emanation. However, the primary goal of Liu Zhi’s translation of Jami’s *Lawa’ih* into *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* can be seen by his free and occasional selective translation of this work and his plentiful use of Confucian terms. Thus, Liu Zhi was aiming to provide an easy-to-read reference book on Jami’s Islamic thought in the Scripture Hall Education System. Liu Zhi’s work in Chinese soon became a reference book. Both Jami’s works presented a fairly comprehensible understanding of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition through Jami, including both the theory and practice of the unity of existence. Jami explicitly acknowledged his Ibn ‘Arabi source in the original twenty-sixth Gleam but Liu Zhi simply identified Ibn ‘Arabi as a former worthy.

From the specific perspective, one can deduce some characteristics of Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence. Firstly, the concept of the unity of existence includes the integration of both practical and theoretical aspects, namely the first twelve Gleams and the remaining twenty four Gleams respectively. While Liu Zhi translated and interpreted the exposition of the divine disclosure, he was eager to point out the ethical aspects of Sufi thought. He translated and interpolated the Sufi text with a clear emphasis on *shar’ia*. The first twelve Gleams of his translation emphasize the practical aspects of *tawhid*. Liu Zhi calls such practical aspects ‘the endeavour of seeking the Tao and cultivating the Tao [Dao].’ For Liu Zhi, then, right thinking (orthodoxy) and doing (orthopraxis) are interwoven within the concept of *tawhid*.

Secondly, in the practical aspect of the unity of existence, Liu Zhi had greater emphasis than Jami on the role of heart. The teaching of the first Gleam has to do with one heart. There are detailed teachings on the heart in subsequent Gleams. The meaning of oneness of heart (emphasis of the first Gleam) gradually develops. It expands to mean single-mindedness, purity, dedication and others as illustrated in the above table. Above all in the tenth Gleam, Jami’s asserting unity (*tawhid*) is to make the heart one. In Liu Zhi’s

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translation, the unity means the heart is in union with the One. The condition of the heart is vital for any successful unity. This may partly explain the wisdom of Liu Zhi in the ninth Gleam when he translated Jami’s ‘annihilation’ as ‘conquering awareness of the external things.’ Some Sufis might interpret annihilation as the total absence of self and real union in the sense of fusion with the Real. However, Liu Zhi was able to avoid any misunderstanding by emphasizing the meaning of overcoming any desire or need for visible things.

Thirdly, in the sixth Gleam Liu Zhi made a clear and easy to understand interpretation of an ambiguous sentence in Jami’s text. Jami used ‘the bounded becomes the Unbounded, and “I am the Real”’. Liu Zhi did not give the literal translation. He interpreted as ‘preserving self is preserving the Lord, and portraying self is portraying the Lord.’ Sentences like ‘the bounded becomes the Unbounded’ and ‘I am the Real or He’ have been problematic in the history of Sufism because this way of speaking may blur the distinction between the creature and the creator.

The two words that Liu Zhi chose to translate are ‘preserving (cun 存)’ and ‘portraying (yu 喻)’. The word ‘cun’ in classical usage can have a variety of similar meanings, namely accumulate, deposit, keep and others. A paraphrased translation of Liu Zhi’s ‘preserving’ may be ‘taking the Lord into the heart’. The word ‘yu’ in classical usage can mean simply to explain, inform or understand. A paraphrased translation of ‘portraying’ may be ‘witnessing the Lord.’ Liu Zhi’s translation may be understood as ‘you take the Lord into the heart’ and ‘you become the Lord’s true witnesses.’ Thus, Liu Zhi’s translated text gives no possibility of blurring the distinction between creature and the creator. Clearly, Liu Zhi’s edition and interpretation is to ensure that his Hui Muslims can have right

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377 Murata, Chinese Gleams, 150-51.
378 In the Chinese text 存己即存主, 喻己即喻主. Murata has competently translated Liu Zhi’s text which clarifies the ambiguity in Jami’s version.
understanding in the sense of orthodoxy which then leads to orthopraxis which is right doing.

Fourthly, the eighteenth Gleam is of special interest because it illustrates the purpose of Liu Zhi’s revision and modification of Jami’s work. Liu Zhi added a single paragraph at the beginning with over 140 Chinese characters. It explains the movement from the oneness to manyness and then from manyness into oneness in Neo-Confucian terms. Rather than using the Real One, he now used substance. Substance is limited to two functions, namely knowledge and power ‘Knowledge and power are the function of the Substance, and they put forth acting and making.’ Various grades of movements are due to movement initiating from the substance and then the dual relation between knowledge and power that gives rise to further movements. The dual relation of two functions, namely knowledge and power, finds a parallel in the Confucian teaching of yin yang. The definition and description of substance is clearer in his Rules and Proprieties of Islam and is explained later in this chapter.

Acting and making eventually became external things. External things did not exist on their own, rather ultimately ‘depend on the Principle, and the Principle is the subtle container of the Real Being’s knowledge and power.’ Liu Zhi interpolated Jami’s divine disclosure and eventual return by using Confucian terms. Liu Zhi gave an additional explanation of the relation between the one and the manifested many by using the analogy of fire. ‘This is also like the power of giving light, keeping warm, cooking food that are contained in the fire. The fire possesses from beforehand all these powers, but as long as it does not encounter various things, these do not become manifest.’ Liu Zhi made great effort to help his readers to understand Jami’s detailed concept of transformation.

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380 This additional paragraph has often been noted by modern scholar including Murata. Murata, Chinese Gleams, 165. However, Yin is silent and just discusses the content of the 18th Gleam. Jin, Sufism in China, 94.
381 In the 18th Gleam.
382 Murata, Chinese Gleams, 165.
383 Murata, Chinese Gleams, 165.
384 In the 19th Gleam.
385 Murata, Chinese Gleams, 169.
Finally, in the twenty-first Gleam, Liu Zhi again freely made use of contextualized terms in his translation. ‘Obstruction necessarily seeks penetration, whereas penetration does not seek obstruction. Thus, the demand is from both sides, but the seeking is from one side …’ While Jami used ‘Unbounded and bounded’, Liu Zhi used easy to understand words or phrase, namely, ‘penetration and obstruction’ respectively. The Unbounded is without boundary and thus can interpenetrate. The bounded with boundary may obstruct anything within its boundary. For beginner of Islam, Jami’s words like ‘Bounded and Unbounded’ are ambiguous. Again, the goal of Liu Zhi’s interpretation is that his readers may understand Jami’s text. Murata states that given ‘the general skill with which he translates the text and his wide reading in Arabic and Persian sources, it is difficult to believe that this modification could have been anything but intentional.’

So far, our above discussion of Liu Zhi’s works may be summarized as follows:

- In his short and translated Sufi work, Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization remains unchanged although the shorter work is too concise to make any definitive statement. However, his longer translated Sufi work, *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*, begins to give a good account of his strategy. His works show intentional effort to help his Chinese readers to understand difficult philosophical concepts. He is in conversation or dialogue with his own Confucian context.
- Generally speaking, Liu Zhi concurred with Jami’s concept of the unity of existence and also the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition.
- Liu Zhi is a skillful translator and interpreter. In his works, he does not deviate from the original meaning of his source although he makes modifications and adds explanatory text. While he may modify certain words, these modifications retain the logic and the meaning of the text.

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In his contextualization, his works uphold the basic tenets of Islam and edit ambiguous sentences that may have the tendency to mislead his readers. In addition, his work emphasizes the role of the heart with respect to the practice of the unity of existence.

4.2 Key Themes of the Concept of Unity of Existence in *The Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*

The second section of this chapter will focus on two major works of Liu Zhi, namely *The Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Liu Zhi hardly discussed the unity of existence in the third part of his trilogy, namely *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*. Only the first three chapters of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* primarily deal with the unity of existence and return to the Real but *The Nature and Principle in Islam* discusses extensively such concepts. The detailed discussion of Islamic sciences in *The Nature and Principle in Islam* is often summarized and reiterated in the early chapters of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. An English translation of these chapters is provided in the appendix IV of this present study.

Murata has translated and examined Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam*. She excels in explicating Liu Zhi’s Islamic sciences of Sufi thought and philosophical terms like root suchness, nonbeing and others based on his Persian and Arabic sources. In addition she also consults Ma Lianyuan’s *Subtleties*. Ma’s work is a rather free translation of *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. Based on Liu Zhi’s sources and Ma’s Arabic translation, Murata is able to find the quoted sources and Ma’s Arabic translation ‘helpful in clarifying some of Liu’s discussions and testing our [Murata, Chittick and Tu] conjectures concerning the Arabic/Persian terms that Liu might have had in mind.’ Murata finds Ma’s commentary most helpful when she tries to interpret Liu’s ideas in *The Nature and Principle in Islam*.

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While Murata’s study is based on the translation of each chapter and explanation of the Islamic concepts, Jin’s study is a general thematic study based primarily on Liu Zhi’s trilogy. The following analysis will focus on the details of Liu Zhi’s concept of unity of existence which Murata, Jin and others have not noted or discussed.

### 4.2.1 The Real Ruler: Transcendence and Immanence

Wang Daiyu often used the Real One. Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* prefers the term the Real Ruler 真宰. It is the real being (實有) and primordial existence (原有). What is the Real Ruler?

Firstly, Liu Zhi stated that the Real Ruler was non-designated. Murata explains that the non-designation of the very beginning has parallels with Jami’s *Lawa’ih* concept of nonentification which is understood as the unknown essence that cannot be properly designated by any name. ‘In the very beginning, there is only the Real Ruler’s root suchness, supremely pure and quiet, without limit and form, not controlled by light and darkness, not belonging to the creative transformation. The Real Ruler is really the root and source of heaven and earth, humans and things.’

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391 According to Murata, ‘nonentification’ is the essence understood as an absolute unity in which no ‘entity’ or thing can be differentiated from any other.’ Murata, *Chinese Gleam*, 119.

392 Murata asserts that the non-designation of the Very Beginning has parallels also with the Daoist classic text, ‘The name that can be named is not the name.’ See Murata, ‘The Unity of Being in Liu Chih’s Islamic Neoconfucianism,’ *Journal of Ibn ‘Arabic Society* vol. xxxvi, 2004.

393 Root suchness (然 ren) is a fundamental concept of Liu Zhi. The literal meaning of suchness (ren) is certainly, verily or yes. An alternative possible meaning is ‘in existence’. The modern Chinese usage of ‘ren’ means already exists and ‘yet to ren’ means yet to exist. Root is usually translated as ‘original’ and may mean ‘without beginning. Root suchness can thus be paraphrased as ‘without beginning and already in existence’. Murata uses the literal word ‘suchness’ and parallels it with the Arabic word *inniyya*, that-it-is-ness. ‘In Islamic philosophy, *inniyya* is used as a synonym for existence (*wujud*). Murata further explicates root suchness as root substance which is the Real Being. Murata, *Sage*, 184.

Secondly, unlike the universe that has numerous and multi-faceted existences, the Real Ruler is one. Unlike the universe that has blossoming and withering lives and seasonal change, the Real Ruler takes no part in such change.\footnote{Liu, Nature and Principle, the fifth chapter. Murata, Sage, 144.}

Thirdly, while the Real Ruler does not change, it is the fount and source of the cosmic existence.

Fourthly, the Real Ruler can express the divine essence through the Numerical and Embodied One.\footnote{Liu, Nature and Principle, the fifth chapter. Also, Murata, Sage, 144.} This concept of the One or the Real Ruler is the usual explanation given by Murata, Jin and others. However, these scholars have not noted further explanations of the Real Ruler in Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam.

Not noted by Murata, Jin and other scholars, Liu Zhi further distinguished the Real Ruler into transcendent Ruler and inclusive Ruler in his second chapter of The Rules and Proprieties of Islam. ‘The One is unique and this uniqueness has two meanings. The first meaning of the unique one is that it transcends all things. The second meaning of the unique One is that it embraces all things.’\footnote{Liu, Rules and Proprieties of Islam, the second chapter. Appendice IV. xviii.}

The transcendent One is beyond manifestations. Unlike the transcendent One, the heaven, earth and all things have manifestations. The vital energy then transforms to give out their forms. This is the number [function] of the acquired heaven. The root suchness of the Real Ruler does not have any manifestation. It does not participate in the vital energy’s transformation and is not determined by the number [function] of the acquired heaven. The Real Ruler does not have any boundary and physical form, it is most pure and subtle, and is difficult to describe. The unique One means it is transcendent to heaven, earth and all things.

With regard to the unique immanent One, it is unique because this One is not to be separated from manifestation and thus becomes ‘unique’. It is not to separate from the many. It creates all matters from beginning to now, both visible and invisible and governs their activities with its real principle. The substance is not separated from its function and it is undifferentiated from all materials. This One
is unique because outside the One, there is no manifestation. Outside this One, there is no boundary. This is the meaning of the immanent One.398

The Real Ruler has two senses of uniqueness: transcendence and immanence. The Chinese word for immanence is bao (包). In classical Chinese usage, it can take various meanings, namely wrap, bundle, pack and others. Liu Zhi’s concept of the Real Ruler did not support pantheism. The meaning of immanence really has the connotation of panentheism.399 When Liu Zhi discussed the disclosure of the Real Ruler, he really explained the origin of cosmos and relationship between a really unique panentheistic being and the cosmos. The Real Ruler in the sense of immanence is understood to be a panentheistic being that can interpenetrate and include all visible and invisible things. The Real Ruler in the sense of transcendence is understood to be a radically unique being that is beyond any human God-talk and outside the disclosure. The Real Ruler is in itself. Both aspects of the uniqueness of the Real Ruler must be held together. They are inseparable and yet they also must be distinguished.

*The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* makes it easier to understand Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence. With respect to the macrocosmic worldview, the panentheistic being is in eternal unity with the cosmos because it interpenetrates and embraces all things. With respect to the microcosmic worldview, humans in particular the perfect human being can return and eventually have a heart union with the panentheistic being. It is not a union of two different bodies to form a single entity which should be called fusion. In simple terms, the practical concept of Liu Zhi’s unity of existence means that by removing all forms of visible and invisible obstructions, humankind may return to the substance or essence of the panentheistic being and eventually actualize a heart union. This understanding of the unity of existence forms the basis of Liu Zhi’s idea of Sufi spirituality. This also explains his emphasis on the role of the heart.


399 Panentheism may simply be defined as the belief that God is greater than the universe and includes and interpenetrates it. A sophisticated version of it is argued by a 20th-century prominent Christian theologian Paul Tillich.
4.2.2 The Second Grade of Disclosure

Murata takes great effort to explain the Islamic concepts of Liu Zhi’s disclosure. Jin, Sha and others explain insightfully the intricate meanings of various Confucian terms in the disclosure. To our knowledge, no contemporary scholar has noted or attempted to explain the logic of Liu Zhi’s argument of disclosure from the perspective of panentheism. Such a discussion is found not in his Nature and Principle in Islam but primarily in The Rules and Proprieties of Islam and Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm.

The three major works of Wang Daiyu discuss the concept of the three Ones. However, these works do not explain the immanence and the logical argument of immanence in the divine disclosure. While Liu Zhi continued to use Wang’s three Ones in his Nature and Principle in Islam, he also attempted to explain the immanence of the Real Ruler. Most probably, he derived such insight from Jami and in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. In the nineteenth Gleam of Lawa’ih, Jami explained the inclusion of the manyness in the oneness of the essence or alternatively in the language of Liu Zhi the inclusion of multiplicity in the only One Real Ruler. According to Jami, inclusion does not mean the inclusion of the contained in the container.

Rather, what is meant is the inclusion of the descriptions and the requirements in the described thing and the requirer, like the inclusion of one-halfness, one-thirdness, one-fourthness, one-fifthness, ad infinitum, in the essence of the numerical one. After all, these relations are included within it and have no manifestation whatsoever so long as it does not become part of two, three, four, and five through repetition of manifestation in the levels.400

Liu Zhi gave a simplified and easy to understand translation with interpretation. Inclusion does not mean the One Substance is a part contained in a whole.

400 Murata, Chinese Gleams, 168. Murata asserts that Jami’s source is Farghani’s Muntaha’l-madarik. However, Farghani’s scheme is much more complicated. Murata, Chinese Gleams, 231.
Rather, it is the substance’s containment of the function and the requirer’s containment of the required. For example, one is one-half of two, one-third of three, one-fourth of four, and so on, to one part of one hundred thousand billion. All these are contained in the root nature of “one”, and “one” has beforehand the power to be the principle of one part of all numbers. However, as long as the various numbers are not added, its power will never become manifest.\(^401\)

The basic argument of Liu Zhi is that the panentheistic being embraces all things. The panentheistic being is not a container that contains various parts. Strictly speaking, it does not contain, carry and divide all things. Rather, such inclusion means that it embraces and interpenetrates them. This insight came from Jami and Liu Zhi adopted it enthusiastically. Similarly, the Great Ultimate that is the most perfect \(\text{li}\) as propagated by Zhu Xi, the Neo-Confucian master, might also influence Liu Zhi’s adoption.

Such understanding of immanence is further developed and seen clearly in his second chapter of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* using similar easy to understand numerical examples. In the second chapter, Liu Zhi explained the fact that the Real Ruler did not beget or reproduce a son, unlike the Christian God in the gospel. As a monotheistic religion, Muslims believe in one and only Real Ruler. Liu Zhi expressed this unique panentheistic being by using the Confucian term, namely root substance. The following quotation comes from one single section in the second chapter.

From one, it gives rise to and completes the ten thousand. One penetrates the beginning and end of ten thousand. The ten thousand comes from one, completes by one. The ten thousand needs one but the one does not need the ten thousand. …

The root substance of one (一之本體) is all-inclusive and penetrating. Nothing is beyond it. It gives rise to number but it is not equal to number. …

The root substance of one is eternally unchanging and unmoving. It generates countless other numbers. The root substance of one is without increase and decrease. It increases and decreases the ten thousand numbers. The root substance of one has no beginning and attachment; it becomes the beginning of ten thousand and the attachment of ten thousand…

Therefore, ten, hundred, thousand, ten thousand and countless other numbers have their source and foundation in one…

The root substance of one is unparallel and nothing likes it. Any number is formed by addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. If you take away this way of thinking, there is no existence of number. The result remains to be the same: one.\textsuperscript{402}

What is the meaning of root substance? Root means ‘source’ and ‘origin’. Murata says that in the common usage of Chinese philosophy, root substance is the unique general term for ultimate reality.\textsuperscript{403} She also notes that substance is often paired with function in both Buddhist and Confucian thought. Substance refers to the essence and function refers to the names and attributes. ‘Generally, substance is the thing in itself, function its movement or activity; substance is a thing’s fundamental reality, function its expression; the two are typically discussed together and designate a relationship.’\textsuperscript{404}

With such understanding of the root substance and function, several brief comments can be made from the above quotation about the relationship between the root substance and the existence of only one being. Firstly, the root substance simply refers to the second grade of disclosure, namely the Real One and may equally refer to the substance of the first sub-grade of the Real One, namely ‘quietness without manifestation’. It should be noted that the term ‘Real One’ does not derive from Confucianism. However, Liu Zhi used Confucian term, namely root substance, to explain the relationship between the Real One and the concept of one unique being. Secondly, it should be emphasized that the order of disclosure or the structure of emanation is a logical order and has no bearing or reference to the time line and status of each entity. It should be interpreted solely in terms of the logical sequence of hiddenness and manifestation. As an illustration, substance is inherently hidden. While function can manifest substance, substance simply is manifested as a body-less substance. It does not have any embodiment at all even at the state of manifestation of function. Finally, the above quotation adequately illustrates the oneness and manyness of Liu Zhi’s understanding of the panentheistic being. The ‘one’ is the function and it is embraced by

\textsuperscript{402}Liu, \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam}, the second chapter. Appendice IV. \textit{xxix}-\textit{xxx}.
\textsuperscript{403}Murate, \textit{Sage}, 77.
\textsuperscript{404}Murata, Sage, 69.
the root substance of the one. Thus, it is an interpretation of the divine disclosure in Jami’s *Lawa’ih* in Confucian terms.

### 4.2.3 The Unity of Existence and Return to the Real

Many contemporary scholars are able to note that Liu Zhi’s works have emphasized both theoretical and practical aspects of Islam. One obvious reason to support this argument is the inner structure of Liu Zhi’s trilogy. The first work, *The Nature and Principle in Islam*, discusses the Islamic sciences including theosophy, cosmogony and nature of things. The second work, *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, discusses the rationale and rites of Islam. His work starts from Islamic theory and moves to practice. The final work ends with the origin of Islam and many extraordinary stories of the prophet Muhammad.

The following discussion can provide a fresh perspective of Liu Zhi’s integration of theory and practice. Liu Zhi’s Islam integrates both the theoretical and practical aspects of Islam using the concept of the unity of existence. The logical order of the various grades of divine disclosure in terms of descent and ascent integrates the two aspects into one single entity, as asserted by Liu Zhi.

The unifying theme of Jami’s *Lawa’ih* is *tawhid* (the assertion of God’s unity: there is no god but God). The work deals with *tawhid* as practice and *tawhid* as theory. The first twelve Gleams focus on the ‘devotional imperative of turning one’s full attention toward the One.’

405 The remaining Gleams ‘discuss various ways in which the relationship between the true Being of the Real and the existence of the world and things can be conceptualized.’

406 It is in this second section, from the thirteenth Gleam to the end, that this work expounds the understanding of the unity of existence.

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At the time of Liu Zhi, another work of Jami, namely the *al-Lama’at*, was a standard Sufi textbook in the Scripture Hall Education System. This work primarily deals with the philosophical explanation of the unity of existence and is a challenging work for many students. In Liu Zhi’s translation of Jami’s *Lawa’ih*, Liu Zhi did not alter Jami’s structure, retaining the practical aspect in the first twelve Gleams and followed by the theoretical aspect in all subsequent chapters. Probably, Liu Zhi’s concern is not so much to put forth his revised view of the unity of existence which is similar to Wang Daiyu. Rather, his concern is to give an easy-to-read translation of Jami’s concepts. This is confirmed by his additional paragraph of explanation in the beginning of the eighteenth Gleam as explained before.

In Liu Zhi’s understanding of the unity of existence, he consulted the six grades of disclosure in Jami’s work but continued with Wang Daiyu’s simpler concept of the three Ones. While substance, function, act, *yin/yang* and others are Confucian terms, the three Ones, namely the Real, Numerical and Embodied One are not familiar Confucian terms. In his translated work of Jami, Liu Zhi generally followed Jami. In his own works, he chose to continue Wang Daiyu’s scheme of disclosure. However, Liu Zhi also fine-tuned Wang Daiyu’s concept of three Ones at the sub-grade of the second grade of disclosure. At the sub-grade of Embodied One, the following table summarizes the difference in understanding between Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Sub-grades of the Embodied One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wang Daiyu</strong>&lt;sup&gt;407&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition with knowledge 知: to inquire about and to imitate what the sages and worthies reflected upon and witnessed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>408</sup> Murata, *Sage*, 518-19. Murata describes the three grades as knowing, seeing and continuity.
so. At this level we know the name, but we do not know the reality.409

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition with seeing 見認: to transcend all the conditions so that humans recognize the Real with the body.</th>
<th>Recognition with heart seeing 心體見認: our endeavour is to understand. To understand is to see why it is so but not to be able to obtain why it is so. At this level we see the differentiation, but we do not see the union.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition with continuity 續認: to conquer entirely both selfishness and opinions of self, returning completely to the fountainhead and recognizing the Real with body while depending on no-self</td>
<td>Recognition with nature, continual knowing 性體續認: our endeavour is to be without interval. To be without interval is to be rooted in why it is so and to be undifferentiated from why it is so; this is the utmost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table illustrates the subtle differences between Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi. When Liu Zhi translated Jami’s work, he added the role of the heart in the practical aspect of Islam. Similarly, Liu Zhi’s concept of the three Ones emphasizes the role of the heart again at the sub-level of the Embodied One. The heart can acquire understanding at the differentiated level. The heart seeing is to understand the world of the acquired heaven. The goal of Liu Zhi’s minor revision is to integrate the unity of existence with the return to the Real with the emphasis on the role of the heart. While Wang discussed the heart which has different grades, Liu Zhi put greater emphasis on the role of the heart with respect to the return to the Real.

Liu Zhi used the concept of the unity of existence to integrate his understanding of God’s disclosure, anthropology and eschatology together. ‘In other words, it sets down the principle of what may be called wahda al-wujud, which is to say that it expresses the first

409 Murata, Sage, 518.
principle of Islamic thought, *tawhid* or the unity of God in terms of *wujud*. The return is a closed system of circular movement, beginning from and returning to the Real One. It begins from a spontaneous movement of the ‘heart’ that triggers the movement through invisible and visible matters in returning to the Real One, similar to Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Wahdat al-wujud* concept, namely existence and unity.

Neo-Confucianism had a similar concept of movement but in terms of a humanist aspect emphasizing self-cultivation and moral transformation through the teachings of the sage as established by many ancient sacred texts. Since the 14th century and the great work of Zhu Xi, a powerful linguistic and philosophical system with ethical concerns was in place to allow foreign ideas and concepts to be contextualized. Instead of glorifying Neo-Confucianism in the manner of Ma Zhu, Liu Zhi followed the strategy of Wang Daiyu. Liu Zhi encountered manifold challenges. Firstly, he took on Wang Daiyu’s concept of the three Ones and improved it to unity in multiplicity and simultaneously also many-in-oneness. While Neo-Confucianism was traditionally weak on theism, Liu Zhi found a common ground exploiting the concept of the Great Ultimate as defined and developed by Zhu Xi. Secondly, he re-appropriated Neo-Confucian self-cultivation for Islamic spirituality and contextualized the meanings of Islamic rituals. The practice of Islamic rituals shared common ground with Chinese self-cultivation. Thirdly, he integrated the concept of the Real and humanity with Sufi spirituality using the concept of return to the Real One. The return of Muslims to the Real is made possible because of who the prophet Muhammad is and what he has done. Liu Zhi always took care to emphasize the unique role of the Utmost Sage. Thus, integration was done perfectly and exemplarily by Muhammad, the holy sage as well as the ultimate prophet.

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411 In Chinese 一念之動.
4.3 Contemporary Scholarship on Liu Zhi’s Concept of the Unity of Existence and Disclosure

One of the major differences between Jin Yijiu in China and S. Murata in America is their view of Liu Zhi’s scheme of disclosure or structure of emanation. Jin Yijiu avers that Liu Zhi departed from monotheistic Islam. Jin argues that Liu Zhi’s pantheism is most explicit in his divine disclosure and Sufi thought. Jin believes that the Chinese school of Sufism was always influenced by the works of Neo-Platonists from India and Persia. Jin asserts that Sufism in China absorbed the theory of disclosure from Neo-Platonism and the purification of souls from Gnosticism. For Jin, Liu Zhi readily accepted these foreign ideas in Chinese Sufism as long as these Sufi Islamic concepts agreed with Neo-Confucianism.

Jin believes that Liu Zhi absorbed Neo-Platonism most clearly in his concept of divine disclosure. The disclosure of the Real as Real One, Numerical One and Embodied One means the fusion of real being with the created world. For Jin, then, theologically by the method of disclosure into various grades and philosophically through dialectical logic, the Real was manifested in the many.

One of the main supporting reasons is Jin’s assertion that Liu Zhi differed from Ibn ‘Arabi. Liu Zhi did not posit the nature and principle of all created beings within the Real One. Rather, Liu Zhi asserted that the root suchness of the Real was shared as communal root suchness. Since it is communal, it is also the root suchness of manifested things. Based on such reasons, Jin then concludes that Liu Zhi’s Islamic philosophy is fundamentally pantheistic. In his later edition of his study of Liu Zhi in 2010, his view remains unchanged.

412 Jin, Chinese Islam, 28.
413 Jin, Chinese Islam, 42.
415 Jin, Chinese Islam, 89. ‘只是劉智沒有像伊本阿拉比那樣，把宇宙的萬有的性理說成是預先存在於“真”之中，而後再顯化出來的．’
Another point of view that supports Jin is the modern understanding of Sufism. It is known that Ibn ‘Arabi’s theoretical Sufism was spread through Naqshbandi masters into the Northwestern part of China by the 17th century as demonstrated by Joseph Fletcher.\textsuperscript{417} By the beginning of the 20th century, Sufism was accused of carrying heterodox elements especially by Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935).\textsuperscript{418} However, Murata in her earlier and recent works affirms that Liu Zhi’s works which ‘provide theoretical explanations of the nature of things — God, the cosmos, the soul — belong to the Sufi tradition.’\textsuperscript{419} Liu Zhi’s ‘inspiration derived in part from the specific strands of Muslim thought least beholden to the formal elements of the tradition, namely, theoretical Sufism (what in recent Persian history has typically been called ‘irfan, “gnosis”) and philosophy.’\textsuperscript{420} Thus Murata believes that Liu Zhi’s works are traditional and in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi teaching. Liu Zhi got inspiration from this tradition and elaborated on them. Murata’s works give no hint that Liu Zhi’s Islam is pantheistic.

How Islamic are the texts written by Ibn ‘Arabi’s followers and the Sufi texts by Jami? Is Liu Zhi’s Islam heterodox? Several responses may be given.

Firstly, the present study disagrees with Jin’s interpretation. Jin argues that since Liu Zhi’s concept of the root suchness is inclusive of all the principles and manifestations of principles, Liu Zhi’s Islam is pantheistic. As explained above, the unique Real Ruler has two aspects, namely transcendence and immanence. The unique panentheistic being is inclusive of all the principles and manifestations. This interpretation of the divine being is not pantheism at all. Liu Zhi attempted to give a balanced view of both the transcendence and immanence of the Real Ruler. If Jin had consulted in depth the second chapter of The Rules and Proprieties of Islam he might have reached a different conclusion.

\textsuperscript{418} Sirriyeh, \textit{Sufis and Anti-Sufis}, 98-102.
\textsuperscript{419} Murata, \textit{Chinese Gleams}, 26.
\textsuperscript{420} Murata, \textit{Sage}, 21.
Additional support for Liu Zhi’s panentheism is found in his interpretation of Jami’s origin of transformation. In Jami’s seventeenth Gleam, the transformation is described thus:

The First Entification is an unmixed oneness and a sheer receptivity that comprises all receptivities …
It is the level of Unity, and to it belong nonmanifestation, firstness, and beginninglessness …
It is the level of One-and-allness, and to it belong manifestation, lastness, and endlessness.  

Liu Zhi translated it as:

The First Movement is the upright one and the subtle conveyance that embraces and puts together…
The level of the Only-One is the inward, the origin, and the beginning…
The level of the First-One is the outward, the derivative, and the end.  

At the second grade of disclosure, the unique Real has two aspects that Jin fails to realize in Liu Zhi’s translated text. Liu Zhi’s translation and interpretation of disclosure is consistent with Jami and in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition.

Secondly, Liu Zhi consulted over sixty different titles in the first two works of his trilogy, fifteen of them of various Sufi works. Murata indicates that many titles did not cover the fields of *Kalam* and Islamic philosophy. She asserts that Sufi works provided the theological basis for Liu Zhi. 

Liu Zhi’s choice of and preference for such sources are significant and in accordance with the spirit of scripture hall education. The Scripture Hall Education System emphasized classics which might be Sufi or non-Sufi works in Arabic or Persian and they were regarded as authoritative. While always upholding the theological significance of Islamic essential doctrines, Liu Zhi’s program of contextualization was to integrate theology proper with ethical conduct. That is, while his works do not betray Islam, they should not be tied down by Islam.

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It is beyond any reasonable doubt that Liu Zhi took the greatest care to obtain reliable Islamic sources available to him through his travel and network. The first two books of his trilogy recorded forty and forty five different sources respectively. He was well aware of unreliable Islamic texts. With respect to his last work, *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*, Liu Zhi began translating it only when he felt sure his source was dependable. He began his translation in 1710. After over ten years of solitary work and three revisions, the first draft was ready around 1721. The gap between the first two books of his trilogy and the last one is about twenty years. *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* was eventually printed in 1776 after his death. It was also the longest work produced by Liu Zhi in his lifetime. By taking careful note the number of Islamic sources he consulted, the efficient network of the Muslim education halls known in Nanjing and other major cities, the common phenomenon of scholars travelling to Beijing and various parts of China, the care that Liu Zhi took to find a reliable source and the time to carry out the work, one can safely conclude that these evidences point to the fact that Liu Zhi was prudent in finding a reliable source and translating the text. His translation, exposition and commentary works are a continuation of his received Islamic traditions in the common sense of the word orthodoxy (abiding with traditional view).

Thirdly, another issue is the question of the orthodoxy of Ibn ‘Arabi thought. The following response is an indirect one that comes from A. Knysh’s work. Knysh’s research primarily focuses on the theological disputations between the supporters and opponents of the concept of the unity of existence championed by Ibn ‘Arabi. Knysh asserts that orthodoxy and heresy is a distinctly Christian concept that should not be uncritically superimposed upon medieval Islam. For Knysh, one should take care to safeguard ‘the intrinsic pluralism and complex characteristic of the religious life of the Muslim community, leaving aside significant and sometimes critical nuances … to let it [Islamic tradition] communicate its own concerns, its own ways of articulation and interpretation of religious phenomena.’

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Knysh pleads that any Islamic researcher should not indiscriminately use the binary opposition orthodoxy/heresy with regard to Islamic history as a whole. Knysh’s fair and realistic thesis is that in ‘each period and in each region of the Islamic world, one is likely to find a particular blend of orthodox ideas. This blend, however, often proves rather unstable and subject to a drastic change as a result of redressing the political and social balance of powers.’

Knysh’s cautious reminder is appropriate in responding to Jin’s criticism and the larger issue of the orthodoxy of Ibn ‘Arabi teachings. One should not indiscriminately judge Liu Zhi’s Islamic tradition and his transmission without a careful analysis of his Islamic context. Thus, with the support from Knysh, this study asserts that Jin’s comment on Liu Zhi’s heterodoxy may not be accurate in the context of medieval Islam in pre-modern China because Liu Zhi’s works are in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. That is orthodoxy in the sense of abiding with Ibn ‘Arabi tradition.

The question of orthodoxy or heterodoxy was not relevant in the era of pre-modern China and at a time when Ibn ‘Arabi’s theology was at its zenith in Chinese Islam. Scholars who have asserted that Liu Zhi’s works were heterodox had to provide more substantial evidences by examining the Persian or Arabic source materials. It should be noted that freedom was needed because Liu Zhi attempted to define and translate often difficult and metaphysical Islamic concepts into Neo-Confucian terms with religious and metaphysical meanings. His approach to receiving and acquiring wisdom is through the person and works of the Utmost Sage Muhammad. That is, Liu Zhi’s methodological approach is Muhammad-centric. It is undoubtedly a traditional approach in accordance with Murata’s opinion of Liu Zhi’s Islam.

Knysh expounds his insightful view further. Various categories may be used to describe a pure and impure form of religion. They are usually described as binary opposites, namely, straight and deviating, lettered religious and popular vulgarized, scriptural literal and symbolic hermeneutics, genuine and corrupted, mainstream and schismatic, conformist and free thinking, and most common of all orthodox and heterodox. Such categories reflect the

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theological polyphony of the great Islamic tradition. This polyphony becomes an axiomatic fact as time progresses. Islamic thought in various parts of the Islamic world is developed by various creative thinkers in both Arabic and Persian. Such progressive development becomes a great Islamic tradition embracing a wide spectrum of Islamic thought. Furthermore, Islamic thoughts and practices need to take root in new cultural settings and cultures. Chinese Islam is necessarily different from Islam of Middle Eastern origin. Contextualized Islam which at first sight may be unrecognizable from the Middle East form is a necessary development.

Finally, Knysh opines that Ibn ‘Arabi and his school can be used as a typical case to illustrate the problem of using the category of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The great mystical thinker Ibn ‘Arabi has massive collections of writings. His thinking is complex and difficult to understand even for trained reader of Ibn ‘Arabi. For Ibn ‘Arabi, his own vision of God is the orthodox view and all others are heretics. The highest degree of knowledge of spiritual attainment is achieved by the Sufi in a state of perpetual bewilderment. While Ibn ‘Arabi is opposed by some who claim that he encourages an excessive esoteric approach, his opponent Ibn Taymiyya has also been repeatedly accused of excessive literalism. Such debate between two different approaches to the interpretation of Islam is a recurring pattern in the history of Muslim religious polemic. Thus, Knysh concludes that the use of orthodoxy and heterodoxy is a European interpretative category and not helpful. In the case of Liu Zhi’s orthodoxy and his use of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition through Jami, Knysh has provided an indirect response which is convincing.

4.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concept of the unity of existence in both short and long works of Liu Zhi. Previous scholars have focused on either one part of his trilogy or a few sections of his works. This chapter has examined his source materials, translation and

428 Knysh, ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy,’ 49-50.
429 Knysh, ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy,’ 60.
expository works, in particular his *Nature and Principle in Islam, Rules and Proprieties of Islam* and *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm*. His source materials are writings from followers of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition, in particular Jami’s *Lawa’ih*.

After examination of Liu Zhi’s free translation of Jami’s *Lawa’ih*, this chapter has shown that his effort of contextualization is to assist his readers to understand the difficult concept of the unity of existence. This translated work reveals quite clearly that Liu Zhi is faithful to Jami’s text. Unlike Wang Daiyu and Jami, Liu Zhi puts more emphasis on the role of the heart.
Chapter Five:

5.0 Liu Zhi’s Sufi Spirituality in Conversation with the Neo-Confucian Context in China

The last chapter has provided evidence that Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence, especially in his translated work, is in continuity with the Ibn ‘Arabi’ tradition. Liu Zhi did not merely regurgitate the works of Wang Daiyu or Jami. He followed closely Jami’s first grade of disclosure but adopted Wang’s concept of the three Ones and interpreted the disclosure as creative transformation in Confucian terms. Unlike Jami and Wang, Liu Zhi emphasized more the role of the heart in return to the Real Ruler. The Ibn ‘Arabi’ tradition usually locates the perfect human being at the last grade of disclosure, namely the fifth, sixth or seventh grade. However, in both Wang and Liu Zhi’s scheme, even at the second grade of the Embodied One, the nature of humanity begins to manifest. Part of the reason may contribute to the strategy of contextualization initiated by Wang which Liu Zhi then continued to develop.

While the preceding chapter has demonstrated that Liu Zhi closely followed the Ibn ‘Arabi’ tradition, this present chapter will demonstrate Liu Zhi’s use of the Neo-Confucian context as conversation partner in his contextualization. He translated a *shari‘a*-minded Sufi spirituality into Confucian self-cultivation. The first part of this chapter examines the form of popular literature intended to educate the Chinese about Confucian virtues in the early Qing dynasty. The second part is a detailed study of Liu Zhi’s *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* which has been briefly studied in Chinese by Jin and hardly even mentioned by any other scholars in English. This poem demonstrates that Liu Zhi’s contextualization is carried out in dialogue with the Chinese contexts and with the goal that the Muslim readers can understand. The third part will explicate Liu Zhi’s understanding of the pivotal role of the prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage. The final part will explain further his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* in conversation with Confucian self-cultivation.
5.1 Theological Conversation with the Chinese Culture: Neo-Confucian Classics

5.1.1. Neo-Confucian Classics in the Early Qing Dynasty

While the writings of Liu Zhi are contextualized Islamic writings, the literary form of some of his works belongs to the popular Neo-Confucian classics in the Qing Dynasty in particular his shorter treatises, namely *The Three-character Classic* and *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon*. The *Three-character Classic* adopts a more rigid structure in that each phrase consists of three Chinese characters only as shown in the parallel translation of the last chapter. Three-character Neo-Confucian classics may even have rhymed structure and help beginners to memorize the content quickly. While Liu Zhi’s *Three-character Classic* serves as an elementary text of the very basic beliefs of Islam for beginners, his *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* serves to introduce both beginners, Muslims in general and even Han literati to the basics of Sufi thought emphasizing a Sufi spirituality of the *dao*. Although each phrase of Liu Zhi’s poem is not three-character, the number of each phrase is either three- or seven-character.\(^{430}\) It has a freer style than three-character classic but still is structured. An example of Confucian classics will be introduced, namely Zhu Zi’s maxims (1627 – 1699). It was commonly used in primary education for centuries and is accessible today on the World Wide Web. The purpose of introducing this maxims is to show that Liu Zhi’s *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* conforms to the popular literary style of education in 18\(^{th}\)-century China.

