

3

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 brief discussion will be provided of contemporary scholarship on Liu Zhi's contextualization.

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.¹ 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 Nature and Principle in Islam*
- *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*²

1. Jin, *Exploring Chinese Islam*, 16–17.

2. Liu, *Rules*. The first five chapters of this work (reprinted 1988) have been translated into English in Appendix IV.

- *The True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*³

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 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 Endeavors* 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 on the Internet.

The Nature and Principle in Islam

*The Nature and Principle in Islam*⁴ 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. 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 volume with five chapters and is known as the root classic.⁵ 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.

3. Liu, *True Record*. Selected sections of this work (reprinted in 1984) have been translated into English in Appendix II.

4. Murata has translated this work into English. Murata et al., *Sage*, 102–580.

5. This is the foundational section of the whole work and known as the 'root classic' (*Benjing*). The first chapter summarizes the whole root classic. The subsequent section serves to expound the meaning of the root classic. Murata et al., *Sage*, 82–84.

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."⁶ 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.⁷

*The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*⁸

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 twenty volumes. The first four volumes recapitulate the Islamic philosophy including the concept of God, knowing God, 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 endeavors. 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*.⁹ 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

6. Murata, *Gleams*, 75–76.

7. Murata et al., *Sage*, 93–580.

8. Liu, *Rules*. The reprinted edition in 1988 has been used in this work.

9. Chi et al., *Annotated General Catalogue*.

known chapters will be translated and discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 later.

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*¹⁰ in which Liu Zhi gave a fairly comprehensive account of the life history of the prophet Muhammad.¹¹ 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 twentieth 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 *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*, Mason translated only sixteen volumes. He followed closely the original Chinese text in the 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."¹²

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 appendixes. 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

10. Liu, *True Record*. Selected texts of this reprinted work in 1984 have been translated into English in Appendix II.

11. Both Murata and 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 'Afif ibn Muhammad Kaziruni. Murata says that Liu Zhi's work 'retells many of the stories in 'Afif's work and follows the same general order, he also condenses the text drastically and adds material from other sources.' Murata, *Gleams*, 34.

12. Mason, *Arabian Prophet*, viii.

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 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 appendixes at the end and solely narrates the life history of the Utmost Sage according to Liu Zhi.

OTHER WORKS OF LIU ZHI: AN OVERVIEW

The Explanation of the Five Endeavors

This is not a long work, about fourteen thousand Chinese words. It is also known as *The Book of Propriety: The Explanation of the Five Endeavors*. It explains the five pillars of Islam in Neo-Confucian terms. It consists of sixty-three short chapters, equivalent to sixty three 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 endeavors. The second section covers from chapters 8 to 32 and explains the meanings and the regulations of such endeavors. The final section covers chapters from the 33 to 63. It explains in details the meanings of endeavor from a religious and ethical perspective. The length of such chapters may vary from a short chapter under twenty Chinese words (for example, chapter 43) to the longest

chapter 33 about four hundred and twenty 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, chapter 1 affirms that the origin of the five endeavors 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. Chapter 2 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 chapter 7 of uprightness and distortion.

The second section teaches the rite, method, meaning, principle, and ultimate goal of the five endeavors, 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 Endeavors*. 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 endeavors are spiritual progress (in chapter 58) and yet this progress is ongoing in a cyclic manner and never coming to an end (in chapter 44). Secondly, the benefits of the five endeavors (in chapters 42, 43, 45 and 51) have both real physical and spiritual well being. Lastly in chapter 50, the Utmost Sage, namely the prophet Muhammad, is unique. His endeavors are most subtle and he can see through the principle and image of things.

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*.¹³ It should be

13. Liu, *Explanation of the Meaning*.

noted that this is not a grammatical introduction to the Arabic language. In this work, Liu Zhi explained the theological meaning of the 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* and *Alphabet Classic*. According to Jin, Liu Zhi employed more Neo-Confucian concepts than any other Muslim literati.¹⁴ Jin asserts that Liu Zhi's contemporary Xu Lan in his work *The Proper Meaning of Islam* 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*).¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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 chapter 5 of this book.¹⁹ The poem is still very popular among Hui Muslims and easily accessible on the internet.²⁰ While many scholars are able to point out that *The Rules and Proprieties 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.²¹

14. Jin, "Liu Zhi's Explanation of the Meaning," 28–29.

15. Jin, *Exploring Chinese Islam*, 302.

16. *Ibid.*, 314.

