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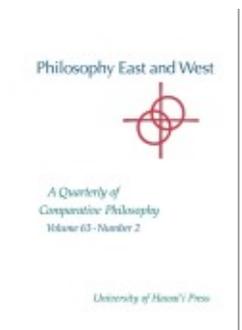
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Understanding the Sources of the Sino-Islamic Intellectual Tradition: A Review Essay on *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms,* by Sachiko Murata, William C. Chittick, and Tu Weiming, and Recent Chinese Literary Treasuries

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An oft-quoted Hadith purports that it is incumbent upon every Muslim to seek knowledge, even if it is to be found as far away as China.[1] However, the plethora of

knowledge that was discovered there generally has yet to be unraveled by Western academics. If the intellectual tradition of Chinese Muslims may appear to be of minor consequence to the larger field of Islamic studies, this is in part because of our failure to assess their influence. The abundant resources for understanding the Islamic sciences in China have barely been grazed and are awaiting our thorough analytical peregrination. This essay attempts to evaluate (1) the most recent work that explores this intellectual tradition, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms,* by Sachiko Murata, William C. Chittick, and Tu Weiming (Harvard University Press, 2009); (2) some sources for subsequent study; and (3) methods for proceeding in the future.

Prior to the sixteenth century, ulema living in China were immersed within the same ubiquitous tradition of Islamic scholarship as their Middle Eastern or Central Asian ancestors. While China was periodically cut off from the larger ummah, teachers and students were actively engaged in the study of the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the Islamic sciences. The religious elite worked with Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages and could participate in the wider discourse of most Muslims. With each recurring oscillation of renewal the Chinese ulema would reevaluate their understanding of Islam, their methods for transmitting this knowledge, and the manner in which they could contribute to the discussion.[2] Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, Muslims adopted a new instructional system called scripture-hall education (*jingtang jiaoyu* 經堂教育).[3] It was created by Hu Dengzhou 胡登洲 (ca. 1522–1597), who returned from his *hajj* pilgrimage with renewed knowledge of Islam and many authoritative texts to guide his coreligionists in their faith. The scripture-hall system succeeded because of several innovative pedagogical methods, including newly accessible Arabic and Persian texts, financing for tuition, room and board for peripatetic students, study materials, a formalized curriculum, and the inclusion of Chinese as the language of instruction. The structure and consistency of the system made its methods easily replicable, and Hu's students soon spread the scripture-hall system throughout China. The inclusion of Chinese as an "Islamic" language inspired its advanced students to create treatises that reflect the theological and linguistic complexity of the scripture-hall system. However, it was not until the seventeenth century that Chinese Muslims created a canon of texts that expressed their native contribution to the Islamic intellectual tradition, the *Han Kitab.*

These literary compositions exhibit the theological substance and expressive orientation of the Chinese ulema. However, while key figures in the tradition and major Sino-Islamic texts have been outlined, the content of their work has yet to be studied in great detail.[4] Our most pressing and urgent task is to provide clear and reliable translations and examinations of the key components of texts. Once a significant amount of these treatises have been introduced, we can then begin to delineate the intellectual currents, connections, and controversies of the Chinese texts. The limited work that has been done fails to make significant connections between the Chinese works and their Middle Eastern and Central Asian counterparts. Further, we do not even have a sufficient understanding of the Chinese Muslim intellectual tradition to link the works between Chinese ulema themselves. *The Sage Learning* takes great

strides in remedying this problem by translating one of the most important *Han Kitab* texts, adding substantial observable evidence for intellectual influences and significant methodological developments for the future study of Sino-Islamic literature.

Sachiko Murata on Sino-Islamic Thought

In general, Sachiko Murata has made the most concerted effort to understand the substance of the *Han Kitab.* Her work has traced the path of the Chinese ulema by following similar stages in its development. Initially, Murata employed a thematic framework from traditional Chinese philosophical systems to analyze the Medieval Islamic intellectual tradition. Her goal in *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* was to approach the issue of gender in traditional Islamic thought and explore the spiritual aspects of the feminine through the writings of Sufis and Muslim philosophers.[5] This is similar to the conventional method of Islamic instruction prior to the establishment of the scripture-hall system. Masters and disciples would focus their training on their long-standing Islamic intellectual tradition and apply its meaning to their contemporary epoch, which highlighted their Chinese culture in varying degrees depending on locale.

