Sage and Prophet: The Chinese Muslim Intellectual Movement of the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

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Honor Code

On my honor, I have not received unauthorized assistance on this thesis.

I have fully upheld the Honor Code of Colorado College.

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This thesis project, written by Garrison Lovelace, meets the required guidelines for partial completion of the degree of Bachelor of the Arts in Asian Studies.

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Introduction

To most people it is common knowledge that Islam and China are two different things. There is the Islamic world and there is China, with rigid borders separating them geographically and culturally. Many assume that there is little connecting the two other than that they both happened to be on the map of the world. Something about the lens through which we view the world paints the Islamic world and China as giant, monolithic cultures, where everyone is fairly homogenous, with little crossing the border. Of course, upon further investigation, one finds that the borders between two such entities to be surprisingly permeable and these cultural juggernauts to not be as homogenous than initially thought. During the course of this project, when I would tell people my subject of study was Islam in China, I was often met with this response, "there are Muslims in China?" Not only are there Muslims in China, there are a lot of them, and they have been there for a very long time. Roughly 2% of China's population is Muslim. This sounds like a small number until one realizes that means there are over 20 million Chinese Muslims. There are more Muslims in China than in Malaysia and every Middle Eastern country other than Turkey, Egypt, and Iran.[1]

The largest group of Muslims in China is called the Hui and its members are classified as one of China's national minorities. The Hui are differentiated from the rest

[1] Dru Gladney, "Islam in China: Accommodation or Separatism?," *The China Quarterly,* no. 174, Religion in China Today: 451.

of Chinese society almost exclusively by their religion, with Hui being either Muslims or descendants of Muslims. The Hui are not confined to any particular place, with members of this group found all over China. Another major Chinese Muslim group this paper concerns itself with are the Uighurs who, unlike the Hui, are associated with one particular region: Northwest China, primarily in Xinjiang. Including these two groups, there are roughly ten other Muslim national minorities in China. Not only are there many Muslims in China, but when one sits down and looks at it, many aspects of Islam and Confucianism are actually quite similar.

The topic of Islam in China had been in the back of my mind since my first year at Colorado College, and after I took an introductory Islam course and a course titled “China in the Age of Confucius,” I noticed something peculiar. Confucius’s *Analects* is structured as a record of the statements and actions of Confucius, providing both a model of behavior and a moral guideline which people were to follow to achieve self-cultivation, and thus bring harmony to the world. In Islam, there are the *hadith*, which are records of the doings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad which provide a moral guide and role model for people to follow to live in accordance with God’s will. Even on the most basic, fundamental level, one can see the similarities between these two traditions. As I read both *The Analects* and a selection of *hadith*, I was struck by how similar they were, yet they existed in two very different cultures. Certainly, I couldn’t be the only person to have realized this; and I wasn’t.

During a century long period, lasting from roughly 1630 to 1730 CE during the late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) and the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 CE), a

Chinese Muslim intellectual movement thrived across eastern China.[2] The movement produced a large amount of Chinese language Islamic material as well as a mass translation of Islamic works from Arabic and Persian to Chinese. The collective term for these written works is *Han Kitab*, combining "*Han*," meaning Chinese, and "*Kitab*," the Arabic word for book. The members of this movement consisted of Chinese Muslims whose roots had been in China for centuries. They spoke Chinese as their first language and went through China's Confucian educational system. As such, they had a firm understanding of China's intellectual traditions, primarily Confucianism and Daoism. The goals of this movement included spreading Islamic knowledge to other Muslims in China as well as positioning Islam in a Chinese context, meaning that they sought to find a place for themselves in a different cultural and intellectual tradition.

The most influential writer of this movement was a man named Liu Zhi (1670-1724 CE), also called Liu Jielian, from Nanjing. Liu Zhi was a very learned man; he was well versed in Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and had also read works brought by Jesuit missionaries. In addition, he could read and write in Chinese, Persian, and Arabic. Liu Zhi's most influential work is his *Tianfang* trilogy, consisting of the *Tianfang xingli* (天方性理, Metaphysics and Principles of Islam), the *Tianfang dianli* (天方典禮, Laws and Rituals of Islam), and the *Tianfang zhisheng shilu* (天方至聖實錄, The Veritable Records of the Most Sagely of Islam). The *Tianfang xingli* discusses Islamic metaphysics and cosmology, while the *Tianfang dianli* is concerned with the laws and rituals of Islam. Finally, the *Tianfang zhisheng shilu* is a translation of a biography of the Prophet, with

[2] The Chinese Muslim intellectual network that Zvi Ben-Dor Benite analyzes extends from Beijing in the north, to Kaifeng in the West down to Nanjing in the south. Source: Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 34

some additions by the author. To Liu Zhi, the teachings of all schools of thought and all religions were the same in that they all shared the same basic principle (*li* 理), a sentiment shared by his Chinese Muslim colleagues.[3] Indeed, Liu Zhi felt that Islam was not disconnected from Confucianism, but rather an extension of it.

The term Liu Zhi and other Chinese Muslims used to refer to the Prophet Muhammad was sage (*sheng* 聖). Their application of the word sage to the Prophet Muhammad reflects their unique hybrid identity, one in which Confucianism and Islam were one and the same. By calling Muhammad a sage, Chinese Muslims positioned themselves within Confucian literati culture. Their school of teaching, or Dao (道), was, in their eyes, not only compatible with the Confucian tradition, but vital to it as well. Muhammad was seen as not only the cap of the Prophets in the Islamic tradition, but the cap of the Chinese sages as well. He was given a position equal to that of Confucius, and as such Chinese Muslims viewed themselves as necessary to Chinese society.

This usage of the term, however, also reflects the difficult position in which Chinese Muslims found themselves; as a group of Chinese literati whose belief system was foreign and was shared by those on the outskirts of the Qing Empire where the Qing state was either dealing with violent unrest, such as in Gansu, or conquering and incorporating new parts of the empire, as was the case with Xinjiang. Thus, Muhammad the Sage served not only as a guide for Chinese Muslim intellectuals, but also protected his followers from accusations of barbarism, and allowed for the community of Chinese Muslims to reach out and explain their beliefs to others in Chinese society. More often than not, Chinese Muslims found themselves persecuted by dominant Chinese culture,

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[3] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 144-153

but they had an unlikely ally, the Qing emperor. Thus, both the “King of the Hui” (Muhammad) and the Emperor of China helped Chinese Muslim intellectuals justify their existence in China to both Chinese society and the Islamic world, as well as construct an identity in which they were, in theory, a crucial part of Chinese society.

The overall theme of the *Han Kitab* project I present in this paper is one of clashing identities. I frame my argument in terms of identity because I find it to be the most useful way to discuss the goals and methods of the intellectual movement. Chinese Muslims wanted to understand their purpose both from their Muslim and Chinese backgrounds, and they couldn’t do this without understanding who they were and where they fit between these two identities. The anthropologist Frederick Barth in his work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* describes an ethnic group as having “a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”[4] Ethnicity and ethnic identity are defined from both within and without, with the standards for membership decided by the group. Barth goes on to discuss the boundaries of ethnic groups and the criteria upon which membership or exclusion are based. Ethnicity as a concept requires interaction between different groups, so that each group knows where the boundary of their group ends and others begin.[5] As such, the plight of the *Han Kitab* authors is one of clashing boundaries regarding ethnicity and identity. Liu Zhi and the *Han Kitab* authors, in presenting their teachings as a branch of Confucianism, were hoping to extend their ethnic boundary to be just as much Chinese as Muslim. However, this created conflict when Han Chinese and the Manchu government either misunderstood this project or outright rejected it. It could

[4] Fredrik Barth. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 11

[5] Ibid., 15-16

be said that in trying to extend their ethnic boundaries into what can simply be called Chinese territory, Chinese Muslims were seen by other groups as infringing upon their own.