17. Jin, "Liu Zhi's Explanation of the Meaning," 26–27.

18. Jin, "Liu Zhi's Explanation of the Meaning," 27.

19. The full English translation is found in Appendix I.

20. <http://www.douban.com/group/topic/24083421/>

21. Jin gives a brief note of various Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian terms in *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon*. Jin, *Exploring Chinese Islam*, 298.

CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP ON LIU ZHI'S WORKS AND A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

An Overview

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 seventeenth and eighteenth-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 endeavors at the beginning of the twentieth 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.²² 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 book is his abridged translation of Liu Zhi's *True Record of the Utmost Sage of Islam*.²³

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,²⁴ Australia,²⁵ Japan and other Southeast Asian countries, Europe²⁶ and America. In 1974, Joseph Ford's historical study of Chinese Islam focused on the Chinese Muslim literati including Liu Zhi in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁷ In the eighties, fuelled by the open-door policy of the Chinese government, study of Chinese Islam

22. See Broomhall, *Islam*.

23. See Mason, *Arabian Prophet*. Also, Mason, "Notes," 172-215.

24. During this period, some classics of seventeenth-century Islamic literature in Chinese were published in more modern Chinese in Taiwan.

25. The Australian National University has made tremendous advances in historical Chinese studies of both Jews and Islam, under the leadership of Donald Leslie.

26. Russians have occasionally shown their interest in historical study on Chinese Islam. Loewenthal, "Russian Materials," 449-79. Also Loewenthal, "Sino-Islamica," 209-12.

27. Ford, "Some Chinese Muslims," 144-56.

in general and seventeenth-century Chinese Islam in particular resumed momentum. Francis Cotter and Karl L. Reichelt translated into English in the early twentieth century Liu Zhi's *The Three-character Classic*.²⁸ Donald Leslie began his life-long work in the late seventies on historical study of Chinese Islam, often paying particular attention to seventeenth-century *Han Kitab* work by the Chinese Muslim literati.²⁹ Most relevant to us 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.

1. Most of the texts in Arabic are standard Sunni Hanafite texts of law and ritual.
2. Many works in Persian are Sufi. The influence of the Naqshabandiyya and Kubrawiyya orders is significant.
3. There are more works in Persian than in Arabic. Most of the works are extant in the West.
4. Possibly, the sources are primarily from Central Asian Muslim sources and secondarily Persians and lastly original Arabic sources.³⁰

A ground-breaking study on seventeenth and eighteenth-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.³¹ She is undertaking more translation of Liu Zhi's writings.³² 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*

28. Cotter and Reichelt, "The Three Character Classic," 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 Qur'an, the five virtues, and worship to the unique position of the prophet Muhammad. Liu Zhi's work in Chinese was published in 1704.

29. Leslie, "Islam in China," 16–48; Leslie and Panskaya, *Introduction*; Leslie, *Islamic Literature*; Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China*; Leslie, *Integration*; Leslie et al., "Arabic Works," 7–27; Leslie et al., *Islam in Traditional China*.

30. Leslie and Wassel, "Arabic and Persian Sources," 78–104.

31. Murata, *Gleams*. All book reviewers conclude that Murata has provided the Western world with a foundational work in English on Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi.

32. Murata, "Unity." Murata, "Creative Transformation," 141–48.

Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms.³³ Another book-length study was published in America by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite in 2005.³⁴ 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 2005.³⁵ He has studied Liu Zhi's *Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Later, Frankel published his research.³⁶ In America, a recent thesis has been done on Wang Daiyu by Kristian Petersen.³⁷ 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 seventeenth to nineteenth-century China, paying brief attention to various Chinese Muslim literati including Liu Zhi.³⁸ 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, and social science study on the Hui and Uyghurs.³⁹ However, these studies have only indirect relevance to this present research apart from the works of Murata and Frankel.