Three-, five- and seven-character literary forms are commonly used in Chinese education. Zhu Zi’s maxims is known as *The Chinese Code of Success*. Only the first few phrases in the beginning of this classic are translated and in parallel format.

\[^{430}\text{The literary form is illustrated in the full text translation in the appendix.}\]
| Get up at dawn and sweep the courtyard, so that the house is clean inside and outside. | 黎明即起，灑掃庭除，要内外整潔，
(4,4,5) |
| --- | --- |
| Rest early at night. Check personally that the doors and windows are properly shut. | 既昏便息，關鎖門戶，必親自檢點。
(4,4,5) |
| When you eat, remember that food is the product of hard work. When you put on clothes, keep in mind that materials do not come by easily. | 一粥一飯，當思來處不易；
半絲半縷，恒念物力維艱。
(4,6) |
| One should repair the house before it rains and not start digging a well when he already feels thirsty. Be thrifty in satisfying your own needs, but generous in hosting a reception. | 宜未雨而綢繆，毋臨渴而掘井。
自奉必須儉約，宴客切勿流連。
(6,6) |

This classic was not written by the well-known Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi in 13th-century China but rather by the 17th-century scholar Zhu Zi. This poem was extremely popular during the Qing dynasty. 433 This classic has 522 characters and emphasizes moral development and holistic family in the context of educating and managing families. The strength of using such a literary style is the ease of memorization because the characters are simple and their meanings are easily understood. Another reason for its popularity is that a few catchy phrases can be selected, enlarged by Chinese calligraphy and posted in public

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432 The number and bracket are not in the original text. The number is the number of Chinese characters. This serves the purpose of explaining the literary form.
places. One can notice from the above parallel translation that while the literary structure is not the rigid three-character or seven-character, there is still a pattern of structure. The number of characters is illustrated above in brackets and can be seen as follows: 4,4,5 is followed by another set of 4,4,5 characters. One set is mirrored by another subsequent set of character. Other sets of number of characters in brackets above are self-explanatory. It should be noted that Liu Zhi’s Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon resembles the literary form of Zhu Zi’s maxims, a more flexible form and yet still structured. Most likely, Liu Zhi wanted to imitate the success of such a literary device and contextualized his teaching of Sufi spirituality in accordance with this popular and well known literary style.

5.1.2 The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon

(1) Contextualization of Liu Zhi’s Poem using Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism

Only Jin has briefly studied the poem and is able to note its eclectic content. He concludes that, since this poem has borrowed plenty of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist terms and ethical concepts, one should not underestimate the erudition of Liu Zhi and his understanding of Chinese contexts in his time. The following table will highlight some of the eclectic terms of this poem and give some remarks on his eclecticism. These remarks and observations have not been noted by any scholars in Chinese and English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session of the Moon</th>
<th>Eclectic Terms</th>
<th>Remarks and Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1.0 Comprehend (參悟)</td>
<td>1.0 The verb has Buddhist origin and means to understand after examination and research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

435 The word ‘comprehension’ has the sense of enlightenment which is a common Buddhist term. Fung, *Short History*, 429.
| Second | 1.0 Suffering world (苦海) | 1.0 Literally, this Buddhist term means bitter sea. It describes that the sorrow of this life is boundless and binding to all humanity.  
2.0 Meaningless encounter (妄緣) | 2.0 A Buddhist term: it describes this life in itself as meaningless and without permanence.  
3.0 Other side of dao (道岸) | 3.0 A Buddhist term: one is to stride forward and reach the realm of self-awareness.  
4.0 Mysterious gate | 4.0 For the Daoist, it refers to a mysterious gate |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
|        | 2.0 Supreme Honoured One (至尊) | 2.0 The term was commonly used by the Nestorian Christians in the sixth to seventh-century China to describe the Christian Lord.  
3.0 Great and heavenly mandate (大命, 天命) | 3.0 Mandate means destiny or the command of God. It is a Confucian term and used in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.  
4.0 Vital-energy, *Yin-yang*, Non- and Great Ultimate | 4.0 These are traditional Confucian terms usually used to describe the Confucian version of creative transformation.  
5.0 Happy excursion (逍遙) | 5.0 The term comes from the first chapter of a well-known Daoist philosopher Zhuang Zi’s book (c. 369 – c. 286). |

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437 Murata, *Sage*, 61-64.


439 Fung, *Short History*, 168.

440 The technical term of Buddhist’s understanding of suffering is *dukkha*. It also has the meaning of impermanence and imperfection. Edward Irons (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Facts On File, 2008) 168.

441 Fung, *Short History*, 413.
| Third | 1.0 Priceless pearl (明珠); seafaring (輕航) | 1.0 Buddhist terms to describe the Buddhist way to liberation. |
| | 2.0 Ninth heaven (九霄) | 2.0 Daoist term to describe the highest level of heaven where the Immortals reside. |
| | 3.0 Subtle medicine (妙藥), golden tablet (金丹) | 3.0 Common Daoist medicinal terms: Daoists attempt to use medicines to cure humanity and restore the balance of humanity with nature. |

| Fourth | 1.0 Moon mythical lady (嫦娥) | 1.0 A very popular mythical figure in Chinese folklore: she resides in the moon. |
| | 2.0 The world (凡塵) | 2.0 Literally, it means the world of dust and may mean the world that inflicts hard work. The word is used by both Buddhists and Daoists. |
| | 3.0 Jade Residence (玉樓) | 3.0 A common term in Chinese folklore: it describes the residence of immortal rulers and other spirits. |
| | 4.0 Great Void (太虛) | 4.0 Zhuang Zi interpreted the Great Void as the realm of solitary mystery. Illusion and voidness are also common Buddhist terms to designate the realms of the phenomenal and the real. |

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| Fifth  | 1.0 Essence of meaning (真諦) | 1.0 The term originates from Buddhism. Such comprehension can explain the root of mystery.  |
|        | 2.0 Highest heaven (大羅)   | 2.0 A Daoist term: it describes the highest level of heaven. |

The above table shows only some of the Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian terms. Jin gives over forty five such terms. Several initial comments may be made on the eclectic character of this poem. Firstly, while the first and second parts of Liu Zhi’s trilogy mainly employ Confucian terms to explain Islamic sciences and rites, the poem is definitely more eclectic and uses the Three Teachings of Chinese culture, namely Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, to convey the meaning of Sufi thought.

Secondly, the first session of the poem still retains the major Confucian terms that Liu Zhi consistently used to explain the various grades of disclosure, namely the Ultimate, yin-yang, mandate and others. However, the poem uses plentiful Daoist and Buddhist terms to describe the Sufi path, namely from the second to the fourth sessions of the moon. Liu Zhi contextualized his Sufi thoughts into Chinese thoughts by using all resources in the Three Teachings.

Thirdly, Buddhists conceptualize the liberation from the meaningless world as a seafaring journey. Their goal is the realm of permanence and escape from the ever-continuing wheel of life and death. While Liu Zhi disagreed with the Buddhist’s negative view of the present world, he agreed with their search for enlightenment. He portrayed the Sufi path as a way towards enlightenment or union with the Real. Daoists search for harmony between humanity and nature. Their goal is the exalted human existence. While Liu Zhi disagreed

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448 In China, the more popular Buddhist texts belong to the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism. Texts of the Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) Buddhism are not common at all. Fung, *Short History*, 399. Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, 347. Vehicle is like station which is a term frequently used in Sufi discourse.

with the Daoist’s abstract view of exalted human existence, he agreed with their worldview which was hierarchical and also comprised a belief in life after death. He selectively chose concepts in these teachings and used them for his own interpretation of Sufi thoughts.

Finally, the goal of the eclectic nature of this poem is that the readers can understand the basic message of Sufi thought. Simply put, Liu Zhi encouraged what he saw as orthodoxy, namely the right understanding of Islam. Theoretical Sufism as described in Jami’s works and its corresponding Chinese translated works is not easily accessible and it is difficult for Muslims in general to understand it. This poem is a short Sufi work and readily available in the mosque and scripture hall. It uses very familiar Chinese eclectic terms and thus easy for readers to memorize. Liu Zhi was not afraid to employ various terms of the Three Teachings. Thus, Liu Zhi’s contextualization is in active dialogue with his Chinese contexts and he regarded the Three Teachings as his conversation partners.

(2) The Chiastic Structure of the Poem

The full English translation of the poem is provided in the Appendix I.\textsuperscript{450} The translation is in a parallel format to illustrate the literary form which shows a clear chiastic structure which has not been noted in any previous scholarship. Jin has discussed the poem briefly\textsuperscript{451} but few Chinese and English scholars analyse it in depth. The first session (1.1, 1.2 and 1.3) of the moon is in clear contrast with the final session (‘1.3, ‘1.2 and ‘1.1). The contrast is between the creative transformation of the Real Being and the return to the Real Being. The second session expounds the need to seek for the way, i.e. dao, and in contrast the fourth session emphasizes various methods of Islamic endeavour. The key to the poem is the mid-third session. Sufism begins with the heart and go on to manifest itself in action resembling a seafaring journey with the goal of homebound journey to the Real Being.

\textsuperscript{450} There are many versions with minor variations available in books and on the World Wide Web. We use the same version as Jin. See Jin, \textit{Chinese Islam}, 323-24.
1.1 Undifferential Being
1.2 Ultimate Nonbeing and Great Ultimate
1.3 Divine predestination and human religious endeavour

2.1 The meaninglessness of life and daily activities
2.2 The need for discipline and seeking of *dao*
2.3 The need for the Sufi master to direct the right way

3.1 The *dao* in the heart-mind
3.2 The Sufi seafaring journey
   ‘3.1 Vision experience and life healing
   ‘2.3 The possibility of heavenly and earthly union
   ‘2.2 The need to eliminate any turbid substance
   ‘2.1 The need for three vehicles and endeavours to achieve real humanity

‘1.3 The eschatological ending by union of both divine and human
‘1.2 Descent, ascent and the union of the arcs
‘1.1 Return to the non-differential Real Being

Some preliminary observations can be made. In the first session of the moon, Liu Zhi expounded his concept of creative transformation. This provides the theological basis for humankind to strive for religious endeavor. He briefly discussed the characteristics of the Real Being and how it transformed the world of principle, the innate heaven, the world of guise/image and the disclosure in the acquired heaven. In the state of non-differentiation, the Real Being is hidden and tranquil. There is no substance, function and act. Yet the Real Being is truly eternal, unlimited without beginning or end. The manifestation began when the Real Being began to differentiate. The use of Neo-Confucianized terms is clearly demonstrated by employing terms like the Great Ultimate, Ultimate Nonbeing and the relationship between the two concepts. Such a familiar Chinese concept has the power of
contextualizing the transformation using Neo-Confucian terms. Liu Zhi equated the Real Being with the Neo-Confucian concept of Ultimate Nonbeing. The first session ends forcibly with the need to pursue religious endeavor. Eventually, the ensuing eschatological event of judgment and reward will be the end.

The second session takes up the preceding argument of the last session by emphasizing the reality that one should take seriously the Sufi endeavor. For Liu Zhi, such an endeavour should be undertaken by every Muslim. The first part of this session explains the meaninglessness of the present life. The mid part emphasizes the importance of the dao. The end brings out the importance of the Sufi master for guidance in seeking the right endeavour.

In the third session, Liu Zhi moves from the external ritual observance to internal purity in pursuit of religious endeavour. At the ending of this session, Liu Zhi emphasized that the dao dwells inside humanity. This is also the part where Liu Zhi employed the Sufi wisdom. As illustrated from the chiastic diagram, the central theme is clearly the seeking of the pearl treasure, starting off the seafaring journey and ending with the return by ascent to the homeland.

The fourth session begins with a very popular Chinese moon lady myth but still continues to emphasize the Sufi pursuit, both external rituals and inner spirituality. This is a genuine contextualization of Islamic wisdom with Chinese folklore, not just a mere intellectual Neo-Confucianism in that the moon legend story has been deeply rooted in the Chinese seasonal mid-Autumn festival celebration. The fourth session has literary parallels with the second session in that it pours contempt on all the meaninglessness of this present life.

The fifth session begins with Islam’s eschatological return emphasizing the concept of return to the Real Being. The theme of descent and ascent is like the descending and ascending arc. While the creative transformation begins with the Real Being, the return is by both divine and human and forms the eventual enclosed whole circle.
(3) Comments and Analysis of the Poem

Firstly, it should be noted that Liu Zhi’s *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* is extremely popular even today not only within the Xi Dao Tang Scripture Hall Education System of the Hui Muslims in Northwest China but also in other branches of Chinese Islam. An abstract of the poem in two literary parallel stanzas may sometimes be hung on the side wall at the mosque entrance gate. Sometimes, the poem is sculptured onto a stele or hard wood e.g. in Yunnan province. In the province of Gansu, it is found that the whole poem was hung on a wall in a Hui community of Ningxia. Muslim children memorize the poem which they have learnt from their parents by oral tradition even though children may not know the meaning of the poem. Islamic themes are progressively developed from the first session to the end, i.e. the nature of Real Being, creative transformation, role of the heart, endeavour, seeking, revealing *dao*, teaching *dao*, sapientia in terms of upward path,\(^452\) nurturing inner nature,\(^453\) bearing fruits and end time return to the Real Being. All these themes are expounded in greater depth in Liu Zhi’s trilogy. While the prophet Muhammad is not explicitly mentioned, there is particular emphasis on seeking a Sufi master and being guided by him forward onto the mystical path.

Secondly, the literary format of the poem closely resembles the late Ming and early Qing Neo-Confucian or Daoist poem. The poem does not fall into the rigid literary and rhyming requirement of Neo-Confucian poetry which has strict literary structure and rhyming rules. Nevertheless, the literary form of Liu Zhi’s poem is carefully crafted and tightly arranged. The usual format of Neo-Confucian poems has phrases consisting of three, five, six and seven characters as illustrated in the beginning of this chapter. However, the first, second and third stanza of each session of the moon is structured tightly. The following parallel translation of the first stanza of the first session of the moon is provided below to illustrate the literary form.

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\(^452\) In Chinese 登霄.
\(^453\) In Chinese 養性.
In the beginning of the first session, the moon begins to appear. Comprehend the Real Ruler that has no form or image. Its subtlety is not known and is non-designated. It has no boundary and exists as the real reality.\textsuperscript{454}

It is unique without beginning and end; the Supreme Honoured one without any partner.

Creative transformation begins.

Principle and image are completed. The great mandate is installed and there is an open door to other forms of creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>\textbf{Liu Zhi’s poem consists of a number of characters in the sequence of 3, 3, 7; 3, 3, 7; 7, 7; 3, 3, 7} in each of the three stanzas of each session. This is illustrated in numbers within the bracket in the table above. Each stanza of the poem has eleven phrases and has exactly a total of fifty three Chinese characters; six phrases of three-character and five phrases of seven-character. This sequence of the number of Chinese characters is repeated for the rest of the whole poem, namely fifteen such stanzas (three stanzas in each session and five sessions in all). Undoubtedly, the poem can be sung in different catchy musical tunes for easy memorization. Phrases and sentences are short. The meaning of each Chinese character is concise but when putting three- or seven-characters together, the phrase has profound linguistic versatility. The three-character phrases are catchy and can be memorized easily. The seven-character phrases can convey more difficult theological concepts and expound metaphysical thoughts. It is due to Liu Zhi’s mastery of literary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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\textsuperscript{454} The great transformation in the beginning session of the moon follows closely the initial stage of the great transformation of the Real in the first chapter of Liu Zhi’s Nature and Principle in Islam. It is also in continuation with Wang Daiyu’s concept of great transformation.

\textsuperscript{455} The number and brackets are not in the original text. The number is the number of Chinese characters. This serves the purpose of explaining the literary form.
devices that many preface writers of his works praised the artistic and literary achievement of Liu Zhi’s writings.

Thirdly, Liu Zhi contextualized Sufi ideas in terms of three vehicles.\textsuperscript{456} A vehicle bears a load. With the vehicle, the seekers can carry all manner of standards and morals. Thus, a vehicle embodies the law of rituals. According to Liu Zhi, the first vehicle is the ritual, second is the path and third is truth.\textsuperscript{457}

The first is called the vehicle of ritual (\textit{shari’a}). It consists of both the way of heaven and the way of humanity. It is the regulation of every matter and act. This is the means of adopting the law for the one who is diligent in cultivating virtue and who respects his own vocation.\textsuperscript{458} The vehicle of path (\textit{tariqa}) is the second vehicle. It is the stage of the law that fully contains the universal principle of humankind and of all phenomena, as well as the completion of human potentiality in accordance with heaven. This is the means of adopting the law for the one who probes into principle and completes nature.\textsuperscript{459} The third vehicle is the truth or principle (\textit{haqiqa}). It fully contains the concept of ‘no-self’ and ‘no-thing’. It contains the subtle words and the symbolic language of the total integration of humankind and heaven. This is the means of adopting the law for the one who restrains his ego and fulfils the truth.\textsuperscript{460} These three vehicles are under the totality of the law of vehicles which transcends even the highest of the spiritual levels. The law of three vehicles is the method of disciplining selfish desires. Yet, above the three vehicles there is the single law of a

\textsuperscript{456} In Chinese 三乘. Jin asserts that the concept of three vehicles is often expressed in terms of boat, sea and treasure or seed, tree and fruit. Jin, Sufism in China, 167.
\textsuperscript{457} 一曰禮, 二曰道, 三曰真. 禮者, 日用肆應之儀則也, 實踐之于其身. 道者, 卻物還真之趨向也, 實踐之于其心. 真者, 即本然, 合而為禮與道之實際也, 實踐之于其性. 實踐之于其性, 即實踐之于本然矣.
乘, 載也. 載諸法義, 以備求道者次第取法也. 初曰禮乘, 總載天道人道, 一切事功之條例. 此勤德敬業者所取法也. 進曰道乘, 總載人理物理, 盡人合天之法程. 此窮理盡性者所取法也. 終曰理乘, 又名真乘, 總載無理, 天人一致之微言, 此克己完真者所取法也. 勸德敬業所以修身也, 穷理盡性所以明心; 心不明, 不可以見性; 性不見, 不可以合天. 性之不可見, 己私之蔽也. 三乘之法, 己私之礪也. 三乘之上更有超乘一法, 則天人化矣, 名跡泯矣, 非語言文字可傳, 待其人自會耳.
\textsuperscript{458} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 180.
\textsuperscript{459} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 182.
\textsuperscript{460} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 183.
supreme, transcendent vehicle, by which heaven and man may be transformed and merged. At this level names and appearances are dissolved. This state cannot be communicated by spoken or written language. Only the individual himself can fully understand it, and then only experientially. This single law is used by Liu Zhi as a supreme vehicle, rather than the *shari‘a* used by the Sufi master.

Frankel notes that Liu Zhi’s law of three vehicles bears resemblance to Sufi discourse. “The hierarchy of spiritual progress as described in Sufi literature is generally divided into three ascending, interdependent levels.” As Jin puts it, the three vehicle law is often compared to different analogies e.g. firstly the analogy of an orange consisting of the peel, orange slice and the seed; secondly the analogy of a tree consisting of the seed, the stem and fruit; lastly the analogy of an egg consisting of the egg shell, egg white and the yoke. Other scholars classify the three vehicles as the boat, sea and the pearl treasure. The purpose of boarding the boat is to launch it into the sea. It symbolizes that the search involves hard work and strenuous striving with the need for courage in taking on risks.

In Jin’s study of Sufism in China, he avers that Islamic scholars in 16th-19th century China often affirmed three vehicles, occasionally even four vehicles. These Muslim literati, including Liu Zhi, expounded the three vehicles idea in their own particular ways or expressions. The difference among them was minor and might be due to their respective sources or schools of Sufism. They agreed that the concept of three vehicles was an overarching principle of Sufism. Jin argues that “from low level striving for higher level, the ultimate purpose [of seekers] is to seek the pearl, the manifestation of real light and obtain what the holy sage has obtained.” While Liu Zhi’s trilogy discusses generally Sufi thought and spirituality using the concept of the unity of existence and return to the Real Ruler through rules and proprieties of Islam, *The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* clearly gives more emphasis on the characteristics of the Sufi way.

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Fourthly, Liu Zhi’s work emphasizes practical knowledge. Islamic wisdom is not so much about mystical paths. Rather, wisdom concerns daily Islamic living as a true Muslim. As a result of his editing work, Liu Zhi was able to present Chinese Islam in a way that was more easily acceptable by both the Qing ruling elites and the ubiquitous Hans. Simultaneously, he also convinced his own Hui Muslims that Islamic faith was creditable. On the one hand, Chinese Muslim literati like Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, reformed the Islamic tradition by transmitting texts into Chinese and that facilitated the propagation of the Islamic faith. On the other hand, Muslim literati who were competent in Neo-Confucianism also might excel in the Qing examination system. By directly competing with other Chinese literati and excelling, they could earn official posts in the government. Thus, Chinese Muslims could raise their social status, join the status quo and simultaneously increase the acceptability of Islam in China. For survival and propagation, it was desirable for Liu Zhi and others to be both Muslims and Neo-Confucian literati.

Fifthly, an important and specific point of contextualization should be noted with reference to the key concept of seafaring journey in the chiastic structure of Liu Zhi’s poem. Liu Zhi made modification and revision of a Buddhist concept. The middle stanza of the third session of the moon is translated as follows:

In the mid third session, the moon is moving. A treasure pearl hides at the seabed. Stride quickly towards the journey and set sail for the sea. The turbulent waves keep coming as if you are being sucked into a dragon’s den. You are tormented by limitless sufferings. Yet, the reward is to reap the priceless treasure pearl. Be alert and stand firm to defend. Don’t fool around. For wealth and honour, seek to return back to the home country.\(^\text{466}\)

The seafaring journey and attempt to land on the other shore are a common theme in Chinese Buddhism. The Buddhist way of living is to realize the meaningless value of materials in the transient world, practice regular meditation, cumulate merits of good work and secure eternal permanence in this life or afterlife. This way of contemplative and non-

\(^{466}\) Appendix I.ii-iv.
competitive living is described figuratively as a seafaring journey. Landing on the other shore is described as the attachment to the realm of permanence. The Buddhist teacher Dao Sheng (c.374 – c. 434) in 5th-century China believed that sudden enlightenment and reaching the other shore of the sea journey were possible in this life. Fung explains Dao’s teaching as follows:

The Buddhists use the metaphor of “reaching the other shore” to express the idea of achieving Nirvana. Tao-sheng [Dao Sheng] says: “As to reaching the other shore, if one reaches it, one is not reaching the other shore. Both not-reaching and not-not-reaching are really reaching. This shore here means birth and death; the other shore means Nirvana. … The world of Buddha is simply here in this present world.”

Dao’s work asserts that humans have Buddha-nature originally within them. By learning and practising the Buddhist way of living, humans can ‘see’ their own Buddha-nature. This ‘seeing’ may happen suddenly and is called sudden enlightenment. Alternatively, Buddhists may also have gradual enlightenment. That is, Buddhists’ accumulation of learning serves as the proper way to free the mind from human ignorance of their Buddha-nature. So, Dao supported both sudden and gradual enlightenment.

Murata notes a hadith of Hidden Treasure. She says that God replied to king David: ‘I was a Hidden Treasure, and I love to be recognized (ahbabtu an u’raf); so I created the creatures that I might be recognized.’ In Liu Zhi’s poem, the Sufi path is to seek the hidden treasure by a seafaring journey. The treasure is a priceless pearl and lays hidden in the deep seabed.

By comparing the teaching of the seafaring journey, hidden treasure and the other shore as they appear in the Buddhist and Islamic exhortation to endeavours, one can note the similarities and differences. Both of them emphasize the importance of permanence. For

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467 Fung, Short History, 412-14.
468 Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 274-75.
469 Murata, Sage, 44.
Dao Sheng, liberation is the ultimate escape of the wheel of death and birth, namely *Nirvana*. For Liu Zhi, the final goal is the union with the Real Ruler. Both of them emphasize that humans have inner ability to reach the goal. For Dao, it is the inherent Buddha-nature in humans that enables them to reach the goal. For Liu Zhi, when God created the first human, he taught him all the names of God. This means that the understanding of the unity of existence is innate to human nature. Liu Zhi said at the end of second session that the *dao* included heaven and earth but humans also included the *dao*. Both of them emphasize reaching a goal. For Dao Sheng, the goal is to reach the other shore or to be enlightened. For Liu Zhi, the goal is to reach the treasure and return home.

The above specific example may give some clues to Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization. He adopted this concept of seafaring journey from the Buddhist’s idea of reaching the other shore. He revised and presented it as seeking a hidden treasure in the deep seabed. He further modified the Buddha-nature in Buddhists and the seafaring journey as a Sufi path with the goal of the self-realization and return to the Real. Liu Zhi adopted the similarities but rejected the differences between Islam and Buddhism. His contextualization is carried out skillfully by using the language of the Chinese contexts and communicating a Sufi concept.

A question may be asked. Should Liu Zhi adopt the Confucian spiritual cultivation rather than the Buddhist enlightenment to explain the Sufi path in his poem? This is a valid question as Liu Zhi contextualized Islamic rites primarily in Confucian terms in his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Two possible answers may be given. Firstly, the linguistic power of a poem is to communicate powerfully a message with various images. The description of the roaring sea, the deep seabed, the hidden treasure and a light ship in this part of the poem can add to the drama of the seafaring journey or the Sufi path. Liu Zhi’s adoption of the Buddhist’s concept may be due to the literary device of the poem. The second answer may even be more plausible. The concern of the poem is to teach the Sufi path and it is a poem

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471 Murata, *Sage*, 42.
of Sufism. Through the three vehicles (in the third stanza of the fourth session) or the rites of Islam, the Sufi can achieve self-realization. This is orthopraxis which is not merely intellectual or legalistic practice alone. This is right doing in the Sufi way. Liu Zhi adopted the Buddhist imagery of journey because it explained the Sufi way better than the Confucian spiritual cultivation. Fung explained the difference in spiritual practice between Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism: ‘while the Buddha must promote his spiritual cultivation outside of society and the human world, the Sage must do so within these bonds.’ Basically, the goal of self-realization of Sufis is not sagehood that emphasizes harmonious relationship within human society and between humanity and the world. The goal of self-realization is union with the Real Ruler. Thus, the Sufi goal is similar to Buddhism in that it primarily focuses on the Sufis themselves and their realizations. This may explain another aspect of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. He adopted a Chinese context that was most appropriate for his poem. While Liu Zhi explained Islamic concepts primarily in Confucian terms, he was erudite enough to choose other more appropriate Buddhist concept to interpret the Sufi path.

Finally, while the focus of the poem is on the Sufi path, the general teaching of Sufism is consistent with Liu Zhi’s teaching in *The Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. From a general perspective, it is clear that the account of the first session of the moon is a very concise summary of various grades of disclosure in *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. The appearance of the perfect human being or ultimate human is the final grade of disclosure. However, the name of the prophet Muhammad is not mentioned but he is called the human ultimate or the perfect man. While the second to fourth sessions primarily discuss the Sufi way in eclectic terms, the role of the heart in self-cultivation is once again emphasized in both the second and fourth session. So, mere intellectual understanding is not sufficient for the Sufi path. Orthopraxis begins with the heart. The fourth session highlights obedience to the Ruler and rites of Islam expressed as

472 Fung, *Short History*, 444.
the three vehicles in *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. The fifth session shows explicit 18th-century Chinese Sufism as it discusses the arc of descent and ascent, return to the root suchness and differentiation becoming non-differentiation. Simply put, the basic teachings in Liu Zhi’s major works are summarized in his poem.

The existence of the world is not merely an accident but it exists because of divine self-disclosure. Human existence without recognizing the Real Being is meaningless and futile. A seeker’s path begins with a sincere and obedient heart. This seeker needs to seek guidance by the Sufi master and he starts with the five pillars of Islam and other Islamic proprieties. The journey has the explicit characteristics of a Sufi path. The seeker practices good works and seeks control of his inner self, emphasizing both exoteric and esoteric aspects of Islam. He should empty himself and arrive at union with the Real Ruler. The above poem succinctly summarizes Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought.

It is too simplistic and without sufficient evidence for anyone to assert that Liu Zhi’s Islam is sinicized or Confucianized just by a mere observation of the plentiful use of Confucian, Daoist or Buddhist terms in this poem or in any of Liu Zhi’s works. Based on the analysis above, it is more appropriate to say that the framework of this poem has been demonstrated to be truly compliant with to Sufi thoughts and the eclectic terms are chosen carefully and selectively as interpretation tool. As a skillful translator and an erudite cultural agent, Liu Zhi was able to contextualize Sufi ideas in Chinese terms. The poem represents a simplified and poetic version of the basic message in Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*.

5.2 Liu Zhi’s Theological Conversation with Neo-Confucian Sagehood: *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*

5.2.1 Examination of Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*

This section will argue that Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* is in accordance with the concept of the perfect man in the Ibn ʿArabi tradition. While Liu Zhi
attempted to depict Muhammad as a contextualized Chinese sage for his Muslim readers, he clearly presented to them a unique sage, very different from all the holy sages in the Confucian tradition. Some sections of this work will be translated. An examination of his theological conversation with the Neo-Confucian sagehood will also be presented.

Isaac Mason translated and edited *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* nearly a century ago. Both Murata and D. Leslie have briefly examined this work. Liu Zhi’s work is most probably based on the 14th-century Persian work, *Tarjama-yi mawlud-i Mustafa* by ‘Afif ibn Muhammad Kaziruni. However, Liu Zhi ‘also condenses the text drastically and adds material from other sources.’ Mason commented on Liu Zhi’s work as follows:

[I]t puts the best construction on all the acts of the Prophet, and credits him with virtues and powers which he himself never claimed, yet adds nothing heroic or noble to a character which has come down to us as a strange mixture of sincerity and inconsistency; of benevolence and cruelty; of self-restraint and self-indulgence; of faith, doubt, and superstition: these are some of the qualities associated with Mohammad, as found in this and other records of the Prophet of Arabia.

S. Zwemer who wrote a foreword in Mason’s book, asserted that from the critical standpoint, Liu Zhi’s work was of little value because he had added to the story of Muhammad’s life in order to whitewash it. Murata comments that ‘Liu Chih [Zhi] retells many of the stories in ‘Afif’s work and follows the same general order … he freely adapts the stories to fit the needs of Chinese narrative; among other things, his version places a far greater stress on the supernatural elements than does the original.’ However, Liu Zhi’s contextualization of the life of Muhammad is carried out with great care. Zwemer was

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474 Mason, *Arabian Prophet* (1921). Liu Zhi’s work has 20 chapters but Mason only translated 18 chapters and deleted the rest because he said that sufficient account had been given of the life of the prophet Muhammad to give the English readers a fair view of Muhammad as known to Muslims in China. Mason, *Arabian Prophet*, 264. The chapter division in Mason’s translation and that in Liu Zhi’s differs slightly but the main bulk concerns the life stories of Muhammad.

475 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 34.

476 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 34.


479 Murata, *Chinese Gleams*, 34.
mistaken in saying that this work was of little value as it accorded with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition of the idea of the perfect man. Such work may contribute to a better understanding of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition in 18th-century China and the model of contextualization undertaken by Liu Zhi.

Murata affirms the significance of the unique nature of Muhammad (nature of continuity, 繼性) in the works of Liu Zhi. Firstly, the concept of the perfect man in the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition forms the background of Liu Zhi’s understanding of humanity in his *Nature and Principle in Islam*. In chapter four of *The Nature and Principle in Islam*, Liu Zhi used the term ‘human ultimate’ (人極). In Neo-Confucian thought, the human ultimate is one who unites with the Great Ultimate (太極).

Secondly, Murata also distinguishes between Muhammadan Reality and Spirit. What is Muhammadan Reality? Murata says that ‘In Ibn ‘Arabi’s terms, the Muhammadan Reality is the Logos as uncreated root of all things, embracing and comprising all the divine names and attributes in an undifferentiated, unitary manner; it is a prototype of the whole cosmos in divinis, and is no different from God himself.’ What is the Muhammadan Spirit? The Muhammadan Spirit is the mandate which is neither God nor creation and stands between Real Being and absolute nothingness. It also brings God and others together. God began the process of creation by the Muhammadan Spirit which Liu Zhi called the nature of the Utmost Sage. Thus,

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483 Murata, *Sage*, 262. Murata says that ‘from the viewpoint of the Descending Arc, the seed of all principles and vital energies — the Muhammadan Reality or Logos — gives rise to the Ascribed or Muhammadan Spirit (Mandate), which embraces all natures and principles.’ The Mandate has two aspects, namely ontological and moral. ‘The Mandate is the means whereby Heaven bestows nature, and nature gives us our humanity … we need to cultivate our souls, polish our hearts, and clarify our root substance. The only way to do so is to follow the teaching of the sages.’ Murata, *Sage*, 63.
the significance of the person of Muhammad is his nature which is known as the nature of
the continuity (繼性) of the Utmost Sage. This nature is related not directly to the
Muhammadan Reality but the Muhammadan Spirit. This Spirit is often known as the
mandate (literal: destiny) which is a common Confucian term.

Liu Zhi followed the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi through Razi’s work and asserted the unique
role of the nature of the continuity of Muhammad both in the innate and the acquired
heaven. Liu Zhi’s depiction of the life and record of Muhammad in his *True Record of the
Utmost Sage of Islam* was consistent with his earlier teaching of the human ultimate in *The
Nature and Principle in Islam* and *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* but in simpler narratives
and short discourses.

*The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* is divided into twenty chapters with the first
chapter as the introduction. This introduction is important as it highlights the unique
importance of Muhammad in Islam. It provides explanations of his uniqueness, exaltation
and the unique role of cosmic return to the Real. Most of his teachings on Muhammad have
been covered in his earlier works but this introduction gives the reader a concise and simple
summary of Liu Zhi’s understanding of Muhammad with respect to the proprieties of Islam
and the return to the Real. From the third chapter, Liu Zhi recorded the life history of
Muhammad chronologically from birth to death at the end of the fifteenth chapter. The last
four chapters are appendices which Liu Zhi himself added. Firstly, selected sections of the
introductory, first and second chapter are translated to provide an insight into Liu Zhi’s
teachings on Muhammad. Secondly, a section of the seventh chapter is translated about the
beginning of Islam in China. Finally, a selected section of the eighteenth chapter will be
translated and it shows clearly Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Muhammad’s teachings in
Neo-Confucian terms.

In the introductory chapter, Liu Zhi introduced the foundational concept of the prophet
Muhammad, emphasizing his exceptional characteristics. The translations below affirm the
superiority of the prophet Muhammad from the land of Arabia and he is very different from any Chinese sage.

The introductory chapter gives an account of the honour and nobility of Muhammad.

Humankind is honourable in heaven and earth. Among humankind, there are sages, worthies, wise and foolish. The sages are most honourable. Among sages, they are further classified into ordinary, ambassador, great and utmost. The Utmost Sage is the highest. Muhammad is the highest sage of all time and of all places and is called the Utmost Sage …

At the beginning of creative transformation, humanity is classed by the principle (li) into nine groups. The Utmost Sage is the highest. After taking the form, humans take on nine groups of image. The image of the Utmost Sage is perfect. His principle is perfect …

The principle and image of all things are to be found within the compass of the nine heavens and the seven earths. The heavens are superior to the earths and the Aershi surpasses the heavens. The nature and principle of the Utmost Sage were situated at the Aershi. Therefore, he is more honourable than any in all the heavens and the earths …

The ancestors of the Utmost Sage, going right back to Adam, never worshipped idols or prayed to heathen gods. This virtue of the ancestors nourished and cultivated generation after generation, culminating in the Utmost Sage. He is the most honourable in accumulated virtue.

Muhammad is also described to have existence in both the innate heaven and the acquired heaven.

From the time of the ancients, there have been many sages. Muhammad is the Utmost Sage. It is so called because he has all required virtues. His transformation is thorough. Through his whole body, the Real Ruler emanates to become the great function … the Spirit of the Utmost Sage existed before the heaven and the earth. He is the fruit of all sages. While the heaven and earth are big, they are nurtured by the Utmost Sage. The spirits of ten thousand sages are under his shadow and they have life.

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487 Murata avers that Aershi derives from the Arabic ‘arsh’ which means the throne of God in Qur’an 20:5. Murata argues that Liu Zhi understood Aershi as the nature of the Utmost Sage. Alternatively, the term Aershi means the Ascribed Spirit blown into Adam, the Mandate. Murata, Sage, 58-59.

488 Appendice II. i-ii.

489 The Muhammadan Spirit is interpreted as the Mandate which is a common Confucian term. Liu Zhi affirmed the spirit of the prophet Muhammad existed before heaven and earth. In this respect, the Utmost Sage is totally different from the Chinese sages. In the case of Razi in his Path, God began the process of creation by firstly creating the Muhammadan Spirit. Murata, Sage, 58-59.
from him. Although he is the descendent of Adam with respect to form, his spirit is really before Adam. His teaching embraces ten thousand teachings. His rule collects and completes ten thousand rules. His way excels ten thousand ways and is upright, illuminates like the sun and moon, as long-lasting as the heaven and earth. … With regard to his teaching, it has been attested by all later generations to be enduring. Its principle (li 理) is clear; meaning is articulate; literary artistry is excellent and above other literature. These prove that the Ruler reveals the sacred texts. Those who are obedient to the teaching, they are not tempted away by any riches and fame. Their ways are not blocked and this truth is proved by all who obey the way.490

In the second chapter, Muhammad is described as the integrator of creative transformation from the beginning to the end.

Transformation begins in the innate heaven, initiated by the great mandate. The great mandate is the act of all true principle (li 理). From the great mandate, there is the nature of continuity which is the root suchness of the Utmost Sage.491 All other natures of the sages derive from him, including the nature of worthies. From the nature of worthies, all other natures like the ignorant … This is called exhausting the nature and principle and getting to the mandate. This is known as the descent and ascent of the great transformation. Likewise, this is also the way of humanity in the descent and ascent. Since the beginning of humankind, only the person Muhammad can achieve the ascent. He embraces the whole transformation from the beginning to the end. Thus, all return can benefit with Muhammad as the goal of return…

Why is Muhammad called the Utmost Sage? How could the Utmost Sage include the great transformation? The great transformation stops at the Utmost Sage but this is not the end. The Utmost Sage continues the transformation to its completion. All individual transformation has its own aspect and is one-sided but the Utmost Sage’s transformation covers all aspects. Thus, he can continue the work of the Real Ruler in the great transformation. He returns the transformation to the Real Ruler. He is the man from heaven and from the earth to heaven. He becomes the axis of transformation. Anyone who is not led by the sage’s transformation, he will go astray and deviate from the way. He is lost from the real way.492

490  Appendix II. i-ii.
491  Root suchness can be paraphrased as ‘without beginning and already in existence’. It can mean the root substance.
492  Appendix II.iv-vi.
The above translations clearly demonstrate the superb honour, nobility and existence of Muhammad. Above all, he is the axis of creative transformation and serves as the mediator between the heaven and earth.

In the seventh chapter, Liu Zhi recorded the story of first messenger sent by the prophet Muhammad to China.\textsuperscript{493} This story has been intensely studied by both scholars in the West and some scholars in China.

