1

Methodological Introduction

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.[1] The Qing dynasty in China with its dictatorial emperors in the seventeenth and eighteenth 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,[2] 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

1. Sun Zhenyu is the only scholar who attempts to date the time of Liu Zhi. He suggests the year of birth around 1662. Sun, *Critical Biography*, 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.

2. Stephen Hirtenstein gives an account of the spiritual life and thought of Ibn 'Arabi. See Hirtenstein, *Mercifer*.

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 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.

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? Anthony 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.[3] The mystics had great passion in their quest for spiritual rigors. 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

3. Johns, "Perspectives," 9.

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

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.[4] Furthermore, he asserts that seventeenth-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.[5] Later, Murata further published a very significant and substantial treatment of Liu Zhi's *Nature and Principle in Islam*.[6] 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 Islamic philosophy, *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam* concerns the way of life for Muslims living in China.

Two scholars have written substantial studies on *The Rules and Proprieties of Islam*. Liang Xiangming writes in Chinese and James Frankel in English.[7] 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.

4. See Zheng, "Islamic Nature."
5. Murata, *Gleams,* 121.
6. See Murata et al., *Sage*.
7. See Liang, *Study of Liu Zhi.* Frankel, *Rectifying*.

METHOD OF STUDY: ENGAGING ISLAMIC TEXTS WITH CHINESE CULTURE

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 that 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."[8] In a specific sense, contextual theology means more than merely "all theology is contextual."[9] Angie Pears asserts that theology is contextual when a theologian "explicitly places the recognition of the contextual nature of theology at the 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 sixteenth to eighteenth-century China. When they engaged with Islamic texts in Persian and Arabic, they needed to translate and equally important to interpret the texts.

8. Pears, *Contextual Theology,* 9.

9. Several authors understand contextual theology not merely as methodology but as a distinct theology, contemporary and effective in its own right. See Schreiter, *Constructing.* Pattison, 'Some Straw," 135–45. See also Bergmann, *God in Context*.

10. Pears, *Contextual Theology,* 1.

11. Ibid.

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

According to Alexander 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 and his followers 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.

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."[13] Whittingham argues that it is not the context and preconditioning that al-Ghazali identifies; rather it is al-Ghazali's preconceived worldview that 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."[14] He did not favor 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.[15] 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.

12. Intra-Islamic debate is not uncommon in the history of Islam. See Knysh, "Multiple Areas," 219.

13. Whittingham, *Al-Ghazali,* 129.

14. Ibid., *Al-Ghazali,* 64.

15. Kamal, "Al-Ghazali," 83–85.

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.[16]

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 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 (*ka*) His likeness (*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

16. Kamal, 'Al-Ghazali's Hermeneutics,' 86–7.
17. Ibid., 88.
18. Knysh, "Sufism and the Qur'an," 143.
19. Ibid., 151.
20. Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 282–83.
21. See Chodkiewicz, *Seal,* 60–73.

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 of the Qur'an, there were three levels of understanding of its meaning: "the metaphysical and cosmological, the analogical (built around the implicit correspondences between the universe and the human individual) and the existential-experiential based on the notion"[23] 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 Chittick, Sufis "stress inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction."[24]

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.

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?

Julia Ching, a Neo-Confucian scholar, gives an affirmative answer. Firstly, the debate whether Neo-Confucianism is theistic or not is ongoing.[25] However, the more important point is that the philosophical system

22. Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 282.
23. Knysh, "Sufism and the Qur'an," 155.
24. Chittick, *Sufism,* 19.
25. Fung Yulan argued that Confucianism could not be considered as a religion

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 twelfth-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."[26] 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 eleventh-century China, peaked in the thirteenth century and began to decline in the sixteenth 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 the Chinese intellectual tradition."[27] 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.

MODELS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

David 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

within the traditional understanding of the word religion. See Fung, *Short History*, 4. Huston Smith argues that from a broader perspective, the distinctive character of Chinese religion is its social emphasis. Leaning 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. Smith, "Chinese Religion," 6. The contemporary Neo-Confucian scholar Tu Weiming also argues that Neo-Confucianism is theistic.

26. Ching, *Religious Thought*, viii.

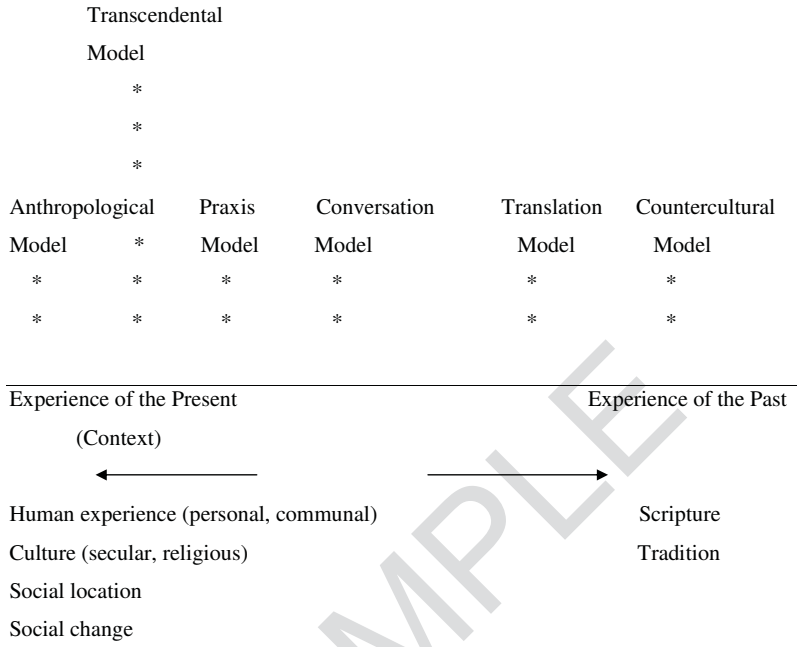
27. Murata, *Gleams*, 19.

in their respective cultural and existential contexts."[28] 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."[29] 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 seventeenth and eighteenth-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."[30] Bevans's model of 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.[31]

28. Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 200.
29. Bevans, *Models*, 27.
30. Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology," 187.
31. Bevans uses 'synthetic' but this study prefers conversation or dialogical model.