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 seventeenth- and eighteenth-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

33. Murata et al., *Sage*.

34. Benite, *Dao*.

35. Frankel, *Liu's Journey*.

36. Frankel, *Rectifying*.

37. Petersen, "Heart."

38. Stöcker-Parnian, *Jingtang Jiaoyu*.

39. A few prominent names may be mentioned. Joseph Fletcher, Dru Gladney, Jonathan Lipman, Michael Dillon, Élisabeth Allès, and David Atwill.

present work 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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ The third book-length study was done by Liang Xiangming and he wrote a general study on Liu Zhi's Islamic teachings in 2004.⁴² 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 (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 in 2006 and the prolific Liu Zhi scholar Jin in 2012. Wang's work discusses the ontology of Ibn 'Arabi.⁴³ 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

40. Jin, *Exploring Chinese Islam*, 283–324.

41. Sha, *Chinese Islam*.

42. Liang, *Study of Liu Zhi*.

43. Wang, *Unity*.

Scripture Hall Education System.⁴⁴ 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 sixteenth-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.⁴⁵
- Greek and other philosophical influences upon Liu Zhi.⁴⁶
- Comparison between Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism and Liu Zhi's Neo-Confucianism.⁴⁷
- Comparison of the Islamic concepts used by Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi and of their use of Confucian terms.⁴⁸
- Comparison of the ethical and moral teachings between Liu Zhi's rites of Islam and Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and spiritual wisdom.⁴⁹
- The Confucianization or sinicization⁵⁰ of Liu Zhi's Islam and Chinese culture.⁵¹

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

44. Jin, *Sufism in China*.

45. One example of such a study is by Wang Genping. Wang, "Explanation," 37-47.

46. The most common influence is Neo-Platonism upon Chinese Sufi teaching. See Jin, "Idea," 1-11.

47. Tuoheti, "Study," 105-8.

48. Sun, *Critical Biography*.

49. Ji, "Comparative Study," 134-42.

50. Sinicization of Chinese Muslims may be defined simply as "the acculturation, the penetration of Han culture into the Hui's everyday life." Berlie, *Islam in China*, 8.

51. Cai, "Adaptation," 108-15.

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.

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

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 and Proprieties of Islam* from the perspective of comparative religion. Murata's main focus is on Liu Zhi's theosophy, cosmogony, and worldview in *The Nature and Principle in Islam*. She gives great insight in explaining the Islamic concept behind Liu Zhi's Confucian terms.

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite⁵² produces an admirable study based on a primary source⁵³ 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, born in Yunnan (c. 1620) with Liu Zhi's father, Liu Sanjie who wrote the preface in Ma Zhu's work. It should be noted that Liu Sanjie was a teacher in the Yuan school in Nanjing, led by Yuan Ruqi.⁵⁴ Benite believes that the emerging and flourishing Hui Muslim literary work was not due to accommodation of Islam to

52. Benite, *Dao*.

53. The primary source is known as the *Register of Lineage and Transmission of Classical Learning*. It is noted by Benite as a genealogy, authored by Zhao Can before 1697, consisting of 26 chapters and three appendixes, covering one hundred and fifty years between 1550 and 1700. It is a study of various networks with biographical details for some teachers and scholars. Benite, *Dao*, 30–31. Another source is Yuan Guozuo's (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*, 27, 154–59. Both Liu Zhi and his father Sanjie belonged to the Yuan's network.

54. Benite, *Dao*, 145.

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 seventeenth 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 . . .”⁵⁵ 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.”⁵⁶ Benite’s work has established the significance of any seventeenth-century Hui Muslim literary work within the well-established intellectual networks and education system. Secondly, 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.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸

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

55. Ibid., 123. Certainly, the religious and political contexts should not be ignored.

56. Ibid., 125.

57. Ibid., 208–13. Benite examines Liu’s *True Record*.

58. Benite, *Dao*, 210–13.

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 eighteenth 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.

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."⁵⁹ Frankel's argument about Liu Zhi's contextualization is nuanced and will be critically examined in chapter 6 later.