In the first year of the Prophetship of Muhammad, there was seen in the sky a strange star, the Chinese emperor Su Wei Ti commanded his astronomer to tell him the meaning. He said, ‘there would be an extraordinary person appearing in the West.’ The emperor sent an envoy to investigate …

The prophet sent his uncle Sa‘ad ibn Abi Waqqas and three others to go with the envoy to China…

The emperor Wen Ti hung up the portrait of the prophet and worshipped it, and when he arose, the scroll was there but the picture had vanished … The disappearance of the picture was due to the wonderful influence of the prophet. The emperor, alarmed, said, “It must really be that he is the Pure Emperor and the True Prince”.\textsuperscript{494}…

The account of the entry of the religion … is given in detail in several Chinese histories, so it can be proved. The story of the worshipping of the portrait is not recorded in the histories; but it has been handed down by tradition, and may be seen recorded on stone tablets, so must not be rejected.\textsuperscript{495}

The historicity and accuracy of Liu Zhi’s record has been extensively debated and the consensus of opinion amongst contemporary scholars agrees that Liu Zhi’s record above is not accurate. However, it seems that Liu Zhi does not intentionally falsify the record. Scholars in the West and China have given different interpretations according to their perspectives. From the perspective of Liu Zhi’s contextualization, it may be enlightened to analyse this story in the light of this whole work. This will be done in the next section of analysis. Another interesting chapter from the perspective of contextualization is the eighteenth chapter.

\textsuperscript{493} Depending on edition and version of \textit{The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam}, this story might be recorded in the sixth chapter.
\textsuperscript{494} Mason, \textit{Arabian Prophet}, 94.
\textsuperscript{495} Appendice II.vi-vii.
Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* has a chapter, namely the eighteenth chapter, on Muhammad’s deeds and teachings. This appendix was added by Liu Zhi himself to make this work more complete. Not only does it record the life history of Muhammad, but also his deeds and words are recorded in this additional chapter. This chapter offers thirty five concise discourses and includes demeanor, virtue, learning, bathing, worship, remembrance of the Lord, fasting, alms tax, pilgrimage, speech, moving and resting, father and mother, progeny, marriage, husband and wife, brothers, slaves and servants, interacting with people, dealing with things, banquets, dealing with disciples, making friends, harmonizing with neighbors, arts and career, pleading, travel, negotiation, healing, divination, interpreting dreams, dwelling, clothing, eating and drinking and visiting the sick. One example of discourses deals with learning and it is a very common and important Neo-Confucian theme.

Knowledge refers to the knowledge of the Real Ruler. One who seeks is not an ignorant and a seeker begins to learn. Seeking is indeed the beginning of learning. It is not shameful for a seeker to ask questions and a teacher should not withhold answers. It says, ‘regardless of age or social class, anyone who can give benefit to learning is my teacher.’ Day and night, ask the Lord to give you beneficial learning and avoid unhealthy habits. One rule of caution for the learner, it says, ‘if one is close to learners, then one learns. If one works with greedy people, one is lost. Do not take in any unhealthy learning.’ Befriend literati and honourable people. Do not let selfish desire blind you. Do not be poisoned by heresy …

Myriad things are established in sincerity. Make your heart steady, your will upright. Then, things turn out pleasantly. It says, ‘teaching is to clarify the way and for the service of the Lord. The way is manifested by learners’ humility and carefulness. The principle of things is important as it can distinguish between understanding and misunderstanding. Do not give up even if you cannot understand just one principle…… If you are diligent to learn Islam, you can broaden the horizon of benevolence and righteousness …

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496 This eighteenth chapter is not translated by Isaac Mason in his work *The Arabian Prophet.*

5.2.2 Comments and Analysis

Several comments on Liu Zhi’s contextualization of the prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage in this work should be noted. Unlike other scholars who examine a few sections or paragraphs, this analysis is based on the whole of this work and also takes into consideration other works of Liu Zhi including shorter tracts and other longer works. The first two comments focus on the introductory and first chapter. The third comment deals with the story of the beginning of Islam in China. The final comment will discuss the Confucianization of the prophet Muhammad’s teaching on deeds.

Firstly, in terms of the layout of the work, Liu Zhi began with the honour, nobility and superiority of the prophet Muhammad in the first few chapters. The prophet Muhammad is unique and superior to any holy sage. Thus, Islam with its Utmost Sage is a noble and honourable religion. In the seventh chapter, Liu Zhi’s narrative of the beginning of Islam in China takes place at the imperial court and under the protection of the emperor. The spread of Islam into China was as early as the Sui dynasty (581 – 618). While he was not aware of the inaccuracy of his source materials, he emphasized that his sources and evidences were convincing enough. After the life history of Muhammad, Liu Zhi added several appendices to this work. The reason for this addition is most likely his method of contextualization. In the eighteenth chapter, Liu Zhi discussed the deeds and actions of Muhammad. He explained them in full Confucian terms. The Confucian tradition fully complied with the deeds and teaching of the prophet Muhammad. It may be deduced from the general flow and development within this work that although Islam is a very different religion from the Middle East and Muhammad is the one and only Utmost Sage, the rules and proprieties of Islam are consistent with the Confucian tradition. Liu Zhi used the whole of this chapter to emphasize the compatibility. In addition, the approval and spread of Islam was carried out at the imperial level in China. This constitutes Islam as a valid and complementary alternative to the official Three Teachings in China. The narrative and teaching of The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam is itself an outward and clear presentation of Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization. Islam with its Utmost Sage is uniquely distinctive and yet it is consistent with the Confucian tradition.
This is a long work of Liu Zhi. The narrative style, easy-to-follow chronological presentation of the life history of Muhammad, mythical stories of death and resurrection, stories of overcoming betrayal, treachery, seemingly supported by evidences, records, date of events and others have made this work very appealing for general readership. After reading this work, Muslims may be encouraged to obey faithfully the Real Ruler. They try to imitate the example of the Utmost Sage and eventually they also obey the rites of Islam, just like any literati who have followed the Confucian learning, not merely intellectually but with their hearts. The story and teaching in this work can reveal much about the goal of Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization. He was faithful to the past tradition and yet he skillfully and actively conversed with the Chinese contexts.

Secondly, the role of Utmost Sage is unique and Liu Zhi connected his uniqueness with the ancient holy sages. Liu Zhi was emphatic and consistent in declaring that even the ancient most highly regarded sage like Confucius was not an utmost sage. This is a part of the strategy of Liu Zhi’s adoption of the term Utmost Sage in all the works. However, the unique Muhammad as the Utmost Sage is not a stumbling block to Liu Zhi’s contextualization. On the one hand, the utmost status of Muhammad resembles the human ultimate or the perfect man in the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. On the other hand, the concept of sagehood holds high esteem in Chinese society. At the time of Liu Zhi, only successful Confucian literati after official examinations were allowed to take government posts. Sagehood is an important status for Chinese culture.

Liu Zhi was not afraid to contextualize the prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage because he probably followed the argument that was put forward by a well-known Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552 - 1610) and his followers in the 17th-18th century China that the ancient emperors and sages in ancient China were monotheistic. Such ancient religion was later corrupted by generations of followers and became idol worship. The ancient sages did not regard themselves as divine. It was idolatry for their followers to worship their sages. Thus, the ancient holy sages neither worship idol nor teach any idolatry. Liu Zhi was comfortable in adopting the prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage as he set an example of
worshipping no god but God. The concept of the Utmost Sage connects Islam with the foundational and unadulterated teaching of the ancient holy sages of China.

Thirdly, the beginning of Islam in China as recorded in the seventh chapter of this work is a topic of scholarly debate. Studies in Chinese are not as numerous as those in English by Ma Haiyun, Benite and others. According to Liu Zhi’s record, the beginning of Islam in China is during the lifetime of the prophet Muhammad. Similar claims and stories by different Muslim literati were common and generally accepted as historical accounts in the early period of the Qing dynasty. At the time of Liu Zhi, it was a common belief that Islam came to China at a very early time. However, the consensus of contemporary Chinese scholars puts the entry date of Islam at least one or two centuries later than these stories. Almost all of them do not support the stories by Liu Zhi and other Muslim literati. In the thematic study of Liu Zhi, Jin briefly describes Muhammad as the perfect man in Chinese Sufism. He does not enter into any debate about the date and account of the beginning of Islam in China.

After studying the textual and contextual evidence of the mythical stories, Ma Haiyun speculates that such myths are created because of the expansion of the imperial Qing into Central Asia and Manchu interactions with Turkic Muslims in North-Western China. Ma’s textual analysis is weak and just based on a so called turban-wearing Muslim called Gess who was the companion of Sa‘ad ibn Abi Waqqas in China. Ma’s contextual evidence is equally weak and not able to convince most readers of the claim that North-Western Turkic Muslims took side with the Qing army. ‘To reward the Hami Muslim allegiance, the Kangxi emperor granted Hami Muslims the right to live and safeguard Su Zhou of China proper and established Hami King … as the Manchu agent in Hami in the late seventeenth

498 Murata makes no comment about the beginning of Islam in China.
499 Jin, Chinese Islam, 246-52.
century.’  

For Ma, the mythical stories of Islam’s entry into China are politically motivated.

A more thorough study based on different Han Kitab texts from 17th to 18th-century China is carried out by Benite. His focus is on the study of Dao and Muslim identity in the Han Kitab. He also specifically studies Liu Zhi’s True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam and the story of sending ambassadors by the prophet Muhammad to China. The key argument of Benite’s work is that ‘in talking about Muhammad as a sage and about Islam as a Dao, Chinese Muslim scholars were talking about themselves and negotiating their identity as simultaneously Muslim and Chinese.’ Benite’s interpretation of the goal of Liu Zhi’s story is the identity of Hui Muslims. ‘Liu Zhi would not have regarded his interpolation as a ‘lie’. Rather, it was an expression of a meta-truth or a mythical truth, a truth that held that Islam had been in China since its very origins and that Muhammad had viewed China as an important site for the future of his calling.’

Ma’s view is speculative and requires more pieces of evidence to prove that these stories were politically motivated by the imperial ruler. Benite’s analysis demonstrates with primary texts of the Han Kitab that these stories serve to integrate Hui Muslims into Chinese culture. Since Liu Zhi’s True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam is the most well-known and detailed account of the life history of Muhammad in the Han Kitab, a more detailed study of this story within the context of the experience of Hui community at the time of Liu Zhi should give fresh insights in addition to Benite’s point of view.

From the perspective of Liu Zhi’s contextualization, Liu Zhi is both a translator of text and a cultural agent of his Chinese contexts. As a skillful cultural agent, he needs to take great care of the present experience of his personal and Hui community. He pays due regard to various aspects of culture, including secular and religious culture, social location, social change and others. To determine an accurate understanding of the present experience, ‘one

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501 Ma, ‘Mythology,’ 450. Hami is a region near Turfan in North-Western China.
502 Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 194.
503 Benite, Dao of Muhammad, 210.
needs to juggle several things at one time, but it is not a matter of just keeping everything moving smoothly. One needs, rather, to place emphasis on message at one point, while at another point one needs to emphasize cultural identity.' At the beginning of *True Record of the Utmost Sage*, Liu Zhi emphasized the message of Islam in the person of Muhammad. In the seventh chapter, he emphasized the cultural identity. Specifically, it was the Hui Muslims as a collective community in various parts of China for over a century that had traditionally identified the mythical stories as meta-truth during the time of Liu Zhi. In addition, Liu Zhi had consulted different apocryphal histories before he narrated the story. Within that story, he admitted that a part was recorded in written form and other part was orally transmitted. Thus, Liu Zhi took great care to validate the accuracy of the story. Likewise, Liu Zhi began to write *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* at a time when he was fully confident that he had acquired a reliable source. With great care, then, Liu Zhi read and understood the present experience of the Hui Muslims.

Benite is sensible to assert that Liu Zhi did not believe the story was a “lie”. Liu Zhi was emphatic that his evidence from both inside and outside the Hui community was sufficient to declare the story was accurate. The focus of the story is not so much whether it is historically accurate or even a fabrication in order to promote integration between Muslims and Chinese. If one takes that approach, one begins to devalue Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*. Liu Zhi did not intend the last part of his trilogy to be devalued. The trilogy should be studied as one whole entity. In both the seventh chapter and eighteenth chapter, Liu Zhi gave an account of the friendship between China and Arabia at an early stage of Islam and also affirmed various cultural similarities between Muslims and Chinese cultures. The story is better explained as a strategy of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. While Liu Zhi emphasized Islam as distinctively unique especially in the role of the prophet Muhammad, Islamic rites and the origin of Islam in China may readily identify with the

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505 Liu Zhi consulted five historical records, namely in Chinese “隋書”, “殊域周咨錄”, “人代紀要”, “通鑒綱目”, “世史類編”. Since historical records were written by the Hans and approved by the imperial emperor, very little historical record of Hui Muslims and other ethnic minority groups is found in imperially approved records. They are found usually in the non-official history, namely apocryphal historical records.
Chinese culture, including the approval of the imperial court, the customs of society and local religious practice.

This explanation of Liu Zhi’s contextualization is more convincing than other suggestions that argue for the Hui identity as simultaneously Chinese and Muslim, (e.g. Benite). On the one hand, Liu Zhi’s Islam is unique and different from Chinese culture when he speaks of the role of the prophet Muhammad as the Utmost Sage. On the other hand, Liu Zhi’s Islam identifies with the Chinese culture when he narrates the story of the beginning of Islam in China and explains the rites of Islam in Confucian terms. Thus, Benite and others can explain partly Liu Zhi’s works. From the perspective of contextualization, Liu Zhi’s works are different and yet simultaneously identical with the Chinese contexts.

Finally, Neo-Confucian ideas are explicitly affirmed in the eighteenth chapter. According to the contemporary Confucian scholar Tu Weiming who has examined The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam, ‘Confucian motifs and themes are pervasive and conspicuous in several of these narratives.’ Another well-known Confucian scholar, Fung Yu-lan points out that Confucius is an educator who emphasizes the way (the dao) and not just mere knowledge in learning.

In the Analects, Confucius said: “Set your heart on the Tao.” (VII, 6.) And again: “To hear the Tao in the morning and then die at night that would be all right.” (IV, 9.) Here Tao [Dao] means the Way or Truth. It was this Tao which Confucius at fifteen set his heart upon learning. What we now call learning means the increase of our knowledge, but the Tao is that whereby we can elevate our mind.

The teaching of the prophet Muhammad on learning is almost interpreted in Neo-Confucian terms. The aim of Liu Zhi’s True Record of the Utmost Sage is to ground the teachings of his two earlier works, namely, The Nature and Principle in Islam and Rules and Proprieties of Islam using the life, teaching and record of Muhammad. Liu Zhi chose his source

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507 Murata, Sage, 593.
508 Fung, Short History, 74.
materials carefully and edited them for his own purpose. The Muslim readers could learn from his account that the prophet Muhammad was both the pre-existent Muhammadan Spirit that existed before creation and the perfect man who set ethical rules as expressed in proprieties of Islam. In this work, Liu Zhi did not succeed in being an accurate historian of the record of Muhammad. However, he succeeded in integrating two of his earlier major works together into a consummate trilogy. That is, Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* clarifies the way. *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* gives practical teaching of the way. Muhammad as recorded in this final work of the trilogy is the wondrous embodiment of both the teaching and way of Islam.

It can also be stated that through Muhammad, the Real Ruler begins the great transformation and also through him that the creation returns and unites with the Real Ruler eventually. While the Utmost Sage is similar to many holy Chinese sages in the teaching of self-realization and transformation, the Utmost Sage is totally unique. One may say that Liu Zhi made an attempt, namely the eighteenth chapter, to contextualize his Islamic practical teachings into Neo-Confucian ideas. However, his main effort in *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* was to do otherwise. Islam is superior and Muhammad is the one and only Utmost Sage. By taking a more serious consideration of this work and Liu Zhi’s contextualization, one can conclude that Liu Zhi’s contextualization is neither sinicization nor Confucianization.

**5.3 Liu Zhi’s Theological Conversation with Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation and Wisdom: The Rules and Proprieties of Islam**

It is necessary to elaborate and discuss the question of how *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* actively makes dialogical engagements with Neo-Confucian culture. Comparatively, this second work of Liu Zhi’s trilogy is easier to read and understand than his first book *The Nature and Principle in Islam* while both of the works may be scholarly enough to achieve the literary standard set by the imperial Qing court. The readership of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is primarily ordinary Muslims and probably non-Muslims also. The work is intended for those Muslims who are not clear about the meanings of Islamic
rituals while they may be keeping these rituals faithfully. For the non-Muslims, this work provides not only Islamic understanding but also rational and Neo-Confucian interpretations of the cultural and religious meanings of the proprieties of Islam.

While Liu Zhi explicated these proprieties within a Neo-Confucian framework, he also argued for the orthodoxy of Islamic proprieties against the heresies of Christian and Jewish rites. Furthermore, Liu Zhi asserted that the founders of Buddhism and Daoism, namely the Buddha and Lao Zi respectively were supporters of monotheistic religion. For Liu Zhi, it was some of the founders’ followers and later supporters who corrupted the monotheistic teaching of the ancient sages. Thus, their religio-cultural proprieties were no longer the orthodox teaching of the founders. Clearly, Liu Zhi followed the successful argument of earlier Jesuits like Matteo Ricci in cross-cultural contextualization. Unlike the later conservative Jesuit missionaries, Liu Zhi refused to adopt the controversial and confrontational approach of cross-cultural dialogue. He opted for both civil obedience to the imperial rulers and simultaneous faithfulness to God.

Liu Zhi innovatively employed an ancient and Confucian concept of law, typically exemplified and embodied by Chinese ancient sages. Liu Zhi’s law was the bridge between the way and teaching or between universal and relative aspects of Islam. He firmly linked the law with the religio-philosophical concept of the ancient Chinese sages. By the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Chinese sages were regarded as occupying a special status in their tradition, sometimes, as the conduit of divine revelation. The sage was the bridge between the universal and relative, the divine and human. Liu Zhi’s originality lay in his

509 Liu Zhi gave a brief account of the life of Buddha and his main teaching is concerned with the self-emptiness of worldly possessions and fleshly desires. Some later leaders emphasized the doctrine of reincarnation to deceive many ordinary followers. He was convinced that many Neo-Confucians had already condemned Buddhism. Appendix IV. xxiii.

510 Liu Zhi provided a historical account of Lao Zi’s life and his brief teachings. He sarcastically suggested that if Lao Zi was alive, he would have laughed at some of the deviations in the teachings of Daoism. Appendix IV. xxiii, xxv.

511 Liu Zhi asserted that monotheism began at the very early stage.

512 Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 189.

emphases that firstly the ancient Chinese sages were monotheistic in their beliefs.\textsuperscript{514} Secondly, for him the prophet Muhammad was a sage in the Arab world and also the prophet of Islam. Thirdly, the originally intended teachings and wisdom of Chinese ancient sages and the teachings of Muhammad and Islam derived from the same divine source.\textsuperscript{515} In Neo-Confucian society, it was easily accepted by the public and Qing government that the sage was the one who acted as an agent of heaven, expressing its will, implementing the universal way by means of his teaching. Unlike Islam, the Neo-Confucian focus was not so much the divine will upon human social and religious affairs; rather its focus was social order, ethical conduct and obedience to the imperial ruler. The Confucian sage was the infallible guide for human self-cultivation and acquiring wisdom of this world and for Daoists the world to come also. Liu Zhi exploited such precepts of the sage and argued that Muhammad’s status belonged to the Utmost Sage.\textsuperscript{516} Liu Zhi used the concept of law to underpin Islamic proprieties and actions. Thus, his work became the authoritative guide on Islamic orthopraxy.

While Liu Zhi argued that Islamic proprieties were compatible with the idea of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation, he did not accept full compatibility. He made careful and selective uses of Neo-Confucian concepts. It must be emphasized that Liu Zhi rejected certain Chinese traditions and practices not only on the basis of Islamic rule but also on various rational grounds. He rejected certain Chinese clothing of the dead in special burial garments because there was no precedent and it was inconsistent with the teaching of the ancient sage. The wearing of headgear was not the rite of Muslims only. It was also taught in \textit{Six Classics}.\textsuperscript{517} While the prohibition of alcohol and pork were based on Islamic abstinence, he also argued the prohibition from rational, empirical and metaphysical

\textsuperscript{514} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 387.
\textsuperscript{515} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 197.
\textsuperscript{516} Liu Zhi asserted that Islamic prophets began from Adam and ended in the ultimate final prophet of Muhammad. Islamic prophethood had a long and ancient tradition. The role of the prophets is not only to reveal God and beliefs of Islam, it also confirms the traditional five relationships of Neo-Confucianism. See the fifth chapter in Appendix \textit{IV}.
\textsuperscript{517} Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 274.
grounds. Thus, he was sensitive to the need for making a persuasive and rational argument, justifying his views to both non-Muslim and backslidden Muslims. When discussing the five ethical relationships of Islam, he interpreted them as distinctively Chinese. He named the five Islamic relationships as the Neo-Confucian five meritorious works and they guided the seekers to return to the Real One. Frankel argues that ‘[Liu Zhi] went on to discuss the specific details of the Five Pillars, Liu Zhi further drew inspiration from Neo-Confucian ideals of self-cultivation, which he effectively syncretized with Sufi notions of annihilation of the ego and subsumption in God.

Two comments may be made. Firstly, it is fairly common to say that Liu Zhi’s method in his Rules and Proprieties of Islam is acculturated and Liu Zhi often locates the rites of Islam, the concept of sage and law inside Neo-Confucian tradition, as opined by Benite and Frankel. However, it is more accurate to assert that Liu Zhi’s aim is to locate Islam both as an ancient western tradition and a valid complementary religio-cultural tradition alongside all the legitimate religio-cultural and philosophical Chinese traditions approved by the early Qing imperial courts. While both Benite and Frankel made contributions to this observation, they have not noted the Sufi background of Liu Zhi’s teaching and more importantly, the method of Liu Zhi’s contextualization.

The Neo-Confucian character of his work is due to his creatively dialogical engagement with Neo-Confucian culture in which all Muslims and non-Muslims are located. Liu Zhi is eclectic in that he accepts the contextualization of Islam as long as these various Chinese customs do not violate beliefs or practices of the basic tenets of Islam. It can be concluded that there is no syncretism in Liu’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam. Rather, Liu Zhi makes a

518 With regard to the prohibition of eating pork, he quoted support from many classic teachings in Chinese medicinal manuals. Furthermore, pork was argued to be harmful because of the nature and habit of the animal. Abstinence from alcohol was due its hypnotic effect. He called alcohol the mother of all evils. Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 281-82.
519 Appendice IV.ix.
521 Benite, Dao, 229.
522 Frankel argues that Rules and Proprieties of Islam is the most syncretic work in Liu Zhi’s writings. The Muslims share with the Chinese understanding of rituals which are guides to human living. He calls Liu Zhi’s assimilation ‘unconscious’. Frankel, ‘Liu Zhi’s Journey,’ 206, 372.
great effort at dialogical engagement with Neo-Confucian culture. As a result, his contextualized Islam is appropriate and intelligible to his readers.

Secondly, Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is more than a mere exposition of Islamic law and legal obligations for Muslims. He expounded not only the five endeavours, but also family relationships, wealth, property, dress, wedding, funeral and other commonly practiced Chinese customs. He expounded a holistic and all-encompassing way of religious life. His substantial introduction and articulate explanation of the proprieties of Islam aimed at the Sufi notion of devotional piety, with emphasis on both heart and body, or attitude and action. For Muslim readers, it was the Real Ruler who established all the proprieties as moral imperatives as well as securing inward knowledge, similar to and yet different from Chinese literati who sought self-realization and transformation.

The goal of Liu Zhi’s contextualization in *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is to affirm the unity of existence by following both the way of heaven and the way of humanity. The first half of the work deals with the way of heaven and the second half with the work deals with the way of humanity. The seeker’s final destination is the Real and ‘his body and mind dissolve and merge with the Original essence of the True Lord.’ 523 The Chinese Neo-Confucians can do likewise in their self-realization by following the teachings of their ancient sages. Moreover, since Liu Zhi’s teaching of the way of humanity is fully compatible with the teaching of the Confucian sages, the Neo-Confucians may be inspired to read Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Thus, this work can benefit both Muslims and non-Muslims. The evidence of such understanding is the fact that *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is collected into the Qing imperial library catalogue, namely *Annotated General Catalogue of the Compendium of the Four Treasuries, Authorized by the Emperor*.

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5.4 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter demonstrated that not only did Liu Zhi interpret Islamic concepts in Confucian terms, he also adopted a very popular Chinese literary writing style, namely, employing phrases often consisting of three, five or seven characters. Liu Zhi’s *Three-character Classic* takes a strict three-character form.

This second part of this chapter translated and examined Liu Zhi’s *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon*. The poem takes a literary form which can be memorized easily for beginners of Islam and is suitable even for children. It has many Sufi themes and a chiastic structure. The climax of the structure is the Sufi seafaring journey. We have shown that the poem has the ability to communicate difficult Sufi ideas in easy to understand cultural terms such as Buddhism’s concept of ‘vehicle’, Confucianism’s concept of self-cultivation and Daoism’s concept of *dao*. As a result of Liu Zhi’s contextualization of the poem, even Qing ruling elites and other Hans could find Chinese Islam acceptable and not too different from the Three Teachings in China. The poem emphasizes practical Muslim living more than the mystical path. It is ‘right doing’ or orthopraxis in the Sufi way. Again, Liu Zhi emphasized the role of the heart. Seekers should seek control of their inner self, empty their self-centred desires and eventually arrive at union with the Real. The poem has a clear framework of Sufi thought and the eclectic terms are chosen carefully as an interpretative tool.

The final part of the chapter examined and analysed Liu Zhi’s *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* which has not been previously studied by any contemporary scholars. The early part of this work emphasizes the honour, nobility and uniqueness of the prophet Muhammad. Muhammad has existence in both the innate and the acquired heaven. He is also the integrator of creative transformation of the Real from the beginning to the end. Thus, Muhammad is unique and known as the Utmost Sage of Islam. Even though this work is primarily a life story of the Prophet Muhammad, Liu Zhi added an appendice at the end of this work on the moral teachings of Muhammad and contextualized them as Neo-Confucian ethics.
We also examined the scholarly controversy of Liu Zhi’s record of the beginning of Islam in China. Liu Zhi did not fabricate mythical stories in his account. It is better to understand his record from the perspective of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. That is, Liu Zhi emphasized the present experience of his Hui community. Hui Muslims had traditionally understood the beginning of Islam in China as the true record. His contextualization gives due regard to both the historical records and the present experience of his community.

It can be concluded that Liu Zhi actively dialogues and engages with Chinese cultures in his contextualization. He adopted the literary Chinese writing style in his poem. He interpreted the poem by using concepts of the Three Teachings but maintained a distinctive Sufi framework. In his record of the beginning of Islam in China, he took seriously the present experience of his Hui community, which was supported by certain historical sources, to validate his account of the Prophet Muhammad. Clearly, Liu Zhi is a skillful cultural agent in his Chinese contexts.
Chapter Six:

6.0 Liu Zhi’s Engagement with Islam and Neo-Confucian Culture in His *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*: An English Translation and Detailed Examination

In the last two chapters we have discussed Liu Zhi’s works in continuation with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and in active conversation with the Chinese contexts. Liu Zhi’s works are rooted in the teaching of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. He faithfully translated the Islamic text. He also contextualized his Islamic texts by active dialogue and conversation with the Chinese contexts in order that his readers might understand them better.

Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* has been studied by both Chinese and English scholars. Liang and Jin have examined this work in their thematic study of Liu Zhi in Chinese. Frankel studies a few sections of the early chapters of this work and writes in English.

This chapter will focus on the first five foundational chapters of the second part of Liu Zhi’s trilogy, namely *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. The goal of this chapter is to analyse Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, chapter by chapter. It will confirm and demonstrate further his continuation of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and proactive conversation with Neo-Confucianism. This present study offers for the first time a full translation of the first five chapters of Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* in English and also an analysis of each chapter. Thus, the originality of this chapter is based on a detailed analysis of these chapters of Liu Zhi’s work from the perspective of his contextualization.
6.1 Examination of First Five Chapters of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*

Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is one of the most important works in Islam’s *Han Kitab*.\(^{524}\) The work is divided into twenty volumes, more commonly known as chapters. The content of the work may be summarized as follows:

- **First chapter:** it is foundational and gives an overview of Islamic theoretical teachings on divine unity, the creation of humankind and the role of prophets. Islamic prophets are usually called holy sages. It also briefly reviews the practical teachings of Islam, namely the five pillars of Islam (or endeavours) and five relationships (much used in Confucianism). Also, this chapter is an outline for all the remaining chapters.

- **Second and third chapters:** these chapters discuss the theology of the Real Ruler who is superior to any concept of divine existence in Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

- **Fourth chapter:** it explains the meaning of endeavour. To bear witness or the *Shahadah* is a verbal attestation of asserting the unity of God.

- **Fifth chapter:** it discusses the various aspects of the five endeavours. It gives a general overview of the definition, content and meaning of the endeavours.

- **From the sixth to the eighth chapters:** these chapters discuss more details of the other four endeavours. The five endeavours are regarded as the heavenly way of self-cultivation.

- **Ninth chapter:** it is devoted to the ritual slaughter of animals.

- **Tenth to thirteen chapters:** the five endeavours are the way of heaven. The tenth chapter discusses the complementary way of humanity which is called the five relationships of Islamic ethics. The eleventh to thirteenth chapters contextualize the way of humanity into the Confucian concepts of five human relationships or ethical codes.

- **Fourteenth to seventeenth chapters:** these chapters delineate the four constants which are residence, property, clothes and food. The fourteenth chapter forbids any cohabitation of the mosque with other religions. Property and clothes occupy the

\(^{524}\) This work is collected into the Imperial library. The collection is known as ‘Annotated General Catalogue of the Compendium of the Four Treasuries, Authorized by the Emperor.’
fifteenth chapter. However, the discussion on food is longer and takes up the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters.

- Eighteenth to twentieth chapters: these are additional teachings on congregational prayer, marriage and funeral rites respectively.

6.1.1 Author’s Preface: Personal Narrative

Liu Zhi in his preface made several important points that could help contemporary scholars to interpret this work more accurately, allowing scholars to approach this work as Liu Zhi himself intended. Firstly, his work is meant to be understood and used. It is meant to be a pedagogical tool. Liu Zhi intended it to be a standard textbook on Islamic proprieties and used in various Islamic education networks. He formerly had written a very comprehensive version of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* but it was too difficult for general readership. It was at the request of his readers that Liu Zhi wrote the extant *Selected Explanation of the Rules and Proprieties of Islam* (abbreviated as *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*). Not only does this present work contain the main discussion, it also has commentary, expanded annotation, a collected overview and even question and answer. It is designed to be a textbook suitable for most Muslims at different levels of learning.

Liu Zhi classified his readers into three categories and they should be helped by his extra commentaries and annotations. The first category was learners who were able to understand the work but found the meaning incomplete. Liu Zhi’s extra commentary served to enhance understanding. The second category was learners who were able to understand but not able to grasp fluently the meaning of the work. Commentary and annotation should make their understanding more thorough and effective. The third category was the beginners who might know the meaning and reason but they still had doubts. Liu Zhi admitted using Confucian ideas primarily to help the last category of readers. His purpose for the section of questions and answers was to dispel confusion and misunderstanding for those who had distorted views on the original meaning of the text. Thus, one can say that this work is

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525 The full text is translated into English in Appendix *III.*
clearly intended primarily for a pedagogical purpose for all types of learners and secondarily an apologetic purpose.

Secondly, the real importance of this work is to teach the profound meaning of Islamic rites and proprieties. It aims to enable the reader’s inseparable union with the heavenly principle. Return to the Real Ruler is the ultimate aim of Islamic rites. Islamic rites are not meant to be legalistic.

Thirdly, Liu Zhi asserted that while one seemed to find Islamic truth difficult to understand, in fact Islamic truth was quite obvious. One should learn and understand Islamic books in a similar way to how one learned and understood Confucian books. Also, one who obeyed the rites of Islam was also similar to one who kept the rites as demanded by the holy Chinese ancient emperors. The point in this personal narrative really is that in the process of learning and understanding Islamic rites, beginners should not be frightened off. Rather, they should be comforted and take the same learning attitude to both Chinese and Islamic literatures. Liu Zhi used Confucian ideas especially for the beginners to help them understand and they were tools of communication.

Finally, Liu Zhi highlighted the teaching of ancient sages and compared them with ancient worthies. He also highlighted the similarity between the holy sages of the East and the sages in the Arabia. While the sage from Arabia is not explicitly named, clearly it is the prophet Muhammad. Also, he is mentioned explicitly with regard to the teaching of propriety in the personal narrative. For Muhammad, propriety can establish humankind. For ancient worthies, humankind without propriety loses its humanness.

From the perspective of contextualization, this personal narrative by Liu Zhi confirms the discussion in the last chapter of this present study. Firstly, if one compares the personal narrative in his first work of trilogy, namely *The Nature and Principle in Islam* with his personal narrative in *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, one may note the overwhelming

526 This point is explained in the fourth chapter of Liu Zhi’s work.
concern of Liu Zhi that the prime goal of his works is for the readers to understand. In the earlier first work, Liu Zhi ‘established explanations to transmit the meaning of the diagrams.’\textsuperscript{527} His method in \textit{The Rules and Proprieties of Islam} is no longer diagrams but commentaries, annotations and other easier to read examples from daily living. He repeatedly emphasized that the beginners and the doubters may understand his trilogy. He made his works easy to understand by the use of diagrams in his first part of trilogy. He used commentaries and annotations in the second work and lastly in \textit{The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam}, narrative with historical evidences from various sources to validate his records.

Liu Zhi in this personal narrative highlighted the reason for his use of Confucian terms. Primarily, he used Neo-Confucian terms for clearer explanation and to solve any doubt that one may have.\textsuperscript{528} He then continued in his narrative to state his view of the similarities between Islam and Neo-Confucianism.

\begin{quote}
In order to discuss the truth of Islam, we make our work easier to understand as it is no different to Neo-Confucian works. To learn and obey the Islamic propriety is likewise to learn and obey the teachings of the ancient sages and kings. The religion of holy sages, either in the East or the Arab world, either in ancient or modern times, is the same. However, people nowadays do not study and research this fact and gradually it disappears.\textsuperscript{529}
\end{quote}

The above quotation of Liu Zhi has led some scholars to believe that he simply asserted that Islam identified completely with Neo-Confucianism. Then, these scholars concluded that his Islam was sinicized. Such misinterpretation is due to the lack of deeper examination of the overall works of Liu Zhi and taking the above quotation out of the context of the whole personal narrative. He explained his view in greater detail in the third chapter of his work later. The above quotation should be understood and interpreted in the context of the whole work.

\textsuperscript{527} Murata, \textit{Sage}, 95.  
\textsuperscript{528} In Chinese, ‘乃質諸儒語，以釋其疑’.  
\textsuperscript{529} Appendice \textit{III.ii}.  

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6.1.2 First Chapter: Original Teaching

This chapter is the introductory and foundational chapter in understanding Liu Zhi’s teaching of Islamic rules and proprieties. This particular chapter has been well known partly because it was adopted as compulsory reading in the Muslim education network soon after its publication.\(^{530}\) It gives an overview of Liu Zhi’s understanding of Islamic rites. It also serves as a useful resource to work out any unclear or ambiguous argument later in this or other of Liu Zhi’s works.

Any first-time or even experienced reader of this chapter can easily detect Liu Zhi’s emphasis on the superiority of Islam, very much like the first two chapters in *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*. Thus, one should be careful not to make the premature and unwarranted statement that Liu Zhi sinicized Islam into Neo-Confucianism. A careful reading of Liu Zhi’s foundational first chapter may gain a better understanding of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. Liu Zhi admitted that Islamic rites based on Islamic doctrine were not much different from Confucian ethics. However, Islam as a religion and a way to the knowledge of the divine being was superior to any Chinese thought systems including Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Islam is superior because it is ancient, beginning from the creation of the world and humankind. It is superior not only because of its historicity and rapid global expansion, Islam has continued throughout all ages without any interruption. Several observations can be made. Firstly, the prophet Muhammad is significant at the beginning and end of this chapter. When Muhammad appeared, the Islamic way became clear and definitive. He revised all previous sacred texts into a final canon and formulated regulations. At the end of the chapter, the prophet Muhammad is implicitly mentioned and his role is also important for all Muslims. The role of the holy sages, including the seal of the prophets i.e. Muhammad, is to establish the religion of Islam so that humankind is not led astray. The

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way of these holy sages is the way of heaven. ‘The Sage is the personal agent of God’s will.’

Secondly, the chapter continues to delineate the superior qualities of Islam from the historical perspective. The origin is geographically located in the central part of the world. The tradition has been continuous without interruption of sages and worthies. Liu Zhi also described the history of Islam, its continuation and spread to various parts of the world throughout human history. While Muslims are scattered worldwide, they regularly come together in their localities and practise the same, unchanging rites. At the end of the chapter in his extended annotation, Liu Zhi gave an account using some Chinese historical records and asserted that Islam was more ancient than the Three Teachings of China. This expanded annotation is the longest section in this chapter. He attempted to demonstrate beyond all doubt that even the emperor Sui Mende (541-604) admired the prophet Muhammad, sent an ambassador to the Middle East and sought from him sacred texts. The above story is also repeated in the last part of his trilogy, namely *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*. This chapter may be regarded as a prelude to the final part of Liu Zhi’s trilogy.

Thirdly, he creatively separated but did not divide the way of heaven and humankind. This chapter explains that both are aspects of Islamic rules and proprieties necessary for self-cultivation and return to the Real. The holy sages of Islam have set themselves up as examples of the way of heaven. Self-cultivation is the way of humankind, similar to the Confucian concept of realization. The usual Islamic concept of Five Pillars is the way of heaven. Both the way of heaven and humankind are integral in the process of ascending the path by continuously knowing the self, the Real and eventual return to the Real. It should be noted that Jin identifies Liu Zhi’s understanding of the proprieties of Islam that his concept is based on a *shari‘a*-minded Sufism.

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532 隋文帝 during the Sui dynasty (581 – 618). The accuracy of Liu Zi’s dates between Islamic events and Chinese emperors has been doubtful. Appendix II.vii.
Fourthly, Liu Zhi cautioned that in applying the principle of Islamic rites in real contexts, Muslims must exercise the rites with care. Such caution opens a window to understand his contextualization. The following section summarizes his view.

Theme: In all these regulations of activity and solitude, there is a principle that is unchanging and yet objectively adaptive, creatively in enforcing the rule of law.

Explanation: Whatever can be seen, heard, spoken, intuited, or situations like eating and resting at home, large and small occasion, there is a historical law to regulate human behaviour. So, Muslims are not to offend others and contravene propriety. At the same time, the law is objective and flexible enough to adapt appropriately, paying attention to the time and the context at that moment. This is to avoid holding firm to arid tradition with rigidity and stubbornly making no progress. In that way, the rule of the law continues to be complied with and yet it is exercised in a flexible manner without unfairness and with due respect to time and context. The rule of law remains the norm.534

Thus, the principle of Islamic proprieties remains unchanged but the application of the principle should be accommodating and flexible. How to apply the principle? One must not be offending to one’s local context at that time. Simply put, the revealed truth is eternally unchanging but the tradition within a specific context should be adaptive. A tradition that is adaptive in a local context is a living one. A rigid and stubborn tradition is soon obsolete. The tradition is always in the process of forming and re-forming responding to the ever-changing contexts. When one reads the above quotation, one should bear in mind that the Hui Muslims are an ethnic minority in China. Not surprisingly, Liu Zhi’s caution makes real sense in that in exercising the rites of Islam, Muslims should not offend and be fair to the majority Han people in China. He strived at a harmonious relationship between the Muslims and non-Muslims. As Benite puts it, the Muslim literati sought to establish a dual identity of the Hui: both Chinese and Muslims. For Liu Zhi, the tradition of Islam makes progress and remains lively when the principle of the rites of Islam is applied with due respect to the cultural contexts.