Certainly, discussing Chinese Muslim identity as a sort of Venn-diagram of overlapping “Chinese” and “Muslim” circles is not without its problems. Chiefly, by doing this it is hard not to oversimplify China, Confucianism, and Islam as static, monolithic entities. However, just as these large concepts have vague, fuzzy boundaries to us, they did to Chinese Muslims as well. What is important here is not specifically what is “Chinese” and what is “Muslim” so much as the simple fact that these two different labels existed and the *Han Kitab* authors were caught in between them. The subjects of this paper sought to bring together these two simple yet significant facts about themselves: They were Muslims, yet they were living in China, and had been for centuries. It was their attempts to bridge these two large entities which created the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement, the *Han Kitab*, and a thoroughly articulated Chinese Muslim identity. As long as we realize that these entities were in constant flux during the time periods this paper concerns itself with, we can proceed with this project and I think some worthwhile conclusions can be made of it.

This paper is broken up into three parts. The first chapter gives a historical background explaining the emergence of the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement as well as an explanation of the terms “sage” and “prophet” which are discussed later in the paper. In this chapter, I compare the large-scale explanation provided by Jonathan Lipman in *Familiar Strangers* to the small focused explanation given in *The Dao of Muhammad* by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. I also discuss the effect of the Manchu takeover and

the formation of the Qing Dynasty on the development of the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement.

Chapter two deals with the concepts of “sage” and “prophet” and how Liu Zhi envisioned Chinese Muslim sagehood in the *Tianfang xingli*. This chapter also discusses the historical and philosophical justification presented by Chinese Muslims for Muhammad being a Chinese sage and how other religious traditions tried to apply the concept of sagehood to their own faiths.

Lastly, the third chapter concerns the relationship between the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement and the Qing state. In this chapter I detail and analyze different stories and tales that reveal the relationship Chinese Muslims had with the Qing emperor. These tales reveal how, in the minds of Chinese Muslims, the emperor’s treatment of Chinese Muslims gave them a reason to live in China.

Chapter 1: The Emergence of the *Han Kitab*

Before discussing how Liu Zhi and others in the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement thought of the concept of sage and specifically how it applied to the Prophet Muhammad, it is necessary to understand the context and conditions which allowed for the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement to occur. Islam had been in China since the 7th Century before a large-scale translation and creation of Chinese language Islamic texts in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, resulting in what is collectively called the *Han Kitab*. Why did this happen at this point in time?

The *Han Kitab* was created as a result of a convergence of multiple interrelated factors that had been developing for centuries. First, it was a response to the threat of loss of Muslim identity due to acculturation measures during the Ming Dynasty. Second, the intellectual movement emerged in the eastern cities of the Jiangnan region as a result of the fruition of a Chinese Muslim intellectual network that had been developing during the Ming Dynasty. Third, with the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644, the nature of Chinese Muslim ethnicity and cultural identity changed as well. With a foreign ruling power, the possibility of forming a Chinese Muslim identity was realized in a way not possible during the Ming Dynasty. Indeed, the emergence of the intellectual movement was no accident; it was only because of this convergence of events that something like the *Han Kitab* could have even been written.

In addition to placing the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement in a historical context, it is also useful to clearly define and explain the terms prophet and sage with which Liu Zhi was concerned. In China's history, sage (*sheng* 聖) has meant different things for different schools of thought, but it was with the concept of the sage within Neo-Confucianism, the school of thought dominant during Liu Zhi's lifetime, that fit together with Chinese Muslims' understanding of the Prophet. The political, social, and academic conditions were all just right for Muhammad to become a Chinese sage. But first, let us elaborate on the historical context in which Liu Zhi found himself that allowed for these developments to take place.

Acculturation and Identity

Jonathan Lipman's *Familiar Strangers* focuses on the history of Muslims in the Northwestern region of China. The scope of his project is large; he begins with accounts of the arrival of Islam in China during the Tang Dynasty and he ends his history in the Republican period (1912 – 1949 CE). Given the large scale of Lipman's project, tracing the origins of the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement go all the way back to the early Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), with the arrival of Muslims as political emissaries and traders. Muslim merchants settled in trading hubs along the Silk Road in the Northwest and in port cities on in the east.[1] Many Muslims stayed in China, finding a niche for themselves as traders. Muslims travelling the Silk Road came as far east as Kaifeng while those coming by boat found their way as far north as Yangzhou.[2]

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[1] Jonathan Lipman, *Familiar Strangers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 25.
[2] Ibid., 26.

These Muslim merchants lived in China in a state of cultural and political isolation, residing in separate areas and barred from politics, but by the end of the Song Dynasty (960-1276 CE) Muslims in China had established themselves as key figures in China's international trade network.[3] By the time of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 CE), the conquering Mongols, considering the idea of Chinese governing themselves as undesirable, appointed many Muslims to high offices. These officials eventually came to be called *semu*.[4] Thus, by the Ming Dynasty, when China was once again ruled by Han Chinese, there was widespread distrust towards Muslims. The change that occurred in policy towards Muslims during the beginning of the Ming is where the origins of the early Qing intellectual movement begin to appear.

Lipman begins his section on Muslims during the Ming dynasty with an early Ming imperial decree stating, "Mongols and *semu* (Muslims) who live in China may marry Chinese (women) but may not marry from among their own kind."[5] This was the beginning of a large scale acculturation process. Lipman describes the logic of this process, "since foreigners, especially former *semu*, might be dangerous, they must be subdued by incorporation, by conscious Sinification, through constant exposure to Chinese culture in the intimate family circle and through genetic incorporation into civilized China."[6] This policy of acculturation was fairly successful, as Chinese became the language of most Muslim households. This, coupled with the Ming state's aversion to

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[3] Ibid., 30.
[4] *Semu* was originally a Yuan administrative term, with *semu guan* being translated as "officials of various categories." However, *semu* in Chinese can also be read as "colored eyes" and thus can also be seen as a comment on the appearance of the Yuan-Dynasty non-Han officials. Source: Ibid., 33.
[5] *Da Ming lü jijie fuli, lü* 6:IIa quoted in Ibid., 38.
[6] Ibid., 41.

international trade which developed in the mid-1400s, cut Muslims off from the rest of the Islamic world.

Lipman then describes the development of "scripture hall education," or Mosque education in central areas like Shaanxi, where Islamic education was systemized and formalized. The curriculum of this education consisted primarily of learning Persian and Arabic and it took place in the local Mosque, thus turning the place of worship into an educational center as well. In Lipman's discussion of the *Han Kitab*, geography plays a key role. By end of the Ming Dynasty and the establishment of the Qing in 1644 CE, The Chinese Muslim intellectual movement was largely confined to cities in eastern China such as Nanjing and other cities in the Jiangnan region, where Muslims steeped in Confucian literati culture sought to make a place for themselves, while the Qing Empire expanded into predominantly Muslim western territory.

Lipman characterizes the *Han Kitab* as one of three methods that Chinese Muslims used to maintain their identity after becoming acculturated. He also lists three developments, divided by region, by which Chinese Muslims maintained their identity: *Menhuan* mysticism in the west, "scripture hall education" in more central cities, and the *Han Kitab* texts in the east.[7] Thus, to Lipman the importance of the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement exists as one of three methods of response to acculturation. In describing the reason why the movement took the shape that it took, in the form of a large body of literature, Lipman writes, "As Qing rule grew more stable and more repressive in the eighteenth century, Muslims in eastern China could ill afford to alienate the officials. Rather they provided an intellectual justification by which Muslims could live comfortably in China, remain Muslims, and still participate in the larger culture within

[7] Ibid., 73.

which they constituted a minority."[8] Lipman compares this to the position of Muslims in the northwest, where literati culture was nowhere near as strong and "a rowdier, more militarized atmosphere stimulated Sufi orders to create solidarities of Muslims based on loyalty to a *sheikh* and a desire for widespread self-defense."[9] Thus, to Lipman, the intellectual movement emerged as a result of Chinese Muslims located in eastern cities trying to reclaim and understand their identity: who they were, and where they fit in Chinese society during their time.