Murata's second book, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light,* turned her attention to the actual writings of the *Han Kitab.*[6] This work was the first major attempt by a Western author to analyze the content of these texts. In it she focused on the first chief author in the tradition, Wang Daiyu 王岱輿 (ca. 1590–1658), and on one of the most remarkable, Liu Zhi 劉智 (ca. 1670–1724). *Chinese Gleams* offered a lengthy examination of Wang Daiyu's principle work, *The True Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching* (*Zhengjiao zhenquan* 正教真詮), which is the oldest extant work in the genre.[7] She also provided translations of two shorter treatises, Wang Daiyu's *Great Learning of Islam* (*Qingzhen daxue* 請真大學) and Liu Zhi's *Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* (*Zhenjing zhaowei* 真境昭微), and demonstrated their affinity with Islamic thought in general and with the school of Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240) in particular. Like the early *Han Kitab* authors she was challenged with the manner in which to translate complex technical terminology from one language to another. She also bore the added weight of deciphering the meaning of these treatises that were deeply rooted in two textual traditions and various languages. Unraveling the intended meaning of the *Han Kitab* authors is one of the main difficulties in interpreting their work.

In Murata's latest book, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi,*[8] she has continued her meticulous analysis and made available one of the most important Sino-Islamic volumes, Liu Zhi's *Nature and Principle in Islam* (*Tianfang xingli* 天方性理). This work examines metaphysics and cosmology and explains the theological underpinnings that serve as the foundation for our physical actions and our corporeal reality. It is important because it represents the culmination of the development of a systematized Sino-Islamic technical vocabulary. It is part of a trilogy of works that attempted to clarify the common Islamic tripartite division of the world into a spiritual realm,

the material world, and the perfect coalescence of the two in the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. Liu's second major work, *Ceremonies of Islam* (*Tianfang dianli* 天方典禮), focused on the ritual aspect of Muslims' lives and delineated Islamic orthopraxis.[9] His final principal text was the *Veritable Records of the Most Sagely of Islam* (*Tianfang zhisheng shilu* 天方至聖實錄), which was a biography *(sīrah)* of the Prophet Muhammad.[10] All of these works demonstrated Liu's affinity for Neo-Confucian thought and his engagement with the three teachings of China (*sanjiao* 三教)—Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—as well his familiarity with "Western" thought, which may have been introduced to him by Jesuit missionaries.

The production of *The Sage Learning* reunited Murata with William Chittick, one of the foremost scholars on Ibn ʿArabi and Islamic thought, and Tu Weiming (Tu Wei-ming), renowned authority on the Confucian tradition and Chinese thought, and continued the work done during their collaboration on *Chinese Gleams.* The translation was done through a process of group readings and constant rewriting. Murata would initially read the Chinese and consult with Chittick to come up with a readable and appropriate English rendering that reflected both the Chinese meaning of the characters and the Islamic context that it was trying to convey. They would then periodically travel to Cambridge to reread the Chinese and their translation with Tu, whose input was utilized to capture the Chinese context of eighteenth-century China and influenced the final rewriting of the English translation. Murata's unique ability to grasp both the Chinese and Islamic traditions enabled her to act as the head author and produce this fine book.

The lengthy introduction, which is divided into five sections, thoroughly explores the two realms of thought and how they intersect in the writings of Liu Zhi. In the first section, Murata amends the work done in *Chinese Gleams* by squarely situating Liu Zhi's work within the scripture-hall system. She is quick to admit that she was unaware of the historical setting of Islamic education in China during the writing of *Chinese Gleams* but has now utilized the most recent Western and Japanese scholarship in introducing us to Liu Zhi's work. This shift in historicity may be of little consequence to the reader, as Murata quickly moves to the content of Liu's work. She explains that the basis for much of Liu's *Tianfang xingli* was derived from several Arabic and Persian treatises. She echoes the influence of the four established Sufi texts in China: Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's (d. 1256) *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return (Mirṣād al-ʿibād min al-madbaʾ ilaʾl-maʿād);* ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafi's (d. ca. 1300) *The Furthest Goal (Maqṣad-i aqṣā);* and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's (1414–1492) *Rays of the Flashes (Ashiʿʿat allamaʿ āt)* and *Gleams (Lawāʾiḥ).* But she adds ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's (d. 1355) *The Standpoints in the Science of Theology (al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām)* to the short list of titles Muslims were actually using in premodern China. Pinpointing the sources that were available to the Chinese ulema has been a longstanding obstacle to understanding what the authors were trying to convey, which *The Sage Learning* has helped slightly to resolve through its close investigation.

The second and third section of the introduction delineates the Islamic cosmography that the *Tianfang xingli* explores and the Chinese appropriation of Arabic and Persian technical vocabulary. This component follows the work begun in *Chinese*

Gleams but is able to achieve its ends with much greater detail and precision, outlining particular Chinese characters and their Arabic or Persian equivalent. Murata covers topics such as realization *(taḥqīq),* Origin *(mabda')* and Return *(ma'ād),* Sovereignty *(malakūt)* and Kingdom *(mulk),* Macrocosm and Microcosm, Names *(asmā')* and Attribute *(ṣifāt),* and the Five Divine Presences *(al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyyat alkhams).* She then reveals the intended Islamic principles behind Liu's use of common Chinese metaphysical concepts. For example, Liu utilizes *xing* 性 (nature) in place of *rūḥ* (spirit); *li* 理 (principle) is used for both *'aql* (intellect) and *nafs* (soul); and *ming* 命 (mandate) translates *amr* (command).