534 Appendix IV. viii.
Finally, an important point is made by Liu Zhi’s contextualization of the Sufi path in Chinese terms. This introductory chapter gives a very clear goal of Islamic rules and proprieties. Liu Zhi used a Buddhist term, namely ‘vehicle’, which is commonly used by Buddhists in their search for enlightenment. The aim of Islamic rites is to know the Ruler and the goal is to return to the Real. Rules and proprieties are to serve humankind to achieve that goal. The path of return is through the way of heaven, namely the five endeavours or five pillars of Islam and the way of humankind, namely the five relationships. Again, it emphasizes the role of the Utmost Sage, namely the prophet Muhammad. ‘The Law is the non-human mechanism whereby this communication [human-divine] is achieved. As the living expression of the moral standard of the Way, it may even be said that the Sage is the embodiment of the Law.’

The law of proprieties is represented by the concept of three vehicles. These vehicles are carriers and are described in an ascending order. They correspond to the Sufi concept of law, mystical path and truth. Liu Zhi explained the Sufi path in Confucian terms as follows:

Working hard for your virtues and honouring endeavours are for body realization. Understanding thoroughly the principle and knowing thoroughly the nature can enlighten the heart. With self-control and accomplishing the real, you can see nature. Without endeavour and cultivation, your heart is not illuminated. Such a heart cannot see nature. Without seeing nature, you cannot unite with heaven. Nature is not seen because the selfish ‘I’ has hidden it. Therefore, the rule of the three vehicles deals with the polishing up of the selfish ‘I’. Above the rule of the three vehicles, a transcendent rule of vehicles exists. In it, both heaven and humans are transformed; with no name or trace left. There is no word to describe the experience except that you have to experience it.

The following diagram by Liu Zhi may help to explain the practical aspect of the concept of three vehicles.

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This argument in the introductory chapter is further explained in the fourth and fifth chapter of *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. 
On the left, the diagram is called ‘the True Practice of Sage Endeavour’. Liu Zhi expounded the relationship between the body, heart and nature which correspond to the propriety, way and real respectively. The function of the three vehicles is to remove all kinds of self-centredness as the seeker makes progress in his path.

At the centre is the root suchness. Liu Zhi used root suchness to describe the Real Being and the goal of the endeavour of the sage is the return to the Real. Murata explains the Islamic concept and the endeavour.

Propriety (the Shariah) brings one’s body and activities into harmony with the Self-so, the Way (the Tariqah) turns one’s heart and consciousness away from the lower tendencies of the ego, and the Real (the Haqiqah) is the realization of the nature of continuity (the Muhammadan Spirit), which then spontaneously manifests itself in the body’s observation of propriety and the heart’s following the Way. At this stage, the individual endeavour has been reintegrated into the Self-so, and the engendering and prescriptive commands coincide.

Thus, Liu Zhi’s contextualization is to identify the Sufi path of law, path and truth as cultivated body, illuminated heart and unveiled nature respectively. While the law is able to cultivate the body or establish humanity, such mere outward compliance with the law is not sufficient. Islamic law and rites should not be regarded legalistically. Liu Zhi’s contextualization emphasizes the transformation of the heart or the dao in the heart. Simply put, orthodoxy or mere right understanding is not sufficient for the complete Sufi path. The

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538 The diagram is no. 4.6 of Nature and Principle in Islam and titled ‘Diagram of the True Practice of Sage Endeavour. Murata, Sage, 448-449.
539 Self-so literally means nature (ziran 自然). Murata translates Liu Zhi’s ziran either into Self-so or Self-suchness. Murata says that it is a Daoist term. Murata, Sage, 200, 444.
540 Murata, Sage, 452.
rite is the first vehicle and necessary beginning for any Sufi path and contributes towards the polishing up of the selfish ‘I’. This process is known as the illumination of the heart. Orthopraxis begins with hard work, honouring endeavours and continues polishing up the selfish ‘I’. It is right doing with emphasis on the inner transformation of the heart in addition to obedience to the rites of Islam. The second and third vehicle serves to enlighten the heart. Then, the enlightened heart can see the nature of the Sufi path. Such seeing is related to understanding the principle and knowing the nature of humanity.

Vehicle, body, heart, nature, principle, cultivation, enlightenment and others are common Chinese terms in Liu Zhi’s contextualization. Liu Zhi used them skillfully to explain all the characteristics of a Sufi path with his own emphasis on the role of heart. The transformation must involve the heart without any negligence of outward compliance of the law. The goal of heart transformation is enlightenment and seeing. Alternatively put, this is unveiling in the context of Sufism.

6.1.3 Second Chapter: The Real Ruler

This is a recapitulation of Liu Zhi’s first work, The Nature and Principle in Islam. In this chapter, Liu Zhi developed his understanding of the Real Ruler with respect to rules and proprieties of Islam. This chapter does not explicate the disclosure of the Real as in detailed a manner as his earlier work but the Confucian and commonly used concepts of substance, function and act are concisely explained. Liu Zhi made a few emphases in this chapter but only two emphases are discussed because they are more relevant to the concept of unity of existence which is one of the objectives in this present study.

Firstly, he carefully highlighted the fact that the Real Ruler is both one and unique, notably at the beginning of the chapter and at the end when he unusually expounded the meaning of Qur’an Sura 112. ‘One and unique’ means the Real Ruler is both a transcendent and

541 This is an important point. Liu Zhi explained in greater detail in the fourth and early fifth chapter of Rules and Proprieties of Islam.
immanent being. His transcendence is characterized by the pre-existent root suchness. His immanence is characterized by inclusivity and nothing is outside his manifestation. When he expounded Sura 112, he confirmed that there was only one Real Ruler. In addition, Liu Zhi offered two possible reasons for such affirmation in Sura 112. The first one was to refute other religions, possibly Christianity. Liu Zhi believed that in the Christian gospel, the father God begot a son. The second was to encourage the seeker to seek the way single-mindedly so that his body and heart could merge. Thus, the concept of oneness applies to the Real Ruler and also the seekers’ union of the heart and body.

Secondly, Liu Zhi’s understanding of the Real Ruler emphasizes integration. The Real is both transcendent and immanent. Transcendence is not in opposition to immanence. Rather, the two aspects complement each other. Taking them together, it gives a complete understanding of the Real Ruler. The substance and function of the Real Ruler should be distinguished and yet not separated. While the substance is distinguished from function in terms of being hidden and manifested, they belong to the same category.

Liu Zhi used two examples to illustrate his argument. Numerical numbers like one and ten are different numbers but they are related and belong to the category of number. Ice and coolness or fire and hotness have no chronological priority. Again, the concept of movement and stillness in the Real Ruler should be intertwined and integrated. The Real unceasingly moves and is eternally quiet. ‘There is stillness in movement, movement in stillness.’ Liu Zhi used the examples of human breathing and the changing seasons to prove his point. Both movement and stillness belong to the on-going cyclical event. Clearly, Liu Zhi’s use of practical example is to help beginners to understand the relation between transcendence and immanence.

With regard to his strategy of contextualization, this chapter is easy to read and understand compared to his earlier work, namely *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. The intricacy of transcendence and immanence of the Real Ruler is clearly explained without the use of a complicated theosophical system. Emphatically, he denies the Christian doctrine that the divine father begot an incarnated son. He defends his understanding of the transcendence
and immanence of the Real Ruler and upholds resolutely the oneness and uniqueness of the Real. His goal of contextualization is to help his beginner readers to understand and not to be misled. As for Muslims who have doubted they should cast away any doubt and overcome any heretical deviations.

6.1.4 Third Chapter: Epistemology

Liu Zhi began to explain epistemologically the connection between the ritual practice of a seeker’s body, heart and nature with the Real Ruler who is both transcendent in its root suchness and immanent in its action in the acquired heaven. Here, our study will focus on the connection between the knowledge of the Real Ruler and the ritual practices of the seekers and Liu Zhi’s contextualization of both knowledge and practice.

Firstly, the existence of a creator who is the Real Ruler is proved by the commonly known cosmological argument in monotheism. The existence of a creator God is the most appropriate explanation after observing not only the existence of the cosmos but also its design. However, the knowledge of this Real Ruler requires more than observations or speculations. Mere outward traits in this creation may not convince people of the existence and attributes of Real Ruler. The seekers must exhaust the principle and ascertain the nature of all the traits or observable things. Heterodoxies arise because people misinterpret a human being who is a creature as the Real Ruler or an abstract principle as a divine being. Liu Zhi also encouraged his readers to observe one particular aspect of creation, namely the human soul.542 Thus, observation should be done on both visible and invisible traits in

542 Liu Zhi distinguished between the soul and heart in this chapter. ‘The heart and way cohere, the soul and subtlety unite.’ While the heart is related to the way, the soul is related to the subtlety. Murata helpfully explains the Islamic thought behind these two terms. The heart means the mind or the heart-and-mind. Liu Zhi’s use of heart never refers to the physical heart. Rather, the heart is the locus of human awareness and consciousness. It embraces physical, psychical and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions are closely related to the Sufi path. The soul (literally as breath) has ambiguous meaning and usually means self. Murata asserts that the soul ‘is the locus of our individual awareness, our selfhood. Each of us represents a unique combination of spirit and body, light and darkness, intelligence and ignorance, remembrance and forgetfulness.’ Murata, Sage, 56. It is with such an understanding of the soul that Liu Zhi related the soul with the subtlety. Rather than the heart, the soul is a clear creation trait by which humanity can ascertain the existence of the creator.
creation. Knowledge of the Real Ruler is acquired through both the visible and invisible traits.

Secondly, it is vitally important to know the Real Ruler and return to him by the ritual practice initiated from the seeker’s heart. As noted before, Liu Zhi consistently emphasized the role of human heart. The Real Ruler belongs to the realm of invisibility and boundlessness. How can seekers who belong to the realm of visibility and finiteness make connection with the Real Ruler through ritual rules and proprieties? The key to answering the question is Liu Zhi’s integrative understanding of the Real Ruler who is both transcendent and immanent. Likewise, the humankind has both visible body and other invisible components like nature and souls. Liu Zhi explained clearly that while the Real Ruler’s root suchness and substance were hidden, Ruler’s actions were manifested in the innate and the acquired heaven.

This chapter explains that seekers can see the Real’s traits in the world of image present in the acquired heaven. Mere compliance with the Islamic rite is not effective in interpreting the trait and experiencing the presence of the Real Ruler. The importance of the seeker’s soul which is an invisible part of humankind is emphasized. Proprieties enable the seekers’ body and heart to engage properly with the traits in the world. A clever and astute seeker is a trained spiritual person. He ponders the principle and vital energy of the Real Ruler and can see the Ruler in anything. Liu Zhi supported this argument by quoting Qur’an Sura 41:53 and a hadith which says, ‘understanding oneself is to understand the Lord.’ One should not misinterpret Liu Zhi’s commentary of the sacred text. While Liu Zhi maintained the unbridgeable gulf between the human and divine, he also averred epistemologically that humankind had the innate capacity for a general knowledge of the

543 ‘惟知真主而趨向之，則根腳正定；紛紛異端，不得以邪說惑亂矣’ When Liu Zhi discussed the Sufi path, the heart or mind played a very important role.
544 ‘真宰之本然，隱於用而見於為也。真主之為，有見於先天者，萬物之理是也，有見於後天者，萬物之象是也。’
545 ‘身內之物，如靈性，無形色，亦無方位者也。日與吾俱，吾不得見其本然為何如也。’
546 ‘由著之隱，由顯之微，以漸而心神契合，則難測者易測矣，難知者易知矣。’
existence of the Real Ruler. A specific knowledge of the Real Ruler must be carried out by unveiling through rules and proprieties with the inner transformation of the heart.

Finally, in the last section of the chapter, Liu Zhi briefly explained his adoption ‘the Real Lord’ as the most common divine name of Islam. Lordship implies ownership and above all sovereignty. ‘Real’ means it is the creator. The ‘Real’ has full control from beginning to eternity and the power to order all things. Thus, Liu Zhi used the Real Lord/Ruler to denote a sovereign, invisible without any image, an all encompassing and pre-determining divine being. He reminded seekers that they should give up any desire to seek a visible image of the deity because it was false and not real. It should be clear in this chapter that while humankind resembles the Real Ruler, there is a significant ontological difference between them. Liu Zhi emphasized that the return to the Real should primarily focus on the practice of the heart although the practice of the body should not be ignored.

From the perspective of contextualization, the most important point is Liu Zhi’s comparison between the Real Ruler of Islam and the divine being recorded in the *Analects* in the final paragraph of this chapter.

My humble view: God as interpreted in the *Analects* as the heavenly Lord is similar to Islam that calls God by the name of the Lord Ruler. Look at the ancient historical records about the five Emperors and three Kings. They had piety towards God and were sincere. The historical books record that God is called the heavenly Lord, other examples like, royal heaven, vast heaven, heavenly will, and heavenly wrath and so on. Here, we talk about heaven. It means God and does not mean the massive and visible sky…

The older generation of Confucian followers say, ‘the evil of the heretics makes it impossible to explain the way.’ I consider that the damage of the heresies is to stop the explanation of the way. Those who study the ancient texts, they understand the way. It is due to the words of the ancient emperors and the holy worthies. In this way, the heresy can be eliminated. As a result, the way of Islam can be clear and exposed.548

547 ‘嘗又系以’真’字，曰‘真主’。蓋因人之稱主者不一，或掌握一物，或操權一時，或蒙昧僭稱於一處，沒則已焉，非若大造之主，總理象而無遠遺，互終古而不易，是乃為真主也。’

548 Appendix IV.xlv-xlvi.
The above quotation gives the clearest answer that Liu Zhi found the Chinese contexts to be helpful conversation partners. He identified the Islamic Real Ruler with the deity taught in very ancient Chinese thought. This thought began around the period of Three Kings and Five Emperors. The estimated time of this period is around 2,852 – 2,070 BCE. There is little reliable written record. Liu Zhi believed that Confucius and his immediate followers also taught monotheistic faith but the later followers of Confucius corrupted it and turned the teaching into deviation. The successful earlier Jesuit missionaries in China adopted this argument and asserted that the ancient Kings and Emperors believed in monotheism similar to Christianity. Likewise, Liu Zhi possibly followed the strategy of the early Jesuits a century later. Thus, he intentionally adopted a specific strategy in his contextualization. The above quotation also confirms our interpretation of Liu Zhi’s use of Confucianism in his personal narrative in the beginning of this work. Liu Zhi did not teach a sinicized Islam.

6.1.5 Fourth Chapter: Meaning and Witness

This chapter explains the meaning of endeavours. It focuses on the acquisition of the knowledge of the Real Ruler through nature and body with an emphasis on the role of the heart. Heart is emphasized in both this chapter and the next chapter. In order to explain endeavours in terms of the relationship between body, heart and nature, it is best to remember the earlier diagram of the ‘True Practice of the Sage Endeavour’.

Endeavours involve both the body and nature with emphasis on the role of the heart.

What do both body and nature prove? Within the body, there are visible, invisible components and also the movement and stillness of the whole body. This is ultimately due to nature. Humankind cannot continue its bodily function without its nature. Also, you cannot see nature outside the body. It is because nature comes first and then the body can function. Nature manifests through the function of the body. This is enough to prove that within this heaven and earth and ten thousand things, visible things and invisible spirit have their origin, namely, the one and real Lord. It is absolutely not that beside the real Lord there is a gap that can hold heaven and earth and ten thousand things. Also, they are not inside the Lord’s root suchness that contains all these things. The subtle unity between the real
Lord and all things is a mysterious principle similar to the union of heaven and humanity. It is not easy to explain. However, you may understand the mystery from both the body and nature. While it cannot be seen and heard, it can be completely heard and seen with body and nature. Originally, it is beyond our limits and without colour and form. Yet you can see the encompassing flowing of substance and function. These are clearly revealed.\(^{549}\)

In this chapter, Liu Zhi explained that endeavours are not for mere self-cultivation. Muslims use their endeavours to testify the unity of existence between the Real and other existents. While the Real is eternally hidden, both body and nature could manifest the Real in their endeavours.

The relationship between the nature and the heart is explained in the same chapter as follows:

Nature is invisible and it fully fills the person. Through the heart, the self can understand his nature and also the eyes can see. The thinking can perceive and see his nature but the ears cannot do so. Nevertheless, you have not had any difficulty in working out the form of nature, resulting in a nature that is uncertain and wavering.\(^{550}\)

Two more quotations on the role of the heart in human endeavours appear in the next chapter, namely the fifth chapter:

Why are there five endeavours? It is because the heart and nature of humanity are interconnected, similar to a lock and key. Ears, eyes, mouth, nose and body are affected by sound, colour, taste, smell and movement, respectively. These [physical images/ perception] may cause love and hatred toward fleshly feelings. Such feelings are like the spring of a lock, which triggers the lock, making perfect and faultless the union between the heart and nature. If you use the key to open the lock, the spring of the lock is released and thus the union is separated. The five senses of feelings, namely sound, colour, taste, smell and movement are a burden and constrain humanity. Thus, five different methods are needed and

\(^{549}\) Appendice IV.xlviii
\(^{550}\) Appendice IV.xlvii.
they gradually can remove the burden. Human nature can be then manifested and the way [of cultivation] is clear. Thus, the five endeavours are necessary for cultivation.\footnote{Appendice IV.lv.}

While humans may desire cultivating the way, they may not know the method and end in failure. Witnessing the Lord directs the heart to return and does not let the heart linger on aimlessly. Know that the real Lord is the origin of the great transformation and all mandates are derived from him. Anyone who desires to return to the mandate must then follow the real Lord as the reliable guide, achieving the return by constraining the body and heart. If humans give witness to other things, they fail both this life and the afterlife and are beyond any cure. How can it be possible for such humans to hope for any success?\footnote{Appendice IV.lv-lvi.}

With reference to the diagram of the ‘True Practice of the Sage Endeavour’ comprising four concentric circles, the entry outer circle of endeavour is the ritual body. Rites are carried out by the physical body. However, humanity is composed of both the visible body and invisible nature. Nature is interpreted as the control which governs the action and senses of the body. Thus, nature is inseparable from the body but needs to be distinguished from it. It is prior to the body and determines the body. Between the circle of ritual body and real nature, Liu Zhi put in the circle of $\textit{dao}$ heart. He averred that the real nature was interconnected with the $\textit{dao}$ heart. The relationship between nature and heart is similar to a lock and key. The $\textit{dao}$ heart could lock or open the real nature. When the real nature is locked, it can enter into the level of root suchness with the Real. Thus, the $\textit{dao}$ heart is located at a circle between the body ritual and the real nature. Simply put, the body that practises the rites is controlled by the real nature. However, the body can affect the $\textit{dao}$ heart and vice versa. The body experiences various external factors and this experience may affect the $\textit{dao}$ heart. Thus, the diagram of the True Practice of the Sage Endeavour is explained.

The ritual body, $\textit{dao}$ heart and real nature are interconnected and inseparable although they are drawn in the diagram as concentric circles. It is the real nature that can unite with the Real but the role of ritual body cannot be ignored at all. The goal of Islamic rites is union.
with the Real. The role of the heart is that firstly it can affect the body by constant repetition of asserting the unity of God (Shahadah) and secondly, the self can then see the invisible nature and understand the mysterious unity of God. This explains Liu Zhi’s constant emphasis on the role of the heart. It should be noted that a branch or school of Neo-Confucianism also emphasizes the heart. It is called the School of Mind.

A brief explanation of the School of Mind is now provided. This is needed because it explains the repeated emphases on the role of the heart in all Liu Zhi’s works. Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200) is the leading thinker of the School of Principle and Wang Yangming (1472 – 1529) is the most important thinker of the School of Mind. At the time of Liu Zhi, the School of Mind is in decline but the School of Principle is gaining imperial recognition and support. Wang Yangming’s most important concept of the mind (literal: heart) is related to Liu Zhi’s concept of the heart. Wang’s fundamental teaching is his interpretation of the Great Learning.553

Wang understood the Great Learning as the learning of the great man. He wrote, ‘The great man is an all-pervading unity, which is one with Heaven, Earth and all things.’554 The great man is able to unite with all things ‘because the human-heartedness is naturally so.’555 The heart has natural instincts and knows that right is right and wrong is wrong. This is intuitive knowledge which is defined by Wang as ‘the nature which Heaven has conferred on us, the original state of our mind, which is spontaneously intelligent and keenly conscious. Any ideas which arise are without fail automatically comprehended by this ‘intuitive knowledge’ of our mind. If they be good, the intuitive knowledge in our mind automatically comprehends this.’556

553 Wang’s major writing is Questions on the Great Learning. See, Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 598-603.
554 Wang Yangming, as cited by Fung, Short History, 508.
555 Fung, Short History, 510.
556 Wang Yangming, as cited by Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 602.
Wang’s intuitive knowledge means that the heart in its original state is not obscured by selfishness. This intuitive knowledge is always followed by a corresponding action. A selfish person would not follow the virtuous instinct of his heart because the heart is obscured. However, the ‘learning of the great man serves simply to clear away the obscuring and thus to manifest the illustrious virtue, so as thus to restore the original unity of Heaven, Earth and all things.’ However, there is one major drawback in Wang’s concept of intuitive knowledge. Although a pure heart knows right and wrong, it does not give a clear teaching of the practical ‘know-how’.

The fourth chapter of The Rules and Proprieties of Islam deals with the explanation, meanings and witness of the endeavours. In the beginning, Liu Zhi emphasized the need for exhaustive effort to understand the principle of endeavours and make all investigations of all aspects of endeavours. ‘Meaning is to know exhaustibly the principle and examine all things. Witness is to explore the mystery and explain the meaning.’ He clearly adopted the School of Principle and Zhu Xi’s concept of investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. The first sentence of this chapter is to emphasize orthodoxy, namely right understanding of Islamic rites, in terms of the School of Principle of Neo-Confucianism. For Liu Zhi, knowing the meaning of endeavours requires an on-going process of hard work. The knowledge needs to be continually expanded.

In the middle part of the chapter and the beginning of the next chapter, the role of heart is then emphasized. ‘Through the heart, the self can understand his nature and also the eyes can see.’ The heart and nature are interconnected. Liu Zhi most likely adopted Wang Yangming’s concept of the mind and explained that the heart must be pure and virtuous, free from any selfishness. While the School of Principle is seemingly in antithesis to the School of Mind in the interpretation of the world, the order of things and others, Liu Zhi employed both schools of Neo-Confucianism in his explanation of the endeavours. Thus,

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557 Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, 604.
558 Fung, Short History, 510.
559 Alternative translation: Testification.
560 The School of Principle asserts that the nature is principle (性即是理) but the School of Mind asserts that the nature is mind or heart (心即是理). Fung, Short History, 504.
Liu Zhi’s contextualization is to employ any aspect of Neo-Confucianism as long as he could explain the meaning of Islamic rites and also the need for the purity of heart. The School of Mind provides the insight for Liu Zhi to emphasize that the heart must not be obscured by selfish desires. With a pure and sincere heart, the Islamic rites are necessarily virtuous. Simply put, endeavours with right understanding and right doing involve both the body and heart.

In addition, the final goal of both right understanding and doing is unveiling. The prophet Muhammad provides not only the perfect example of endeavours but also assists Muslims’ unveiling and their return to the Real. The context of this chapter makes it clear that while the sage in this chapter is not explicitly called the Utmost Sage, the holy sage can be interpreted as the prophet Muhammad.

Imitate that which is visible and follow the way of the sage. Then, you can reach the realm that is conceived to be impossible to reach. The holy sage is indeed human but he is the representative of the way and also manifests the way. The real Lord is the origin of the holy way. Therefore, testifying to the sage is to testify to the Lord. If you testify thoroughly to the end, you also testify to the deeper mystery of the Lord. You can speak of two testimonies, one to the Lord and the other to the sage. In reality, it belongs to the same principle.561

Based on such analysis above, it may be concluded that Liu Zhi’s contextualization is uniquely his own in that he selectively made choices from all aspects of Chinese contexts, both the School of Principle and Mind of Neo-Confucianism. He selected, edited and modified his Chinese contexts as necessary to communicate the meaning and witness of Islamic rites.

561 Appendix IV.xlix.
6.1.6 Fifth Chapter: Five Endeavours

This is one of the longest chapters in this work and it gives a clear and essential summary of the nature and meaning of the five pillars of Islam which are contextualized as the five endeavours. The Confucian basic meaning of endeavours has the connotation of merit. The word endeavour is a good translation because while the true practice is truly the hard work carried out by the seekers, it is fundamentally empowered by the Utmost Sage and preordered by the Real Ruler. Liu Zhi, the integrative thinker, consistently insisted that both aspects, divine and human, were necessary for humankind to return to the Real Ruler. The previous chapter emphasizes the spiritual or metaphysical meaning of true practice and the unique role of the prophet Muhammad. This chapter follows on from the previous chapter and discusses the complementary aspect of the true practice, namely the practical details for daily living of all Muslims. Liu Zhi emphasized the five endeavours because they were revealed in the sacred Qur’an as divine commands and exemplified by the prophet Muhammad. After an overview in chapter five, Liu Zhi used three subsequent chapters to expound the five endeavours in greater detail.

Any reader who examines this chapter generally can get a good overview of the five endeavours. Firstly, one can clearly know that the aim of the five endeavours is more than mere self-cultivation of human character. It is to do ultimately with one’s return to the Real or the unity of the human with heaven. The five endeavours are the means to the end. Secondly, one can notice that the major concern of Liu Zhi’s discussion is on the first endeavour which is to bear witness, Shahadah. While he explained that there were ten extensive rules that governed the true practice of Shahadah, the other four endeavours were not given such detailed discussion. At the end of the chapter, he repeatedly emphasized the vital role of Shahadah. It is the foundation of the beginning of all things and the backbone of the five endeavours. The ten rules governed not only the external practice of audible and verbal recitation but also the internal practice of inaudible heart recitation. Not only

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562 The opening prologue emphasizes that the five endeavours are divine commands. ‘五者皆主命, 而聖人作則, 以示眾人者也.’
563 髓, 言其精旨, 元, 言其根始也。百功資成念, 猶百體資成於精髓也.
Muslims should understand the meaning of their witness, they should readily without hesitation answer any queries about *Shahadah*.

A more detailed examination of this chapter can reveal Liu Zhi’s systematic method in presenting the importance of five endeavours and his integration of outward and inward compliance of law by the true practice of the heart. Thus, the five endeavours are not interpreted legalistically. Also, there is a rational basis and yet the role of the heart is always emphasized. Liu Zhi further explained different aspects of the endeavours.

Firstly, Liu Zhi gave a rational account for the important roles of the five endeavours. While the five endeavours were external rites, they also resembled the five senses of humanity. He argued that physical senses were linked to the inner sentiments of the heart. For Liu Zhi, inner sentiments and feelings were burdens on the seekers, withholding and constraining the seeker’s progress. He used the example of a lock. This example is important and requires brief recapitulation. Sentiments are like the spring of a lock and enable the lock to be open position. The five endeavours are like the key to the lock. If the key is turned, the lock is closed, resulting in an ideal situation of union. The ideal role of the five endeavours is not to allow any inner sentiment to affect the locked position. After birth, human nature gradually becomes insensitive and falsehood grows daily. The five endeavours are to remove such hindrances to the seekers’ path. While Liu Zhi occasionally used the Qur’anic source to assert the divine decree, he often resorted to rational argument and thus made his argument more convincing. Unlike *The Nature and Principle in Islam* which uses one diagram to discuss a theme, this chapter provides plentiful illustrations to make his arguments convincing and easier to understand. Obedience to the five endeavours is compared with the discovery of treasure. The seekers continue their endeavours because they are afraid of losing the treasure. The real Lord is the creator, controller and manager of the cosmos. Liu Zhi illustrated this by saying that a knife must have a knife-maker; a racing chariot a rider in control and a garden a gardener to manage the garden. Thus, the importance of the five endeavours is argued rationally.
Secondly, the integration of the outward compliance of the five endeavours with the inward compliance by the true practice of the heart is emphasized. It is not the body but the heart that has contact with the way of heaven. ‘The way of heaven works harmoniously with the human heart’. When the five endeavours are accomplished, the seekers are at the end of the acquired heaven because their hearts are in the appropriate condition to perceive the substance and function in the innate heaven. That is, the seekers have accomplished the true practice of the bodily substance. They may continue their paths or ways with their heart body and nature body. To a certain extent, the external compliance with the five endeavours concerns the true practice of the bodily substance but the internal compliance is equally important.

Another aspect of Liu Zhi’s integration deals with the five endeavours. The first endeavour is witness (Shahadah). The witness is to direct the seeker towards the real Lord and the prophet Muhammad who was sent by God. This is the seeker’s ultimate goal. The seeker should look at nothing in this world but out of this world for the real Lord because he is invisible. The second endeavour is ritual prayer which is the path of return. Seekers practice prayer and they are then on the path of return. It is because the seeker is aware of the final goal and he sets himself on the path towards that final goal. The third and fourth endeavours deal with self-centredness. The third endeavour of fasting is to resist the temptation of material things and the seeker takes control of his desire. The fourth endeavour of alms-tax is even harder. It is to sacrifice the human self. It is not so much for one to let go of one’s desire. More than that, one is dead to material things. The fifth pilgrimage means to return to the real Lord, forgoing the love of home and looking forward to a glorious union with the real Lord. The issue is not the temporary giving up of the visible home or to seek for a holy location. Rather, it is the fervent desire for the unity with

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564 天道人心, 妙合而通也.
565 修此, 而後天道盡.
566 Literally, bodily substance means the physical body (身體, shen ti). Murata says that ‘Liu commonly used ti [體] for body, but he tended to use shen [身] as a contrast for the heart.’ Murata, Sage, 438. It should be noted that Liu Zhi asserted that humans have three substances, namely bodily substance, heart substance and nature substance. Murata, Sage, 519.
567 念, 知所歸也.
the real Lord. Thus, the integration of the five endeavours is the union of humankind with the real Lord, contextualized as self-cultivation of body, heart and nature. Unsurprisingly, when discussing the first endeavour of bearing witness, Liu Zhi emphasized audible, inaudible, verbal and even nonverbal form of bearing witness from the heart. When discussing prayer, he emphasized set time, ritual and non-set time, and non-ritual prayers.

Finally, the seekers should pay careful attention to the prophet Muhammad who is their example in accomplishing the five endeavours. Liu Zhi laid down ten rules for the important first endeavour, *Shahadah*. In addition, he discussed the role of the Utmost Sage, the prophet Muhammad. The importance of Muhammad is due to both his nature and body. The significance of his nature or more correctly ‘nature of continuity’ (*繼續*) is due to its intermediary function. Without his nature of continuity, seekers are not able to actualize their full realization. The significance of his body is due to his receiving of the divine revelation, resulting in the gift of the Qur’an. His sensory and revelatory faculties are superbly miraculous. They are far superior to all previous holy sages. He possesses all the virtues. That is, the prophet Muhammad embodies Islam. To know Islam is also to know the Utmost Sage. In Liu Zhi’s expanded annotation, he praised the glorious contributions of the prophet Muhammad.

Great is the Utmost Sage! His mandate is before heaven and earth and yet he was born at the end of all holy sages.

Great is the Utmost Sage! His way is the tradition of thousands of sages. He faithfully and utterly obeys the Lord of the cosmos.

Great is the Utmost Sage! His endeavours are as huge as the heaven and earth. His way includes both the laws of divine and human.

It is clear and obvious that without the prophet Muhammad, the usefulness of the five endeavours is limited. Liu Zhi’s clear and summarized narrative of the Utmost Sage in the

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568 經謂: 凡欲識至聖者。先須認其宗派。此至聖之宗派也。
569 大哉聖人。命立天地之前。誕生萬聖之後…
570 大哉聖人! 道傳千聖之宗。忠竭萬方之主…
571 大哉聖人! 功同天地之能。道冠天人之表…
final part of the fifth chapter on the teaching of five endeavours gives a very clear emphasis that the role of the Utmost Sage is vital for the Muslims to return to the Real. The Utmost Sage has primordial existence in the innate heaven. He is the Human Ultimate. He is also a human being who has superior revelation and sensory power. Without knowing the Utmost Sage, there is no return to the Real. Any reader can hardly miss that such description of the prophet Muhammad belongs to the Sufi tradition. Like Ibn ‘Arabi, Liu Zhi came perilously close to deifying the Human Ultimate.  

6.2 A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Scholarship on Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam

Before undertaking an overview of contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam, it is necessary to explain Liu Zhi’s understanding of the way of heaven and the way of humanity in the tenth chapter of this so-called very Confucianized work. In the fifth chapter, there is an overview of the five endeavours and a brief description of each endeavour. Then, the first endeavour is explained in greater detail. More details of the other four endeavours are explained between the sixth to eighth chapters. It is in these chapters that the five endeavours are clearly stated as the way to heaven.

From the tenth chapter, Liu Zhi discussed the way of humanity which describes five Islamic ethics of human relationships (hereafter: five relationships) which bear strong resemblance to five Confucian ethical codes. The five Islamic ethics of relationships are the relationship between king and courtier, father and son, husband and wife, brother and sister and lastly a friend and another friend. These ethical rules for harmonious human relationship are a common code, the norm of nature and unchanging propriety. However, they are more than mere harmonious human relationships. Liu Zhi imbued these relationships with Islamic content in his tenth chapter.


Islam establishes the five endeavours to achieve the way of heaven, also the five relationships to achieve the way of humanity. The way of heaven and humanity are not two ways but the external and internal aspect of just one way. To be on the way of humanity means eventually near to the way of heaven. The foundation of the way of heaven is the way of humanity. Being on the way of heaven is inclusive of the way of humanity. It is because the way of humanity is to put right the essential nature of humankind. At the end of both the way of heaven and humanity, humankind has accomplished things that ought to be done.574

Liu Zhi innovatively connected the five endeavours (i.e. five pillars of Islam) with the Confucian five ethical codes using both the concept of way of heaven and humanity. Thus, if one just reads the tenth to twentieth chapters without any reference to all the previous chapters, one easily concludes that Liu Zhi’s Rules and Proprieties of Islam sinicized Islamic ethics into Confucianism. However, if one just reads from the first to the ninth chapters, one can easily conclude that Liu Zhi’s Islamic five endeavours are superior religious proprieties and different from Confucianism. Also, if one focuses on the way of humanity and its parallel with the five Confucian codes, one will conclude Liu Zhi’s work is totally sinicized. If one focuses on the way of heaven and its parallel with the five pillars of Islam, one will conclude that his work is very Islamic and yet contextualized. It should be noted that Liu Zhi himself refused to separate the two ways and interweave two aspects together. Thus, it is neither Confucianized nor a mere adaptation of the form of Confucianism. It is important to hold together the two aspects that Liu Zhi has integrated together. Thus, if one merely takes a section of Liu Zhi’s work out of context, one can easily misinterpret Liu Zhi’s works and his contextualization. This present work has persistently examined both the longer and shorter works and thus gives a more balanced view of Liu Zhi’s Islam in Confucian terms.

The common consensus of Chinese scholars on Liu Zhi’s work is that The Rules and Proprieties of Islam is most Confucianized. A few careful and articulate Chinese scholars

who study this work more thoroughly will take a minority view different from the consensus. From the West, there is only one scholar, namely James D. Frankel who investigates in detail some parts of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. A critical assessment of scholarly opinions will be provided at the end of this chapter.

### 6.2.1 An Overview

With regard to Liu Zhi’s Islamic works in general, some contemporary scholars argue that his *Han Kitab* is an articulate effort of Confucianization, Sinicization, indigenization and even acclimatization\(^{575}\) of Islam into Chinese culture in his times. Other scholars may assert that Liu Zhi’s strategy is accommodation and adaptation. A few scholars may be more neutral in that Liu Zhi intended his works to be mutual cultural enrichment between Muslim and the Chinese. A typical slogan concerning Liu Zhi’s works is that these works have tried to seek convergence with the Chinese culture and yet maintained the differences. The core issue is the degree and nature of such differences. Obviously, there is a spectrum of opinions. The majority of Chinese scholars assert that the difference is minor. Only a few scholars aver that the difference is irreconcilable. This consensus of scholarly opinions on the general works of Liu Zhi also carries forward to his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. The general consensus at this moment is that his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* aligns the five relationships with the Confucian five ethical codes. This section will survey the contemporary scholarship and critically assess two contemporary scholarly opinions on this particular work of Liu Zhi.

Ma Duoyong investigates the localization of Islam in China. From a historical perspective, he studies the dialogue between Islam and Confucianism.\(^{576}\) Ma asserts that Islamic writers, in particular Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Principles of Islam*, absorb selectively and yet massively

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the five codes of Confucianism which are championed by Zhu Xi, the great pioneer of Neo-
Confucianism. The basic contents of the five relationships are almost the same as the five
codes and give the impression that the Islamic ethics are Confucian-like. Liu Zhi’s work
selectively avoids any discussion that may minimize the core teaching of Islam. Not only
does he put the husband and wife relationship as the first order of his five Islamic ethics,
unlike the five codes, Liu Zhi was silent about particular matters of details, such as Muslim
widows who could re-marry.⁵⁷⁷ Re-marriage was despised by Neo-Confucians who
considered any virtuous widow should not re-marry. While Liu Zhi emphasized the loyalty
of the courtiers to the emperor, he also used Qur’anic teachings that the emperor should
know the real Lord and uphold righteousness because the Lord himself symbolized
righteousness.⁵⁷⁸ Thus, the emperor was in fact under the rule of the real Lord and ruled his
empire on behalf of the Real. The emperor should also imitate the sages who proclaimed
the Lord’s messages and be models and examples to others. Ma concludes that while the
ethical systems of Islam and feudal Confucianism are different, they share the common and
core concepts of piety and self-realization which closely integrate the two systems together.
This integration transforms Islamic ethics into an Islamic ethical system with Chinese
characteristics.⁵⁷⁹ There is a difference between the two systems. In choosing his materials
selectively, Liu Zhi has adapted Islamic ethics and expressed them in Confucian terms.