The Chinese Muslim Educational Network

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite's *The Dao of Muhammad* focuses exclusively on the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement of the early Qing. Identity, indeed, is the central concept and issue of Benite's work. The identity he analyzes is equal parts Muslim and Chinese and, as he puts it in his introduction, "The ways in which Chinese Muslim scholars of the late Ming and early Qing understood themselves as 'Chinese' is one of the study's central concerns."[10]

In analyzing what led to the *Han Kitab*, Benite devotes a section of his book to discussing what he calls the Chinese Islamic educational network that had been forming for centuries. He traces the network to Northwest China but remarks that it was only after the network moved eastward to the Jiangnan region that it thrived. In cities like Nanjing, the intellectual network expanded, acquired more students, and took the shape that would come to form the intellectual movement and create the *Han Kitab*.[11] Benite goes on to

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[8] Ibid., 84.
[9] Ibid., 85.
[10] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 8.
[11] Ibid., 21.

describe how the Jiangnan region[12] was remarkable in it had been major economic and cultural hub since the Tang dynasty, important not just commercially but also for producing a large amount of scholar officials as well. It was only in eastern areas like Jiangnan that the educational network could arise, Benite explains, because while Muslims in Eastern China during the Ming Dynasty could hold jobs in administration, the sciences and military, "Muslim communities of the Southwest and the Northwest suffered under harsh state policies and were constantly in conflict with imperial government of the Ming."[13] As such, the farther a Muslim community was from the empire's borders, the more integrated into Chinese society it could become.

A large part of Benite's argument is that the *Han Kitab* emerged as a result of Chinese Muslim scholars with a grounding in Confucian education attempting to understand their own cultural background. Benite makes it a point to note that the idea of a Chinese Muslim educational network developing in parallel to the official Chinese education system has been ignored in the history of Islam in China. Benite writes, "This oversight, clearly, is part of a historiography that has taken Han society's claims to an educational monopoly at face value."[14] Benite challenges the dominant historical approach to academic history in China in his discussion of the Muslim educational network that led to the writing of the *Han Kitab*. Benite also writes, "To say that the *Han Kitab* grew out of the Chinese Muslim educational system is another way of saying that it grew out of a network and culture of learning and scholarship."[15]

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[12] The Jiangnan region refers to the area immediately south of the Yangzi river, with Nanjing being of primary importance in regard to the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement.
[13] Ibid., 23.
[14] Ibid., 25.
[15] Ibid., 26.

One of his sources for tracing this network is a genealogy written in the 1670s by a Chinese Muslim entitled *Register of Lineage and Transmission of Classical Learning*. The genealogy outlines a vast network of Muslim teachers, students, families, and schools from 1550 to 1700, detailing the movement of teachers and families as well as when schools in the Mosque education system were founded. Benite remarks, "Over the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this network evolved and grew, not only in terms of students but also, and more importantly, in terms of its structure and the intensification of contacts among locales, provinces, and regions."[16] The growing number of students and the formalization of an educational network created a background from which the *Han Kitab* was capable of emerging. Indeed, the *Han Kitab* is in many ways a dialogue between different Chinese Muslim scholars regarding the nature of their teachings and how they are to be understood in relation to their Confucian cultural background.

Identity in the Qing Dynasty

While the anxiety over potential loss of identity during the Ming Dynasty was one factor influencing the authors of the *Han Kitab*, another key element created the space and opportunity for this movement to emerge: the Manchu takeover of China and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644. Muslims in the Ming Dynasty were forced to adapt to a specific "Chinese" way and become as "Chinese" as possible. However, with the establishment of a government composed of an ethnically and culturally outside group, the Manchus, also came a greater flexibility of cultural categories. [17] While the

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[16] Ibid., 35.
[17] Ibid., 12

culture of the Ming Dynasty was exclusively Han Chinese, the culture of the Qing was marked by multiple cultural and ethnic identities.

Part of what made the Qing Dynasty inherently multi-cultural and multi-ethnic was the Eight Banner system, a military organization in which membership was rewarded with food, money, shelter, and a higher degree of power.[18] Originally, the Eight Banners were an exclusively Manchu organization, but as the Manchus began building their armies during the early 17th Century in preparation for their conquest of the Ming, more and more Mongols joined their armies as a result of conquest and surrender. In 1634, when the number of Mongols within the Manchu banner system numbered at around 10,000, the Manchus created a separate Mongol Eight Banner system.[19] As the Manchus acquired more Ming territory, more ethnically Han Chinese from the Northeast became incorporated into their army resulting in a *Hanjun* (Han Martial, 漢軍) Eight Banner system.[20] The Eight Banner system was a staple of both Qing military and social life, and while membership was exclusive to the elite of Qing Dynasty, it organized society in an ethnic and cultural way unseen during the Ming Dynasty. While views towards ethnicity in the Ming were marked with a "Chinese" versus "barbarian" dichotomy, the nature of the Eight Banner system in the Qing allowed there to be space for Han, Manchu, Mongol, and Muslim identities.[21] Indeed, for calling the Manchu rulers barbarians during the Qing Dynasty would result in harsh punishment. In the Qing Dynasty there existed a role for specific ethnic and cultural groups within a state controlled by an outside group, and while there was no Muslim banner, the Eight Banner system set a precedent for different

[18] Mark Elliot, *Empire at the Margins*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 29
[19] Ibid., 41
[20] Ibid., 42-45
[21] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad,* 12.

and distinct cultural groups to find a place in Chinese society. With this newfound ability to embrace their Muslim heritage, the Han Kitab authors then sought to place themselves within the intellectual scene of China. Now that we understand why the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement occurred when it did, we turn to the concepts by which they formed their identity.

Sage and Prophet

Traditionally, the term sage was used to refer to virtuous rulers of antiquity.[22] They provided models for good governance and role models for living everyday life as depicted by Confucius (551-479 BCE) and Mencius (371-289 BCE). To Confucius, sagehood was the ultimate goal of education — the highest level of self-cultivation that was exclusive and difficult to achieve. Mencius too held sagehood as the highest moral standing that one should aspire to, but he believed that all men were capable of becoming sages.[23] Much of the *Mencius*, the work retelling the doings and sayings of Mencius, depicts the titular figure arguing with various rulers, usually criticizing their conduct. In these arguments, Mencius compares the conduct of the ruler to the sage kings of antiquity, Yao, Shun and Yu. The sage kings are regarded highly because they followed the Way (道 *dao*) and held the Mandate of Heaven, the divine right given by heaven which allowed the king to rule. Thus, When Mencius provided criticism he was making the point that the current ruler's conduct was in discord with that of the sages, and as a result

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[22] Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions,* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 23.
[23] Thomas Lee, *Education in Traditional China*, *a History*, (Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2000), 180-183

the king would be overthrown and thus lose the Mandate.[24] It was believed that the sage rulers' conduct would bring harmony to the world, and if they acted inappropriately, their misconduct would be felt throughout society. In the Confucian tradition, it was through self-cultivation by means of learning and devoting oneself to government that one could become a sage and this became the ideal standard for rulers to follow. [25]

What is key in understanding why the sage kings were so revered in Confucianism is the fact that they were mortal men. They did not have supernatural powers, but were rather ordinary humans who were virtuous rulers, and thus examples to which all rulers should aspire. While the term sage was important in Confucianism, it also had a place in another school of thought in traditional China: Daoism.