The final two sections of Murata's introduction outline the structure and arguments of the *Tianfang xingli* and the method she uses to render it into English. In *The Sage Learning,* Murata does a thorough study of the prolegomenon of the *Tianfang xingli* titled *The Root Scripture* (*Benjing* 本經).[11] *The Root Scripture* is a summation and consolidation of the key points covered in the *Tianfang xingli.* The style and structure of the *Tianfang xingli,* as well exegetical comments on it, suggest that it was intended to be memorized by students who would then be able to recall its broader teachings just by reciting *The Root Scripture.* Murata also describes Liu's use of seventy diagrams throughout the *Tianfang xingli,* which reflects his knowledge of the use of theological illustration, which was common throughout the Muslim world. The aim and substance of the *Tianfang xingli* is encapsulated in Liu's diagram titled "The Macrocosm's Following in the Circle of Creation and Transformation." This is a variant of what many scholars have labeled "the circle of existence" *(dā'irat al-wujūd)* and demonstrates Liu's continued influence from Ibn 'Arabi. The diagram delineates the orbit of the circle through the "arc of descent" *(qaws al-nuzūl)* and the "arc of ascent" *(qaws al-su'ūd)* and its various stages.[12] For example, he begins with the "Nondesignation of the Earliest Beginning," which consists of Being (*you* 有) alone, moving toward his final diagram, "Undifferentiated Transformation of Heaven and Humans," made up of the Real (*zhen* 真). The intermediary diagrams illustrate how Being manifests in the world and leads back to the Real. In *The Root Scripture* Liu offers a précis of his analysis and uses the greater remainder of the book to explicate humankind's condition in the cosmos.

The Root Scripture is revealing because Liu cited his influences for these subjects, utilizing the transliterated forms of the Persian or Arabic texts that help formulate his understanding. Murata also had the benefit of comparing *The Root Scripture* with its Arabic translation by Ma Lianyuan 馬聯元 (d. 1904), titled *The Subtleties (al-Laṭā'if).* Four years after the production of *The Subtleties,* Ma also wrote a commentary on the work titled *Explanation of the Subtleties (Sharḥ al-Laṭā'if).* Like many ulema from the nineteenth century onward, Ma Lianyuan returned to using Arabic as a means for engaging both their local Chinese communities and the broader Muslim world. Ma's decision to translate *The Root Scripture* into Arabic demonstrates that the Chinese Muslim community used Arabic in order to understand the larger Islamic discourse and participate in its evolution. It also shows that he believed Liu's representation of Islamic theology was exemplary and worthy of a wider distribution outside the Chinese-speaking community. However, Ma had the difficult task of ren-

dering Liu's Chinese into an intelligible Arabic treatise. The movement back toward writing in Arabic posed challenges to authors identical to those of the early Chinese ulema in the scripture-hall system who had developed a technical Sino-Islamic vocabulary.

The presentation of the *Root Scripture* is structured in a way similar to Murata's and Chittick's translation of Liu Zhi's *Zhenjing zhaowei,* the Chinese translation of Jāmī's Persian *Lawa'ih* in *Chinese Gleams.*[13] The left half of the book presents Liu Zhi's *The Root Scripture* in readable and eloquent English followed by a lucid translation of Ma Lianyuan's *Subtleties.* In addition to side-by-side interpretations of the original works, the authors offer edited transcriptions of both the Chinese and Arabic text. The inclusion of this supplementary material makes *The Sage Learning* exceedingly valuable because it enables the reader to analyze the original terminology that was used and compare the Chinese and Arabic correlations and associations.