Ma’s view is representative of many scholars in China who support the adaptation and
integration of Islam so that Islam in China has its own unique Chinese characteristics. Zhu
Xiaojun supports Ma. In his short essay, Zhu avers that Liu Zhi’s transference and
transformation of the five Islamic relationships into the five codes of Confucianism are
mutually beneficial to both Chinese and Islamic traditions in China. Also, Zhu asserts that
this is the only plausible way for Islam to continue its existence in China and also safeguard
its interests.⁵⁸⁰ After comparing the five relationships of Chinese Islam with the five codes
of Confucianism, Shi Lili even declares that the writers of the Han Kitab proactively and

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⁵⁷⁷ Ma, Dialogue, 26.
⁵⁷⁸ Ma, Dialogue, 27.
⁵⁷⁹ Ma, Dialogue, 28.
⁵⁸⁰ Zhu Xiaojun 朱小軍, ‘Briefly Exploring Liu Zhi’s Five Codes 清初回族學者劉智 ‘五典’ 說探微,’
strategically converge with the Chinese culture. Islam is thus almost sinicized by their
tremendous effort of translation and transformation.\textsuperscript{581}

Another group of Chinese scholars are able to point out that while the Islamic rites in \textit{The Rules and Proprieties of Islam} adapt to Neo-Confucianism, the two traditions have
substantial differences and yet both benefit from the co-existence. Ji Fangtong examines the
theory of self-cultivation between Islam and Confucianism in \textit{The Nature and Principle in Islam}.\textsuperscript{582} He argues with substantial evidence from some Neo-Confucian texts that Liu
Zhi’s understanding of self-realization has many resemblances and parallels with Neo-
Confucianism with few insignificant differences in the true practice of the body, heart and
nature.\textsuperscript{583} Ji acknowledges a major and essential difference. Liu Zhi’s work emphasizes that
the goal of self-realization is return to the Real and the method of eventual self-realization
is annihilation.\textsuperscript{584} Ji concludes that despite the religious difference, human self-realization
is a universal phenomenon. Thus, the integration of Liu Zhi’s ideas and Neo-Confucianism
is an asset for humanity.\textsuperscript{585}

A similar view of adaptation and integration is presented by Hai Jing in his general study
on filial piety and loyalty between Confucianism and Islam.\textsuperscript{586} Hai says that although Liu
Zhi’s understanding of the five relationships has its source from the teaching of \textit{Hadith}, the
philosophy and the layout of his argument has massive parallels with Confucian ideas.\textsuperscript{587}
Hai asserts that with respect to the issue of filial piety, Liu Zhi and other \textit{Han Kitab} writers
completely adopted the Confucian five codes. With respect to the issue of loyalty to the

\textsuperscript{581} Shi Lili 石麗麗, ‘The Comparison between Five Ethics Thought of Confucianism and Five Ethics
Thoughts of Chinese Islam 儒家‘五倫’思想與中國伊斯蘭‘五典’思想的比較’ (MPhil. Thesis: Lanzhou,
Northwest University for Nationalities, 2010).
\textsuperscript{582} Ji Fangtong 季芳桐, ‘Comparison of the Theory of Self-realization between Islam and Confucianism:
Study on Qing Hui Scholar Liu Zhi and His Thoughts in Nature and Principle in Islam 回儒修養理論比較:
\textsuperscript{583} Ji, ‘Comparison’, 139-40.
\textsuperscript{584} Ji, ‘Comparison’, 141.
\textsuperscript{585} Ji, ‘Comparison’, 142.
\textsuperscript{586} Hai Jing 海敬, \textit{A Comparative Study on Attitude toward ‘Filial Piety’ and Conscientiousness between
Confucianism and Islam 儒家和中國伊斯蘭教‘忠考観’比較研究} (MPhil. Thesis, Lanzhou: Northwest
University for Nationalities, 2011).
\textsuperscript{587} Hai, ‘Comparative Study,’ 40.
emperor, they articulately transformed into a dual loyalty to both the Real Ruler and the emperor. Hai Jing notes that to be loyal to the emperor is not necessarily to be disobedient to the Real Ruler. The two loyalties are not in antithesis. Such re-adjustment of the meaning of loyalty is able to reconcile the difference between the two ethical systems.\textsuperscript{588} Another well-known scholar of Liu Zhi is Sha Zhongpin who examines specifically Liu Zhi’s way of humanity.\textsuperscript{589} Sha avers that both Liu Zhi and Neo-Confucians teach the way of heaven and the way of humanity. These two ways are not mutually exclusive but they are two aspects of the same self-realization. Sha concludes that in constructing an ethical thought system for the Hui Muslims, Liu Zhi’s ethics have both outward form and inward spirit. The form is taken from Chinese culture and the spirit from Arabic Islam.

Thus, the general scholarly consensus from contemporary Chinese scholars asserts that Liu Zhi’s ethical system, in particular his \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam}, is Confucianized although he is articulate enough to maintain an Islamic framework or goal. Admittedly, there is a variable difference in degree of Confucianization among scholars.

It should be noted that there is a minority view which differs from the above majority view in China. After examining \textit{The Rules and Proprieties of Islam}, Guo Suxing and Sun Zhenyu in their short essay modestly expound several key themes in Liu Zhi’s work.\textsuperscript{590} Their analytical exposition is based on a careful reading of the whole range of Liu Zhi’s works. Firstly, Liu Zhi favours the heavenly principle, namely the way of the sages as required by the Real Ruler, though the way of humankind is not ignored. Secondly, the role of Islamic rites is to return to the Real and this aspect is silent in Neo-Confucianism. Thirdly, Muslims should have righteous deeds. Fourthly, while Islam emphasizes the religious teachings, it also integrates with the secular teachings of self-realization. The

\textsuperscript{588} Hai, ‘Comparative Study,’ 40.
\textsuperscript{589} Sha Zhongpin 沙宗平, ‘Examining the Hui Islamic Ethics from Liu Zhi’s Five Relationships of the Way of Humanity 從劉智的“人道五典”看回族伊斯蘭倫理,’ (Lecture Note, Shihezi: Shihezi University, Xinjiang, 2004).
religious teachings are exemplified by the Islamic sages. The secular teachings are to emphasize strict morality in human relationships.\textsuperscript{591}

While the work of Guo and Sun is not explicitly contrary to the common consensus, there is a scholar who explicitly disagrees with the majority view. Min Wenjie specifically examines and compares Liu Zhi’s five relationships with the Confucian five codes in \textit{The Rules and Proprieties of Islam}.\textsuperscript{592} He says that the usual practice of investigating the dialogue between Islam and Confucianism tends to emphasize the common ground in both traditions. However, he emphasizes the qualitative differences.\textsuperscript{593} He points out briefly five essential differences.

Firstly, the five relationships are divinely ordained and commanded by the Islamic sacred scriptures. Confucianism has developed in its long history through alteration and enrichment by sages.

Secondly, the order of the five relationships is different from the five codes. Liu Zhi put the husband and wife relationship first because of the teaching of the Qur’an and \textit{Hadith}. The creator created Adam and his wife. Their descendants multiplied and spread to become the whole humankind. Thus, the husband and wife relationship is first in the order of Liu Zhi’s Islamic ethics.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the Qur’an and \textit{Hadith} do not teach merely ‘five’ Islamic ethics of human relationships. The Islamic sacred texts do teach a wide range of human relationships in minute detail. Thus, Min asserts that Liu Zhi selectively chose only five because of his strategic method of communicating Islamic teachings using well-established Confucian terms and practices.

\textsuperscript{591} Guo, ‘Liu Zhi’s Islamic Thought,’ 109-114.
\textsuperscript{593} Min, ‘Comparison,’ 32.
Fourthly, Confucian codes are concerned with the order of human relationships in a feudal society. Islamic ethics are applicable for the sake of this life and the afterlife.

Finally, Islam has a strong view of the mandate or predestination of the Real Ruler and eventual return to him. The Real Ruler is to reward or punish humankind according to the deeds of this life on the Day of Judgment. There is no equivalent concept in Confucianism.\textsuperscript{594} Min says that by popularizing the five relationships of Islam using the Confucian five codes among both the literati and the ordinary Han Chinese, other teachings of Islam are more easily accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims. He concludes that contemporary scholars who compare Islamic and Confucian ethical teachings should be cautious and avoid misinterpreting the basic spirit of Islamic ethical thought.\textsuperscript{595} This present research work stands with the minority view, namely Min’s view and agrees with the reading and comments of Guo and Sun on Liu Zhi’s works.

6.2.2 A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Scholarship on Rules and Proprieties of Islam

Substantial monograph-level studies on \textit{The Rules and Proprieties of Islam} have been completed by Liang Xiangming in China and James Frankel in America. There are two main reasons to choose Frankel and Liang. Firstly, this present work is more focused on Liu Zhi’s \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam}. Only Frankel and Liang have done more substantial research on this work. Murata and Yin have studied very thoroughly Liu Zhi’s \textit{Nature and Principle in Islam}. They have focused more on cosmogony, divine disclosure and anthropology. Thus they are not chosen for assessment. Secondly, Frankel and Liang are chosen because they reflect two different perspectives on Liu Zhi’s work. While Liang’s analysis reflects his understanding of Liu Zhi in engagement more with his contemporary Chinese scholars, Frankel’s work reflects his understanding of Liu Zhi in

\textsuperscript{594} Min, ‘Comparison,’ 33-36.
\textsuperscript{595} Min, ‘Comparison,’ 36.
engagement more with contemporary Western scholarly research within the general Neo-Confucian context.

(1) James Frankel’s Works


Frankel has made a great contribution to highlight the significance of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* in the *Han Kitab*. He also praises the literary erudition of this work. Frankel’s substantial monograph asserts three main points. Firstly, in his support of Benite’s thesis, he avers that the identity of Hui Muslims in late Ming and early Qing dynasties is Muslim and Chinese simultaneously. In other words, part of Liu Zhi’s work is to raise the Hui Muslims’ awareness of their Islamic and Chinese dual inheritance.


598 Liang Xiangming 梁向明, *The Study on Ethics of Three Chinese Translators During the Late Ming Dynasty to the Early Qing Dynasty* 明末清初回族三大漢文譯著家倫理思想研究 (Beijing: Guangming Daily Press, 2010). This is the published version of his PhD thesis in 2007. Liang Xiangming 梁向明, ‘The Study on Ethics of Three Chinese Translators During the Late Ming Dynasty to the Early Qing Dynasty’ 明末清初回族三大漢文譯著家倫理思想研究 (PhD Thesis, Beijing: Minzu University of China, 2007).
Secondly, he asserts that the concept of law or shari’a in Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* is both to regulate behaviour and prescribe a path for religious endeavour. In agreement with Murata, he says that Liu Zhi’s concept of shari’a is dependent heavily on Sufi thought.

Finally, Frankel explains that Liu Zhi carefully searches for Allah’s Chinese name in the monotheistic antecedents in the Chinese tradition. Frankel believes that Liu Zhi’s search is primarily influenced by the sixteenth century Jesuits in China and Chinese Jews secondarily. The term *zhu* or ‘lord’ is adopted eventually because ‘the fact that Nestorians had already established this as a term suitable for monotheistic theology in the stele inscription of 781, followed later by the Jesuit coinage of the title *tianzhu*, “Lord of Heaven”, set a precedent for Muslim writers to follow.’

The central thesis of Frankel’s monograph is that:

Accommodating his [Liu Zhi’s] thought to the rational standard of contemporary Chinese thought, in his presentation of Islam Liu Zhi downplayed the role of revelation, expounding instead theological concepts, with frequent reference to natural law and sophisticated metaphysical arguments of Neo-Confucian lixue (lit. “study of principle”). In terms of Islamic orthopraxy, he harmonized Muslim religious practice with the Confucian principle of ritual (li), thus demonstrating that Islam is built upon the same central pillar of civilization as Confucian culture is.

Also, Frankel concludes his assessment of Liu Zhi’s contextualization. One should also note that Frankel prefers the term accommodation to contextualization.

Liu Zhi constructed effective arguments for the harmonization of Confucian and Islamic ideas of morality and ethics, hinging upon the concept of ritual. And while he did manage to syncretize certain important metaphysical concepts of the two traditions, he ultimately could not bridge the theological gap that divided them. Yet syncretism was Liu Zhi’s method, not his goal — promoting better understanding of Islam was.

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599 Frankel, *Rectifying*, 160.
600 Frankel, *Rectifying*, xix-xx.
Frankel’s study on Liu Zhi in particular and *Han Kitab* in general gives a cautious and helpful insight for any contemporary study and scholarship of these Chinese Muslim literati whose existence was challenged by the hegemonic Chinese civilization in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Frankel’s view is that

> It is not that conflict and concord are not prominent features of Chinese Muslim history; they certainly are … The concord, or harmonization, that many observe in the writings of the Chinese Muslim literati elite … was the organic product of individual minds, acting in a communal and generational context, in an effort to make sense of a hybrid intellectual, cultural and religious heritage.\(^{602}\)

Thus, in terms of contextualization Frankel argues for a hybrid and organic relationship between Hui Muslim thought and Neo-Confucianism.

(2) Liang Xiangming’s Works

While Frankel’s work involves both Chinese and Arabic sources, Liang’s work focuses primarily on the Chinese sources and contexts. While Frankel’s work focuses more on Liu Zhi’s early chapters of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, Liang’s work examines more thoroughly many works of Liu Zhi including close reading of Islamic ethics in *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Liang notes that Liu Zhi’s task is difficult because Arabic religious and philological concepts are not easy to translate into Confucian terms. In *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, Liang notes that the content is concerned with fundamental Islamic doctrines, both theoretical and practical aspects. Liang also avers that Liu Zhi used Confucian concepts and ideologies merely to express his doctrinal teachings. Liang describes Liu Zhi’s work as Islamic doctrinal teachings with Chinese characteristics.\(^{603}\) In his study on Liu Zhi’s Islamic ethics in *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, Liang agrees with the majority view that Liu Zhi intentionally contextualized the Islamic five

\(^{602}\) Frankel, ‘Uncontrived Concord,’ 46.

\(^{603}\) Liang, ‘Using Confucianism to Interpret Islam,’ 90.
relationships into the Confucian five ethical codes. However, Liang admits that such contextualization of Islam into Chinese culture is subtle and articulate.

Liang says that the first point of Liu Zhi’s contextualization is flexibility. Confucian teaching insists on a courtier’s obedience to the emperor to the extent that when the emperor orders him to die, the courtier should obey. While Liu Zhi followed the Confucian five ethical codes and insisted on the obedience of the courtier to the emperor, he also used Qur’anic verses (an example like the story of King David) and Hadith to command the emperor that he should rule righteously and under the sovereignty of the Real Ruler. The second point of contextualization is Liu Zhi’s insistence on both the way of heaven and way of humanity. While the five relationships are the way of humanity, it is the five endeavours that are the way of heaven. The way of heaven represents the distinctive Islamic worldview with its emphasis on afterlife and the spiritual aspects of Islamic rites. The Confucian worldview has more to say on human ethical relationships and very little on the afterlife.

Liang views Liu Zhi’s works as a subtle, articulate and creative contextualization of Islam into the Chinese culture. With respect to cosmogony and epistemology, Liang says that Liu Zhi used Confucianism as his means to communicate Islamic teachings. However, with respect to an ethical system, Liang avers that Liu Zhi’s Islamic ethics were enriched by Confucianism. Liang concludes that while the Islamic practices serve as the form, it is the Confucian five relationships that are the core contents of Liu Zhi’s ethical system.

In addition to a specific examination of Islamic ethics in The Rules and Proprieties of Islam, Liang also examines Liu Zhi’s works in general. He has made several general observations. Firstly, Liang asserts that while Liu Zhi’s cosmogony was primarily influenced by theoretical Sufism, his exposition was eclectic using philosophical ideas from Daoism,

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604 Liang, Study on Ethics, 137.
605 Liang, Study on Ethics, 133-34.
Buddhism and both the Principle and Mind School of Neo-Confucianism.\textsuperscript{606} While his exposition was eclectic, Liu Zhi truly maintained his Islamic foundation and theology. Liang says that Liu Zhi held firm to the fundamental Islamic tenets that the real Lord is one and unique and also Muhammad is the ultimate prophet. There is no more Islamic prophet after him. Liang avers that this fundamental belief of Liu Zhi never disappears despite his contextualization of Islam to the Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{607}

Secondly, Liang asserts that the doctrine of the unity of existence forms the overarching principle by which Liu Zhi integrated his various teachings of ontology, cosmogony, epistemology and ethics.\textsuperscript{608} His doctrine of the unity of existence is influenced clearly by mysticism.\textsuperscript{609} The significance of this doctrine is primarily concerned with the knowledge of the Real Ruler. The Ruler reveals itself to creation by both invisible and visible manifestations. Humankind can know the Real Ruler by the way of heaven and the way of humanity paying careful attention to the true practice of the body and heart.\textsuperscript{610} Liu Zhi’s teaching on the true practice of the heart is explicitly influenced by Sufism.\textsuperscript{611}

Thirdly, Liang argues that Liu Zhi made compromise in his political view. Liu Zhi taught that the emperor was a ‘representative’ of the Real Ruler. That is, the emperor was the agent on behalf of the Ruler to govern the state. Anyone who prayed to the Ruler and ignored the emperor made no prayer to the Ruler at all. Liang concludes that in this particular view, Liu Zhi made compromise and his political view was explicitly Confucianized.\textsuperscript{612}

Finally, Liang supports the view that Liu Zhi’s works primarily aim to expound Islamic doctrines and use Confucian concepts, logics and thinking method as interpretative tools.

\textsuperscript{606} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 32, 33, 44, 48.
\textsuperscript{607} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 52.
\textsuperscript{608} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 49, 57-62.
\textsuperscript{609} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 57.
\textsuperscript{610} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 62-73.
\textsuperscript{611} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 74.
\textsuperscript{612} Liang, \textit{Study of Liu Zhi}, 85.
Confucianism is just a means and not an end. The result is not merely a better understanding of Islam by Muslims and less misunderstanding of Islam by the majority Han Chinese. It also has the effect of mutual enrichment and complementarity between Islam and Chinese culture especially in the area of ethical thinking and human self-realization. It achieves such a satisfactory effect because of Liu Zhi’s flexible method and appropriate artifice in his interpretation. Has Liu Zhi betrayed his Islamic original teaching? Liang asserts that a long period of continuous contextualization of Islam into Chinese culture has gone through a process of co-existence, exchange and integration. Such a long process of contextualization has brought enrichment to the Chinese culture including astronomy, medicine, and architecture by the arrival and continual influence of Islam. This contextualization has thus exceeded the religious boundary. Liang concludes that Liu Zhi’s works are truly Islamic and have not betrayed at all the principle of beliefs in Islam. In essence, Liang argues that Liu Zhi has Confucianized his Islamic ethics but not his basic tenets of Islamic belief.

(3) A Critical Assessment of Frankel and Liang

Admittedly, the two scholars have made scholarly advances in the study of Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* and provided a better understanding of Islamic rites within the Confucian cultural background. Their contributions complement the recent research in the study of Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam* by Murata and Jin. This critical assessment of the two contemporary scholars can cover various aspects from comparative religious studies to self-realization and return to the Real Ruler. However, this study focuses on the issue of unity of existence and Sufi spirituality by Liu Zhi. Several critical comments may be made.

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613 Liang makes helpful and general comments on various scholarly models about Lu Zhi’s adaptations. See Liang, *Study of Liu Zhi*, 161-62.
Firstly: while both Xiang and Frankel admit the influence of Sufism on Liu Zhi’s works, their investigation is not detailed enough to provide an Islamic context to explicate Liu Zhi’s explicit Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Other scholars, namely, Murata and Yin have paid careful attention to Liu Zhi’s Islamic tradition. When Murata examines Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle in Islam*, she often refers back to the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition and Liu Zhi’s quoted Sufi books in order to make sense of the meaning of various Chinese terms used by Liu Zhi. Moreover, she also refers to the later Arabic translation of *The Nature and Principle in Islam* by Ma Lianyuan, who is also known as Nur al-Haqq and Ma’s Arabic translation has helped her to work out some of the difficult meanings of Liu Zhi’s Chinese terms. The strongest evidence that Liu Zhi is influenced by the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition is his translation of Jami’s *Lawa’ih* into *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* in Chinese. Similarly, Yin also pays attention to Liu Zhi’s Sufi sources and discusses their significance among Hui Muslims in their Scripture Hall Education System. Yin provides a detailed essay on Sufism in China and indirectly provides a detailed account of Liu Zhi’s Sufi context. Thus, the Islamic tradition of Liu Zhi has been carefully investigated by Murata and Yin. While both Frankel and Liang acknowledge that Liu Zhi was influenced by his tradition, both of them pay insufficient attention to Sufi influence in their interpretation.

Secondly, both Frankel and Liang have not sufficiently attended to the mystical role of the Utmost Sage, Muhammad in the Sufi tradition. This unique role of the prophet Muhammad has been discussed in the last chapter. The exemplary role of the Utmost Sage is vital and he is the perfect exemplar of all sages in Islam. He is also the sole vicegerent of humankind. He guides and enables all Muslims in their spiritual quests. The role of the Utmost Sage is important in both the innate heaven and the acquired heaven. In Liu Zhi’s concept of the unity of existence, the Muhammadan Spirit (such as the concept of the nature of continuity of the Utmost Sage) gives rise to creation and humanity. Muslims are enabled by the Utmost Sage in their return to the Real Ruler. Both Frankel and Liang are willing to

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acknowledge the significance of Ibn ‘Arabi’s unity of existence. Again, both of them give insufficient attention to the role of the prophet Muhammad. Liang is able to give an account of Liu Zhi’s Islamic worldview including the unity of existence and the role of Islamic ethics within such a worldview. However, Frankel gives more attention to the simultaneous Chinese-Muslim identity of the Hui and Liu Zhi’s search for the Islamic name of God in Chinese. Frankel does not say much about the Utmost Sage but this is not the focus of his study. This second critique is in continuation of the first critique in that had Frankel and Liang paid sufficient attention to the Sufi context and the mystical tradition of the Utmost Sage in the writings of Liu Zhi, their studies would have greater insights.

Finally, we should consider their arguments about Liu Zhi’s contextualization. Both Frankel and Liang have found it difficult to articulate a consistent strategy in Liu Zhi’s contextualization. Frankel argues that Liu Zhi’s method is syncretic but syncretism is not his goal. It is a means to an end. Also, Liu Zhi downplayed divine revelation and managed to harmonize Islamic practices with Confucian culture. In essence, Liu Zhi’s Islam adapted merely the form of Confucianism. Thus, Frankel has not taken the side of the majority view. While Liang affirms that Liu Zhi’s Islam is an adapted and subtle Islam with Chinese characteristics, in particular his political emphasis of Muslim loyalty to the imperial rulers, he also says that Liu Zhi adhered to the basic tenets of Islam. Thus, both of them find it difficult to give a neat, simple and direct statement of Liu Zhi’s contextualization.

A brief recapitulation of the successful contextualization by the Jesuit missionary Ricci Matteo in 17th-century China is helpful. Matteo’s contextualization can be similarly interpreted as a dialectical model of contextual theology. Later, the Jesuit mission in China faded away because of the rite controversy between the Qing Emperor Kangxi and the Pope in the Vatican. Liu Zhi employed a similar but not the same strategy. Recent contemporary cross-cultural study emphasizes dialectical engagement. 620 Angie Pears avers that dialectical engagement is to avoid polarizing positions of continuity and discontinuity. 621

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620 Contextual theology and dialectical engagement will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.
621 Angie Pears, Doing Contextual Theology (Florence: Routledge, 2009) 1-49.
The two poles are really related to each other through creative interaction and also through critical affirmation and rejection of cultures. It means that the husk can synthesize with Chinese culture but the kernel is supracultural, namely context oriented and yet text-based.

Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization has an irenic spirit. It is not confrontational, possibly avoiding the mistakes that later Jesuit missionaries made in 18th-century China. His model is definitely not setting the Hui Muslims up against other non-Muslims in China. His goal is to encourage Hui Muslims’ right understanding, doing and eventual unveiling without any alienation with the Chinese culture. Thus, his contextualization is strategically dialogical. His translation of Islamic texts has followed the similar strategy of his well-known predecessor Wang Daiyu in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Liu Zhi’s dialectical engagement is context-oriented, always in conversation with the Chinese culture but his content is supracultural and based on Islamic text. His model of contextualization is known as translation-conversation model. The context and content are held dialectically in creative interaction. It is neither Confucianization nor mere adaptation of the form of Confucianism. His contextualization encapsulates the dialectical engagement, sensitive to the Confucian cultural context and faithful to the Islamic tradition.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter translated and analysed the first five chapters of *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* with special reference to Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization. The first part of the chapter examined each chapter of his work individually. The second part critically commented on contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. We have shown that while Liu Zhi claimed in his author’s preface that his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* was no different from Neo-Confucian works, this claim should be understood in the context of learning and understanding the rites of Islam. That is, the process of learning Islamic rites is no different from learning Neo-Confucian classical

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622 This model will be further discussed in the final chapter.
works. Scholars often quote this claim and erroneously assume that Liu Zhi’s Islam is Confucianized.

In the first part of this chapter, we have shown that Liu Zhi interpreted the five endeavours or pillars of Islam in Islamic terms as the way of heaven and the five ethical human relationships in Confucian terms as the way of humanity. The two ways should be distinguished and yet not separated. The aim of Islamic rules and proprieties is to know the Real and the goal is to return to the Real. As noted, Liu Zhi emphasized the role of the heart in Islamic rites. Liu Zhi contextualized the role of the heart according to the School of Mind in Neo-Confucianism. In Liu Zhi’s contextualization, he was willing to employ any school of thought in Neo-Confucianism as long as he could explain the meaning of Islamic rites and also the need for purity of heart.

The second part of this chapter discussed the scholarly debate between J. Frankel and X. Liang on Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Frankel avers that Liu Zhi might be influenced by the 17th-18th century Jesuits in China and their strategy of accommodation or adaptation to Chinese contexts. Frankel argues that syncretism was Liu Zhi’s method but his goal was to promote better understanding of Islam. Liang asserts that Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islam into Chinese culture is subtle, articulate and creative. Liang argues that Confucianism is just a means and not an end. Not only did Liu Zhi’s contextualization promote better understanding of Islam, but he was also able to bring mutual enrichment and complementarity between Islamic and Chinese cultures especially in the area of ethical thinking and human self-realization. We have shown and argued that both Frankel and Liang have provided insights into Liu Zhi’s contextualization but they find it difficult to give a neat, simple and direct statement of Liu Zhi’s model of contextualization.

It is concluded that Liu Zhi’s contextualization engages in active dialogue with Chinese contexts. His strategy is context oriented and yet text-based. The model is the translation-conversation model which will be further discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Seven: Model of Contextualization, Contemporary Relevance and Final Conclusion

7.1 Liu Zhi’s Translation-conversation Model of Contextualization

In chapter one of this study, we discussed the six models of contextualization by Bevans. He notes that two or more models might be operating in a particular context. Based on the results of our investigation, this study selects a composite model. That is, Liu Zhi used the translation-conversation model in his contextualization of the Islamic tradition. He is an erudite Islamic scholar and a skilful cultural agent. Liu Zhi’s contextualization presented a vital, transformative and contemporary expression of Islam in the Neo-Confucian context.

Liu Zhi’s translation-conversation model of contextualization has several characteristics. Firstly, Liu Zhi was in dialogue with several cultural frameworks: Buddhism, Daoism and Neo-Confucianism. He was not merely interested in the School of Principle and the School of Mind in Neo-Confucianism. He was also in conversation with all aspects of the diverse Chinese cultures of his time. He was possibly aware of the Catholic missionary Matteo Ricci’s approach of contextualization and might have read Jesuit books or translated texts.

Secondly, Liu Zhi’s contextualization adopted the various strengths of both translation and conversation models as discussed by Bevans and yet simultaneously reduced the built-in dangers of the two models. Bevans avers that the translation model persistently preserves the basic tenets of belief. Thus, the contextual situation ultimately is the vehicle of the basic message of religious faith. The context is always a secondary element. The major strength of the translation model is its safeguard of the integrity of the basic tenets of belief and the Islamic tradition. With respect to the conversation model, its major strength is its emphasis both on the uniqueness of Chinese culture and its complementarity with the basic Islamic tenets of belief. With such positive attitudes to culture and by the process of genuine conversation between the dialogical partners of Islam and diverse Chinese cultures, Liu Zhi seeks to create a deep and renewed expression of Islam. The goal of conversation is that each partner can learn from the other, and each can profit from the other.
Liu Zhi’s translation-conversation model of contextualization demonstrates that he upheld the basic tenets of Islam, including the unity of divine existence, return to the Real in the afterlife and the basic five pillars of Islam. Without any sign of compromise in his contextualization, Liu Zhi emphasized the sole existence of the divine being, the unique role of the last prophet Muhammad, the ultimate authority of the Qur’an and the divine revelation of the five pillars. Also, he readily employed both Neo-Platonic and Neo-Confucian concepts and terms to explain Islamic cosmogony. He used the idea of the innate and the acquired heaven to explain his Islamic worldview. Moreover, he employed well known concepts of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation to explain Islamic and Sufi spirituality. The most distinctive and creative expression of his contextualization was his affirmation of dual loyalty to both the divine being and the imperial non-Islamic rulers. Loyalty to the imperial ruler did not compromise any faithfulness to the divine being.

Finally, this model of contextualization can satisfactorily explain the modern opinions among both Chinese and English scholars. Many Chinese scholars note Liu Zhi’s articulate contextualization by a careful and extensive use of Neo-Confucianism. Not surprisingly, some of them have commented that Liu Zhi’s Islam was fully sinicized. Also, a few Chinese scholars note that Liu Zhi selectively used Neo-Confucianism. These few scholars assert that while Liu Zhi’s five Islamic ethical relationships are very similar to the Neo-Confucian five merits, Liu Zhi’s framework of such relationships was clearly based on a unique Islamic concept. In addition, Liu Zhi altered and re-arranged the order of the five relationships in accordance with Islamic values. Almost all the contemporary Chinese scholars agree that Liu Zhi’s contextualization was able to enrich Neo-Confucianism with Islamic culture. All these comments bear the hallmark of the conversation model, namely a Hegelian sense of synthesis. On the other hand, the English speaking scholars are able to clearly illustrate Liu Zhi’s faithful use of Persian and Arabic Islamic sources. Thus, Liu Zhi’s translation and exposition of the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition was conservative. Liu Zhi was an erudite scholar in his translation and exposition of difficult Islamic concepts. Simply put, his strategy is context oriented and yet text-based.
The following is a summary of the main characteristics of Liu Zhi’s translation-conversation model of contextualization that this study has demonstrated:

- Liu Zhi upholds the divine authority of the sacred texts, especially the Qu’ran, and highly valued his received tradition. Revelation is primarily propositional.
- His translation emphasizes both the exoteric and esoteric interpretations of Islamic texts. In his transmission of Islamic texts, Liu Zhi apparently chooses the Islamic texts selectively. He also expands the meaning of the texts in his interpretation and yet he is in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition of Islam.
- His exposition and explanation of Islamic thought are expressed mainly, but not exclusively, in Confucian terms.
- His engagement with Chinese culture is by active dialogue or conversation. He builds bridges between Islamic thought and the Confucian context, so that Muslims in their own Chinese contexts could understand the Islamic messages in the Chinese texts.
- His contextualization interplays the experience of the past (Scripture and tradition) with the experience of the presence (experience, culture, social location and social change).
- In his engagement with the Confucian concept of self-cultivation, he contextualizes it as Sufi spirituality.
- He upholds the teachings of ancient Chinese sages and understands Chinese culture as a partner of Islamic teaching. However, Liu Zhi insists that while the Prophet Muhammad was understood as the Utmost Sage, he was unique and superior to all other sages.

In view of the above characteristics of Liu Zhi’s contextualization, it is best to describe Liu Zhi’s model as translation-conversation. This model can also be understood as a movement of descent and ascent. His work of translation is to communicate the Islamic message in the language and culture of real people in their contexts. He seeks to build bridges between divine revelation and the human context. This is a movement from the revealed text to the context. In addition, he engages and adapts the Confucian concept of self-cultivation as Sufi spirituality. This is a movement from below, or from the human context, back to the divine text, or where God wants humans to be. Both the concept of Confucian self-
cultivation and the concept of Sufi return to the Real Ruler are understood as a single process of transformation. For Liu Zhi, this transformation includes individuals, as well as corporate and cultural systems. For the Muslim readers of Liu Zhi’s works, their way or dao of Muslim living could be understood as Confucian self-cultivation.

7.2 Triangulating the Text, Culture and Wisdom in the Neo-Confucian Context

Liu Zhi was an erudite translator of Persian or Arabic text, well versed in his own Islamic tradition. Also, he was a competent cultural reader, well versed in his Neo-Confucian tradition. This present study has shown that Liu Zhi’s contextualization has been effective because while he transmitted his Islamic tradition in Neo-Confucian culture, he contextualized it by triangulating text, culture and wisdom together.624 Thus, while the form of contextualization is translation-conversation, the content is triangulation of text translation, culture adaption and spiritual wisdom.

The reasons for the appearance and common usage of Han Kitab (Islamic texts in Chinese) in Islamic education halls are many and should be carefully studied within the historical setting, philosophical thoughts and religious activities of that time. Firstly, in the case of the Nanjing Muslim literati of 17th-18th century China, namely Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, the reasons for Han Kitab were as follows:

- defend the strange ritual practices,
- strengthen the Hui Islamic and cultural identity,
- achieve the balance of both exoteric and esoteric aspects of Islam,
- contextualize Chinese Sufism in the 17th century,
- adapt to the increasing imperial control in the Chinese language context and

provide some user-friendly textbooks, poems, tracts and teaching aids for the Scripture Hall Education System.

Secondly, Liu Zhi sought to find an effective method of transmission embracing both translation of texts and dialogical engagement with the Chinese culture. He triangulated three aspects, namely creative translation of text, articulated interpretation of the Chinese culture and practical wisdom. Triangulation involves communicative interaction. It discards the subject/object dichotomy. That is, both the sacred text and Chinese culture interact with the world of practical wisdom. Putting this into Liu Zhi’s context, both Islam and Neo-Confucianism are subjects and they communicatively interact with the world of wisdom in 17th-century China.

7.3 A Summary of Liu Zhi’s Translation-conversation Model of Contextualization

The following table is a summary of Liu Zhi’s method of contextualization as discussed in this study. None of the following points has been noted and discussed by scholars in English and Chinese with exceptions mentioned in the footnote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Various Aspects of Liu Zhi’s Contextualization</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liu Zhi’s Use of Chinese Contexts</td>
<td>1.0 <em>The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon</em>: very eclectic and use Confucian, Buddhist and to a lesser degree Daoist terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0 <em>The Nature and Principle in Islam</em>: Mainly use Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi’s cosmological terms i.e. Neo-Confucian terms625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0 <em>The Rules and Proprieties of Islam</em>: The Islamic concept in the second half of this work is interpreted in Confucianized term but the first half is not so obvious.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.0 <em>The True Record of the Utmost Sage</em>: Muhammad is interpreted as the Utmost Sage. As a whole, use few Confucian terms except one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

625 This point has been noted and discussed by Jin, Murata and others.
| Liu Zhi’s Pedagogical Method in his Works | 1.0 *The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon*: Articulate Confucian literary style and ease of memorization  
2.0 *The Nature and Principle in Islam*: Diagram and explanation  
3.0 *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*: Text, commentary, annotation and illustration  
4.0 *The True Record of the Utmost Sage*: Narrative, drama, mythical story and Chinese history |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text and Context</td>
<td>While the authoritative text remains unchanged, the application of the principle of rules and proprieties of Islam should be flexible and adaptive in various contexts. Progress is made when such application is fair and not offending to the community in the contexts at that time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sufi Wisdom | 1.0 *Shari’a* law: Rites are based on the revealed text.  
2.0 *Tariqa*: the Sufi path begins with a pure, sincere and virtuous *dao* heart without any obscuring. *Dao* heart works together with real nature and then can ‘see’  
3.0 *Haqiqa*: unveiling and return to the Real One; the vital role of the Utmost Sage626 |
| Knowledge of Rites and the Real Ruler | 1.0 Right understanding: the School of Principle; investigation of things and the extension of knowledge  
2.0 Right doing: the School of Mind; a pure *dao* heart without any obscuring leading to virtuous action  
3.0 Union with the Real Ruler: the goal of union is similar to other Chinese thoughts:  
3.1 Treasure in the deep sea and Buddhist enlightenment  
3.2 Daoist’s exalted state of existence and the perfect man  
3.3 School of Mind: the concept of the Great Man who unites Heaven and Earth |

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We have shown that Liu Zhi’s contextualization is by using the translation-conversation model. This conclusion is the result of research after translating, examining and critically commenting on Liu Zhi’s major and some of his minor works. This model of contextualization provides a more convincingly explanation of existing arguments proposed by both Western and Chinese scholars on Liu Zhi’s works. The following statements of his contextualization can be noted:

1.0 In general, all of Liu Zhi’s works are contextualized and should be known as contextual theology.

2.0 With respect to his trilogy, the most contextualized work is his *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. It is followed by *The Nature and Principle in Islam* and the least is *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*.

3.0 In *The Nature and Principle in Islam*, Liu Zhi used Neo-Confucian terms and concepts to explain the great transformation using the innate heaven and the acquired heaven. Human composition and social class divisions are also explained in Neo-Confucian terms. However, the theological framework is based on the worldview and tradition of Ibn ‘Arabi.

4.0 In *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*, Liu Zhi made little effort to contextualize the prophet Muhammad except a chapter in the appendice.

5.0 In *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*, Liu Zhi made use of the Neo-Confucian concept of self-realization to explain the five pillars of Islam. It is based on this work that many scholars argue that Liu Zhi adapted or inculcitated Islam into Chinese culture.

6.0 In general, Liu Zhi was influenced by his Chinese Sufi tradition. He contextualized the Sufi spirituality of seekers as the way of return to the Real Ruler by using Neo-Confucian or other Chinese religious spirituality. This is clearly demonstrated by his poem, *The Five Sessions of the Moon* and can also be seen in other work, in particular *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. 
7. 4 The Contemporary Relevance: Muslims as Minorities

Liu Zhi translated and applied the Islamic texts which Muslim literati had received into their respective Chinese contexts. Liu Zhi had a daunting task because he argued that one could be both a Muslim and a Chinese under an increasingly oppressive Qing imperial rule. To do so, Liu Zhi endeavoured to continue interpreting the received Ibn ‘Arabi tradition within his own context in Chinese. On the one hand, he distinguished Islam from the Chinese culture by stating Islam belonged to the wisdom of the Arab world, founded by a western sage, Muhammad who received direct revelation from God. Thus, he separated Islam as a religion from Chinese social culture. On the other hand, he argued that Islamic rites and Chinese socio-religious culture were compatible and they would exist harmoniously.627

Liu Zhi’s contextualization resonates with the contemporary Islamic scholar, Tariq Ramadan. Ramadan’s works focus on Islamic theology and the position of the Muslim in the West and within Muslim minority countries.628 Ramadan calls himself both a Muslim and a Swiss. He affirms that there is a difference in nature between the Islamic principles related to religious ritual and those that concern the affairs of the world and society.629 In the realm of religious rituals, detailed and precise instructions are laid down in the Qur’an and Hadith. In the realm of human affairs in the West, Qur’an and Hadith generally only give guidance and direction rather than a definitive framework.630 According to Ramadan, the methodologies in these two realms are complete opposites. While ritual practice only relies on the Qur’an and Hadith, human affairs involve human reason and also allow creativity of interpretation. Ramadan asserts that in social human affairs, Islamic laws are

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629 Ramadan notes that while the scholastic traditionalism of Islam pays attention to the revealed texts to elucidate Islamic principles, liberal reformism emphasizes reason as a means to work out the affairs of the world and society. For Ramadan, Sufism is more inclined towards the text than reason. Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 29.
interactive with reason. Also Islamic laws are interactive with the social context. Ramadan insists that reason should not be the sole responsibility of ulama. This reason is known as civil reason by a corporate body consisting of experts, social and natural scientists, intellectuals and ordinary citizens.

As explicated by Andy Yu in his research, Ramadan puts civil reason at the centre of an interactive triangle.631 It is the civil reason at the centre that can be interactive with three other points, influencing and being influenced by them.632 The first triangular point is represented by the Qur’an and Hadith. Reasoning by such a civil corporate body should be based firmly in the explicit and implicit teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith. The second point in the triangle is the context of the society. The corporate body analyzes the social context by reasoning and then reflects upon the analysis after their experience. The third point is the need for critique. The corporate people analyze their critique and likewise reflect upon their criticisms. Ramadan argues that this ongoing reasoning, critique and reflection upon the social context in the light of the Qur’an and Hadith are necessary in both western pluralistic and Muslim majority societies.

Similarly, Kemal Ataman also notes that the attitude of Muslims towards people of other religious traditions cannot be characterized as a definite, fixed doctrine in any given time and space in any multicultural society.633 As one’s context changes, so does the interpretation of the text that shapes one’s consciousness, and therefore one’s attitudes. Along similar lines of approach as Ramadan and Ataman, Hendrik M. Vroom opines that Muslim immigrants from Middle Eastern countries now living in Western Europe with a change in context need a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of Islam in their

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632 Ramadan interprets shari’a broadly incorporating the role of reason or thinking. It shows Muslims how to be and remain Muslim. The shari’a is not only the expression of the universal principles of Islam but the framework and thinking that makes for their actualization in human history. Ramadan, Western Muslims, 32.