One of the most important figures in Daoism was a man named Zhuangzi, whose work of the same name outlines some of the basic concepts of Daoism through humorous, esoteric anecdotes and enlightening conversations. One of the fundamental differences between Daoism and Confucianism is that while much of Confucianism involves the state and where one fits in society, in Daoism individuals are supposed to free themselves of the conventions of society, including moral labeling and judgment.[26] As such, the model for the sage in Daoism changes. Instead of being a self-cultivated scholar who is involved in government, the Daoist sage must do away with society and devote himself to pursuing the Way. In one exchange detailed in the *Zhuangzi*, two men, Chien Wu and Lien Shu, discuss a story Chien Wu heard regarding a Holy Man who lived on a faraway mountain

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[24] For examples arguments regarding sage kings, see *Mencius* 2A:2, 3A:4, 3B:9, 4A:1-2, 4A:26, 4B:1, 4B:19, 4B28, 4B32, 5A:2, 5A:5, 5A:7, 6A:6-7, 6B2, 6B:15, 7A:38, 7B:33, 7B:37-38, found in William deBary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990; 2000), 114-148.

[25] Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 57.

[26] Zhuangzi and Burton Watson. 1996. *Basic Writings*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1-7

who had supernatural abilities, such as eating air and riding a flying dragon. Chien Wu did not believe this story, causing Lien Shu to call him ignorant and said of the Holy Man, "This man, with this virtue of his, is about to embrace the ten-thousand things and roll them up into one. Though the age calls for reform, why should he wear himself out over the affairs of the world? There is nothing that can harm this man… From his dust and leavings alone you could mold a Yao or a Shun!"[27] Thus, what makes one a sage in Daoism is not service to the state and self-cultivation through learning, but rather a pursuit of the Dao and abandonment of society. Furthermore, unlike Confucianism, Daoist sages could achieve things considered supernatural.

The role of the sage in the Daoist tradition would change over time, with the development of the *Taiqing* (Great Clarity 太清) school of alchemy in the 3rd through 6th centuries CE. The goal of the Taiqing tradition was to achieve immortality and the ability to summon gods and demons through the creation and consumption of elixirs. Another key concept in this tradition was its namesake, Taiqing, which was one of the levels of heaven within the tradition. One Taiqing text entitled *Huainan zi* (Book of the Master of Huainan) from 139 BCE describes the sage to be one who could reach the realm of Taiqing: "[The sage] communicates through his essence with his foundation in the Great Clarity and roams in the indistinct space."[28] Thus, in the Taiqing tradition, the sage could make contact with a higher power, an ability unknown to Confucian sages.

Although Liu Zhi and other Chinese Muslim intellectuals framed their argument regarding Islam and Muhammad in a Confucian context, they were also familiar with the Daoist canon. As such, while Muhammad was not a Daoist sage in the *Han Kitab*, the

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[27] Yao and Shun are two of the Sage Kings of antiquity. Quote source: Ibid., 27-28

[28] Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 37.

Daoist interpretation of the concept of sage was something that *Han Kitab* authors would have been familiar with, and certainly the fact that there was some sort of historical precedent for sages making contact with the divine in the Taiqing alchemical tradition helped their argument. Now, we return to Confucianism, and more specifically the changes in it that would take place that allowed for Muhammad to be counted among the likes of Yao, Shun, or Confucius.

One of the core components of the Confucian tradition is the emphasis on self-cultivation through learning, but there had been much debate about what the exact goal of learning was, and specifically whether it should be more in favor of the state or personal moral cultivation. By the Song Dynasty, the issue of learning in the Confucian tradition was in crisis, as intellectuals at the time struggled to figure out the exact goal of learning and how to construct a universal curriculum for Confucian education.[29] In the end, Zhu Xi's (1130-1200 CE) model for learning won out and thus created what is referred to in the West as Neo-Confucianism. In this new school of thought the path to sagehood was transformed, altering the original meaning of the word sage from that of a political entity to a more moral one, defined not by one's standing in government and performance as a ruler as much as one's personal self-cultivation.[30] As Daniel K. Gardner puts it, "[Zhu Xi's] rigorous curriculum, together with *tu-shu-fa*, required of students total commitment to the pursuit of the Way; for him learning was learning to be a sage – it was lifelong, not merely a stage in one's career."[31]

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[29] Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically,* 57-59.
[30] Ibid., 76-81.
[31] *Tu-shu-fa* can be translated as hermeneutics. It was Zhu Xi's method of not just reading the Confucian classics, but also experiencing them personally. Source: Ibid., 42. Quote source: Ibid., 79-80.

It was Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty that would become a core piece of China's educational system up through the Qing Dynasty. Indeed, during Liu Zhi's life, Zhu Xi's version of Confucianism had become the school of thought endorsed by the Qing state and taught in the exam curriculum. Additionally, many Confucian scholars found that the more individualistic schools of thought studied in the Ming led to the Dynasty's downfall[32] and as such the reverted to the Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism. Qing officials too felt that the intellectual culture of the Ming posed a potential threat to their newly formed state and as a result promoted Song-dynasty Confucianism.[33] It was this version of Confucianism, with Zhu Xi's focus on individual self-cultivation to achieve sagehood, which Liu Zhi and other Chinese scholars learned through the Confucian education system. As such, the model of the sage as a model for emulation on the part of all scholars and individuals was part of the intellectual scene in which Liu Zhi found himself in.

When Liu Zhi and other Chinese Muslim intellectuals began translating Islamic texts they had found and writing their own works, referring to the Prophet Muhammad as a sage must have seemed like an easy translation. It is the Neo-Confucian version of the sage that fit perfectly with the Islamic concept of the Prophet and The Perfect Man, as perfectly morally cultivated individuals who were to be emulated. In Islam, the Prophet serves as the spokesman for God, instructing man on the proper course of conduct as well as reminding people that they are to submit to God. Prophets serve as the meeting point between human and the divine, through which God's words can be heard. Muhammad, the most important Prophet and founder of the believers' movement that turned into the

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[32] Jonathan Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 102.
[33] Ibid.

religion of Islam, is considered the seal of the prophets.[34] He is also central to Islam in that the Quran, the literal word of God, was given to man through Muhammad by transmission of the angel Gabriel. His successful campaign in spreading Islam and his connection with the divine turned Muhammad into a role model for how to live in accordance with God's will. This eventually spawned the tradition of the *hadith*, which are records of the doings and sayings of the Prophet. As the medieval Muslim theologian al-Ghazzali (1054-1111 CE) wrote, "Know that the key to happiness is to follow the *sunna* and to imitate the Messenger of God (Muhammad) in all his comings and goings, his movements and rest, in his way of eating, his attitude, his sleep and his talk."[35] To act as the Prophet did and to understand him and follow his message is one of the goals of Islam.

Chinese Muslims in the 16th to 18th centuries, disconnected from the rest of the Islamic world, relied on whatever Islamic texts they could access, many of which happened to be in the Sufi tradition, an Islamic school that is very metaphysical in nature but not entirely incomprehensible or inapplicable to the average Muslim. In the Islamic world, there were Sufi texts which provided guidance on everyday matters as well as how to be a moral and upright person.[36] But it was the more metaphysical texts in the Sufi tradition that made their way into China and into the hands of the *Han Kitab* authors. The texts that influenced Liu Zhi often dealt with how one could see God before death, just as Muhammad had done. The Sufi approach towards achieving this goal was quite

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[34] For more on the founding of Islam as an ecumenical movement, see Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers,* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
[35] *Sunna* is the Arabic word for "custom," but in this and most contexts it refers to the customs of the Prophet. Quote source: Ghazzali, *Ihya' ulum ad-din,* 2:300-344 cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is his Messenger*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 31.
[36] For more on this subject see Birgivî Mehmet Efendi and Tosun Bayrak, *The Path of Muhammad: A Book on Islamic Morals and Ethics & the Last Will and Testament (Vasiyyetname)*, (Bloomington, IN.: World Wisdom, 2005).

compatible with that of the Neo-Confucian tradition, with the results being a distinctly Chinese Muslim approach towards self-cultivation.