The next four hundred pages of *The Sage Learning* render Liu's extensive explication of *The Root Scripture* in fluid English translation. The diagrams create the structure for the discussion and lead the reader through the details of existence. Murata presents each Chinese diagram in its original form next to an English translation of that exact diagram. This allows the reader to be cognizant of specific Chinese characters for corresponding translations while generating a vast philological repository for future scholars. Murata's numerous notes tease out the Islamic context that can be lost in the Chinese characters and the broader Chinese context that informed the choice of certain vocabulary by Liu. In many she relates Liu's explanation to earlier authors and demonstrates the close correlations to popular texts from the Sufi tradition, such as Ibn 'Arabi's *The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya)* and *The Ringstones of the Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam);* Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī's (d. 1274) *The Texts (al-Nuṣūṣ);* 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī's (1098–1131) *Prolegomena (Tamhīdāt);* Maḥmūd Shabistarī's (1288–1340) *Garden of Mystery (Gulshan-i rāz);* 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān Hujwīrī's (d. 1073) *Unveiling of the Veiled (Kashf al-maḥjūb);* Mullā Ṣadrā's (d. 1640) *The Four Journeys (al-Asfār al-arba'a)* and *The Elixir of the Gnostics (Iksīr al-'ārifin);* Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl's (d. 1191) *The Reverberation of Gabriel's Wing (Āwāz-i parr-i Jibrā'il);* Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's (1207–1273) *Rhyming Couplets (Mathnawī);* Nasafī's *Explanation of the Revelation (Bayān al-tanzīl),* Unveiling of Realities (Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq),* and *The Book of the Perfect Human Being (Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil);* Jāmī's *Selected Texts of Commentary on the Imprint of the Ringstones (Naqd al-nūṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ);* and Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī's (d. 1300) *The Rising Places of the Brilliant Stars (Mashāriq al-darārī)* and *The Utmost Perception (Muntaha'l-madārik).*

Murata also situates Liu's teachings within the broader Chinese literary context and how it embraced concepts from such texts as the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) of Confucius 孔子 (551–479 B.C.E.); Laozi's 老子 *Daodejing* 道德經; the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and the *Great Commentary* (*Dazhuan* 大傳) [on the *Yijing*]; the *Zhuangzi* 莊子; Zhou Dunyi's 周敦頤 (1017–1073) *Explanations of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* (*Taiji tushuo* 太極圖說); Chen Chun's 陳淳 (1159–1223) *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained* (*Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義); and Wang Yangming's 王陽明

(1472–1529) *Inquiry on the Great Learning* (*Daxuewen* 大學問), as well as the writings of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077), Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1193), and the celebrated Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).

Murata's previous work on the *Han Kitab* also enables her to cite and cross-reference Liu's work with that of Wang Daiyu. Murata's thorough probing into Liu's influences and the extensive contextualization she provides is exemplary and the type of analysis needed in order for us to complete an image of what Sino-Islamic scholarship consisted of in premodern China.

The Comprehensive Chinese Canons of Islamic Classics

For Western scholars, the larger context of Sino-Islamic scholarship is becoming more and more accessible and this picture of the Chinese Muslim intellectual tradition is beginning to take shape. This is in part due to the recent production of various compilations of original source material in Chinese. While many important authors' writings, such as the work of Liu and Wang, have seen numerous printings both in premodern and modern China, the vast majority of *Han Kitab* texts have remained in their manuscript form, scattered throughout China or in various libraries all over the world.[14] However, most recently, many of the premodern woodblock prints have been republished and made available to a wider audience.

In 2005, the first such collection was published, *The Great Canon of Islam* (*Qingzhen dadian* 清真大典).[15] The *Qingzhen dadian* consists of twenty-five volumes and gathers together one hundred and sixty-seven of the most important texts from the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) until the Republic of China (1912–1949). Most of these are facsimiles of the original manuscripts, but there are a few modern printed selections. It is arranged thematically, covering a wide range of topics, including the Qur'an, Hadith, *sīrah,* elementary textbooks (*zaxue* 雜學), mysticism, ethics, law, medicine, astronomy, geography, history, philosophy, genealogies, inscriptions, and translations. It also includes some *xiao'erjing* 小兒經 literature, which was a method of transliterating Chinese language with Arabic script, and a small number of Arabic texts. Many of the texts are rare outside China and provide a door to a greater understanding of Sino-Islamic literature. The *Qingzhen dadian* represents a great stride toward gathering the sources of Chinese Muslim intellectual history, and despite a few deficiencies, such as poor replication of some documents with illegible characters, it is an invaluable reference.

A concise but well-published collection, *A Selection of Authoritative Chinese Islamic Texts* (*Zhongguo Yisilanjiao dianji xuan* 中國伊斯蘭教典籍選) and its Arabic title, *A Selection from the Heritage of Chinese Islamic Books (Min turāth al-kutub al-Islāmīyah al-Ṣīnīyah al-mukhtārah),* was produced in 2007.[16] For its breadth this compilation is comprehensive and varied. It includes material from the late Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912), about fifteen texts, but primarily focuses on the Republic of China period. These texts originate in various parts of China, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanxi, Henan, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan, and

Guangdong. It contains fifty-two works that explore various aspects of the Islamic sciences and pedagogical materials. The editors' goals for publishing these materials were threefold: to improve the local understanding of Islam by Chinese Muslims and prevent the tendency toward erroneous applications and interpretations of the faith; to promote a cross-cultural exchange from the perspective of comparative religious studies; and to dispel fallacious perceptions and depictions of Islam and Muslims in China for a non-Muslim and possibly nonacademic audience. *Zhongguo Yisilanjiao dianji xuan* covers the traditional Sino-Islamic philosophy of Wang and Liu, as well as works on the Qur'an and Hadith, popular literature, newspaper publications, and bilingual educational materials. While the editors have repaired the condition of many of these texts, often in microform, unintelligible characters plague some. It is doubtless a very significant contribution to the study of Chinese Muslim authors and can provide further material for mapping their intellectual contributions.