633 Ataman, ‘Religion, Culture,’ 495.
transition to a Western culture. Such a process involves reinterpretation in a different context of the principles of fiqh and the right understanding of the Qur’an and Hadith.\(^{634}\)

Thus, Ramadan and others resonate with Liu Zhi’s translation-conversation method of contextualization, in particular the realm of human affairs in the West where Muslims live as ethnic minorities. We conclude that Liu Zhi’s model of translation-conversation contextualization with emphasis on triangulation between text translation, cultural adaptation and spiritual wisdom has relevance and may enlighten further understanding of Muslims in the West. That is, while Liu Zhi worked in 17\(^{th}\)-18\(^{th}\) century China, his ideas still have currency and current relevance.

In post 9/11 America, some American Muslims have made attempts to reclaim or re-state the true nature of their faith. Khaled Abou El Fadl laments that political discourses have displaced moral discourses.\(^{635}\) In fact, Islam is concerned with building and creating life and thus is against violence. Furthermore, Taha Jabir Alalwani asserts that Islam summons Muslims to build a civilization, a community, with values, not a state.\(^ {636}\) A Sufi poet, Kabir Helminski says that ‘Islam is not a formulation, an ethical system, a practice, or even a revelation as much as it is a revelation to the divine.’\(^{637}\) Islam is a lifestyle that reflects tolerance and gentleness. Muslims should live in peaceful coexistence in a state of equality. These recent re-statements of faith by some American Muslims emphasize the experience of God and peaceful coexistence with other human beings. These teachings resonate with Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam.*


7. 5 The Legacy of Liu Zhi in 20th-Century China

The legacy of Liu Zhi lasted into the mid 20th-century China in Xi Dao Tang (西道堂) in Ningxia, China. The founder and leader of this group of Muslims was Ma Qixi who started the group in 1890. He adopted Liu Zhi’s written works as his main sources of Islamic education and teaching. Ma was not a scholar but his poems on Islam were popular among his followers. A common understanding is that Liu Zhi is the seed and Xi Dao Tang is the fruit.638 Jin Yijiu explains that the key point of this understanding is that Xi Dao Tang persistently used Chinese cultural ideas to explain and expound Islam.639 Not only did Xi Dao Tang adopt and embrace Chinese cultures to explain their beliefs, but also the Muslims of Xi Dao Tang used extensive networks of trade to engage and make friends with their neighbours, both Hans and non-Hans in 19th-20th century China. Ma followed Liu Zhi’s teaching of harmonious co-existence between the minority Muslims and the majority Hans. Xi Dao Tang declined during the Second World War due to internal conflicts and other reasons. The co-existence between Muslims as ethnic minorities and other groups in that region of Ningxia, North China did not create any cultural, political and religious animosity.

Muslims have been living in China for many centuries and there have been occasional rebellious uprisings and various governments have responded mercilessly. However, generally speaking, Muslims have co-existed with Han Chinese harmoniously for centuries. Contextualization and contextual theology are necessary for any Muslims living as ethnic minorities in the modern world. The contextualization of Liu Zhi is relevant in that the basic tenets of Islam can remain unchanged. The way forward for Islam in the modern world is to acknowledge the need for reform by contextualization into local culture.

638 Jin, Chinese Islam, 339.
7. 6 Final Conclusion

This study was concerned with the issue of Liu Zhi’s contextualization of Islam in 17th-18th century China. The general consensus of most Chinese scholars is that Liu Zhi’s Islam is Confucianized, but most English scholars aver that Confucianism in Liu Zhi’s works is just a means and not an end. Chapter One explained the research questions and provided the methodological introduction. Various models of contextualization were explicated. Not only did Liu Zhi and other Muslim literati translate Islamic texts in Persian and Arabic into Chinese, they also interpreted Islamic concepts by primarily using Confucian terms. Liu Zhi’s contextualization involved active engagement, dialogue and conversation with the Chinese contexts.

Chapter Two gave an account of the historical, religious and philosophical contexts of Liu Zhi. The Three Teachings in China provided rich resources of philosophical and ethical materials for Liu Zhi to contextualize the Islamic message of divine being, rites, return to the Real and others. Chapter Three examined almost all extant works of Liu Zhi and discussed the contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi’s works. Little study has been made by scholars, both English and Chinese, on the role of the Prophet Muhammad in Liu Zhi’s overall teaching. Liu Zhi contextualized Muhammad as the Utmost Sage of Islam, superior to any Chinese sage.

Chapter Four showed that unlike Jami, but in continuity with Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi taught the concept of existence in terms of the three Ones, namely, the Real One, the Numerical One and the Embodied One. Unlike both Jami and Wang, Liu Zhi put greater emphasis on the role of the heart in the practical aspect of the unity of existence. The goal of Liu Zhi’s contextualization is to help his readers to understand the difficult philosophical concept of the unity of existence and to help them set their hearts on return to the Real.

In Chapter Five, while Liu Zhi used plentiful Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian terms and images in his poem of The Five Sessions of the Moon, the overall structure and themes
complied with Sufi thoughts. His depiction of the Prophet of Muhammad in the early part of *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam* was of a unique and extraordinary person with existence in both the innate and the acquired heaven. Liu Zhi contextualized Muhammad as the Utmost Sage who had a unique nature of continuity. Without Muhammad’s nature, Sufi seekers could not actualize their full realization and return to the Real. Clearly, heaven, nature and sagehood are common Confucian terms. Thus, Liu Zhi is a skillful cultural agent who contextualizes his Islamic message in active engagement, dialogue and conversation with his Chinese cultural contexts.

Chapter Six focused on only the first five chapters of Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Liu Zhi explicitly stated that he used Confucian terms to help his explanation, especially for those readers who might know the meaning and reason of the Islamic rites and yet still have doubts. While Liu Zhi’s *Rules and Proprieties of Islam* has been claimed to be Confucianized, we conclude that only when Liu Zhi explained the way of humanity, did he identify the Islamic ethical relationships with Neo-Confucianism. When Liu Zhi explained the way of heaven in terms of the five endeavours of Islam, the Islamic concepts had distinctive meanings and the role of the Prophet Muhammad was vitally important for any seeker of Islam to return to the Real.

After examining the major and minor works of Liu Zhi, this study concludes that Liu Zhi’s Islam is in accordance with the Ibn ‘Arabi tradition. Sufi ideas permeate all his works. Liu Zhi consistently contextualized his Islam into the Chinese contexts by using the translation-conversation model.


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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE WORDS

A

act, action 行
Aershi 阿而實
Ahong 阿訇
alteration 變
annihilation (fana’)
apertures, bodily 體竅
ascent 升
awareness 覺

clarity 明
classic 經
constant, five 五常
continuity, nature of 續性
cultivation 修

D

Dao 道
Daoism 道教
Daodejing 道德經
designation 稱
differentiation 分
discernment 識
dust 塵

B

Being (wujud) 存在, 存有
body 體
breath (nafas) 息

C

carrier, three 三乘
Changes, Book of 易經
embodiment 體
eemptiness 空
endeavours, five 五功

fa 法
faithfulness 信
feeling 情
fire 火
firmness 定
flow 流
form (xing)形

loyalty 忠

nature (xing) 性
Neo-Confucianism 新儒家
Neo-Confucian literati 新儒士
Non Ultimate 無極

One, Embodied 體一
One, Numerical 數一
One, Real 真一

piety, filial 孝
principle 理

righteousness 義
ritual, rites 禮
Root suchness 本然
Self-cultivation 修身

virtue 德
vital-energy (qi) 氣

worthies (xian) 賢

yin, and yang 陰陽

Zhu Zhi 朱子
Appendix I:
The Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon\textsuperscript{1} in English and Chinese

In the beginning of the first session, the moon begins to appear. Comprehend the Real Ruler that has no form or image. Its subtlety is not known and non-designated. It has no boundary and exists as the real reality.\textsuperscript{2} It is unique without beginning and end; the Supreme Honoured without any partner. Creative transformation begins. Principle and image are completed. The great mandate is installed and it opens door to various subtleties.

In the mid first session, the moon is new. There is a need to understand the intelligent Non-Ultimate as the root of nature and principle. The vital energy opens up. The *yin-yang* dissociates. When all the things are complete, the Human Ultimate\textsuperscript{3} is begotten. The Non-Ultimate is the seed while the Great Ultimate is the tree.\textsuperscript{4} The tree was once in the fruit which later gives rise to the root. There is a need to understand and distinguish the tree from fruit.\textsuperscript{5} Avoid confusing the root with the one who plants the root.

\begin{tabular}{p{0.4\textwidth}p{0.6\textwidth}}

I. & I.更初，月正生，參悟真宰無影形。\
 & 妙難喻，無所稱，不落方所乃實真。\
 & 永活乆古無終始，獨一無偶至尊，\
 & 開造化，理象成，大命立開眾妙門。\

In the beginning of the first session, the moon begins to appear. Comprehend the Real Ruler that has no form or image. Its subtlety is not known and non-designated. It has no boundary and exists as the real reality.\textsuperscript{2} It is unique without beginning and end; the Supreme Honoured without any partner. Creative transformation begins. Principle and image are completed. The great mandate is installed and it opens door to various subtleties.

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\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{p{0.4\textwidth}p{0.6\textwidth}}

I. & I.更中，月正新，參慧無極性理根。\
 & 元氣剖，陰陽分，萬物全備人極生。\
 & 無極是種太極樹，樹藏果內果即根。\
 & 慎分明，須認真，莫把種作種根人。\


2 The great transformation in the beginning session of the moon follows closely the initial stage of the great transformation of the Real in the first chapter of Liu Zhi’s *Nature and Principle of Islam*. It is also in continuation with Wang Daiyu’s concept of great transformation.

3 The Human Ultimate is Liu Zhi’s term for the perfect man of the Ibn ‘Arabi’s tradition.

4 Non-Ultimate, Great Ultimate and Yin-Yang are often used Neo-Confucian cosmological terms. The three key movers in this great transformation are Non-Ultimate, Great Ultimate and Human Ultimate.

5 Liu Zhi used familiar Sufi analogy, namely the root, tree and fruit.
At the end of first session, the moon is up high. There is a need to have firm belief in our teaching and reject other devious teachings. Seek endeavour in the acquired heaven, desire for forgiveness. Obey the heavenly mandate and holy rules. Obedience shall enjoy unlimited blessings in paradise. Disobedience leads to punishment in hell. I beseech your, dear children, waste no time in happy excursion. Otherwise, the afterlife will be in crying torment.

In the beginning of the second session, the moon is charming. This life on earth cannot give security to our mandate. Indulging in a glamorous life will reap all day labour and result in bitter torment in this suffering world. A hundred years have 36,000 days and humans rarely live over seventy years of age. I beseech you, dear children, think carefully. In a sudden moment, unexpected events may happen.

In the mid second session, the moon is round. Discipline your life and don’t take a laid back life. Drink and eat less. Keep to your sleep. Always remember in your heart the Shahadah. Hands should not let go the precious bronze green sword. Break away from indulgent love and abandon absurd relationships. From now on, strive forward step by step. Land onto the shore of dao and see the real

6 Esoteric Sufi practices are rare in this poem. This is the only place where dhikr is mentioned with emphasis that such prayer is from the heart.
vital-energy.

At the end of the second session, the moon is shining. When the heart is in danger, the *dao* is dim and weak in the heart. Monkey and horse are abominable. Dragon and tiger are threatening. Behind station after station stand tall and imposing mountain ranges.\(^7\) Even though you have the green sword\(^8\), you cannot cut open a way out into freedom. So, visit the spiritual master and seek to defend your *dao*.\(^9\) Through the mysterious station,\(^10\) then acquire real opportunity.

In the beginning of the third session, the moon is pure.\(^11\) Seek the great *dao* from within yourself. While the cosmos is huge and things are difficult to name them, the *dao* has left its traits inside your heart.\(^12\) The *dao* encloses the heaven and earth and yet humanity encloses the *dao*.\(^13\) The *dao* penetrates both outside and inside; both coarse and fine. Learn

\(^7\) The Sufi path with station after station is clearly a confirmation of Liu Zhi’s Sufi thought.
\(^8\) The bronze sword was known as a very sharp weapon in the Qin dynasty. Later, it was superseded by an iron sword.
\(^9\) Liu Zhi clearly emphasized the Sufi master and seeker relationship. Again, this is one of the Sufi practices and only the seekers with the guidance and direction of the master can make further progress.
\(^10\) The word ‘mysterious’ has Daoist connotations. It means not so much ‘mystical’ but rather ‘difficult to comprehend’.
\(^11\) The third session takes up many Sufi themes but they are expressed eclectically.
\(^12\) Liu Zhi affirmed and argued rationally that the Lord has left many traits in the world. These traits may derive from the smallest details of humanity. The *dao* is ubiquitous and all embracing even within humans.
\(^13\) From the perspective of the world of images, the cosmos is huge and humanity is merely one of many creatures. From the perspective of the heart or spiritual world, the human heart can embrace the cosmos and is embraced by the *dao.*
this well and start your journey. When you understand yourself better, you also know the Lord.\textsuperscript{14}

In the mid third session, the moon is moving. A treasure pearl hides on the seabed. Stride quickly for the journey and set sail for the sea. The turbulent waves keep coming as if you are being sucked into a dragon’s den. You are tormented by limitless sufferings. Yet, the reward is to reap the priceless treasure pearl. Be alert and stand firm to defend. Don’t fool around. For wealth and honour, seek to return back to the home country.\textsuperscript{15}

At the end of the third session, the moon is high up. Be single minded and look forward to seeing the paradise in the jade garden.\textsuperscript{16} Ascend to the heaven of Immortals and complete the jade ring. Be guided by the light of the Little Immortal and join the banquet. Pick some medicines and make some life-saving precious tables.\textsuperscript{17} Meet the sick and give him the tablet for free. Heal the old and afflicted. Then, receive the reward of a long-lived life.

At the beginning of the fourth session, the moon is slanting. The legendary moon lady resides in the jade

\begin{table}[h]
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\textsuperscript{14} Understanding oneself means also understanding the Lord. This theme is also explicit in the first introductory chapter of \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam}. \\
\textsuperscript{15} This is the central and key section of the poem. Many characteristics of Sufi thought about seeking the \textit{dao} and acquiring the wisdom of God are discussed. Seekers must be diligent and persistent in their pursuit of the Sufi path. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Literally, the words refer to the jade garden. It is paraphrased as paradise. \\
\textsuperscript{17} In Liu Zhi’s \textit{Rules and Proprieties of Islam}, he asserted that the five endeavours could have wonderful healing effects on human sickness and spiritual wholeness. The making of medicines and tables is a Daoist concern for good health and longevity. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
The mythical lady is a popular figure in a Chinese ancient folk story. This beautiful lady lives on the planet moon. The use of this lady in this poem may have two meanings. Firstly, she refers to the wife of Adam. Secondly, she refers to the virtue and beauty of human spirituality. The possession of spiritual aspects in humanity beautifies the outlook of humankind.

The path of return is by extreme hard and disciplined work. Literally, it means the ‘great emptiness’.

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19 The path of return is by extreme hard and disciplined work.

20 Literally, it means the ‘great emptiness’.
retain the nature. Practise three vehicles, pass through five elements and accomplish the path to become the real “I”; thus becoming real humanity. Inherently, I own the inner precious mirror. I rank supreme among all in the creation. Steer forward the merciful sea journey and guide the lost. Then, reside with a sincere and compassionate heart.

In the beginning of the fifth session, the moon is shrinking. The heart embraces both the heaven and earth. The heaven folds up and the earth cleaves. The images of creation may decay but the principle is not to disappear. Obstruction is overcome and nondissociation begins. The two worlds of colour and subtlety become transparent. It is difficult to communicate subtle sayings to ordinary people because it seems like a mouth that has no tongue.

In the mid fifth session, the moon is submerged. The pure heart manifests the nature and the dao is complete. When the ascent and descent unite, the circling is complete. Then, it completes the return to root suchness. Humanity and heaven unite. Images

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21 The concept of elements is based on Razi’s Sufi path. These are foundational elements for the creation of the material world. The five elements refer to gold, wood, water, fire and earth. Passing through the five element means that the seeker is getting out of the realm of the material world and into the realm of transcendence.

22 Literally, accomplishing the path has four hidden aspects. These aspects may refer to the enlightenment of the heart, the realization of the nature, the transcendence of the material world and finally union with the Real. At the end of the path, the seeker can acquire the realm of the ‘real’ person.

23 This is an analogy. The Real is the real existence and humankind is the mirror which reflects the Real. It is because humankind can reflect the Real that humankind ranks supreme in creation.

24 The description is clearly of the final day of judgment. Although all the visible things are to be destroyed, the principle (li) of all things remains unchanged.

I.vi
are transcended and the real essence of meaning manifests. At the end of three self-denials, the root suchness shines. The invisible and visible disintegrate. The two arcs form a circle and eventually return to the original suchness.

At the end of the fifth session, the moon is waning. Return to the Real and reach to the highest heaven. There is neither colour nor image, neither sound nor smell, only real quietude. A dust or grain may be small but its smallness embraces the greatness of the total substance. All things in the creation return to the origin and are no longer in time and space. The fruit is a union with the Real without any world of image. The afterlife is happiness and solitude.

25 The three denials refer to the denial of self, others and all visible things.
26 This is in accordance with the Ibn 'Arabi tradition.
27 The highest heaven 大羅 is a Daoist concept. This shows Liu Zhi’s extensive eclecticism.
Appendix II:

Translation of Selected Texts of the True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam

Introductory Chapter: Explanation of the Honour and Nobility of Muhammad (an Overview from Various Classics)²

Humankind is honourable in heaven and earth. Among humankind, there are sages, worthies, wise and foolish. The sages are most honourable. Among sages, they are further classified into ordinary, ambassador, great and utmost. The Utmost Sage is the highest. Muhammad is the highest sage of all time and of all places and is called the Utmost Sage.

At the beginning of creative transformation, humanity is classed by the principle (li) into nine groups. The Utmost Sage is the highest. After taking the form, humans take on nine groups of image. The image of the Utmost Sage is perfect. His principle is perfect.

The principle and image of all things are to be found within the compass of the nine heavens and the seven earths. The heavens are superior to the earths and the Aershi surpasses the heavens. The nature and principle of the Utmost Sage were situated at the Aershi. Therefore, he is the most honourable than any in all the heavens and the earths.

The ancestors of the Utmost Sage, going right back to the first ancestors of the Aershi, surpass the heavens and the earths.

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¹ Liu, Zhi 劉智, The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam 天方至聖實錄 (Beijing, China Islamic Association, 1984).
² Liu Zhi, True Record, 23-25.
Adam, never worshipped idols or prayed to heathen gods. This virtue of the ancestors nourished and cultivated generation after generation, culminating in the Utmost Sage. He is the most honourable in accumulated virtue.

### Introductory Chapter: the Utmost Sage

From the time of the ancients, there have been many sages. Muhammad is the Utmost Sage. It is so called because he has all required virtues. His transformation is thorough. Through his whole body, the Real Ruler emanates to become the great function… the Spirit of the Utmost Sage existed before the heaven and the earth. He is the fruit of all sages. While the heaven and earth are big, they are nurtured by the Utmost Sage. The spirits of ten thousand sages are under his shadow and they have life from him. Although he is the descendent of Adam with respect to form, his spirit is really before Adam. His teaching embraces ten thousand teachings. His rule collects and completes ten thousand rules. His way excels ten thousand ways and is upright, illuminates like the sun and moon, as long-lasting as the heaven and earth. … With regard to his teaching, it has been attested by all later generations to be enduring. Its principle (li 理) is clear; meaning is articulate; literary artistry is excellent and above beautiful literature. These prove that the Lord reveals the sacred texts. Those who are obedient to the teaching, they are not tempted away by any riches and fame. Their ways are not blocked

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Chapter One: The Record of the Transmission of the Light of Muhammad through Successive Generations of his Ancestors⁴

The Utmost Sage was established before the heaven and earth and began the transformation of all things. His designation then was named Ahmad. He was the progenitor of all creation. When he was born in the acquired heaven and earth as the seal of the all sages, he was named Muhammad.

The original form of an ordinary man is contained in the backbone of his ancestor. However, the Utmost Sage’s original form was seen in the forehead of his ancestors. As the head is the noblest part of the body, and the forehead is the most honourable part of the head, we thus can see that the place from which the Utmost Sage received his form was the most honourable.

The original form of the Utmost Sage was manifested on the forehead of Adam. His original principle was situated at the highest part of the ninth heaven; his exalted name was found in the foremost part of the Aershi; how could he be any other than the most honourable one?⁵

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⁵ Murata avers that Aershi derives from the Arabic ‘arsh’ which means the throne of God in Qur’an 20:5. Murata argues that Liu Zhi understood Aershi as the nature of the Utmost Sage. Alternatively, the term Aershi means the Ascribed Spirit breathed into Adam, the Mandate. In the case of Razi in his *Path*, God began the process of creation by firstly creating the Muhammadan Spirit. Murata, *The Sage*, 58-59.
The sages are as numerous as the stars but the Utmost Sage is the sun among the stars. The tradition of teaching is like the baking of a cake. The former sages planted the wheat and made the flour and mixed it appropriately. The Utmost Sage completed the process of baking the cake. The Utmost Sage was the most cherished person of the whole creation. That is why the Lord said to Jesus, ‘had it not been for Muhammad, I would not have created heaven, earth, men and spirits.’ So there can be no doubt that the Utmost Sage had a special existence.

The roof of heaven bore his name. The gate of heaven was inscribed with his name on its door. The ancient books recorded his name. Angels and devils extolled it. The Utmost Sage’s own body bore the stamp of his name. The heaven and earth and all things were created in accordance with his name. Who or what in heaven or on earth can surpass the Utmost Sage? Everything returns to him like all streams return to the sea. Those who return to him are the upright and those who do not return to him are the deceived people. Who can be compared to him?

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Chapter Two: Diagram of Transformation

Transformation begins in the innate heaven, initiated by the great mandate. The great mandate is the act of

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6 Liu Zhi, True Record, 68-69.
all true principle (li 理). From the great mandate, there is the nature of continuity which is the root suchness of the Utmost Sage.\textsuperscript{7} All other natures of the sages derive from him, including the nature of worthies. From the nature of worthies, all other natures like ignorant ... from the sage to the Utmost Sage, this return back to the root suchness of the nature of continuity. This is called exhausting the nature and principle and getting to the mandate. This is known as the descent and ascent of the great transformation. Likewise, this is also the way of humanity in the descent and ascent. Since the beginning of humankind, only the person Muhammad can achieve the ascent. He embraces the whole transformation from the beginning to the end. Thus, all return can benefit with Muhammad as the goal of return.\textsuperscript{8}

The Utmost Sage: the Integration of Great Transformation

Why is Muhammad called the Utmost Sage? How could the Utmost Sage include the great transformation? The great transformation stops at the Utmost Sage but this is not the end. The Utmost Sage continues the transformation to its completion. All individual transformation has its own aspect and is one-sided but the Utmost Sage’s transformation

\textsuperscript{7} Root suchness (ren) is a fundamental concept of Liu Zhi. Root suchness can be paraphrased as ‘without beginning and already in existence’. Murata uses the literal word ‘suchness’ and parallels it with the Arabic word inniyya, that-it-is-ness. ‘In Islamic philosophy, inniyya is used as a synonym for existence (wujud). Murata further explicates root suchness as root substance which is the Real Being. Murata, Sage, 184.

\textsuperscript{8} This paragraph is a clear and concise summary of Liu Zhi’s cosmogony in Confucian terms with emphasis on the important role of the prophet Muhammad.
covers all aspects. Thus, he continues the work of the Real Ruler in the great transformation. He returns the transformation to the Real Lord. He is the man from heaven and from the earth to heaven. He becomes the axis of transformation. Anyone who is not led by the sage’s transformation, he will go astray and deviate from the way. He is lost from the real way.\(^9\)

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**Chapter Seven: First Messenger to China\(^{10}\)**

In the first year of the Prophetship of Muhammad, there was seen in the sky a strange star, the Chinese emperor Su Wen Ti commanded his astronomer to tell him the meaning. He said, ‘there would be an extraordinary person appearing in the West.’ The emperor sent an envoy to investigate…

The prophet sent his uncle Sa’ad ibn Abi Waqqas and three others to go with the envoy to China…

The emperor Wen Ti hung up the portrait of the prophet and worshipped it, and when he arose, the scroll was there but the picture had vanished… The disappearance of the picture was due to the wonderful influence of the prophet. The emperor, alarmed, said, “It must really be that he is the Pure Emperor and the True King”.\(^{11}\)

The account of the entry of religion … is given in

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\(^9\) The key role of the prophet Muhammad is mediating between humanity and the Real Ruler.

\(^{10}\) Liu Zhi, *True Record*, 120.

\(^{11}\) Mason, *Arabian Prophet*, 94. In Mason’s translated work, this story is placed in the fifth chapter.

II.\(vi\)
detail in several Chinese histories, so it can be proved. The story of worshipping of the portrait is not recorded in the histories; but it has been handed down by tradition, and may be seen recorded on stone tablets, so must not be rejected.  

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<th>The Learning 13</th>
<th>學問</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge refers to the knowledge of the Real Ruler. One who seeks is not ignorant and a seeker begins to learn. Seeking is indeed the beginning of learning. It is not shameful for a seeker to ask questions and a teacher should not withhold answers. It says, ‘regardless of age or social class, anyone who can give benefit to learning is my teacher.’ Day and night, ask the Lord to give you beneficial learning and avoid unhealthy habits. One rule of caution for the learner says, ‘if one is close to learners, then one learns. If one works with greedy people, one is lost. Do not take in any unhealthy learning.’ Befriend literati and honourable people. Do not let selfish desire blind you. Do not be poisoned by heresy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>萬事立於誠，恆其心，正其意，</td>
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| 12 Liu Zhi quoted five historical records. Two of them are apocryphal historical records “世史類編” “人代紀要”. The other three are more reliable records “隋書”, “通鑒綱目”, “殊域周咨錄”.
| 13 Liu Zhi, True Record, 310-11. |
way and for the service of the Lord. The way is manifested by learners’ humility and carefulness. The principle of things is important as it can distinguish between understanding and misunderstanding. Do not give up even if you cannot understand just one principle … If you are diligent to learn Islam, you can broaden the horizon of benevolence and righteousness.
APPENDIX III:

Personal Narrative of *Tianfan Dianli* *(Selected Essential Explanations of the Proprieties of Islam)*

In accordance with the wish of my deceased father, I translated the book *The Rituals and Rules of Islam* (天方禮法). The readers of the book responded that the work was so comprehensive and complicated that it was difficult for them to comprehend. They suggested a beginner’s version with selected topics and commentaries. Therefore, I selected topics most important to practical living, edited it and called this work, *Selected Essential Explanations of the Proprieties of Islam*. However, the reader then found this work too concise and beginners could not understand properly. Therefore, after each topic, I added commentaries to ensure the beginners could understand the basic truths. The commentaries came from other places in this work and also external sources that I had collected and they dealt with the learning of Islam. In these commentaries, some comments deal with truths already understood but the explanation is not complete. Other comments serve to enrich. Some comments deal with meaning already explained but the truth conveyed is not straightforward. These extra comments serve to explain the meaning more completely and clearly. Some comments deal with meaning and truth already understood but the beginners still have doubt. Furthermore, some comments have been borrowed from Neo-Confucian sayings for clearer explanation. These comments are really common knowledge but some people with a narrow vision misunderstand the original meaning of the text and create disagreement. Thus, this work also contains questions and answers. They serve to discern the error and solve any puzzle.

Although we have explicated the propriety, which seems to be ordinary matter, the meaning of propriety is profound. If a person remembers it for the sake of his life and determines in his mind not to forget, then he achieves the unity of himself with the heavenly truth and

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there is no separation whatsoever. In this work, some may find the meanings concise and
difficult but the reality is that they are quite obvious. In this work, some explanations have
been borrowed from the imagery and examples of Can Ran Wei Miao 燦然微妙. In order
to discuss the truth of Islam, we make our work easier to understand as it is no different to
Neo-Confucian works. To learn and obey the Islamic propriety is likewise to learn and
obey the teachings of the ancient sages and kings. The religion of holy sages, either in the
East or the Arab world, either in ancient or modern time, is the same. However, people
nowadays do not study and research this fact and gradually it disappears. Fortunately, it is
only the Islamic propriety that still exists.

In this work, the opening part is a discussion of the fundamentals of the religion of Islam.
The middle part talks about the rules and regulations. It deals with the heavenly five
Endeavors and the five Relationships. It discusses the deepening of principle and nurturing
nature. It talks about personal realization, forming family, serving the nation and various
matters concerned with living and proper dressing. These issues are discussed concisely.
Lastly, the work concludes with marriage and funeral.

This work has twenty chapters and twenty eight sections. The topics are not comprehensive
but the content with various illustrations is very comprehensive. While this work does not
discuss comprehensively every aspect of propriety, it contains principles and outlines for
human living. The learner can enjoy their living accordingly. The prophet Muhammad said,
‘the propriety is the foundation of being human.’ The ancient sage has also made an
analogy, ‘the relation between propriety and humanity is similar to the relation between
sweet and honey. If honey is not sweet, the honey is not honey. How can humanity be
humanity without propriety?’ Therefore, it is said propriety is intimately related to
humanity. It is indeed very intricately enwrapped!

My deceased father deeply felt that the Islamic propriety had not been explained and
proclaimed. He was once committed to this work but he died without realizing his goal.
Although my learning was shallow, I decided to carry on my father’s wish. Now, in
accordance with my limited knowledge, I wrote this work about the Islamic truth. If readers can receive it from the bottom of their hearts and put it into practice, they will not betray the vital meaning of the proclamation by the traditional sages through the ages. This is also my purpose with this humble explanatory work. In terms of the selection of different contents, and the good and bad styles of my writing, I submit myself to correction and affirmation by all co-workers.

A scholar of Islam,
Liu Zhi of Jinling [Nanjing].
APPENDIX IV: RULES AND PROPRIEITES OF ISLAM

Chapter One: Original Teaching

Theme: In the very beginning, before the formation of the ten thousand things, there is the Real Ruler. It is without limit and likeness.

Explanation: In the very beginning, there is only the Real Ruler’s root suchness, supremely pure and quiet, without limit and form, not controlled by light and darkness [yin/yang], not belonging to the creative transformation. The Real Ruler is really the root and source of heaven and earth, humans and things. All the principle and vital energy come from this root suchness. This is what is known as the ultimate union between heaven and humanity. This is also what is meant by returning to the root and back to the mandate. The Real Ruler is the home return of all principles and vital energies.

Theme: When the great mandate had accomplished the creation of heaven and earth, it also created all things therein.

Explanation: the Real Ruler is without any form. It

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3 Alternative translation: myriads of creatures.
4 Alternative translation: boundary.
5 Root suchness (ren) is a fundamental concept of Liu Zhi. The literal meaning of suchness (ren) is certainly, verily or yet. An alternative possible meaning is ‘in existence’. The modern Chinese usage of ‘ren’ means already exists and ‘yet to ren’ means yet to exist. Root is usually translated as ‘original’ and may mean ‘without beginning. Root suchness can thus be paraphrased as ‘without beginning and already in existence’. Murata uses the literal word ‘suchness’ and parallels it with the Arabic word inniyya, that-it-is-ness. In Islamic philosophy, inniyya is used as a synonym for existence (wujud). Murata further explicates root suchness as root substance which is the Real Being. Murata, Sage, 184.
manifested itself as the Great Ultimate that resolved into darkness and light [yin and yang]. When the darkness and light differentiated, the heaven and earth came into existence. When the heaven and earth had formed, the ten thousand things were created. The heaven and earth are now ready and the subtlety of the Real Ruler embraces therein and threads through them.6

Theme: Humankind was created in the Muslim lands

Explanation: When the creation and all things are in order, then vital energy, water, fire and earth gather in their essences. In the Muslim lands, the forefather Adam was created in the wilderness of the Arab land.

Theme: In the Middle [East], the sages are begotten.

Explanation: the Middle East is the land of Muslims. It is the land in the midst of heaven, earth and the four directions of the world. Thus, it is called the Middle [East]. The holy sages congregated in this land and humankind had begun in the Middle [East].7

Theme: Comprehensive rules are set up and thus teaching has been established.

Explanation: Adam gave birth to sons and daughters. Generations of sages have been begotten. The practice of the way (dao), the establishing of the teachings, the principle of the transformation of cosmos and the

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6 Alternative translation: Then, the subtle function of the true Lord fills all in all.
7 Liu Zhi used additional sections, about 300 words long, known as verification, to discuss the central location of the Middle East. He used three geographical documents to affirm his view. This verification is not translated.
meticulous function of all things, have been communicated to Adam from the Real Ruler who designs names, gives rules and declares them to later generations. Adam and the holy sages have not randomly formed their own ideas. Thus, the teaching of Adam is most ancient and not to be supplanted.

Theme: From that time on, humankind and creatures have multiplied from generations to generations and spread over all corners of the earth.

Explanation: According to the history of ancient Muslims, over a thousand years after Adam, there was a severe flood and many people lost their lives. After three months, the flood subsided. A great sage called Noah arose. He received the divine call to solve the problem of the flood. He sent people across the land to deal with the effects of the flood. Thus, humankind was scattered to all corners of the earth. Two thousand years had passed since the time of Adam.

Theme: If the teaching is not ancient, it should still exist. If it is ancient, the teaching should have been lost. Thus, most of the teachings in the modern world are not ancient.

Explanation: In the world, there are many countries and each country has its own unique culture. Therefore, scattered humankind has different languages and their writings are also different. Thus, is it possible for humankind to behave the same way? During the period of Three Kings and Five Emperors, their rules and regulations were of course also ancient. The Three
Kingdoms era was more recent. After that era, hundreds of scholars emerged with their own distinctive and imaginative thoughts and ideas. They created many schools of thought, each one espousing their own particular theories. Each school developed its own religion and faith. This situation continued unabated. Eventually, not only were there different schools of thought but, even denominations within one school. The aims and doctrines of religious teaching no longer complied with the previous ancient teachings.

Theme: Islam is the only religion that passes down through generations of sages. The tradition of thoughts and systems has not been interrupted.

Explanation: From the time of Adam to Muhammad, there were many people who had been called to promulgate the teaching. These individuals were called the sages. However, there is a hierarchy of sages. In general, there are four levels. Anyone who is called to promulgate the teaching and has the gift of prophecy is known as the sage..... Six hundred years after Jesus, Muhammad was born. Muhammad was called to eradicate evil words and illuminate the ancient teachings and inaugurate peace to all generations.  

Theme: From the time when Muhammad was called to sagehood, the teaching of Islam has been known widely to all, spreading across the world.

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Over 200 words have not been translated. Liu Zhi’s key point is to emphasize the continuity of Islamic prophethood.
Explanation: Muhammad was a descendent of the royal family of the Muslim land. He was extremely clever and was a highly moral man with supreme moral ethics, a king of the world. He followed the rules of the ancient teachings. The teaching had stopped when Jesus died six hundred years ago. Muhammad was called The Seal, meaning that he was the last of all the prophets. The true Lord communicated to him 6666 verses called Al-Furqan [the criteria].

Theme: Editing the sacred text

Explanation: Text means the revealed text given to holy sages before Muhammad. From the time of Adam to Jesus, there were 114 books. For example, the five books of Moses, the book of David and the gospel of Jesus are the major books. The Real Ruler appointed the prophet Muhammad to edit and revise the sacred texts. He revealed to Muhammad the Furqan [criteria] which contains all the meanings of previous sacred texts.

Question: Someone may ask: ‘Since the sacred texts were given by the Real Ruler, all of them should be complied with. How come that they were edited and revised?’ The answer: ‘the 600 years after the death of Jesus, various ridiculous views arose and confused the truth. The real sacred texts were corrupted and errors came into the texts. Many of them lost their original meaning and they lost their real value. Nevertheless, people still thought they were real and complied with
their teachings. The errors continued to multiply. Eventually, texts were no longer the revealed text and people really rebelled against the truth. Therefore, the holy one\(^9\) edited and revised the text. Original meanings were restored and errors were erased. The Furqan is set back onto the right track and covers a wide range of truth with accurate balance. It becomes the teaching and rule for living. The editing work stopped the downfall of the truth and restored the eternal shining light of the sacred text, like the sun and moon. This work has profound significance.

Theme: To set up the law.

Explanation: The law means the rules pertaining to fasting, worship, marriage, funeral rites and so on. Different situations require different ways to use the law. Major occasions mean Hajj and purification, minor means the food and daily living. The law covers all aspects of natural phenomena, propriety, culture, rules, medical treatment, prediction of success and failure and the rule of the nation. These are established by the text. These rules are like an eternal flame, giving eternal brightness which can never be extinguished. From generation to generation, humankind can clearly and unerringly comply with the law. Anyone who is clever and wise should not set himself above or contravene the law.

Theme: [Muhammad] summarized the essence of teachings of all the former sages and formed a system. From then on, the way of Islam was clear and complete.

\(^9\) The context clearly indicates the holy one is the prophet Muhammad.
Explanation: All the sages in human history resemble the moon in a long lasting night. Once the Utmost Sage appears, he resembles the sun in the mid-day. From Adam to Jesus all the sages in history, their propagation of the way resemble a plant that has roots, buds and branches with leaves and flowers. The way of the Utmost Sage resembles the fruits. On earth, there is no light brighter than the sun. In the growth of a tree, bearing fruit is the completion of growth. No one is as complete as the Utmost Sage in propagating the way in the history of the sages.

Selected key theme: [Muhammad] teaches the religion of Islam. The aim of Islam is to know the Lord.

Explanation: The Lord Ruler creatively transforms into all things. He is the root origin of our heart and nature. Owing to the manifestation of the Real Ruler, humans have their original nature. From nature, humans have their heart. Then, I become the crown of creation which takes place in the realm of the innate heaven. Today, with the endeavour of their hearts, humans then know their nature. From knowing their own nature, humans can know the Real Ruler. This takes place in the realm of the acquired heaven. To know the Lord Ruler as the creative transformer is out from my heart and nature which should set upon a firm and right foundation, not able to be shaken by deviating views.

Theme: Our endeavour is to revere and serve.

Explanation: Reverence means with single-mindedness
and solemnity, you devote yourself to the Lord. Service means each and every one of your acts is done with obedience to him. The single-minded and solemn reverence is concerned with the endeavour of the heart. The obedient action is concerned with the endeavour of the body. Thus, reverence is the origin of service. Service is the function of reverence. If the heart has reverence, then the service in this latter-world can succeed. If the service is without the reverence, then service is in vain. Therefore, to serve the emperor with reverence in the heart means loyalty; to serve the parents with reverence in the heart means filial obedience. In all matters of seeing, hearing, speaking and acting, you should follow properly the rules and proprieties. With these in place, you are not without rules and not abandoning any proprieties. This endeavour is both profound and detailed; both strict and elaborate. By this, humans can achieve the union with heaven as exemplified by the sages and worthies. Therefore, you need to put reverence first in order to serve and obey the Real Ruler. With reverence, you can reap good fruit.

Theme: the eventual goal is to return and recover the mandate

Explanation: Returning to the root means returning to the beginning. Recovering the mandate means the completion of our heavenly duty. What is meant by the beginning? In the creation of humanity, there is the beginning of stillness, without any evil and without any adulteration of our root substance. What is meant by the heavenly duty of humanity? Humans are created so that by their hearing and seeing they are to understand the
task of return. The Real Lord has transformed the heaven and the earth and manifested the basic meanings of all things and these are for the sake of their return.

You need to learn diligently, desire for realization and examine yourself. You need to examine things thoroughly, learn to understand the reality of these things and the way in which they develop. You need to work hard and accomplish realization, marriage and governance. Our work is for the sake of returning and recovering the mandate. Thus, Islam is to teach people to know the Lord and return to the root substance; to teach you to give reverence to the Lord and for the accomplishment of the first mandate. After that, you return to the root substance. This is the greatest achievement of Islam.