Chapter 2: Muhammad the Sage

In the Islamic tradition, Muhammad holds the position of the last, and most important, prophet. However, the Chinese Muslims in the late-Ming and early Qing referred to him with a different title: sage. As Chinese Muslim Sai Yu wrote, "Regarding Islam's sage (*sheng* 聖) – his Dao is the greatest, his teaching is the most proper, his merit is the most refined."[1] Why use the term "sage" to refer to the Prophet Muhammad? What were they hoping to accomplish by using this term? How do Muhammad and the word "prophet" fit into the Confucian tradition? When analyzing the written works of the *Han Kitab* authors, such as Liu Zhi, the answers to these questions become quite clear. It was through the application of Chinese concepts like "sage" to Islamic theology that Chinese Muslim scholars created an intellectual identity that harmonized with their Chinese background just as much as their Islamic beliefs. In translating and understanding the Islamic texts they found, Chinese Muslims viewed words like "prophet" as foreign counterparts to the Chinese term sage and thus viewed Islam as more of a continuation of the Confucian tradition rather than as a separate entity. Similarly, by referring to the Prophet as a sage and discussing the nature of sagehood in the Islamic

[1] *Dao* generally means "the way," but in this context it refers to a teaching or a school of thought. Quote source: Sai Yu, "*Zhisheng shilu* xu" (Introduction to the *Zhisheng shi lu*) quoted in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 174.

tradition, they sought to create a space for themselves within the dominant Confucian intellectual sphere.

Seeking Legitimacy

While Chinese Muslims made the case that their faith was relevant to Chinese society by framing it within the Confucian tradition, they were not the first ones to do so. Centuries earlier, Buddhists used this same strategy to make the case that Buddhism, a teaching from what were considered barbarian lands beyond the empire's borders, belonged in China. In a work entitled *Disposing of Error*, a Buddhist named Mouzi responds to accusations that Buddhism was not compatible with Confucianism. Little is known about the author and it is unknown when exactly this work was produced; it was most likely written between the 4th and 6th centuries CE. In a section entitled, "Why Is Buddhism Not Mentioned in the Chinese Classics?" the author responds to the accusation that Buddhism is worthless due to the fact that it was not practiced by the sages Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou or Confucius, and that it was not mentioned in the seven classics. To this Mouzi replies, "All written works need not necessarily be the words of Confucius, and all medicine does not necessarily consist of the formulae of Bian Que (the most famous physician of antiquity). What accords with rightness is to be followed, what heals the sick is good. The gentleman-scholar draws widely on all forms of good and thereby benefits his character."[2] Mouzi then goes on to say that the sages had teachers who had not been mentioned in the classics and that to compare the sages to the Buddha would be like "comparing a white deer to a unicorn."[3]

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[2] Mouzi, *Disposing of Error*, quoted in deBary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1,* 422.
[3] Ibid.

Mouzi's *Disposing of Error* shows that if a foreign teaching were to become accepted by Chinese society, it would have to be on Chinese terms. Most of Mouzi's defense of Buddhism is not framed around Buddhist texts, but rather Confucian ones. In the same way, when Chinese Muslims constructed their argument that their faith belonged in China, they had to dig through the classics for passages supporting their cause. In arguing that Muhammad fit the criteria of sagehood, Chinese Muslims used passages like this from the *Mencius*:

> Shun was born in Zhufeng, moved to Fuxia, and died in Mingtiao – a man of the Eastern Yi. King Wen was born at Mount Qi in Zhou and died at Biying – a man of Western Yi. In terms of place, they were separated from one another by more than a thousand *li*, and in terms of time, by more than a thousand years. But when they realized their intentions and effected them in the Middle Kingdom it was like uniting the two halves of a tally: the sage who came earlier and the sage who came later were one in their dispositions.[4]

The meaning of this passage and its significance were not lost on the *Han Kitab* authors. Shun and King Wen were both sages, separated by space and time. A sage is a sage, no matter when or where he lived. Chinese Muslims thus used passages like this one to explain and justify why their sage, Muhammad, could still be a Chinese sage even though he lived in a faraway land. This can be clearly seen on a monument at a mosque in China:

> In all parts of the world sages have arisen, and their being called sages was because they had this similarity of mind and principles. The Western Sage Mohammed was born later than Confucius, and lived in the country of Arabia; we do not know how far removed in time and place this was from the sage of China; their language differed, yet their principles agreed. Why was this so? Their minds were as one, therefore their principles were the same. The ancients had a saying: "A thousand sages have one mind; a myriad ages have one governing principle." This may be accepted as truth.[5]

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[4] *Mencius*, 4B:1, quoted Ibid., 140.
[5] Liu Jielian and Isaac Mason, *The Arabian Prophet; A Life of Mohammed from Chinese and Arabic Sources. A Chinese-Moslem Work,* (Shanghai: the Commercial Press, 1921), 278.

The basic message of this passage mirrors that of the section from the *Mencius*: two men, separated by time and space, but whose minds "were as one" and who "were one in their dispositions." This argument, that Muhammad could be considered a Chinese sage, was essential to the *Han Kitab* authors because it legitimized their religion within the Confucian tradition. In finding their own identity, Chinese Muslims sought to create one that fit within their Islamic beliefs as well as their Confucian intellectual background, and thus regarding Muhammad as a sage was a vital step in this process.

One of the desires of Liu Zhi and the *Han Kitab* authors was to have a place in mainstream literati culture in China. They aimed to achieve this by constructing Islam as a Dao, one of many in China. As Benite puts it, "The message to the broader literati community was that Chinese Muslim intellectuals were, like the elite in general, studying a Dao."[6] In many ways, they emulated the literati culture at the time in hopes of validation, both in hopes that they would better understand themselves through a system with which they were familiar and that perhaps their sage could be counted among the others in Confucianism. While Chinese Muslims were trying to make the case that the revered figure in their faith was a sage, they were certainly not the first to do so. Other religious traditions had attempted to apply the term sage to their faiths, yielding mixed results.

Sages Among Sages

One of the most important ways in which the term sage works so well with Islam is the fact that the Islamic and Neo-Confucian traditions stress the humanity of their revered figures. As James Frankel writes, "It is important to note that despite the

[6] Ibid., 182.

tendencies in both the Confucian and Islamic traditions to elevate their revered figures to almost superhuman status, the mainstream view concerning the sages and prophets respectively is that they were mortal human beings."[7] This is one of the key factors that influenced why Chinese Muslims could so easily consider Muhammad a sage and their teachings as part of Confucianism.

Frankel devotes a section of his book, *Rectifying God's Name*, to discussing the difficulties other religions faced in using the term "sage" to discuss their important figures. For example, Buddhists used the term as something equivalent to the word, "holy," but they never went so far as to put the Buddha in the same category as the Chinese sages. Additionally, as Frankel notes, "But the same canon (Buddhist) also attributes to him (Buddha) superhuman qualities and deeds, including exercising power over the gods of the Hindu pantheon."[8] Jews also struggled with applying the term sage to the Prophet Moses. A stone stele dated 1663 attributed to the Jewish author Liu Chang shows his attempt at applying sagehood to Judaism. Liu Chang's problem, Frankel writes, was that "the author struggles to reconcile the Semitic concept of the prophet as the recipient of supernatural revelation with the more secular Confucian understanding an author, or in the case of Confucius a compiler and translator, of orthodox teaching."[9] Thus the crux of the problem that Jews faced when translating the term "prophet" was the inherent trait of revelation at the core of the word. While revelation is still key to Islam, the nature of the Prophet in Islam as a role model gave Islam a powerful tool in reconciling "sage" and "prophet" that was lacking in Judaism.

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[7] James Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name: Liu Zhi's Confucian Translation of Monotheism and Islamic Law.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 84.
[8] Ibid., 85.
[9] Ibid., 86.