Bevans provides a diagram of his models as follows:[32]

Figure 1.1: A Map of the Models of Contextual Theology



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."[33] 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.

32. Ibid., 32.
33. Ibid., 123–24.

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."[34]

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 behavior. 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."[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.

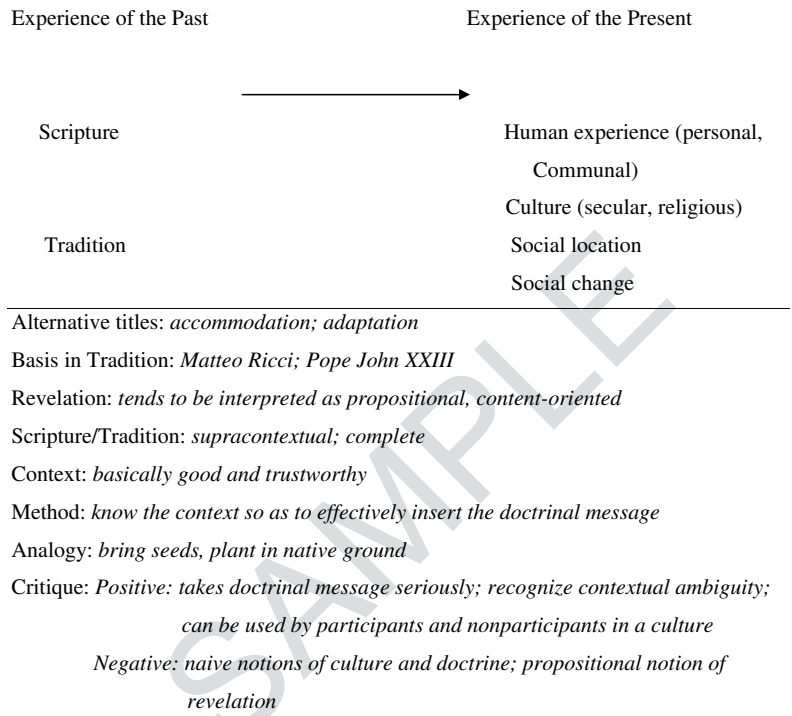
The translation model is a conservative approach: the basic tenets of a belief system are understood as an unchanging message that is supracultural. Bevans stresses that translation incorporates not only form but also meaning. Thus, the meaning of the basic tenet of belief is translated into culturally appropriate terms.[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.

34. Ibid., 106.
35. Ibid., 74.
36. Ibid., 37–38.

During the process of translation, culture is encountered. However, its role is neutral and not valued for its difference or uniqueness.[37]

The following diagram summarizes the major contents of the translation model.[38]

Figure 1.2: The Translation Model



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

37. Ibid., 37–53.
38. Ibid., 42, 44.
39. Ibid., 88.

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."[40] 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."[41] 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."[42]

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 of power is very much tilted toward one partner."[43] 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:[44]

40. Ibid., 90.

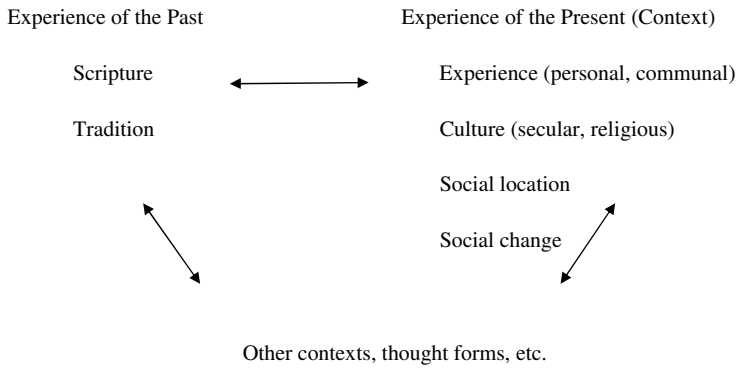
41. Ibid., 92.

42. Ibid., 94.

43. Kim, "Missiology," 49.

44. This is a revised and composite diagram of two diagrams in Bevans, *Models,* 93, 95.

Figure 1.3: The Conversation Model



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'

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."[45]

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

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Beginning from the late seventeenth 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. This present study determines Liu Zhi's method of contextualization of Islam. It is argued that his method is translation-conversation.

45. Ibid., 32.
46. Ibid., 43.
47. Ibid., 94.

2. 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. 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. This is the first ever full English translation of the first five chapters of Liu Zhi's *Rules and Proprieties of Islam.*
5. This is the first ever English translation of selected sections of Liu Zhi's *The Explanation of the Five Endeavors.*
6. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER

Chapter 1 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 conextualization.

Chapter 2 provides a historical background of Islam in seventeenth–eighteenth-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.

Chapter 3 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.

Chapter 4 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.*

Chapter 5 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 that 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 endeavors of Islam. These endeavors are not interpreted legalistically. Rather, he contextualized them by using Neo-Confucian wisdom, which was understood as self-cultivation.

Chapter 6 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 Endeavors* 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 final chapter 7 concludes with a discussion and summary of Liu Zhi's model of contextualization. It also provides a contemporary relevance of this study.