Theme: To obey with piety, the five endeavours are to accomplish all the way of heaven.

Explanation: The five endeavours are reciting the Shahadah, ritual prayer, fasting, alms-tax and pilgrimage. Always remember the Real Ruler. In quietness, remember him. In activity, observe things and remember him and do not distract yourself in meaningless thoughts. Say your prayers five times a day at the designated time with utmost diligence and purity of heart. Fast a month within a year. This is to control your fleshly desire. Give alms once a year to the poor, sharing materials in love and virtue with others. Once in a life time, do the pilgrimage and that will strengthen your sincerity of the heart to seek the Lord. When you obey the five endeavours, you have accomplished the
Theme: To hold the five relationships with sincere honour is to accomplish the way of humanity.

Explanation: The five relationships are the five ethical principles that are concerned with the relationship between the emperor and the courtier, the father and son, the husband and wife; brother and sister and between friends. In the Middle East, it is also called the five accomplishments. The Emperor and the courtier constitute the country; father and son the family, husband and wife the home; brother and sister constitute business; and friends together constitute [human] virtues. All the above mentioned relations have changeless propriety. If you obey the five relationships, then you have fulfilled the way of humanity.

Theme: The learning and achievement [five endeavours and relationships] may be elementary or profound. This depends on the individual.

Explanation: The way of Islam originates from one and is not complex. The wise person can understand its depth and profundity while the fool can understand its surface meaning. It depends on the person who may understand the superficial or the deep meaning of Islam. It also happens in any truth seeking that only the wise can come to the truth but the fool can hardly experience truth at all. It requires a courageous effort for anyone who wants to explore the truth.

Theme: The person may want to do one thing but not...
others. The principle of action depends on compliance with righteousness and fittingness.

Explanation: Righteousness means doing things justly and fittingly. A person who has thought carefully knows what is right. A person who is ignorant may lose the opportunity to do what is right. When we are encountering a situation, may it be proceeding with or backing off, the principle of action should be fittingness. We do not follow others who betray righteousness in order to achieve honour. We do not act improperly to achieve fame. We just hold fast to the true way, taking good care of our words and actions.

Theme: There is propriety for marriage and a rule for funerals.

Explanation: Marriage and funerals mark two important moments, the beginning and end of the way of humanity. The holy sage uses the way of heaven as the principle and fittingly regulates the rule of law for the whole world and for all further generations. Humankind is to comply diligently. It is enforced strictly without any regard for status, no matter if they are poor, rich, exalted or humble.

Theme: In all these regulations of activity and solitude, there is a principle that is unchanging and yet objectively adaptive, creatively enforcing the rule of law.

Explanation: Whatever can be seen, heard, spoken, intuited, or situations like eating and resting at home, large and small, there is a historical law to regulate
human behaviour. So, humans are not to offend others and contravene propriety. At the same time, the law is objective and flexible enough to adapt appropriately, paying attention to the time and the context at that moment. This is to avoid holding firm to arid tradition with rigidity and stubbornly making no progress. In that way, the rule of the law continues to be complied with and yet it is exercised in a flexible manner without unfairness and with due respect to time and context. The rule of law remains the norm.

Selected key theme: the rule [for realization] consists of three vehicles. However, it derives from the same principle.

Explanation: Vehicle is the means to carry. It carries different rules and meanings. It allows the seekers step by step to work at the rule. The first is said to be the propriety vehicle, which carries both the way of heaven and humanity and all rules of endeavour. You work to get virtues and honour your work also. This is the content of propriety vehicle. The next step is called the way [path] vehicle, which carries the human and material principles, fulfilling the rule in uniting heaven with humanity. You need to understand thoroughly the principle and know thoroughly the nature for the sake of satisfying the rules. The last step is called the principle vehicle, also called the real vehicle, which carries the non-self and non-thing, accomplishing the subtle union between heaven and humanity. Such rule means the self-control is complete and accomplishes the status of ‘Real’.

Working hard for your virtues and honouring endeavours
are for body realization. Understanding thoroughly the principle and knowing thoroughly the nature can enlighten the heart. With self control and accomplishing the real, you can see nature. Without endeavour and cultivation, your heart is not illuminated. Such a heart cannot see nature. Without seeing nature, you cannot unite with heaven. Nature is not seen because the selfish 'I' has hidden it. Therefore, the rule of the three vehicles deals with the polishing up of the selfish 'I'. Above the rule of the three vehicles, a transcendent rule of vehicles exists. In it, both heaven and humans are transformed; with no name or trace left. There is no word to describe the experience except that you have to experience it.

Selected key theme: Humanity is classified into nine levels but the principal aim derives from one vein.

Explanation: It is the same humanity but is classified into nine categories. The sage group has four, namely average, ambassador, great and Utmost Sage. Beneath the group of sage are the great worthies, the wise people, the pure and upright, the good people and the common people. While levels are different, they derive from the same vein. The sage founds the doctrinal content. The worthies assist the sage. The wise people are to spread the doctrine. The pure and upright, good and common people are to hold firm the doctrine.

If you do not attain the nature of the sage which is able to found the doctrine, you attain that of the worthies who can assist. If not able to assist, you attain the level of human nature to spread it. If not able to spread it, you attain the level of human nature to receive it. Receiving...
and keeping the faith are the ways to return to the root. Then, your heart has no regret and you do not fail in this life.

Theme: The way of Islam is without any image. The Islamic teaching has law and no one is to contravene them.

Explanation: The way of Islam is to be understood by its teaching. Without teaching, laws cannot be established. The way is naturally to be the principle of heaven. The teaching is a guidance/regulation for humankind to follow. The law is to distinguish between the heavenly principle and human desire, discerning right from wrong, guiding everyone in the right direction.

To establish the teaching with an idol is ridiculous. To obey the teaching and rule with self-centred serenity and indulgence is greed. Indulgence will result in immorality. Immorality will forget the seeking of kindness. Without the kind, seeking heart, evil desire will arise. Therefore, the truth is veiled and the way to the real Lord is blocked. Therefore, the sages proclaim the truth in the world and establish Islam, without any pictorial images. Human beings who follow Islam and the sages should obey the law without any self-centred serenity and indulgence. Outwardly, human beings should not be tempted by idols. Inwardly, they should not be burdened by selfish desire. Therefore, the sages have established Islam that is superior to other religions.

Theme: The way of the holy sage envelops and penetrates everywhere whereas his teaching is both right
and grand. Those who believe do not doubt and puzzle.

Explanation: The way of the holy sage is the way of heaven. The religion of the holy sage is the practice of the way of heaven. To believe in the holy sage’s way is to obey the rules of the way of heaven and follow the tract of the way of heaven. Note that this is the way of heaven. It is broad and extensive, inclusive of all things, penetrating all things. Heaven and earth are within its bounds. Even minute dust particles cannot filter through. The way of heaven unifies and governs by making the sky clear, the earth peaceful, the sun and moon shining, summer and winter alternating without end, also the mountain stable, the water running, flower and tree blooming and decaying and bird flying.

Now that the real Lord decorated [the world with] the ten thousand things, how could they fit into their roles and develop their functions? If they were under bondage, how could they develop healthily? Therefore, according to the way of heaven, the holy sages founded the religion of Islam so that people would not be led astray and influenced by any devious views. People who are edified by the holy teaching are like grass and trees that are gently blown by the wind of the spring, like hibernating insects awaken by the thunder and like people with knowledge and wisdom. They are full of life and live according to their natures and within the boundary of the law. If they live and settle in the most right and ideal environment, how can they doubt Islam at all?
Theme: While Muslims have settled in all corners of the world, they meet [religiously] within a house. The Muslims have a long history and the teachings have remained unchanged.

Explanation: The way is the same regardless of time and location. Do the teachings change with time and location? Does humankind change with time and location? The holy teaching has lasted for centuries. Rules and proprieties remain unchanged. Followers have scattered to all corners of the world and their determination has remained unchanged. Thus, Islam has a long and lasting history.

Theme: Islam has been transmitted continuously and should be trusted as a magnificent way of living by the law. It has spread across the generations, remained unchanged and is prosperous.

Explanation: Continuity means there is no loss of momentum or pause. Trust is a belief. Our religion began from Adam, (and continued through) Noah, to Abraham and on for centuries. Sages emerged and continued until Muhammad who made the collection. The later worthies and learned persons then expounded the key meanings. Many people proclaimed the way and many people continuously received the way. So far, the history of the way is over 7,000 years old. The rules and regulations of the way have remained unchanged. The way has prospered continuously and spread far and wide. It is to be transmitted for generations to come and remain forever prosperous. Can this be doubted?
A Survey of Collected data:

……Ming dynasty historian Long Yin (朗英) and his 7th Revised Collections (a supplementary history of Yuen and Ming dynasty, 58 Volumes in total): The mosque came to China in the time of the Sui dynasty. Islamic teachings and rules cover many aspects of Muslim daily living. Our Confucianism is inferior to it. According to Islam, the wealth, poverty, life and death of any person are predestined. However, cults tempt people into believing in idols for their blessings. Muslims serve the Lord and emphasize filial piety and worship no other. Some Muslims are rich. In Confucianism, we do not practise righteousness to the poor even if they are close to us, let alone care for strangers. Muslims give alms each month to their neighbours. Even non Muslim can also receive aid. Chinese Confucianism requires obedience to the teachings of the sages. Some positive traditions remain but others have been lost. However, Muslims worship the Lord and serve their parents. Their tradition of seeking righteousness and fostering assistance remains unchanged through history. Daoism and Buddhism are inferior to Confucianism and they are not worthy for any discussion……

10 This historical data is the most detailed discussion in this chapter. It consists of about 1600 words. This account is reaffirmed in even greater detail in Liu Zhi’s final work.
Chapter Two: the Real Ruler

Theme: The magnificent Real Ruler is the one, the only one. He is without any image. He created heaven and earth, humankind and all things.

Explanation: In the massive cosmos, there is one and only one Real Ruler. He is without image and is most subtle. No words can express or capture the essence or the subtlety. He is the Lord of creation and un-creation. The Lord emanated all things that we may find in pairs or talk about. The Lord is prior to all heaven, earth, humankind and all creation.

Additional Explanation: One is unique and this uniqueness has two meanings. The first meaning of the unique one is that it transcends all things. The second meaning of the unique one is that it embraces all things.

The transcendent One is beyond manifestations. Unlike the transcendent One, the heaven, earth and all things have manifestations. The vital energy then transforms to give out their forms. This is the number [function] of the acquired heaven. The root suchness of the Real Ruler does not have any manifestation. It does not participate in the vital energy’s transformation and is not determined by the number of the acquired heaven. The Real Ruler does not have any boundary and physical form, it is most pure and subtle, and is difficult to describe. The unique One means it is transcendent over heaven, earth and all

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things.

With regard to the unique immanent One, it is unique because it is not to be separated from manifestation and thus become ‘unique’. It is not to separate from the many. It creates all matters from the beginning to now, both visible and invisible and governs their activities with its real principle. The substance is not separated from its function and it is undifferentiated from all materials. This One is unique because outside the One, there is no manifestation. Outside this One, there is no boundary. This is the meaning of the immanent One.

Guise has two levels of meaning. The first is the guise with visible form, the other is invisible. All things that the eye can see, the ear can hear, the nose can smell, the mouth can speak, the hand and legs can move and dance, are visible guises. All things that the heart can think and can reach are to be understood and belong to the invisible guise. Thus, the real substance is without manifestation, colour, boundary, understanding, guessing and language. These are not the substance of the real Lord. If you search exhaustively the way, you should think. These thoughts are guise and may lead to awakening awareness. The Ruler makes transformation into various [outward/visible] guises and the Ruler is not these guises. It inspires all awakening awareness and is not the awakening awareness.

Theme: The substance exists before the division of the two vital energies [ying/yang]. The function manifests
itself after the formation of the image of all things.

Explanation: The substance is concerned with the independence [of the Real Ruler]. Function is concerned with the original power. The function is not equated with the substance because the function derives from the substance. The substance is not the function but function can manifest the substance. The substance and function are not the same but they cannot be separated. It is similar to the relation between ten and one. One is not equal to ten but is not different from ten. Ten is not one but the whole of ten is one.\(^\text{12}\)

The substance [of the Real Ruler] is prior and the function later manifests. This is the way to describe the order of the hidden substance and the manifested function. It is not the way to say one has original priority over the other. Before the appearance of anything, the function [of the Real Ruler] is enclosed by the substance which is subtle or not apparent and the function cannot fathom. After the appearance of things, the substance is hidden within the function and seen in the function. The substance [is the Real Ruler, it is] not the [visible] substance. Thus, this substance cannot be understood analogically as the substance of all things. The function is [the function of the Real Ruler and] not the [visible] function. This function cannot be analogously described as the function of all.

Additional Explanation: the name of the substance is similar to the name of ten. The name of the function is

\(^{12}\) Oneness may be divided into supra-numerical and numerical. Liu Zhi here talks about supra-numerical one. The supra-numerical one can be interpreted and understood as the inclusive unique one. Murata, *Sage*, 504-06.
similar to the name of one. Ten is not one. However, the whole of substance is one. As the substance, the ten consists of [many] one[s]. One is not ten. As the function, all the ones are acts of the ten. The substance and function of the Real Ruler is related similarly. The whole of substance [of the Real Ruler] is the function and all the functions are [acts of] the substance. Therefore, the two are not to separate. However, the two cannot be united because they have different meanings.

For everything that exists in this world, there is an assured suchness and there is also a causal suchness. Assured and causal suchness are not separable. When one thing exists, it follows that all that relates to this thing exists. It is not a chronological event. For example, it is like ice and coolness, fire and hotness. It is not ice first and then coolness comes afterwards, fire first and then hotness. The substance of the Real Ruler is like causal suchness. The function is like his assured suchness. However, the two have the difference of hidden and manifested and yet there is no chronological priority. In order to understand the Real Ruler in the future, you should note the perspective of hidden and manifested.

Theme: Prior to the existence of the Real Ruler, there was no other beginning. Posterior to it, there is no end. The size of its root substance is so massive there is no boundary. It is so small that nothing is within him.

Explanation: The Real Ruler exists before all things. So,
there is nothing prior to him. It exists after all things end. So, there is nothing posterior to it. Its substance is all inclusive and thus there is nothing outside him. Its function is all penetrating and thus there is nothing smaller inside him.

It does not have any beginning but he initiated the beginning of all things. It does not end but govern the ending of all things. It is so inclusive that he has no boundary. It is so penetrative and therefore very meticulous. Thus, it can be so tiny without limit. It is before the beginning and governs the ends of all things. Within it, there is no boundary and it is able to penetrate all boundaries. Outside it, there is no outer boundary and it includes all boundaries. This beginning, end, outside and inside phenomena may be accounted for by the emanation and penetration of the root suchness and the hiddenness and manifestation of the subtle function.

Theme: The true Lord has no image, takes no location, no nearness or farness. No other being is equal to it. It is not dependent on any other existence.

Explanation: Image, location, nearness and farness, equals are created by transformation. The Real Ruler is un-transformed and has no image, location, near or far and equal. Since no image is like him, it can then transform into image, location, near and far and equal. Since it does not take any location, it can allocate all locations. Since it is not nearness or farness, it can measure both near and far. Since there is no equal that can manage it, it can support and arrange all phenomena.
### Theme: [The Real Ruler] governs all the principles of all things and their developments. It controls the heaven and the destiny of humanity.

Explanation: The principle of all things is embedded in the subtle function. The numerical is the extension and expanding use of its function. Heaven is the biggest in the transformation; humanity is the most spiritual. All these derive from its subtle function. What can exceed its boundary? The entirety [of all things] derives from the transformation. What things are not under its control? Therefore, the Real Ruler controls and also transcends all things.

|切對待．| 擇要：綱維理數，掌握天人
|---|---|
|理，其妙用之含蘊者也。| 解：理，其妙用之含蘊者也。數，其妙用之蕃衍者也。天，其造化中之最大者也。人，其造化之至靈者也。總由於妙用，孰能越其範圍？總出其造化，孰不聽其操縱？故真宰之綱維掌握，超越乎萬有也。
|數，其妙用之蕃衍者也。| 擇要：主萬化而不化，莫非其化；妙萬跡而無跡，孰非其跡？
|天，其造化中之最大者也。| 解：主持萬化，而本不化。萬化之所以能化，莫不資其斡旋也。妙通萬跡，而本無跡。萬跡之所以成跡，無非藉其陶鑄也。斡旋萬化者，必不為萬化所斡旋。而萬化亦莫能測其斡旋，故不化愈神其化也。陶鑄萬跡者，必不為萬跡所陶鑄，而萬跡莫能測其陶鑄，故無跡愈顯其
is impossible to speculate on the great transformation based on the traits. Therefore, that the Lord has no trait in itself means that the transformation is indeed a miracle.

Additional Explanation: Transformation and traits are two but one entity. Both of them are manifestations of the function of the real Lord. Transformation is to awaken awareness of the subtle function of the real Lord. Trait is the concrete physical matter and can be observed from its subtle function. The function and substance are absolutely not two different entities. The transformation of all things manifests the change of the function of the real Lord. All things have their particular traits. This is really to prove the existence of the real Lord. Therefore, without transformation and trait, there is no other way to understand the real Lord. If you depart from the real Lord and erroneously understand transformation and trait, there is no way to understand transformation and trait.

Theme: The real Lord is omniscient, omnipotent, perfect and good in all.

Explanation: This is to say that the real substance of the Lord has no trace. Its subtle function has all sufficiency. As for knowledge, it is omniscient. Its knowledge is different from sensory knowledge. The spirit of the real Lord is omnipresent. It is insightful and illuminates all ancient and modern subtle principles. As for power, it is omnipotent. However, this power is different from the power of concrete action. The transformation of the real Lord spreads out into the whole creation. The beginning
and return of all things is moved by the real Lord’s transformation. Any material thing that develops is not outside its function. All that it has created, they are all self-contained. The transformation is complicated but it is done with precision and thus is most perfect. The root substance of the Real Ruler is pure and not contaminated. The created metal, wood, water, fire and earth are the elements of material things. The transformation of these elements nurtures to become all things. The eventual things are most subtle and good. These four virtues [knowledge, power, perfection and goodness] affirm that the real Ruler is the Lord. The Lord is also the cause for the transformation to take place.

Additional Explanation: The four virtues ‘knowledge, power, perfection and goodness’ are the cause for things to exist. They also penetrate into the images and substances of all things. Before the formation of the cosmos, nothing exists except the lofty Real Ruler. All things are formed in the real Lord because they are embedded in his knowledge. They are then seen in his power and they end up perfectly in the virtue of the Lord’s goodness. If there is no knowledge of the Lord, there is no principle for any existence of things. If there is no power of the Lord, nothing is able to take on image and substance. If there is no perfection of the Lord, all things cannot continue their transformation and begetting. How can things be self-contained and fill the whole cosmos? If there is no goodness of the Lord, they cannot take various shapes and forms. Do not all things fit nicely for their advantage and in their good time?
Theme: the Lord created all things without depending on any precondition. The Lord has transformed all things and they continue to transform. With its mercy, the Lord enables life to multiply. All things have their needs without any shortage. The Lord eternally and endlessly gives life to all things.

Explanation: the subtle function is omnipresent. As for the transformation, it is naturally done without depending on any coinciding conditions. Talking about the transformation of the Lord into ten thousand things, it is about ten thousand things in their complexity that transform and develop without end and boundary. Talking about the transformation of the Lord into many lives, it is about ten thousand things that receive their needs without any neglect. Talking about the Lord’s giving to ten thousand things, it is about the Lord who satisfies endlessly all the needs of nature. These four virtues are the reasons that the Real Ruler endlessly transforms into ten thousand things and they ceaselessly originate from him.¹³

Theme: The Lord has movement and stillness [hidden and manifested]. He is not unchanging. This is the reason for the ever changing [of all things].

Explanation: Here, it is about movement and stillness. It is a metaphorical way of saying the hidden and manifested Real Ruler. There is no such thing as movement and stillness in him. It is merely said here because the subject of transformation is discussed. The transformation of the Real Ruler begins in the movement

¹³ An additional explanation of about 70 words have not been translated.
of his principle in the stage of former-heaven. In the stage of latter-heaven, it begins from the movement of his vital energy. From the movement and stillness, the principle and vital energy figuratively explain the Real Ruler’s hidden and manifested aspects. This also reflects the transformation of the Real Ruler, manifests the subtle function of the Real Ruler flowing out into the cosmos. The meaning of non-constancy is that there is movement and then follows by stillness. Also, stillness is followed by movement, like an eternal cycle without end. All things cannot exist. They exist because of the work of movement and stillness of the principle-vital energy. All things cannot transform. They are transformed because of the Lord’s hidden and manifested aspects. Therefore, it is said that the Real Ruler is the root cause of all things.

Additional Explanation: The movement of [the Real Ruler] forever unceasingly moves. The stillness of the Real Ruler is eternally quiet. There is stillness in movement, movement in stillness. However, whether it is movement or stillness, it is manifested in material things. Whether in movement you do not know any movement or in stillness, you do not know any stillness, this refers to the mechanism of transformation and flowing out of the subtlety. You need to explain the meaning of movement and stillness and cannot seek their form. The movement and stillness are not constant. It is not one moment of movement and then next moment of stillness, not movement of this side and stillness on the other side. Both poles have movement and stillness. In stillness, there is movement and in movement, there is stillness. This happens without end. When there is a

化，起於一氣之動。以理氣之動靜，喻真宰之隱顯，乃神其造化之機，申其妙用流行之自也。不常，調時起時息，時息時起，如循環之無端也。萬物無以為生，而生於理氣之動靜，萬物無以為化，而化於真宰之隱顯。故曰：其生生之本也。

動者一於動，靜者一於靜，或動中有靜，或靜中有動，皆物也。若動而不知其何以動，靜而不知其何以靜，恰又無時不動，無時不靜，此造化之機，流行之妙也。只可以動靜之義解，不可以動靜之形求。動靜不常，非謂此一時動，彼一時靜，這一邊動，那一邊靜，而果有動靜之兩端也。動也靜，靜亦動，絕無止息。止息則間斷，間斷則天地毀矣，譬如人之呼吸，總一氣之流行，豈可
break, it causes the destruction of the heaven and earth. A similar example is like human breathing. Breathing takes place all the time. How can there be a break in breathing? Another example is the coming spring. The tree develops branches because of the yang movement, causing the temperature to rise. When the autumn comes, the leaves wither because of the ying quietude, causing the temperature to lower and the drying up of leaves. The temperature reaches its climax and then drops to the bottom and return up again. Is there any moment of non-movement?

Theme: Qur’an 112th chapter says, ‘the Lord is the one and only one Lord. The Lord is the source of all things. It depends on no other. It does not reproduce and is not begotten. There is nothing that can compare with it.

Explanation: Al-Ikhlas is the name of the 112th Sura of Qur’an. It specifies the real principle of the Real Ruler. ‘Say’ means the Real Ruler decrees to the holy sages who proclaim to the people. ‘Is’ is a verb that emphasizes the reality of the Ruler and summarizes the content of this chapter. The heart and way cohere, the soul and subtlety unite. Consequently, one can affirm that it is the true Lord. Apart from it, there is no Lord. ‘One’ is the beginning of all numbers. It unites all the parts within a ten thousand and yet transcends the beginning and end of the ten thousand. ‘Source’ means the return of all things. The Lord begets all things and also transcends all things inside out. When a woman gives birth, this is to reproduce. When material forms of life reproduce another form, this is to reproduce. The real Lord has nothing like that. There is no place for it to

| 有息間斷？又如樹木，陽動而舒，氣上而升也；當秋則敗，陰靜而斂，氣下降也。升至盡頭，則退而降，降至盡頭，復轉而升，何有一刻停緩而不動耶？ |

| 擇要：淑真篇云：“曰：是，主，一也；主，究竟也，無產，無所產；無一與之配。 |

| 解：‘淑真’，是真經第 112 章之篇名。專言真宰至實之理也。‘曰’，真宰束觕聖人，令以告人之語也。‘是’是信實之辭，統含通章之意；心與道契，神與妙合，自然是，無有不是也。‘一’，乃萬數之自始，統乎萬，而貫乎萬之始終者也。‘究竟’，乃萬物之歸終，成乎萬而通萬之表裡者也。婦生子曰 “產”：又凡物生物如本者曰 “產”。真主無等類，無所從出，故無產，亦無所產。非若異教 |
reproduce. It reproduces nothing and is not begotten. Other religions making such ridiculous claims, declares the Lord has a son and daughter. They are begotten by the Lord. Someone also says, ‘the Lord has a father. He is begotten by the father.’ The above ‘no one is comparable to it’ means the Lord is the most exalted one. No other can be equal with him. If there is one, the real Lord, then who is the second? How can one say that it is the only one? This is the meaning that the real Lord is the only one. The whole chapter of Al-Ikhlas narrates the existence of the real Lord. Its existence is concerned with the idea of one. The meaning of one and only has been fully explained. The real Lord is the source of all things, it does not reproduce. When one says no one is comparable to the real Lord, one really affirms the reality of one. When a learner is able to appreciate how the one is to be the one, he does not need more analysis and naturally will be able to understand.

Additional Explanation: From one, it gives rise to and completes the ten thousand. One penetrates the beginning and end of ten thousand. Ten thousand derives from one, governs by one. Ten thousand must have one. Therefore, within the ten thousand, every one of them is one. Without one, there is no ten thousand. The root substance of one is eternally unchanging and unmoving but as a number one can give rise to countless other numbers. If one is to disperse, it can become million. If one is to increase greatly, it becomes ten billion. No matter it is ten, hundred, thousand, and ten thousands and billion; it cannot do without one. Without one, no number may be formed. Once you know the meaning, you can work it out. That is the reason [in Quran 112:1],
the Lord is one and at the end of the chapter, none is like him. The relation between the Real Ruler and all things is like one and all the numbers. The original substance [root suchness] of one is all-inclusive, all-penetrating, without surplus and shortage and with all sufficiency. One can beget any number but it is not equal to any number which must begin with one. One is similar to any number but not equal to the number. One naturally penetrates into other numbers. The root substance of one is eternally unchanging and unmoving but one can change into ten thousand numbers. The root substance of the one is without increase or decrease but this one can naturally increase or decrease the ten thousand numbers. One has neither beginning nor attachment to any number. It becomes the beginning of any number which has to attach to the one. One is the beginning of any number but it is not attached to any number. Therefore, ten, hundred, thousand, ten thousand and countless other numbers have their source in one which is the beginning. Other numbers attach to one. All numbers including ten, hundred, thousand and ten thousand have their beginnings in one and are founded on one. The root substance of one is unparallel and none is like one. Any number is formed by addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. If you take away this way of thinking, there is no existence of number. The result remains to be the same: one.

Explanation: Alternatively, the purpose of the Quran’s 112th Sura is possibly to inform the seeker about the way. One is pure but two means contamination. Seekers with oneness of heart are without contaminated thoughts. From the heart, the seeker can give single-minded action.

末復云‘無一與之配’。蓋以真宰之於萬物，更猶一之與萬數也。一之本然，無所不包，無所不貫，無欠無餘，全體自足。而其生數也，不等於數，而為數之所由始，其同數也，不等於數，而自與數相為周通。一之本體，不變不動，而自能變動萬數，一之本體，無增無減，而自能增減萬數。一之本體，無所從起，無所依附，而自為萬數之從起，萬數之所附，故十百千萬，至於無算之數，皆一為之資始而立根也。一之本體無匹無配而成為萬數之匹配，匹配，即萬數之所以為數也。萬數，由匹配而結成也，匹配釋，萬數減，仍復一矣。

或曰：‘淑真篇’，為求道者言也。一則純，二則雜，求道者，心乎一，則無雜矣。乎其心，則必一乎其趨，則其身心融化，而渾同於真主之
Then, the body and heart of the seeker merge and cannot be differentiated from the root suchness of the real Lord. Because of this, outside the real Lord there will be needless diversion [error], losing your concentration. So, you will not even ask where the one comes from. Such questions may shake your firm foundation, lose your single-mindedness and contaminate your purity.

Chapter Three: Epistemology

Theme: Any craft work must have a craftsman. The universe must require a Lord who has created it.

Explanation: In the world there are many things. A palace is a huge building. A plate is a small container. These things are created by their makers. Without the house builder, there will be no house. Without the craftsman, there will be no cookware. The sky is clear and high above. The earth is solid and broad. Since the sun, moon, stars, mountains and rivers, living creatures and plants exist and they are abundant and plentiful, surely the creator Lord Ruler exists. Is it possible that the sky, earth, moon, stars, mountains and living plants form themselves? If one lives all the time under the sky and ignorant of a Lord Ruler in the sky, then one really does not know the sky. If one lives all the time on earth and is ignorant of the Lord Ruler on earth, then one really does not know earth. Every day one can see the sun, moon, stars, mountains and living plants and yet one does not know who the Lord Ruler is. Is that person proficient enough to investigate and seek the true knowledge of heaven and earth? He is not proficient to know the

14 Liu Zhi, Rules and Proprieties, 47-57.
heaven and earth. How can he then know his own heart and see his own nature? Without investigating and seeking the principles of a thing, resulting in true knowledge and according to his human nature, he is not able to interact with people or things. How can he then exalt his virtue and realization? This is a very important question. Humankind should really need to know the Lord Ruler of the universe.\footnote{An additional explanation of about 200 words was provided by Liu Zhi but not translated. At the end of the section, he emphasized expanding knowledge of every detail of things before any self cultivation.}

Theme: In the world, there are foolish, worthy and unworthy people. They all know the existence of the Lord Ruler. Whoever does not know him; he is then constrained in form and image and ends up in emptiness.

Explanation: Although a person may be aware of the existence of God, he does not know God really. By his meaningless imagination, he creates false knowledge and erroneous feelings. The fools stick to their forms and images instead of the Lord Ruler. Thus, they regard humans and things as the Lord Ruler. The Daoists and Buddhists seek the Lord Ruler outwardly in forms and images. Therefore, these are people who regard emptiness as the Lord Ruler. There are numerous examples that end in failure.

Theme: Some learners may seek Lao Zi.

Explanation: Lao Zi lived in the Zhou Dynasty. His teaching exalted abstraction and mysticism. He used his power to prepare medicines for immortality. Lao Zi sought to be elusive and tried to lose any trace of himself, where could he then know the principles of a thing? How can he then exalt his virtue and realization? This is a very important question. Humankind should really need to know the Lord Ruler of the universe.
himself. The Qin emperor sought immortality and popularized Daoism. Later, people regarded Lao Zi as the Lord.

Theme: Some learners may seek the Buddha.

Explanation: Buddha lived in the Shakya Republic and was an Indian. He pioneered Buddhism and exalted emptiness and meaninglessness. He was keen on spirits and attempted to rescue humankind from hardship. He taught others to become another Buddha. Buddhism teaches that Buddha is the most exalted being in the world. All things depend on and can succeed because of Buddha’s emptiness. Buddha came to China during the reign of Emperor Han Mingdi. Therefore, people in the East regard Buddha as their lord.

Theme: Some may seek the heaven

Explanation: Some may understand heaven as the principle and others the form. With regard to the principle, the heaven means humankind can understand its subtlety and yet is unable to grasp its irresistible power. With regard to the form, the heaven means one can look up and see various movements in the sky. According to the Analects of Confucius, the heaven is known as God. This heaven really means the principle. However, foolish people do not understand the meaning of heaven and they just use any form as the Lord Ruler.

Theme: Concerning principle

Explanation: Principle is to explain the necessity of

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<th>人以老子為主者。</th>
<th>擇要: 日佛</th>
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<tr>
<td>解: 佛, 身毒國人也. 其教尚空寂, 談鬼怪, 以度眾生成佛為務, 蓋謂天上地下,推佛獨尊, 萬事萬物, 皆緣佛妄想而成. 漢明帝傳其傳入中國, 因而東土人有以佛為主者.</td>
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<td>解: 天, 有指理言者, 有指象言者, 指理而言, 則人默識其妙, 天且弗違者是也; 指象而言, 則人仰視其行,周旋運動者是也. 儒者謂五經以上帝為天, 指理而言也. 庸愚者不識此天為何物, 遂以形體之天為主矣.</td>
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| 解: 理, 物之所以然者. 天
things. Heaven has its principle, humans have their principle and materials have their principle. It is like the relation between the meaning of an essay and the text. In the ancient five Chinese Analects, there is absolutely no statement saying that God is the principle. The later scholars speculatively tried to work out the nature of God. They tried to know God from image form but in vain. When they gave up the image form, they had no foundation to know God. Thus, they said that God was the principle. They regarded that in this world, there was no exaltation higher than the principle. Thus, they gave the principle the name of God. This is not appropriate.

Additional explanation: The principle relates to things and this relation is similar to the text and meaning of the text. This has been the ancient unchanging truth. Before you write, you need to form the meaning that becomes the central idea. When this meaning is written on paper, it becomes the story form with deciding content. No matter what the form or the content of this story is, there must be an author who firstly needs to determine the theme and work out the plot. He then develops it to become a story. No one should say that the central idea of the story is the author himself. The learner should understand the relation between the principle and its thing. This relation is similar to the meaning of the story and the way the text conveys the meaning. Should the learner understand such relation, he can avoid mistaking the principle as the author.

Theme: He who seeks speculatively does not know the real Lord.

有天理，人有人理，物有物理。理之與物，蓋若意之與字也。五經中，絕未有謂上帝即理。乃後之學者，欲揣度上帝為何如，泥相求之而無所得，去相求之，又無所歸，遂以理當之。蓋謂天下莫尊於理，故以帝名之，而不知其說猶屬未當也。

原注：理之於物，若意之於字，千古之喻也。譬人欲作一文，未書之時，主意才立於心中，此文之理也。及書於方策，則文之象也。文之象，固本於理，然必有作文者，為之意，而發揮之者也。詎可謂意即字之作者乎？學者明夫理之於物，即猶意之於字，則無誤識矣。

擇要：擬度為主，非真主也。
Explanation: Lao Zi and Buddha are humans and they must be created. They could not escape life and death. Those who exalt them as lords are meaningless. Heaven is above the earth and both are created as a whole. Even if heaven merges with the earth, both are created and belong to the material world. Some fools call this the lord. The principle itself is an abstract concept that is embedded within the material world. The principle is not creative and it is ridiculous to call a principle the lord. Therefore, he who seeks to know the Lord speculatively does not know the Lord.  

Theme: The true Lord is without any form and image but it is real. The Lord created heaven and earth, humankind. It is the Lord of the principles and vital energies of all things.

Explanation: The Lord is without form and image. It is impossible to see him in form and colour. If the Lord is real, it is impossible to seek him with abstraction and emptiness. Since the Lord is the creator, Lao Zi and Buddha are not lords at all. Since it is the Lord of principles and vital energies, the Lord can be understood by the process of analogy. Any scholar, who wants to know the Lord, must know its name and then the reality of the Lord.

Theme: To know the Lord, you seek it heartily. This sets the seeker on a firm foundation. All deviations and incorrect views will not be able to confuse him.
Explanation: It is the Lord Ruler who gives me life; it also let me live. When I die, my life returns to the Lord Ruler. Thus, I can live in rest and peace without worry. If I live without knowing the Lord Ruler, what warrant do I have to return to the Real? Because of this, we should not be ignorant. It is serious that we need to know the Real.

We know the Lord and seek it obediently. We understand it in our hearts. In situations that we cannot hear or see, we still solemnly exalt it with a fearful heart. It seems the Lord Ruler is very near and he watches quietly over us. Thus, our lives know it obediently. We need to be alert in our ritual relationship with the Lord Ruler who watches over us in all moments. Also, we must earnestly use our bodies to know it.

If I am obedient daily, I am not far from the Lord Ruler. Every moment I am obedient, and then the Lord Ruler is not far from me. When I live, there is no separation between us. Will I be far from the Lord if I die with the compliance of the Lord’s way? Even when I live or die, I do not separate from the Lord Ruler. This is the right way to deal with life and death. I thus become a person of belonging to the root and returning to the Lord.

This is such an important idea that I really need to focus on it. Shall I spend my life and energy in meaninglessness? Is it worth it? Also, life is important

解: 我之性命，皆主宰之所賦於者也。當我之生也，主宰以性命賦之於我，及其死也，我仍以性命歸之主宰，始得以寯無恙也。若生之日，不知有主宰，而死之日，又何以能歸之主宰乎？此知有主宰一著，為人生所必不可忽者也。

知有主宰而趨向之，則根腳之際了然明白，不覩不聞之中凜乎主宰之陡降於前也，而其以性命趨向之者，至矣。瞻禮對越之間，凜乎主宰之鑒觀於上也，而其以身體趨向之者，切矣。

日日趨向，則我不遠於主宰矣。刻刻趨向，則主宰亦不遠於我矣。生之日，如此相親相密；而死之日，又焉有不相符無間者乎？我之性命生死，不離於主宰，方是能了卻生死者，方是能歸根復命者。

如此大事，不急急講求，而顧乃以有用精神虛度一生也，豈不可以深惜哉？
that we should not waste time listening to heresies. Should our life be sorrowful and regretful?¹⁸

Theme: When you see the movement of grass and trees, you sense the coming wind. When you see the budding of seeds, you know the coming of the spring. Examine your soul and you see there is life. Examine the transformation of the world. You know there is Lord Master. This is a necessary principle.

In the last section, I have discussed the real and false principles, trying to prove the existence of the Lord Ruler. Here I discuss the ways and methods to seek the Lord Ruler and give some evidences for the seeker.

Some may think that it is difficult to know the Lord but it is not that difficult. There are two categories. Firstly, the form can see other forms. Secondly, the other is formless that can discern and know from the traits of things. Thus, in this world, all things can be known.

For example, wind is without form and colour. Humankind cannot get and know its essence. When the grass and trees move, we sense the coming wind. Another example, spring does not occupy space. Humankind cannot capture or know its essence. However, when we can see the budding of the seed, we know that spring has come. These two examples are of outward phenomena. Soul is a thing inside us. It is

¹⁸ An appendix on the meaning of life in about 300 words has not been translated.
without form and space and yet it follows us daily. We do not see the root suchness of our souls. However, based on my sight, hearing, language, movement, daily living, we are able to know that the nature of the souls.

Looking at far away things and near things within us, we still cannot see many invisible things. While these things cannot be seen, we cannot cheat ourselves by saying that they are nothing. It is from their traits that we can discern that they exist. The Real Ruler exists in the universe, without form or colour. Naturally, humankind cannot see his root suchness. If we see the transformation of world, the movement of the sun and moon, the orderliness of such movement, the fitting distribution of creatures, the passing of centuries, time unchanging and life without ceasing and continuing to multiply, we can know that the Lord Ruler is quietly in control. To say there is nothing and no Lord is cheating.

When the grass and trees move, the wind leaves its trait. When the seed starts budding, this is the sign of coming spring. The soul of humankind is the expression of his life function. The sign of the Lord Ruler’s existence is revealed in the world’s transformation and movement. Wind, spring and life are the transformation of the Lord Ruler. We cannot see the essences of wind, spring and life except their traits. Likewise, we can only know the traits of the Lord Ruler and do not see his root suchness.
Theme: The root suchness of the Lord Ruler is hidden in function, seen in acts, subtle in principle and formed in image. Before his subtlety manifests, we cannot see the substance. After the manifestations, are not all materials signs of his root suchness?

Explanation: This explains the reality of the real Lord so that seeker can find it. According to the real Lord’s root suchness, it has substance, function and action. Its substance is hidden, quiet and difficult to be made known. The subtlety of its function is unpredictable. Its actions can scarcely be seen. Why is that? This is because the root suchness is hidden in function and seen in its action. The action of the true Lord is seen in the innate heaven and becomes the principle of all things. Its action is seen also in the acquired heaven and becomes the image of things.