The most recent and ambitious anthology is *A Comprehensive Collection of Islamic Classics* (*Huizu diancang quanshu* 回族典藏全書), published in 2008, which is richly informative and extremely valuable for future Sino-Islamic studies.[17] It is divided into four major categories of works: religion, made up of 210 texts; political history, 110 documents; arts and literature, 144 treatises; and science and technology, 68 works—spanning 235 volumes altogether. This project was approved for publication by the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences in 2004, but an initiative to gather and discover any and all Islamic texts began years earlier. The research team traveled throughout China searching private collections, mosque libraries, old bookshops, and various Muslim enclaves in order to obtain even the rarest of documents related to the history of Muslims in China. The publication of *A Comprehensive Collection* was designed to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and its unveiling was a momentous occasion in the cultural history of Chinese Muslims, who see their literary history as an important achievement. The exhaustive nature of *A Comprehensive Collection* has compelled many to dub it the *Huizu Siku quanshu* 回族四庫全書, in reference to China's most sweeping compendium, the Qianlong Emperor's 乾隆帝 (1711–1799) *Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書). The appellation is appropriate because the *Huizu diancang quanshu* is the most comprehensive, complete, and authoritative large-scale compilation available.

As for the content of *A Comprehensive Collection,* the religious documents cover Islamic philosophy, thought, and doctrine; pedagogical items; biographical records; legends; history; ritual; Hadith; and the Qur'an. The political section includes the history of political systems, individual genealogies, and Muslim revolts. The arts and literature component contains works of poetry, aspects of painting and calligraphy, and collected writings of Muslim authors. The texts in the final segment on the sciences discuss astronomy, medicine, hydrology, agriculture, martial arts, foreign policy, gastronomy, mathematics, geography, hydrography, and navigation. The *Huizu diancang quanshu* adds considerable depth to the textual legacy of Chinese Muslims but also enhances our ability to understand how these writings were used and received by later generations through the inclusion of multiple editions, such as both

the Qing woodblock print and the Republican-era published version of the *Tianfan xingli.* A strong characteristic of many of the religious texts included demonstrates the employment of Neo-Confucian teachings, or, as this practice is often referred to, "using Confucian literature to transmit Western learning" (*yong ruwen chuan xixue* 用儒文傳西學). However, a further examination of the texts included demonstrates that it is difficult to fix a common character on the region's Islamic intellectual output and authors. Therefore, in general, we cannot anticipate structural features of Sino-Islamic scholarship and need to let these numerous sources unveil their nature and determine the contours of their intellectual history. Overall, the *Huizu diancang quanshu* is a superb wealth of valuable sources and will certainly be the research and reference tool for Islamicists, and others, interested in literary productions of Chinese Muslims for the foreseeable future.

Effective Methodologies for Engaging the Sources

With the abundance of newly available primary sources for Western academia there needs to be a clearly defined strategy for approaching these texts. Murata's latest shift in her research method appears to be the most useful at the present moment in Sino-Islamic literary studies. In her analysis, she compares the Arabic translation of *The Root Scripture* with the Chinese original to try and determine Liu Zhi's intended theological principles and his use of specific lexical equivalents. Ma Lianyuan utilizes Arabic technical vocabulary from his own training to explain Liu's work in Chinese. From the *Subtleties* and the *Explanation of the Subtleties* we are able to pinpoint what meaning Liu was trying to convey when he used specific Chinese vocabulary in a certain context. Murata and Chittick used a similar technique while translating Liu Zhi's translation of Jāmī's *Lawa'ih.* Through similar examinations of Arabic, Persian, and Chinese works written by the Chinese ulema and translations of their counterparts we can begin to develop a precise understanding of how Islam was expressed in Chinese in the *Han Kitab.* This may be one of the most pressing needs currently for developing accurate and authentic translations of Sino-Islamic texts into English. The more faithful we can be to the original intentions of the authors throughout its development the better we will be able to attain a comprehensive understanding of Sino-Islamic intellectual history, its interconnections, and its relation to the broader Islamic intellectual world.