Similar to the situation that Buddhism faced, Christianity had the problem of trying to fit the square peg that is the divine nature of Jesus into the round hole that was the secular, human concept of the sage. As Frankel notes, "because of the problem of the imprecise correspondence of the term *sheng* [sage] to any single Christian concept, Chinese Christian apologists were cautious in extending the reach of their accommodative claims, and they circumscribed their use of terminology accordingly."[10] It was difficult for Christians to put their divine Jesus into the same category of the Chinese sages, so they reverted to acknowledging a parallel between the Way of Christian figures and the Way of the sages, but they never put them together.[11] Thus, the *Han Kitab* authors found themselves in a particularly interesting situation. Their version of the prophet worked fairly well with the sage, enough so for them to quite confidently argue that they all belonged to the same category. Of course, this was partially at the expense of the importance of revelation in Islam for the sake of compatibility, something Muslims outside of China most likely would have taken issue with, but the emphasis of Muhammad as a role model over Muhammad as the receiver of revelation helped Chinese Muslims greatly in their struggle to find a place amongst other Chinese scholars.

As Frankel concludes, "Thus, the depiction of the Prophet as sage may be seen both as an expression of fundamental Chinese Muslim simultaneity and a manifestation of the *Han Kitab* writers' desire to carve out a niche for themselves and their tradition in the milieu of Confucian literati culture."[12] For Chinese Muslims to call Muhammad a sage and fit Islam within Confucianism, they sought not only to understand their heritage, but also to frame their teaching as a part of the Chinese intellectual tradition. More than

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[10] Ibid., 87.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 89.

simply having a part in the Confucian intellectual scene, however, Liu Zhi and the other Chinese Muslim intellectuals felt that their Dao was an extension of Neo-Confucianism. Indeed, given the degree to which Neo-Confucianism and Sufism worked together in regards to the concepts of "sage" and "prophet," it is not difficult to see why Liu Zhi thought the way he did.

Emulating the Sage and Seeing The Real

Sufism and Neo-Confucianism shared the goal of seeing "reality" as a result of cultivation of one's behavior. However, Chinese Muslims, influenced by Sufi texts, created a different path to seeing reality than Neo-Confucianism, though they used Confucian terminology. It was a specific way of understanding sagehood, using an Islamic method through a Confucian filter, and one that functioned to help form a Chinese Muslim identity. Zhongying Cheng describes sagehood in the Neo-Confucian tradition as follows:

> As there is no ending to this process of thinking and as this thinking always requires concretion in common life and interaction with community, human life and human thinking should form a dynamic, dialectical unity of mutual enrichment and growth, the goal of which is the idealized form of perfection of all virtues including understanding reality. This goal is titled by Neo-Confucianists *sagehood* (*sheng*).[13]

This understanding of reality is just as important in the Sufi tradition. Indeed, one of the most commonly used names for Allah in Sufi texts is *al-Haqq*, meaning Truth or

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[13] Zhongying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, (Boulder, Colo.: NetLibrary Inc., 1999; 1997), 49.

Reality.[14] However, the virtues that Chinese Muslims sought to master did not quite line up so neatly with those of Neo-Confucianism.

Although Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) was a scholar of little repute during his lifetime, he is known today for being regarded as a sage by Zhu Xi.[15] In describing the aspects of the sage he lists the five virtues: "As for the (Five Constant) Virtues, loving is called humaneness [*ren* 仁], being right is called rightness [*yi* 義], being principled [*li* 理] is called ritual decorum [*li* 禮], being penetrating is called wisdom [*zhi* 智], and preserving is called trustworthiness [*xin* 信]. One who is by nature like this, at ease like this, is called a sage."[16] Thus, to Zhou Dunyi, only when one masters these virtues can one become a sage. However, looking at the example of sagehood as understood in the context of Sufism, the path to sagehood begins to take a different shape.

In the Sufi tradition, the way to achieve oneness with God is to follow the words, actions, and most importantly, interior state of the Prophet. This can be summed up in the important Sufi concepts of *shari'a* (revealed law), *tariqa* (path to God), and *haqiqa* (reality). How these three terms relate to each other in regard to emulation of Muhammad can be summed up in a saying attributed to the Prophet, "The *shari'a* are my words, the *tariqa* are my actions, and the *haqiqa* is my interior state."[17] These can be considered the three dimensions of Islam.[18] What this means for Muslims is that they must heed the words of the Prophet, act as he acted, and align their thoughts and feelings with him; only then can one become closer to God and see the Truth.

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[14] Sachiko Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2009), 29.
[15] deBary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1,* 669-670.
[16] Zhou Dunyi, *Penetrating the Classic of Changes*, found in Ibid., 677.
[17] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 99.
[18] Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*, 26-27.

To Liu Zhi, *shari'a, tariqa,* and *haqiqa* all had perfect Chinese counterparts. *Shari'a* becomes *li*, (禮, propriety) *tariqa* becomes *dao*, (道, the way) and *haqiqa* becomes *zhen*, (眞, reality). In the *Tianfang xingli* (天方性理, Metaphysics of Islam) Liu Zhi describes the path to unity with God by following these three concepts: "Only by emulating the Sage's endeavors, cultivating the body with Propriety, clarifying the heart with the Way, fully realizing nature, and going back to the Mandate, does the Complete Substance come home to the Real."[19] In Confucianism, propriety represents the social rules that guide our actions in everyday life.[20] *Li* is the Principle of heaven as made manifest through human affairs. It is marked by appropriate responses to the given situation, without deficiency or excess.[21] Using this in place of *shari'a* gives this a slightly, but not entirely, different message. *Shari'a* means the message given from God to Muhammad and the other Prophets that encompasses law, faith and the actions of the Prophet.[22] What is similar in the two terms is the importance of human action. In Confucianism, *li* is the manifestation of the Principle of Heaven by the actions of man. Similarly, *shari'a* is the revealed law that must be emulated to become closer to God. However, the specific path one takes in terms of performing the revealed law is expressed in *tariqa*.

Dao is an absolutely vital concept in Chinese intellectual tradition. It translates to "the Way," but also means a path. Chen Chun, one of Zhu Xi's students, describes *dao* in the Neo-Confucian tradition as follows: "The general principle of Dao is the principle

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[19] Liu Zhi, *Tianfang xingli*, Root Classic 4: 86 in Ibid., 141-142.
[20] Shuxian Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 21.
[21] Ch'en Ch'un and Chan Wing-tsit, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 72-73.
[22] *Religion Past and Present,* s.v. "Šarīʿa"

people should follow in their daily affairs and human relations."[23] He elaborates, explaining that it cannot be called a road because "[i]f it is meant for only one person, it cannot be called a road,"[24] implying that it is meant for all people to take. He also states that the principle in Dao stems from Heaven, and its importance extends beyond human interactions.[25] While *shari'a* is a concept fundamental to all of Islam, *tariqa* holds particular significance within Sufism. It is the particular path one takes to see the Real and the means by which one purifies the soul.[26] It is different from *shari'a* because while *shari'a* is the set of instructions for what to do and how to act, *tariqa* requires conforming to those instructions while at the same time aligning one's mind and heart with God.[27] For Liu Zhi to use *dao* for this term, then, would make sense, given the two terms' basic meaning of "path". However, Liu Zhi achieves more than simply translating the term for the sake of content; by using these fundamentally Confucian terms he transforms the Islamic concepts into Confucian ones.

The way in which Liu Zhi uses these Confucian terms (*li, dao, zhen*) in describing the specific processes in emulating the sage and attaining connection with God illustrates his idea that Islam is simply an extension, and indeed a vital part, of Confucianism. Ma Zhu (born ca. 1620), another prolific and influential Chinese Muslim scholar, in describing the relationship between the different schools of thought within China, provided a quote attributed to the Wuzong emperor of the Ming Dynasty (r. 1506-1521). The importance of this passage was proof to Ma Zhu of the importance of Islam to China:

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[23] Ch'en Ch'un, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained*, 105.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ṭarīḳa".
[27] Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*, 27-28.