The substance and function of the Real Ruler cannot be felt by us but we can feel the principle and image which is not the Real Ruler but they are his action in the innate and acquired heaven. When you see the principle and image, you are seeing the act of God, aren’t you? The action of the Real Ruler is nothing other than the manifestation. When you see his action, don’t you see the function of the Lord also? The subtle function is the original power. When you see the function of the Lord, don’t you see the root suchness? From the manifested phenomena, we can understand complex philosophy.
From what can be understood, we can see dimly the hidden subtlety. Gradually, our heart and spirit can engage properly. Therefore, things that may be difficult to explore can be grasped. Things that may be difficult to understand can be solved. Is this merely the problem of understanding and exploration? In reality, when we see all things, we also see the manifestations of the Lord’s root suchness. Why should you bother to distinguish the substance, function and act of the real Lord? The subtle function of the Lord has already been manifested. We can see the real Lord every time and everywhere. Abdullah Ibn Umar once said: ‘Let it be if we cannot see. While we can see, we see the real Lord. This is the meaning as explained.’

Theme: Qur’an (41:53) says: ‘I reveal my traits in all four corners and their locations of the world….How come that you cannot observe?’

Explanation: This Qur’anic verse explains what has been said previously, namely, all things are signs of the Lord Master. This verse is the evidence and the Lord’s subtle function is manifested. It is because humankind observes things superficially that we are not able to understand deeply. Therefore, there is a distance between the Real Ruler and humankind. To us, it seems the Real Ruler is hidden. We do not know that all things are manifestations of the Real Ruler and we should be able to see him. The Real Ruler is not far away and not hidden. It is humankind whose eyes are blind and ears are deaf. We ourselves are far from it and have hidden from the Lord.
The clever and astute people can observe the real Lord in anything. They ponder the principle and vital energy and know the hidden real Lord. They observe the day and night [ying and yang] and understand the endless great transformation. They then know the magnificence and exaltation of the real Lord. They look up to the sun and moon and can imagine the clairvoyance of the real Lord. They search ceaselessly the mountains and oceans and see his plentiful immanence and endless nurture in all. They see the mountains and rivers. Then they can experience the ever-flowing abundant grace of the real Lord. They watch the flowers and plants and can discover the wideness of his transformation. They observe the birds and animals and can see the universal love of the real Lord. They appraise the spirit and god and can know the wonder and omniscience of the real Lord. They observe the seasons and the weather and know the Lord’s regulation of all natural cycles. They study the metabolism of creation and can know the Lord’s control of the up and down of all things. All the true facts above are the manifestation of his subtle function and the lodging residence of the root suchness of the real Lord. Where materials exist, the real Lord is also present. Therefore, a text says: ‘only when you are near to things, you are able to know the real Lord. What is the point of seeking the true Lord in a far place?’

Theme: The holy sage says: ‘understanding oneself is to understand the Lord.’ That is, you need to understand yourself first before you understand the Lord.
Explanation: In the section above, from the things far way, you can see the proof of the Lord. Here in this section, the holy sage speaks from a nearer [with respect to humanity] perspective. You can know the reality of the real Lord. As your humanity is the microcosm, the nature of this person is also the Real Ruler. As you do not know the necessity of your root suchness, neither do you know the Real Ruler’s root suchness. However, if you seek yourself and know the necessity of your nature, then even the necessity of the Real Ruler’s root suchness is also known because it is not outside your nature.

For humans to be human there are four conditions that should be needed. Humans have their root suchness, which is the true nature. They have their subtle function, which gives intellectual power. Also, they have innate ability to see, hear, speak and act. Finally, they can act creatively in art and craft writing.

For the Real Ruler to be the Real Ruler, likewise there are four conditions that should be needed. The root suchness is the real substance. The subtle function is intellectual ability. Its root ability includes root seeing, hearing, speaking and acting. [Lastly], it has [splendid] acts. It governs the time of things by perpetual begetting and return. Thus, if you know the causal suchness of your substance and function, you also know the causal suchness of the Real Ruler. Is this a very appropriate comparison? This is the key meaning of the statement above that to know yourself is to know the Real Ruler.

解：前經言，乃遠取諸物可以見主之徵驗。聖人此言，則近取諸身，可以得主之實際也。蓋人之身，天地一小式耳；人之性即此身之主宰也。人惟不能自知本性之所以然，故不能知主宰之所以然也。若返求諸己，能識自己本性之所以然，則主宰之所以然，不外當身之本性，而得之矣。

蓋人之所以為人者，大約四者盡之：有本然焉，真性是也；有妙用焉，知能是也；有本為焉，視聽言動是也；有作為焉，工藝書寫是也。

主宰之所以為主宰者，亦四者盡之：有本然焉，真體之謂也；有妙用焉，亦知能之謂也；有本為焉，本聽、本觀、本言、本動是也；有作為焉，時行物生，周而復始是也。明夫自己體用之所以然，即知夫主宰之所以然矣。不至切近乎哉；此所以謂認己為主認之要訣也。
True meaning: the meaning of the Lord Ruler is similar to the head in a family. The ruler is the highest position and received respect and reverence from the family members. He manages all family affairs and no one can supplant him. While the usual interpretation is of extreme exaltation, it is used because the Lord Ruler in reality holds sovereignty over certain things, similar to a landlord and an emperor. It is from this sovereignty that the name Lord Ruler originates. This Lord Ruler is one who holds sovereignty over others and the Lord Ruler is thus called.

Our teaching believes that the transformation is concerned with the root suchness. The Lord is the convergence of both the world of image and principle. It governs the transformation. Nothing is more exalted than the Lord. Nothing can really describe him. It is similar to the lordship of the landlord and emperor. Based on this sovereign idea, it is then called the Lord. While the Lord is sovereign over creation, human sovereignty over other things cannot compare to it. Although the use of the word Lord may be similar, this usage is only a metaphor, using the metaphorical argument to illustrate the principle. The visible is metaphorical to the invisible. In reality, the two lords have basic qualitative difference.

The Lord is prefixed by the word ‘real’. It is because the meaning of Lord is different to different people. The lord may mean that it may control one thing, one moment or even the ignorant may illegally occupy and control a location. There is no fixed rule to use the word lord. Such lordship is very different from the creator Lord.
The Lord thoroughly controls the world of image and principle, from beginning to now, without any disorder. This is the real Lord. Some people may misunderstand this meaning. They think that the creator Lord is the same as the emperor. They give the Lord a visible image. Most important, the real Lord means that it is the creator of all things and this is to show the meaning of Lord. Any seeker needs to know the meaning. He should not stop and try to seek the visible image of the Lord.

Additional Explanation: Zhu Xi says that ‘according to the Analects, in the universe, there is a heaven Lord…. He is known as the principle.’ ¹⁹ He also says that the magnificent Lord bestows grace upon humankind.’ The will of the heavenly Lord predetermines the blessings and disasters of humankind. This proves the existence of the Lord Ruler. Someone asks: ‘While we call the Lord Ruler by the name of the heaven Lord, who is this Lord Ruler?’ Zhu Xi answers, ‘the Lord Ruler exists naturally. Since the sky is solid and strong material and moves endlessly, then there must be a Lord Ruler who causes the natural movement of the sky.’ He also says ‘…Today, people call the heaven Lord by the name of Lord Ruler who is without form. This is not an appropriate way. Even worse, some people in society call the Lord Ruler by the name of the mythical emperor.’

¹⁹ This is a detailed historical data section and translation is only for the section on Zhu Xi. About 300 words are not translated.
My humble view: God as interpreted in the *Analects* as the heavenly Lord is similar to Islam that calls God by the name of Lord Ruler. Look at the ancient historical records about the Five Emperors and Three Kings. They had a piety for God and were sincere. The historical books record that God is called the heavenly Lord, other example like, royal heaven, vast heaven, heavenly will, and heavenly wrath and so on. Here, we talk about heaven. It means God and does not mean the massive and visible sky. The historical record does not explain the reason of naming the heaven as God. From the time of Confucius and Mencius, it is common to name God as heaven and not sovereign emperor. Fools do not know the profound meaning and consider the heaven as the visible sky. Other people may also become speculative. They create many unfounded theories. Therefore, many deviations begin to creep in…… As mentioned by Zhu Xi. He says, ‘Heaven is used to describe the Lord Ruler that transforms all things. This heaven is known as the principle. There is nothing in the world that is nobler than the principle. Thus, the principle is called [heaven] emperor.’ He also says, ‘this principle is a pure, inclusive and abstract concept. It cannot create. Through movements, the vital energy can attend to and cohere to form many things……’ According to the above three arguments, sometimes it is due to the principle, or sometimes due to the vital energy or sometimes due to no principle or vital energy. Therefore, if someone asks about the truth of return, which way should they go?
What evidence can they get in order to get back to the root and return to the mandate? Or rather than answering the question, let the heretics speak. They then become popular day by day. Should they be allowed to be unceasingly popular? The older generation Confucian followers say, ‘the evil of the heretics makes it impossible to explain the way.’ I consider that the damage of the heresies is to stop the explanation of the way. Those who study the ancient texts, they understand the way. It is due to the words of the ancient emperors and the holy worthies. In this way, the deviation can be eliminated. As a result, the way of Islam can be clear and exposed.

Chapter Four: Meaning and Witness

Prologue: Meaning is to know exhaustibly the principle and examine all things. Witness is to explore the mystery and explain the meaning. In Islam, the ‘meaning and witness’ is a method for the heart to pass on knowledge. This is a unique and singular way to know the Real Ruler. This chapter consists of five subchapters.

Subchapter One Theme: I testify there is no god except

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21 Alternative translation: Testification.
one, not two, God. It is the only real Lord. I testify the
prophet Muhammad is the messenger sent by the Lord.

Explanation: The witness is to prove the reality of the
real Lord and to know the root suchness of the real Lord.
My witness is to use the self as proof without seeking
any proof from outside the self. The fact is that the
human self is composed of body and nature. That may be
the body proof or may be the nature proof or may be the
unified body nature proof. These may be sufficient to
prove the real principle of the real Lord.

What does the body prove? The body of humanity has
form and also invisible nature. The body including the
inner hundreds of body parts is the visible part of nature.
Vision, hearing, speech and movements are deeds under
the control of nature. Nature enables the body to act and
generate senses. This is sufficient to prove that the
heaven and earth and ten thousand things do not have
any self-government. They are all determined by the
Real Lord and Ruler.

What does nature prove? Nature is invisible and it fully
fills the person. Through the heart, the self can
understand his nature and also the eyes can see. The
thinking can perceive and see his nature but the ears
cannot do so. Nevertheless, you have not heard any
difficulty in working out the form of nature, resulting in
a nature that is uncertain and wavering. From this
argument, the real Lord has invisible originality. However, he embraces all forms of visible things and yet
you cannot use word, concept, analogy and debate to seek him.

What do both body and nature prove? Within the body, there are visible, invisible components and also the movement and stillness of the whole body. This is ultimately due to nature. Humankind cannot continue its bodily function without its nature. Also, you cannot see nature outside the body. It is because nature comes first and then the body can function. Nature manifests through the function of the body. This is enough to prove that within this heaven and earth and ten thousand things, visible things and invisible spirit have their origin, namely, the one and real Lord. It is absolutely not that beside the real Lord there is a gap that can hold heaven and earth and ten thousand things. Also, they are not inside the Lord’s root suchness that contains all these things. The subtle unity between the real Lord and all things is a mysterious principle similar to the union of heaven and humanity. It is not easy to explain. However, you may understand the mystery from both the body and nature. While it cannot be seen and heard, it can be completely heard and seen with body and nature. Originally, it is beyond our limits and without colour and form. Yet you can see the encompassing and flowing of substance and function. These are clearly revealed. This is the meaning of personal proof. You may seek proof external to the self. Can that external proof be as clear?

Explanation: The [ultimate] sage is also another proof. He further explains and expounds what is said above. 

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22 Although the text does not clearly indicate the sage is the prophet Muhammad, the subchapter titles clearly indicates the concerned sage is the prophet Muhammad.
The real Lord is invisible and controls the transformation in the innate heaven. The holy sage is the visible vicegerent of ten thousand things in the acquired heavenly realm. It is impossible for the invisible Lord to make any description to humankind but the visible sage can explain it. Therefore, you are able to understand the difficult truth that is impossible to understand otherwise.

Imitate that which is visible and follow the way of the sage. Then, you can reach the realm that is conceived to be impossible to reach. The holy sage is indeed human but he is the representative of the way and also manifests the way. The real Lord is the origin of the holy way. Therefore, testifying to the sage is to testify to the Lord. If you testify thoroughly to the end, you also testify to the deeper mystery of the Lord. You can speak of two testimonies, one to the Lord and the other to the sage. In reality, it belongs to the same principle.

Translation: Witnessing the word and understanding the text of the Lord have a single core idea. It has two words, namely, ‘not two’, only one single idea. The seeker who works hard needs to witness the reality of ‘not two.’ Such work completes the whole of witness. It is because the beginning and end of the heaven and earth, [that is] all things are operating intricately and that is merely the real Lord’s manifestation of his subtle function. Such manifestation of the function and the subtle function of root suchness are different and yet not separable. They have different categories and are known by different names. Both of them eventually return to the one Lord. Those who are foolish and confused are not able to understand. They hold on to their own senses,
erroneously exploring things beyond the real Lord. They are mistaken to hold firm to images. They are wrong to seek the real Lord from the created things that are outside the Lord or to seek it from the outside of the created things. Then, they conclude that the transformation of all things is a constancy of reality. How can they understand the subtle truth of the return to the real Lord? It is no wonder that many have not understood and are doubtful of the ‘not two’. It is really disheartening!

Subchapter Two Theme: All things are not the Lord, there is only the real Lord; Muhammad is the Lord’s messenger.

Explanation: The witness, namely Shahada, is to do without the need of the proof of trace. There exists one Real Ruler. It is without boundary and has no body. However, the seeker can examine self and then he can witness the Lord, resulting in the meeting of the human with the heaven. The method is unavoidably based on the trait, namely, human self. The human self is not antithetical to the Real Ruler.

Explanation (continued): This chapter does not have to do with any proof by word nor with the existence of one Real Ruler. In its undifferentiated heavenly principle, it transforms and leaves traces. All things that have names are embedded in the unnamed. Thus, those named things are really unnamed things. All things that belong to the acquired heaven are undifferentiated in the innate heaven. Hence, the acquired heaven is also the innate heaven.

化窟歸真之妙道乎？無怪乎落於疑貳者之多也，悲哉!

擇要：一切非主，惟有真主；穆罕默德，是主欽差

解：清真言者，去其作證之迹，惟存一主宰也。主宰無方無體，求道者能於當體求證焉，夫亦可謂盡人見天之會矣，而未免有作證之迹也。己身與主宰猶未免有對待之痕也。

此章不用作證文語，惟存一主宰，則渾然天理，而化乎對待之痕矣。凡有可名，皆包藏於無名之中，則可名亦無名也。凡屬後天者，皆渾人於先天之中，則後天即先天也。可名與無名，不分界
heaven. Named things and unnamed things do not have boundaries. The innate and acquired heaven have no difference. Because of this, what is the point in insisting on proof? If the seeker can know this realm of understanding, then, he has reached the highest end point of exploring the Real Ruler. There is no knowledge that the seeker cannot get!

Subchapter Three Theme: I believe in the Lord’s root suchness [no beginning and original existence]. The subtle function reveals its exalted name. I confess that the real Lord reveals all laws.

Explanation: To summarise the meaning of witness, it concerns the subtlety of the Lord’s substance and function. The real Lord’s original substance has no trace; in the beginning it has no name. When the function manifests, his exalted name is then revealed. As an illustration, the real Lord sees, hears, knows and empowers all things, begetting and transforming. These are due to the principle of root suchness and the name of subtle function. When the subtle function is not manifested, the principle is concealed. When his subtle function manifests, the principle is then revealed. Therefore, there is no place or thing that does not exhibit the trace of the Lord’s root suchness and subtle function. Those who are not focused to examine, do not understand this fact in their heart.

After witness then you can know un-differentiation and transformation. Because of this, the complete substance and great function of the real Lord are revealed thoroughly in the human self who seeks witness. If the
seeker is sincere, the result will certainly be real. Once
you have the certain reality, you accept and obey all the
laws of the real Lord. Naturally, you do not relax
yourself and withhold progress. Therefore, you seek to
unify with the substance and function [of the real Lord],
faithfully obey the Lord, wholly practise the Lord’ s law
and work them out.

Subchapter Four Theme: I believe in the real Lord. I
believe in all heavenly spirits, and the sacred tex
ts. I believe in the holy sages and the afterlife. I believe in the
predestination of good and evil, that humankind has the
choice of good and evil and believe in resurrection of life
after death.

Explanation: the particulars of faith express specifically
the subtlety of function and action. The Lord Ruler
transforms all things. The highest of all is the spirit and
sage. The sacred text is to teach humankind,
distinguishing right and wrong, confirming good and
evil. The Lord transforms the visible world which is this
life. It also arranges the life after. Once there is life after,
there will be return. You can clearly know and
understand the subtlety of the real Lord as if it manifests
clearly before you. Then, you can unceasingly and
anywhere meet with the Lord. Likewise, you can unite
unceasingly and anywhere with the substance and
function of the Lord Ruler.

Subchapter Five Theme: the real Lord is lofty! All

praises belong to the Lord. Ten thousand things are not the lord, but only the real Lord. The Lord is greatest. We are powerless and dependent on the exalted Lord.

Explanation: The big praise is the ultimate act of witness.\textsuperscript{24} Such witness is at the realm of true reality. You believe and obtain the complete substance and function [of the Lord]. This means your endeavour is pure; your heart is focused; not external to the Real Ruler and able to see again one thing. Not external to the Real Ruler, your heart has one thought. Then, when you see with your eyes, you can see the Lord. When your heart desires, you desire the Lord. When this happens, you should not hold on to your cleverness and ability. You should un-differentiate and yourself transform into the subtlety of the root suchness. There is no need to say praises external to the whole substance and great function of the Real Ruler, is there?

A humble conclusion: These five subchapters are really one chapter; five contents, but really one content. The five chapters have their titles. This is to show clearly the development of content. The previous chapter gives a hint of the following chapter and the subsequent chapter supplements the content of the previous chapter. The order is not to be reversed, added or subtracted. If the learner is serious about knowing, then he can reap the reward. Learners can continue to discover from each chapter, the more they study, the more they are impressed.

\textsuperscript{24} This is the corporate celebration among Muslims who memorize the \textit{Shahadah} vocally at the end of Ramadan.
Chapter Five: Five Endeavours

The five endeavours are the way of cultivation, realizing the rule of uniting humanity with the heaven. The first endeavour is the witness of Shahadah; the second ritual prayer; the third fasting; the fourth alms-tax and the fifth pilgrimage. All five endeavours are the Lord’s commands. The holy sage has shown himself as the example to all others.

Prologue: When the humans begin to form within the mother’s body, the way of heaven is hidden. Then, the vital energy grows daily but real truth grows dim. Both reality and falsehood grow daily and yet human nature becomes insensitive. The understanding has become obscure and purity is contaminated. The way is then blocked. Humans do not know the way of return. The five endeavours of Islam, namely witness, ritual prayer, fasting, alms-tax and pilgrimage, are the ways of cultivation and return to human origin.

Explanation: The way of heaven works harmoniously with the human heart. The Lord gives one principle to humanity but each human receives the principle differently. Thus, there is a difference between the sage and ordinary humans. The holy sage uses the way to explain things [the physical images] and he understands clearly the truth. The ordinary humans use things [physical images] to explain the formation of things and the truth is concealed. How can humans understand? How can humans return to their origin? Then, the real

Lord gives the five endeavours. This is the way of cultivation, clearing the blockage, pointing out the way and guiding the path of return.

Why are there five endeavours? It is because the heart and nature of humanity are interconnected, similar to a lock and key. Ears, eyes, mouth, nose and body are affected by sound, colour, taste, smell and movement, respectively. These physical images or perception may cause love and hatred toward fleshly feelings. Such feelings are like the spring of a lock, which triggers the lock, making perfect and faultless the union between the heart and nature. If you use the key to open the lock, the spring of the lock is released and thus the union is separated. The five senses of feelings, namely sound, colour, taste, smell and movement are a burden and constrain humanity. Thus, five different methods are needed and they gradually can remove the burden. Human nature can be then manifested and the way of cultivation is clear. Thus, the five endeavours are necessary for cultivation.

Theme: Witness is to know clearly the return.

Explanation: While humans may desire cultivating the way, they may not know the method and end in failure. Witnessing the Lord directs the heart to return and does not let the heart linger on aimlessly. Know that the real Lord is the origin of the great transformation and all mandates are derived from it. Anyone who desires to return to the mandate must then follow the real Lord as the reliable guide, achieving the return by constraining the body and heart. If humans give witness to other

擇要: 念.知所歸也

解: 世人雖有意修道,而苦於不知其法,是以無成功也。念主,則心有所歸,而不致流蕩忘返。蓋真主為大化根原,萬命所自出。凡欲返本命之初,務以真主為準嚮,斯得所要歸。而身心俱有收束矣。若不知念此,而
things, they fail both this life and the afterlife and are beyond any cure. How can it be possible for such humans to hope for any success?

Theme: Ritual prayer is to practise the way of return

Explanation: If humans desire to practise the way, they must first know the way. They can then speedily and directly arrive at the destination. Otherwise, they may divert to another way and have no chance of arriving at the destination at all. It should be noted that the Lord gives life at the beginning. Humans pass from the foetus stage to adulthood and their experiences are different. By such different experiences, humans are further away from their beginnings. More experiences mean further away, making a return to the beginnings more difficult. Humans have passed through various stations, one after another. Is it possible for humans to return just by one step? Propriety means humans walking through their previous experiences, making their way back to the start. Since the Lord has given humans lives, so they can step by step, station by station, experience their lives. Thus, humans can now return to the mandate of the Lord station after station. This is the meaning of propriety.  

Theme: Fasting is to abstain from material things.

Explanation: Humans desire material things and that may constrain humanity. Humans cannot easily give up

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<tr>
<th>他有所念，則今生後世既皆失腳，莫可藥救，仍望成功，何可得也。</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>擇要：礼，践所歸之路也。</td>
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<td>解：凡人欲行道，必先識路程，而後可長驅以往，不然，則歧途異同，終無到日也。蓋人自主命之初，歷胎胞以至于成人，其中所歷之境不一。多歷一境，即與本來之地多遠一層，愈歷愈遠，故其歸根復命，難而又難。當日郵遞而來，今日豈能一蹴而返？禮拜者，踐其原來所歷之境，而步步次以返之也。當日自主命步步郵遞以致於今生，今日即由此生步步郵递以復歸於主命，此禮拜之至義也。</td>
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<td>擇要：齌，以絕物也</td>
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<td>解：人牽物欲，而不能遽絕者，以其有所求也，齌者，絕</td>
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26 Then, Liu Zhi provided further a broader meaning of proprieties in about 500 words. This section is not translated.
this desire because they need such materials. Fasting is to abstain from the need for materials. Human nature is originally good but the desire for materials means constraint. Constraint results in the unavoidable need for materials. Fasting is the endeavour of abstinence from materials. Through the exercise of abstinence, humans have no desires for materials. Abstinence from materials means that human nature is not interfered with and thus nature can return to the Lord without any second thought.

Theme: Alms-tax is to sacrifice human selfishness.

Explanation: Humans do not align with the way [of the Lord] because of their self-centredness. The endeavour of the alms-tax is in practical terms the giving up of personal possessions. In reality, it is the self that needs to be given up. Humans may possess many things but it is money that means the most. While you may not know how to give up the self, alms-tax is indeed the giving up of the self. To give alms means the self is to die. When you are dead, you are suitable to unite with the way of the Lord. Thus, if you are seeking the way, outwardly you are dead to material things. Inwardly, you are also dead to the self. Hence, strings of desires completely disappear. Contaminated things are then purified. You no longer need to seek the way diligently because the way unconsciously undifferentitates with you subtly.

Selected key theme: Pilgrimage means the return to the Real.

Explanation: The more you desire to stay in your home,
the less you long for the way. The Lord commands pilgrimage and wants you to give up your selfish desires, be on the way and near the origin. Pilgrims give up their love for their home. They travel precariously and then arrive at their destination. Therefore, those who seek cultivation need to give up their self, practise asceticism and eventually arrive at the Real. This is to use visible practice to reveal the meaning of the invisible pilgrimage.

Theme: The cultivation of these five endeavours is to end the way of the acquired heaven.

Translation: These five endeavours are the method of cultivating of the way and keeping humans close [to the Real]. This way embraces heaven and earth. It reveals concealment. Nothing can exist outside the way. Also, humans cannot exist without the way. The way transforms all things and all things return back to the way. If humans come from the transformation of the way and cannot return to the way, does it mean that the way is far away from humans? No, it is humans who are distant from the way. Humans can use these endeavours to cultivate the way. Frequent witness enables human return. Frequent ritual prayer enables humans to know the journey. Fasting enables humans to give up materials and directs them to the way. Alms-tax is the giving up of the human self and to control their own self. Pilgrimage means that humans are to move from far to near, from outward to inward and return to their place in the original substance. Outward pilgrimage means that humans still leave behind their walking trace, but inward
pilgrimage means to be undifferentiated and be one with the Real Ruler. This is the purpose of cultivating the way. Is there any purpose more superior to this?

Theme: Witness is to set your heart to the Real Ruler. Witness can be heart (unspoken) and mouth (spoken) witness.

Explanation: Heart witness means single-mindedly thinking of and remembering the Lord, as if you are returning to your origin. It is inaudible and invisible also. Mouth witness means adoration and praise, not forgetting the Real Ruler has no beginning. This has form and is audible. When the mouth praises, the heart must go along with it. Such prayer is not superficial and able to enlighten the mind. It can generate a heart sincere to the Lord. The ritual law requires mouth witness. To be close to the Real Ruler, you need heart witness. Therefore, witness is the first step towards realization.

Theme: The mouth witness has a set time but heart witness does not have a fixed time.

Explanation: Mouth witness has form and sound but form and sound are disturbing. Say for example, you cannot do mouth witness when you are busy and not free. However, heart witness is invisible and inaudible. Form and voice are not a hindrance to heart witness. Another example, when you hear and see movement, eat and work, you can still single-mindedly focus on the Lord and dare not forget him. In this way, you always remember the Lord. There is really no set time to regulate your remembrance of the Lord. Thus, there is no

此者哉？

擇要： 念者， 心乎主宰之謂也， 有心念， 有口念。

解： 心念者， 聚精會神， 以致於本原之地， 此無形無聲之念也。 口念者， 稱揚讚頌， 以不忘無始之真。 此有形有聲之念也。 口之所至， 必須心至， 其念始不落於虛浮。 心之所至， 必須口至， 亦足以誠心而生其誠敬也。 禮法在口念， 敬主在心， 故念一功， 為修道之首務也。

擇要： 心念以時， 心念無時。

解： 口念， 為有形有聲之念， 而形聲足以礙之。 如與物接， 不得暇則不念， 故曰以時也。 心念為無形無聲之念， 則形聲不得而礙之。 如視聽言動， 起居食息之頃， 一心專注於主， 不敢暫忘， 則亦何時是念， 而亦何時非念， 故曰無時也。 雖然， 是亦
set time for heart witness. This is the situation for people below the middle class who hope for realization. As for the higher level people and their realization, it is their whole body and mind that unite together. Return to the Lord must be done with the coherence of both the inside and outside person. In your daily living and dealing with people, you need to remember the Lord. This is the superior wisdom. Only the wise people can understand and do it. Those who have yet to achieve this level are difficult to understand.

Theme: The endeavour and function of witness is great.

Explanation: The function of witness is important. When all things have not yet been formed, the heart of humankind has moved. This is the beginning of good and evil, and the source of principle and desire. Every moment remember the Lord. In the midst of seeing and hearing, consider the uprightness of the Lord and do not fall into the danger of desire. In every event you tirelessly remember the Lord. In your daily work, seek diligently and sincerely with reverence. Do not be lazy and fall into falsehood. Pray in all things lest your body suffers worry. If you don't pray in all things, this may lead to a life of disaster. Thus, the function of witness is important. This witness is the core of self-realization and an affirmation of the teaching.

Theme: In witnesses, there are ten rules.

Explanation: Rule means the main rules. In each of the five endeavours, there are main rules, holy rules, propriety and secondary endeavour. The main rule is the
rule of the Lord. Holy rule is the act of sages. Propriety is the combination of holy rule and ritual. This has to be practised from the ancient to the present time and is regarded as normal practice. Secondary endeavour means that the individual can seek his resource for realization. Witness includes both heart and mouth witness and has ten rules. Learners need to pay careful attention and experience intimately so that their witness is not meaningless.

Theme: Recite the witness

Explanation: The first of the ten rules is to recite the witness. This witness is discussed in chapter four on meaning and witness. Here, to recite means mouth witness. You recite the witness. Before you pray, you need to know the Lord. To know him intimately, there is no better way than to recite the witness. It is to affirm the truth without error. When the sages teach the way, they require accurate recitation. The rule of sequence of regulations can judge the evil of acts and deeds and the judgment is also in accordance to this recitation.

Theme: Know the meaning of the witness

Explanation: The second rule is to know the meaning of witness. This is to know the meaning of the recitation. Since you recite the witness, you need to know the meaning. If it is merely mouth recitation and not knowing the meaning, you really have not recited at all. Thus, while knowing the meaning is number two in the sequence of regulations; it is number one and most
important in the way of realization. This is because to come close to the Lord, the basic requirement is the heart witness which is most important and mouth recitation comes second.

Theme: To believe the principle of witness.

Explanation: The third rule is to believe the principle of witness. It is to believe what you have recited and witnessed. The correct way is to recite verbally, know the meaning and the heart believes truly the principle. Ordinary people can merely recite verbally and know the witness. The heretics can do likewise. If the heart does not have sincerity, how do you differentiate from the ordinary people? The reason that ordinary people are ordinary is that they do not understand the principle of witness. Heretics are heretics because they do not believe the principle of witness. The knower is the person who knows the witness. The believer is the person who believes the witness. Therefore, we are called Muslims and this term does not apply to any other people.

Theme: To obey the way permanently.

Explanation: Permanency means to keep the way all the time. You know the principle of witness is right and should always remember it in your heart and never forget it. For example, a traveller needs to follow the path in his journey. He may lose his path and not be able to return home. Another example, a person picks up a treasure. He needs to keep it carefully as if it were treasure and fears losing it. If you face towards the Lord,
you have achieved the principle of witness. You need to be vigilant daily and always pious to the Lord. In any movement, do not forget the Lord. In any quietude, remember him. You are afraid to make a mistake, losing your way and unable to return to him. You believe him sincerely; firmly keep your right way. If your whole life does not forget him, you do not need to worry about your life and death. This is the fourth of the ten rules.

Theme: If questioned, do not avoid your answer. If asked, do not be slow to teach.

Explanation: Someone might ask about the principle of witness. You should answer clearly and without hesitation. This shows that you already believe. Also, it helps the other towards their belief. Some might ask to be taught about the principle of witness. You should use correct recitation to teach them, without any delay and do not pass on the responsibility to anyone else. Thus, we have the principle and pass it on to others who also receive the principle. The first four rules are concerned with you and your understanding. The fifth and sixth rules are about your passing on from you to others so that others can fully understand. The last four rules are concerned with the affirmation of belief without doubt. This can give weight to the argument and get rid of any heresy.

Theme: To know clearly the principle that the Lord really exists.

Explanation: Three reasons for the principle that the Lord exists. Firstly, it is the principle of creating all
things. Another principle is the control of all things and lastly the management of all things. What is the principle of creation of all things? There is a maker of every container or thing. For example, a small cup or container must have a craftsman; a knife made by a knife-maker; a house by a builder. There is nothing in this world that naturally exists without being made. The world has visible form and how can there not be a creator? Therefore, it is doubtless to ascertain the existence of a creator Lord Master.

What is the principle of the control of all things? It is humankind that makes the first move. Any ship that sails has a sailor. A racing chariot has a rider. The flying kite has a person that controls the wire. The arrow that hits the bull’s-eye has an archer. Without the person, a ship, chariot, kite, the arrow cannot work. Look, the world turns in an orderly fashion and all things continue endlessly. How come there is no one in control if the world continues to turn and things endlessly continue? Therefore, it is impossible to deny the existence of the Lord Master who is in control.

What is the principle of management of all things? No matter whether the property is occupied or abandoned, someone does the management. For example, a house has an owner, a garden has a gardener. This applies to all
containers and things without exception. Now that the world is enormously complex, how can it exist without the existence of a Lord Master who manages all things? Therefore, it is doubtless to ascertain the existence of a Lord Master who manages all things.

Theme: To know that the Lord is one.

Explanation: Three reasons that we know the Lord is one. Firstly, it is the proof of one; secondly, the proof of family governance and lastly the proof of principle.

What is the proof of one? It is from one that you get all other numbers. Number one does not come from two. The Lord initiates the beginning and end of the world. How can there be two? From this point, it is obvious that the Lord is one and not two. What is the proof of family governance? In a family, there must be a head and the family prospers. In a country, there must be one ruler to rule it. No one has seen two parents having the same status and also two emperors governing the same country, resulting in harmonious ruling. Even more, is it possible that the Lord is two as he is and the source of all things? From this you can see the Lord is one and not two.

What is the proof of principle? Assuming there are two lords, can the two lords have the same power? Alternatively, can the two lords have different powers? If they have the same power, it is enough just to have one and the second one is superfluous. If there are different powers, it means there is an opposition of powers. When
there is opposition, the appearance of the world is not unitary. The stronger one will lord it over the weaker who should not be the lord after all. From this principle, you can see the Lord is one and not two.

Theme: The proof that nothing can be comparable to the real Lord

Explanation: Comparison means there is something similar. Things can always find other matching things. The true Lord is incomparable. All things have their form, colour, sound and taste and one thing can be distinguished from another. The principle, vital energy and image of things can also find their match. The Lord is unlike any form, image, sound, taste. It does not belong to any principle, and vital energy. What can you compare it with? The root suchness of the Lord is pure without any contamination and outside any human mind and thinking. Not only is its substance incomparable but his subtle function is also incomparable. Not only is his function incomparable but his act is also incomparable.

Let’s take a look at the creation of the Lord. His creation is lively. Humankind cannot create. For example, an ant, a mosquito, grass, seeds are all full of life. Can humankind create ants, mosquitoes, grass and seeds that have life? In all things, what is more exalted than humankind? Who is cleverer than humankind? From this, we know there is no one similar or comparable to the Lord. Summarizing the argument above, we prove by
using things that are outside us. This is not the most relevant proof. The most relevant proof comes from within us. Humankind has nature and that can prove the existence of the real Lord who is one. This is the most superior and firm proof. Is there any human body merely without nature in the world? Are there two natures in one human body? What can someone say about the form of this nature and how comparable is this nature with the other? If the scholars can learn and explore from within the human self to know the real Lord, they have come over half way.

Theme: Know the prophet Muhammad as the sage, the Utmost Sage.

Explanation: From the ancient times, there have been many sages. Only Muhammad is the Utmost Sage. He possesses all the virtues and his transformation is clear. He perfectly practises the will of the Lord. He has a long ancestral tradition and exceptional sensitivity. His spirit begins superbly before the foundation of the world. He is the master of all principles and natures. The body of the Sage emerges as the heaven and earth are formed. He is the fruit of all the sages throughout the ages. As an illustration, the heaven and earth symbolize a tree. The Utmost Sage is the seed and also the fruit of the tree. Seed and fruit are ‘not two’. Therefore, while heaven and earth are huge, they are formed into reality by the nurture of the Utmost Sage. The spirits of all sages have

29 The text refers to the diagram of nature principle in bracket.
begun under the shelter of the Utmost Sage. The form of the Utmost Sage belongs to the heir of Adam but his spirit is the ancestor of Adam. His religious tradition unifies all other religions and his collected laws fulfil all other laws. His way is superior to other ways with unbiased accuracy, shining like the sun and moon and as long-lasting as the heaven and earth. According to ancient texts, if humans want to know the Utmost Sage, they need to know the Utmost Sage’s religion as described above.

The sensory and revelatory faculties²⁷ of the Utmost Sage are superb and he is far superior to all the sages. These include, for example, the seed of the Utmost Sage’s shadow appearing on the foreheads of his ancestors. Also, the chest of the Utmost Sage bears a seal which has words written by the angel in his flesh. The light of Muhammad appears on the forehead of Adam. When the ancient Chinese emperor tried to worship a painting of the Utmost Sage, his image in the painting disappeared. The other sages have experienced none of Muhammad’s faculties. His sensory and revelatory faculties have long lasting effect and all later generations can confirm that. He received from the Lord the gift of Qur’an and all followers of Islam … Islam is adaptable to all particular situations and it is passed on from generation to generation without any change to another faith. The way has been prosperous and without any hindrance. Therefore, such [growth] can be a proof of the sensory and revelatory faculties of the Utmost Sage. After examination, humankind can say that his religion has a long tradition, his sensory faculties are miraculous, is故，其形為阿丹嗣，其靈為阿丹祖，其教統萬教而備，其法集萬法而成，其道卓越萬道而中正，與日月同光，與天壤同久。經謂：凡欲識至聖者，先須認其宗派，此至聖之宗派也。

至聖之感應，莫可數窮，而其超越前聖者，可以萬計。若珠丸毓秀，肉印光瑩感神光於阿丹，拜丹青於唐主，皆感應之微末，而亦前古聖人之所未有也。至其感應之重久，而為天下後世據者，則有主授之經焉，有服教之人焉……適殊域，傳子孫，累世而不易其信，道盛教衍，無往不通，是則，其人為可據也。視其宗派之原委，感應之神奇，為教之正大，自生民以來，未有一人可以幾及，則其為至聖也可知矣。

²⁷ Literal translation: telepathy.
and his proclamation is accurate and great. Since the beginning of humanity, there has been no other person comparable to the Utmost Sage. Thus, it is obvious that he is known as the Utmost Sage.

Theme: The witness endeavour is accomplished when the ten rules are completed

Explanation: If you do not recite the witness, there is no proof of the Lord. Without the meaning of the witness, you do not understand. Without any understanding, the witness has no foundation. Without any faith, there is no solid action. Without perseverance, there is no sincerity. Without any action and sincerity, witness has no effect. When questioned, do not give any answer and thus become a cheat. When asked, do not teach the knowledge and thus become a miser. Cheating and miserliness are the two worst defects in your witness. If you do not know the reality of the Lord, your witness is meaningless. If you do not know the uniqueness of the Lord, your witness is unfocused. The result of meaninglessness and lack of focus is a shaky and even doubting faith. If you do not know the superiority of the Lord, your witness is not pure. Impurity can lead to the rise of superstition and evil thinking. If you do not know the Utmost Sage, Muhammad, you lose direction in your way. Therefore, there is no way for you to return. You enter into deviations. Therefore, if you can complete the ten rules, you can accomplish the endeavour of witness.

Liu Zhi gave another detailed account in about 900 words based on Chinese historical record to expand his view on the prophet Muhammad. This account is not translated.
Theme: The holy sage says, ‘Witness is the core of all endeavour. It is the source of all goodness. Benevolent people perpetually witness and are free from any worry. People who emphasize realization will not forget the endeavour of witness.

Explanation: The core is the backbone of the matter. Source is the beginning of things. All endeavours are achieved through witness. It is like the body that needs a backbone in order to perform normal functions. All good works require the witness endeavour to begin. It is like the primordial energy that creates all things. Witness is the fountain head, leading all the endeavours. If you always keep your witness endeavour, your endeavour is perfect and your virtues plentiful. You are naturally free from worry and anxiety. In all your daily living, your basic practice is to witness to the Lord. If you are serious about realization and seeking human divine unity, should we not emphasize witness as the most important element?