However, we must not be too eager to use this newly found understanding retrospectively for the entire Sino-Islamic intellectual tradition. Using the classifications and terminology of one scholar uncritically would be anachronistic if applied to the whole of Sino-Islamic scholarship. Liu Zhi's work outlined the middle period of the Sino-Islamic intellectual tradition well, but we should be more comprehensive in our application of this methodology. There are several Chinese translations of Persian works in the early period of Sino-Islamic scholarship that can help determine how vocabulary was rendered. The earliest known translation was of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's *Mirṣād al-ʿibād,*[18] which was rendered as *The Essentials of the Return to Truth* (*Guizhen yaodao yiyi* 歸真要道譯義) by Wu Zixian 伍子先 in 1651 and is one of the

oldest extant texts in the *Han Kitab.* This text was so popular that several people created their own translations, under different titles, to use in the scripture hall. The second important translation was ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī's *Maqṣad-i aqṣā,* of which there are two translations, possibly by the same author. The first, *The Scripture of Studying the Truth* (*Yan zhen jing* 研真經), was translated by She Yunshan 舍蘊善 in 1679. The second is an undated copy attributed to Po Nachi 破納痴, possibly the penname of She Yunshan, called *The Outline of the Way Returning to the Truth* (*Guizhen biyao* 歸真必要).

A comprehensive comparison of these Chinese texts with the original Persian versions will reveal how these early scholars approached the Islamic tradition that came before them. A study of their translations in conjunction with other significant early Sino-Islamic texts, such as Wang Daiyu's *The True Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching;* Wu Zixian's *Elementary Introduction on the Cultivation of Truth* (*Xiuzhen mengyin* 修真蒙引); Zhang Shizhong's 張時中 (ca. 1584–1661) *General Principles of the Return* (*Guizhen zongyi* 歸真總義1)*, Essentials of the Four Chapters* (*Sipian yaodao* 四篇要道)*,* and *Kalām [Philosophy]* (*Kelimo* 克理黙); and Ma Zhu's 馬注 (1640–1711) *Compass of Islam* (*Qingzhen zhinan* 清真指南) will help determine how Chinese Muslim scholars within the scripture-hall system were rendering and appropriating Chinese philosophical traditions during its initial phase. Then we can produce a sketch of this initial stage of maturation and linguistic sophistication within the *Han Kitab.*[19]

This methodology can effectively be applied to Ma Dexin 馬德新 (1796–1874) and his students for understanding the later period. Ma Dexin was a prolific author comparable to Liu Zhi in his literary output, which covered most of the religious sciences, including instructional materials for students, a record of his pilgrimage to Mecca, and the first thorough attempt at a standardized translation of the Qur'an. He wrote in Chinese, Arabic, and Persian, and often he or his students translated from one language to another. Ma Dexin's works provide several opportunities for exploring how Chinese Muslims used the technical vocabulary of all three languages.

His Arabic treatise *al-Taysir* was first published in 1862 and translated into Chinese in 1868 as *Description of the World* (*Huanyu shuyao* 寰宇述要). Similarly, there exists an Arabic and a Chinese version of his *Sources of the Islamic Calendar* (*Tianfang Liyuan* 天方曆源). This direct correspondence between the Arabic and Chinese editions shows how an important author rendered his own terminology between languages. Ma also produced his own translation of Nasafī's *Maqṣad-i aqṣā,* titled *Daoxing jiujing* 道行究竟 (*Completing the Path of the Way*). This is helpful for determining how Persian technical terminology was rendered in the later stages of Sino-Islamic intellectual history when Arabic was becoming more and more predominant. Finally, his Qur'an translation, *A Direct Explanation of the Treasured Mandate of the True Scripture* (*Baoming zhenjing zhijie* 寶命真經直解), is most valuable for an understanding of how Sino-Islamic terminology was formulated within this tradition during its final stages. Ma's desire for Chinese Muslims to have a greater understanding of their religion motivated him to render his holy book directly from Arabic and provides us with a rich source for investigating Sino-Islamic scholarship.

Ma Dexin's student, Ma Anli 馬安禮 (d. 1899), gave us another text, the *Islamic Book of Odes* (*Tianfang shijing* 天方詩經), that is valuable for an understanding of the conceptual relationship between Chinese and Arabic in Chinese Muslim scholarship. The *Tianfang shijing* is a direct translation of the infamous *Mantle Ode (Qaṣīdat al-Burdah)* by the Egyptian poet Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Būṣīrī (d. 1294–1297).[20] In Ma Anli's manuscript he presents the original Arabic poem along the top of the page with his Chinese translation below. A comparison of all of these texts with their corresponding originals will reveal further evidence on how authors rendered specific terminology and understood Islam in the Chinese cultural context.