> The Confucian Study can begin things and complete tasks (in society), but it is inadequate for penetrating the Spirit or understanding transformations (of Nature). The study of Buddhists or Daoists can get close to penetrating the Spirit and understanding transformations, but it cannot comply with Heaven's decree or reach the truth. The way of each teaching holds one side only. It is only the teaching of the Pure and True (Islam) which recognizes the Lord and can penetrate to the Principle of things. That is why it will last for ten thousand generations.[28]

This was part of the beliefs Chinese Muslim scholars held in the early Qing Dynasty. It is as if the different schools of thought in China were part of an incomplete system – one which Islam completed. Thus, when Liu Zhi uses the terms *li, dao,* and *zhen*, he intends to use them not as Chinese counterparts to Islamic concepts, but as the *actual meaning* of the Chinese terms. In this school of thought, Muhammad was given titles reserved for the likes of Confucius, most notably *zhisheng* (至聖, Utmost Sage) and *dacheng* (大成, Great Completer), implying that just as Muhammad is the cap of the prophets, he is the cap of the Chinese sages as well.

Given the connotations of the term sage in the Neo-Confucian tradition as a role model with wisdom that can be attained through learning, the Chinese Muslim path to sagehood becomes a very specific and unique path, balanced between Islamic and Confucian tradition. By emulating the Prophet in terms of internalizing what he did and said (*li*), finding the narrow, personal, spiritual path to God, or more simply the Way to God though sharing the mind and heart of the Prophet (*dao*), one could finally see the Real (*zhen*). To Liu Zhi, this specific path was to be taken on the most basic level by all Chinese Muslims and to a greater extent all people in achieving human perfection and harmony, equal parts Confucian and Islamic. However, one of the main issues that exists

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[28] Quoted in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 187-188.

in translating the term prophet as sage is the status of Muhammad as the last Prophet and by extension the last sage, which is in conflict with the Neo-Confucian goal of becoming a sage oneself. If there could be no more sages, how could one become a sage?

Levels of Sagehood in the *Tianfang Xingli*

By using sage as the translation for Prophet, Chinese Muslims backed themselves into what seems to be a bit of a theoretical corner, because one cannot become a prophet. As Sachiko Murata points out, "In the Islamic context, authors are generally careful to assert that the way to achieve human perfection lies in emulating the prophets, but there always remains the caveat that no one can 'become a prophet' in the strict sense of the word, because Muhammad was the last one; hence, people can at best become saints."[29] Liu Zhi's attempt at reconciling this issue can be seen in diagram 2.2 of *Tianfang xingli* (See Figures 1, 2). Instead of dividing between prophets and saints, Liu Zhi creates different levels of sagehood.

Liu Zhi describes the Utmost Sage as follows: "The knowledge and power of the Utmost Sage are undifferentiatedly the same. 'Undifferentiated sameness' means that his knowledge and power are undifferentiatedly the same with the knowledge and power of the Real Ruler in one body, without lack or surplus."[30] Essentially, Liu Zhi is saying that Muhammad (the Utmost Sage) holds his elevated status because of his inner sameness and internalization of the Real Ruler, or God. What separates different levels of sagehood is the internalization of the knowledge and power of God. As such, Muhammad sits at the top of the ladder while everything else lies somewhere below it.

[29] Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*, 75.
[30] Ibid., 276.

As he describes the rest of the levels of sagehood, Liu Zhi states that great sages "use knowledge and power efficaciously," ambassador sages "respond obediently to knowledge and power," and average sages "manifest and elevate knowledge and power."[31] Furthermore, "great worthies hope for and look toward knowledge and power,"[32] Thus, sages and non-sages are differentiated on the basis of their connection to the "Real Ruler" by means of knowledge and power. What Liu Zhi means by knowledge can be seen in his translation of a Sufi text, *Gleams*, by Jami, where Liu Zhi translates, "Truly the Real Being's knowledge goes throughout the ten thousand beings. Therefore, without any doubt, all things large or small, manifest or concealed, have knowledge."[33] Thus, knowledge in this sense means God's knowledge which creates the world and is inherent in everything; as such, Muhammad is the Utmost Sage because he exists in the same level of existence as God. Different people can reach different levels of "undifferentiated sameness" with the divine, and thus there are different levels of sagehood.

Liu Zhi creates a specific outline for different levels of sagehood that fits within both a Neo-Confucian and Islamic framework. While "sage" does have its drawbacks as a translation for prophet, as shown here, it can be reconciled and in fact the concept of the sage works more effectively with Islam than many other foreign religions. But while Muhammad was completely and unapologetically a sage to Liu Zhi and the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement, he never became one to the rest of the Confucian literati community. Confucianism and Islam still remain two very distinct and different entities.

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[31] Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*, 75.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Sachiko Murata et al., *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'Ih from the Persian by William C. Chittick,*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 203.

The next chapter addresses the reasons for the Chinese Muslims' inability to spread their Dao and have their sage become a sage to all Chinese by analyzing the relationship between Chinese Muslims and the Qing state.

Chapter 3: The Emperor and the *Huihui*

In addition to finding a place within China's literati community, Chinese Muslim intellectuals' argument that their prophet was a sage served as a defense mechanism against social and political discrimination. Chinese Muslims found themselves in a bit of a difficult situation during the Qing Dynasty; while there was now a space for them to create their own identity, composed of equal parts Chinese and Muslim, they were doing so in a time of imperial expansion into primarily Muslim western regions including Xinjiang as well as during a time of continuous unrest in other Northwest regions, such as Gansu. So while The *Han Kitab* authors under a technically foreign emperor were allowed to explore their heritage in a way unavailable during the Ming Dynasty, the Qing state and the Chinese Muslim community did not enjoy an entirely friendly relationship.

While the early Qing emperors understood the benefit of keeping the Chinese Muslim community on their side, Han officials in the Qing administration did not share such harmonious views. Similarly, Chinese Muslims understood the need to align themselves with the emperor and differentiate themselves from the rebellious Muslims in the Northwest.[1] In a writing called "Explication of *huihui*," Liu Zhi writes of how the Chinese term for Uighur, *huihe*, came to be used to refer to all Chinese Muslims since the

[1] The Gansu region in the 18th century saw many Muslim rebellions against the Qing state and incidents of violence due to corruption as well as inter-sect fighting between different groups of Muslims. The 18th century also saw the Qing empire expand their borders into what is now Xinjiang, which was a majority Muslim region. Source: Jonathan Lipman, *Familiar Strangers,* 93-115.

Uighurs were Muslim. He writes, “During the Song and Yuan periods, many Muslim scholars and learned men arrived [in China] *en masse*, [and] they realized that the term “Huihe” was inappropriate so they changed it to *huihui*. The sound is almost the same but the meaning is considerably deeper.”[2] While Chinese Muslim scholars stressed the difference between themselves and the Uighurs, apart from the emperor many in the Qing state could not tell the difference between *huihui* and *huihe*. Thus, a strange sort of relationship formed between the emperor and his Chinese Muslim subjects, one in which the emperor came to the defense of Muslims while Muslims remembered and memorialized the emperor’s kindness. Indeed, the emphasis on the similarities between Islam and China in the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement was more than just a matter of identity; it was a matter of self-preservation. Chinese Muslims in the Qing Dynasty were in a state of constant defense against misunderstanding and persecution, requiring them to justify why their religion belonged in China, with the unlikely ally of the emperor himself. This section details a few different stories that were circulated amongst the Chinese Muslim community during the Qing Dynasty, some of which we know today to be fictional and others true, all of which demonstrate the relationship Chinese Muslims felt they had with the Qing emperor. These stories and writings tie developments in the *Han Kitab* literature and the Chinese Muslim community to the delicate political position Chinese Muslims faced in the Qing Dynasty.