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."⁶⁰ Also, Murata argues that Liu Zhi's *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* would not "overtly betray its Islamic origin."⁶¹ 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."⁶² When Murata examines Liu Zhi's translation of eighteenth 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 Liu Zhi added an extra introductory paragraph, he also removed Jami's Greek philosophy in the eighteenth Gleam.

59. Frankel, "Liu Zhi's Journey," 12–13.

60. Murata, *Gleams*, 26.

61. *Ibid.*, 121.

62. *Ibid.*, 123.

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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴

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.

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 us, 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 civilizations meet, namely Islam and Neo-Confucianism, the three natural steps of interaction are difference, conflict and integration.⁶⁵ Na Qi believes that the seventeenth-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.

63. Ibid., 125–26.

64. Murata et al., *Sage*.

65. Na, "Difference," 136–41.

A thoughtful approach is undertaken by Ding Kejia. Rather than examining Liu Zhi's trilogy, Ding examines his Sufism.⁶⁶ 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 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 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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

66. Ding, "Cultures," 25–30.

67. Liang, "Brief Discussion," 27.

68. Liang, *Study of Liu*, 46–48.

Daiyu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Dexin.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ That is as 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.

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.⁷¹

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 seventeenth century, has continued to the present and made Chinese Islam different from the Middle Eastern Islamic tradition. Such localized Islam with Chinese characteristics⁷² 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

69. Liu, *Dialogue*.

70. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

71. Liu, *Dialogue*, 178.

72. This phrase is commonly found in popular Chinese religious literature. That is Islam with Chinese characteristics.

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.⁷³

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 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.⁷⁴ Then, Sha concludes that Liu Zhi combined medieval Arabic Islam with the school of principle (*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."⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶

The minority camp disagrees with the common consensus about the sinicization of Hui Islam in seventeenth-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.

73. Sha, *Chinese Islam*, 281–82.

74. Sha, "Confucianism," 58–59.

75. *Ibid.*, 58.

76. The following essays are some samples: Sun and Su, "Introductory Exploration," 63–66; Cai, "Fusion," 108–15; Ji "Comparison," 134–42; Tuohuti, "On Wang Daiyu's and Liu Zhi's Contributions," 104–7.

A critical work in Taiwan was done in Chinese by Zheng Wenquan.⁷⁷ 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 thirteenth-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 sixteenth and seventeenth 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.⁷⁸

The second writer is Min Wenjie.⁷⁹ It is often argued that Liu Zhi's Islamic teaching of five endeavors 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 endeavors 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.⁸⁰

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."⁸¹ That is a sound judgment by Yang who provides a con-

77. Zheng, "Study on the Islamic Nature."

78. Zheng, "Islamic Philosophy."

79. Min, "Comparison," 32-36.

80. *Ibid.*, 36.

81. Yang, "Do not Betray," 5-8.

text 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.⁸² 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.⁸³

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 seventeenth-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. Seventeenth-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.⁸⁴ 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

82. Yang, "Pilot," 55–56; Yang, "Similarity," 48–51.

83. Yang, "Mirsad," 26.

84. Yang, "Arabian Principles," 86–90.

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.

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."⁸⁵ Frankel further opines that "Liu Zhi downplayed the role of revelation, rather expounding theological concepts with frequent reference to natural law."⁸⁶ 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 *Han Kitab* literature."⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸

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 sixteenth to eighteenth-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

85. Frankel, *Liu's Journey*, 10.

86. *Ibid.*, 11.

87. Frankel, *Rectifying*, xvii.

88. 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.

Liu Zhi and secondly on Wang Daiyu.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ Various research works on Wang have been done by Chinese scholars and they share a broadly similar point of view.⁹¹ The common consensus 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 endeavors 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 Muslim literati's 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 others operated.

Finally, a preliminary study of Liu Zhi's *Poem of the Five Sessions of the Moon* later in greater detail 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.

89. Murata, *Gleams*; Jin, *Exploring Chinese Islam*; Jin, *Study on Wang Daiyu's Thoughts*.

90. Wang Daiyu, *Collected Classical Writings*.

91. Li, "Wang Daiyu," 58–62; Jin, "Ideological Structure," 14–19; Sun, *Critical Biography*.

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.

SAMPLE