The growing use of Arabic by Chinese Muslims from the late nineteenth century on also opens up their literary oeuvre to a broader group of Islamicists. As mentioned above, Ma Dexin utilized Arabic heavily in his works, and his most successful student, Ma Lianyuan, the subject of part of *The Sage Learning,* wrote almost exclusively in Arabic. Almost all of his texts, including *Interpretation of Qurʾanic Verses* (*Haiting chiayi* 孩聽解譯), *The Islamic Divisions of Faith* (*Tianfang fenxin bian* 天方分信篇), *Dismiss the Trinity and Honor the One* (*Chusan chongyi* 黜三崇一), *General Rules for Praying for Rain* (*Qiyu zonggui* 祈雨總規), *First Rules of Character Methodology* (*Zifa chucheng* 字法初程), and *A Summary of Character Methodology* (*Zifa cuoyao* 字法撮要), were written entirely in Arabic except for the title page, and some, like *Sublime Words on Nature and Principle* (*Xingli weiyan* 性理微言), consisted of both Chinese and Arabic. Therefore, the intellectual history of Chinese Muslims need not be limited to Sinologists but should be approached by those interested in Islamic thought in general. By providing studies and translations of key Arabic works that are at once both faithful to the original and comprehensible to the contemporary English reader, Arabists can help bridge the gaps in our understanding of the efforts of Chinese Muslim intellectuals. Murata's collaborative efforts have demonstrated their effectiveness in ascertaining the kernel of Sino-Islamic thought and should be emulated in future studies. The fresh perspective of Islamicists may also help to prevent any myopic analyses of Chinese Muslim scholarship, which, unlike Murata's work, can easily be tackled solely in terms of their Chinese literary and cultural setting by those trained in Chinese. The broader the lens we seek to observe Sino-Islamic intellectual trends through the more comprehensive the picture, the more we will ultimately be able to construct.

In general, a comparison of the works of Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Dexin shows that they each treated Chinese thought and vocabulary in a different manner. *The Sage Learning* demonstrates that Liu enthusiastically adopted the essence of Neo-Confucian thought, whereas *Chinese Gleams* illustrated that Wang utilized its symbolism but was often unsympathetic to its inherent meaning. Ma Dexin, on the other hand, explicitly maintained the Sino-Islamic tradition of his predecessors while simultaneously pushing for greater inclusion and understanding of Arabic writings and the Qurʾan. Therefore, we must be explicit on the meanings of certain vocabulary from each generation and place them within their historical context. Furthermore, when trying to designate the correlations between the Islamic and Chinese traditions we must not assume that the use of specialized Chinese vocabulary dis-

placed the original Islamic meaning that the original author was trying to convey. Understanding the terminology used across time will reveal how the Chinese Islamic intellectual tradition matured and was transformed across its long history. Ultimately, these studies will reveal the contours and development of the Chinese Muslim intellectual discourse and contribute to our understanding of its evolution. Then we will be able to proceed with our examinations of the vast body of Sino-Islamic classics that remain unknown to the Western audience.

Overall, we must overcome any lingering hesitation to engage the available resources. This reluctance may be due to methodological or linguistic limitations, but with so many original sources yet to be surveyed we must brazenly forge ahead. Utilizing translations to construct an accurate lexicon appears to be an advantageous and effective starting point. Once we have established how Sino-Islamic vocabulary was formulated and how it was used within some key texts or by leading authors in the *Han Kitab* we will be able to furnish a detailed analysis of its development and transformation over time. The recent publication of the *Qingzhen dadian, Huizu diancang quanshu,* and *Zhongguo Yisilanjiao dianji xuan,* all of which can be found in several libraries in the United States, makes almost all the major Sino-Islamic works available and leaves no reason to ignore them in our investigation of the Chinese Muslim intellectual tradition. Our future engagement with them should allow us to better locate the Sino-Islamic tradition within the broader intellectual history of Islam and understand the interconnections between Chinese scholars.

Notes

1 – "Seek knowledge even if in China, for verily, seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim." This Hadith is generally considered weak *(ḍaʿīf)* (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1997], 9 : 369).

2 – Joseph Fletcher explained Islamic revival in China through the motif of "Tides" of influence. See his "Les 'voies' *(turuq)* a soufites en Chines," in *Les ordres mystiques dans l'Islam, cheminements et situation actuelle,* ed. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: EHESS, 1986).

3 – For an extensive study of the development of the *jingtang jiaoyu* see Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Chinese Muslims in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

4 – For some key bibliographical works see Donald Daniel Leslie, Yang Daye, and Ahmed Youssef, *Islam in Traditional China: A Bibliographical Guide,* Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 54 (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2006); Donald Daniel Leslie, *Islamic Literature in Chinese* (Canberra: Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1981); Claude L. Pickens, *Annotated Bibliography of Literature on Islam in China* (Hankow: Society of Friends of the Moslems in China, 1950); and Isaac Mason, "Notes on Chinese Mohammedan Literature," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 56 (1925): 172–215.

5 – Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

6 – Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light: Wang Tai-yü's Great Learning of the Pure and Real and Liu Chih's Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm,* with a new translation of Jāmī's *Lawā'iḥ* from the Persian by William C. Chittick; foreword by Tu Weiming (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

7 – The earliest Sino-Islamic texts are *The Investigation of the Teachings of the Pure and True* (*Qingzhen jiaokao* 情真教考), *The Lord's Book of Explaining Obstructions* (*Junshu shiyi* 君書釋疑), and *The Teachings of the Arabian Sage* (*Tianfang shengjiao* 天方聖教), of which there are no remaining editions and all are only known from their inclusion in Liu Zhi's *Veritable Records of the Most Sagely of Islam* (*Tianfang zhisheng shilu* 天方至聖實錄) (Leslie, *Islamic Literature in Chinese,* p. 21).

8 – *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms,* by Sachiko Murata, William C. Chittick, and Tu Weiming, with a foreword by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Cambridge, MA: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute; distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009). This title can alternatively be translated as *Metaphysics of Islam* or *Philosophy of Islam.*

9 – The *Tianfang dianli* is thoroughly examined in James Frankel, *Liu Zhi's Journey Through Ritual Law to Allah's Chinese Name: Conceptual Antecedents and Theological Obstacles to the Confucian-Islamic Harmonization of the Tianfang Dianli* (PhD. Diss., Columbia University; Ann Arbor: UMI—Dissertations Publishing, 2005). This title can alternatively be translated as *Law and Ritual of Islam.*

10 – A partial translation of the *Tianfang zhisheng shilu* can be found in Isaac Mason, *The Arabian Prophet: A Life of Mohamed from Chinese and Arabic Sources, a Chinese-Moslem Work by Liu Chia-lien* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1921).

11 – Murata translates the term *jing* 經 as "Classic," i.e., *The Root Classic*, which conforms to the common rendering of this word in relation to the Four Books and Five Classics (*Sishu Wujing* 四書五經) of the Confucian tradition. While rendering *jing* as Classic reflects this specific tradition, it fails to encompass the wider use of the term *jing* in the Buddhist and Daoist traditions. Therefore, I have chosen to translate *jing* as "Scripture," which should be understood in the broad sense of a text that has social, cultural, or religious meaning for a group of people.

12 – For a series of Ibn 'Arabi's diagrams illustrating these themes, see William C. Chittick, "Ibn al- 'Arabi and his School," in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations,* ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 49–79. On Ibn 'Arabi's cosmology in general see William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

13 – Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light,* pp. 128–210.

14 – The holdings of various libraries throughout Europe and the United States are outlined in Françoise Aubin, "Chinese Islam: In Pursuit of its Sources," *Central Asian Survey* 5 (2) (1986): 73–80. The Harvard-Yenching Library has now created a bibliographic aid for The Rev. Claude L. Pickens, Jr. Collection on Muslims in China. It is the largest collection of original manuscripts in the United States, collected by three missionaries, Samuel M. Zwemer (1867–1952), Isaac Mason (d. 1939), and Claude L. Pickens, Jr. (1900–1985). The New York Public Library, Asian and Middle Eastern Division Research Level Collections, houses Isaac Mason's personal library, the Mason Collection of Chinese-Muhammadan Books and Pamphlets, the second largest treasury of manuscripts.

15 – Committee for Compiling Data on an Integrated Chinese Religious History (Zhongguo Zongjiao Lishi Wenxian Jicheng Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 中國宗教歷史文獻集成編纂委員會), *The Great Canon of Islam* (*Qingzhen dadian* 清真大典) (Hefei: Huangshan Shushe, 2005).

16 – Wang Jianping 王建平 and Bai Runsheng 白潤生, *Zhongguo Yisilanjiao dianji xuan* 中國伊斯蘭教典籍選 (A selection of authoritative Chinese Islamic texts) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2007).

17 – Wu Haiying 吳海鷹, Wu Jianwei 吳建偉, Lei Xingkui 雷興魁, and Lei Xiaojing 雷曉靜, *Huizu diancang quanshu* 回族典藏全書 (A comprehensive collection of Islamic classics) (Gansu Wenhua Chubanshe, 2008).

18 – For an English translation and an explanation of this text's importance throughout the Islamic world see Hamid Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books), 1982.

19 – Most of these texts are contained in one or both the *Huizu diancang quanshu* and *Qingzhen dadian.*

20 – The full title of the poem is *Celestial Lights in Praise of the Best of Creation (al-Kawākib ad-Durrīya fī Madḥ Khayr al-Barīya).*