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[2] Liu Zhi, “Huihui shuo,” in *Tianfang zhisheng shilu*, (1874), 20:26a. quoted in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 211.

The Kangxi Emperor

Certainly, part of the respect that Chinese Muslims paid to the emperor in the Qing Dynasty was due to the political and religious view towards authority in the Confucian tradition. On the relationship between subject and ruler, Liu Zhi in the *Tianfang dianli* writes, “This is the Teaching of the Five Ethical Relationships. In Islam, they are also called the ‘Five Accomplishments.’ Now, the proper relationship between sovereign and subject completes the state…When these Five Standards are completely cultivated the Way of Man is made complete.”[3] But simple respect for one’s emperor does not explain the relationship the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662-1722) enjoyed with the Chinese Muslim community.

On the subject of the Kangxi Emperor, James Frankel writes, “An astute politician, the Kangxi Emperor was well aware of the value of maintaining good political relations with friendly Chinese and non-Chinese Muslims on the western frontier of the expanding Qing Empire.”[4] The Kangxi Emperor also knew better than to place all of China’s Muslims in the same category, and as such he was aware of the differences between the Chinese Muslims close to the heart of the empire and the Uighurs of the Northwest.[5] The Kangxi Emperor, while not treating his Muslim subjects with any sort of special favor, still valued understanding his subjects. In fact, he was prone to complimenting Muslims in comparison to other groups in China.

In a 1694 Imperial Edict, the emperor proclaimed:

> We have reviewed the great customs and classics of the Han and Hui people, from ancient times until today, and have found that from the beginning they are

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[3] Liu, Zhi. *Tianfang dianli zeyao jie*, p. 7 cited in James Frankel, “Benevolence for Obedience: Policies on Muslims in Late Imperial and Modern China,” *ASIANetwork Exchange* 16, no. 2 (2009): 29.
[4] James Frankel, “Benevolence for Obedience,” 30.
[5] Ibid., 31.

> both on the magnificent Way. (By contrast) the seventy two sects have been cultivating Immortality or striving to become Buddhas, corrupting the truth and leading people astray, with lawless heterodoxies of all kinds springing up all over. What has already passed we shall not prosecute, but in the future, the violators will be summarily executed. The Han Chinese ministers and officials all have their allotted duties and from time to time enjoy the benevolence of the Sovereign, participating in the affairs of court according to the calendar. On the other hand, the Hui face their Lord and do obeisance to their Sage five times everyday, and certainly do not enjoy subsidies from us, and yet they still know to give honor where honor is due. And so the Han are not as good as the Hui. Let this be known in every province: If any officials or common people, due to a petty grudge, use some pretext falsely to accuse the Hui religion of plotting a rebellion, the official in charge will execute them first and report to me afterwards. Throughout the realm, the Hui people shall abide by the principles of Purity and Truth, nor would they disobey a command or betray our kind intentions and appreciation of the significance of the Way.
>
> Respect this and comply[6]

What can be seen here is the emperor painting his Chinese Muslim subjects in a positive light in comparison with other ethnic and religious groups in the empire. The Imperial Edict states the Buddhists are "corrupting the truth and leading the people astray" while the Han take subsidies with the implication that they do not give honor in return. While this may seem like the emperor has a true personal preference for Islam and his Muslim subjects, Frankel argues that the emperor was just playing politics, praising one group at the expense of others in order to gain allies and keep different groups suspicious of each other instead of the state. On a similar note, the emperor's motive in this edict may have been more along the lines of criticizing Han officials as opposed to truly praising the Muslim community.[7] Nevertheless, this Imperial Edict was proudly hung on the wall of a mosque in Beijing, and the Kangxi Emperor found his way into the written works of the *Han Kitab*.

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[6] Wang, Xia, ed. *Beijing Niujie Libaisi*, p. 40 cited in Ibid., 32-33.
[7] Ibid., 34.

Imperial Edicts and other words of the emperor served to frame the Kangxi Emperor in a sympathetic light, leading him to become the central character in numerous tales regarding the affairs of the state and the Chinese Muslim community. Such tales often involved the emperor siding with Chinese Muslims in a dispute or helping spread Islamic knowledge. One tale, which may actually be true, goes as follows: The Capital Prosecutor saw a large group of Muslims gathering at night in a mosque. The Capital Prosecutor concluded that the Muslims were planning a revolt and alerted the emperor, who investigated the gathering first-hand. He dressed in ordinary clothes and entered the mosque, only to find the Chinese Muslims celebrating Ramadan. Realizing there was no threat, he dismissed the Capital Prosecutor.[8] While the emperor ended up defending the Chinese Muslims, the threat that they faced was still a component of the Qing state, in this incident the Capital Prosecutor. Often times these stories of the emperor and Chinese Muslims involve the emperor punishing some overzealous official, but there are yet others which depict the emperor as a disseminator of Islamic knowledge. There is another tale of far greater importance to the Chinese Muslim intellectual community which finds the Kangxi emperor telling a Chinese Muslim of his own heritage.

The Origins of the Hui

While Liu Zhi was a prolific writer whose *Tianfang* trilogy has become a central text in the *Han Kitab* canon, his father Liu Sanjie was influential in his own right as well. The work *Huihui yuanlai* (*The Origins of the Hui*), attributed to him, presents tales regarding how Islam came to China. In the *Huihui yuanlai*, there is a story of how the Kangxi Emperor, returning from a trip beyond the Great Wall, stopped by the house of

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[8] Ibid.

one General Ma, a Muslim. The emperor discussed Islam with the general, and asked him if he knew the origins of his religion, the meaning of Islam's "Dao," why his religion is called the "Pure and True,"[9] and why Muslims came from the West. The general answered that he did not know and in a surprising turn of events, the Kangxi Emperor said, "I have a book here for you to read that will inform you of these matters."[10] The book he gave the general is a tale of Islam's arrival in China.

During the Tang Dynasty, the Taizong Emperor (r. 626-649) had a dream in which a disaster was thwarted by a man wearing a green robe and a turban. The emperor woke up, consulted his ministers and concluded that the dream meant that the empire was in danger and the Hui (Muslims) of the West were needed to protect it.[11] The emperor sent out a message requesting aid from the Huihui King (Muhammad). Muhammad, wanting to visit China, unfortunately had to decline but in his stead he sent an envoy of three Hui ambassadors, including Muhammad's maternal uncle, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (Chinese name: Wan Gesi).[12] Two of the Hui ambassadors sent perished along the way, with Sa'd being the only ambassador arriving safely with the rest of the envoy.[13] Benite discusses the conversation Wan Gesi had with the emperor as follows, "Upon his arrival in China, Sa'd and the emperor had a discussion concerning sages and sagehood… The exchange resulted in emperor's conclusion that Confucianism and Islam were compatible with one another."[14] So far in the story of the *Origin of the Hui*, we see not one, but two emperors who seem to be on Islam's side. First, the Taizong Emperor confirming that

[9] One of the common names of Islam amongst the Chinese Muslim communities is "The Pure and True Teaching."
[10] Ma Kuangyuan, *Huihui yuanlai* (*zhengli ben*), p. 72 cited in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 204.
[11] Ma Kuangyuan, *Huihui yuanlai* (*zhengli ben*), p. 53-54 cited in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 205.
[12] James D. Frankel, "Benevolence for Obedience," 29.
[13] Haiyun Ma, "The Mythology of Prophet's Ambassadors in China: Histories of Sa'd Waqqas and Gess in Chinese Sources." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 26, no. 3 (2006): 446.
[14] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 205.

sagehood and Confucianism are compatible with Islam and second, the Kangxi Emperor knows more about Islam than his Muslim general. This story is more myth than fact. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas had never been to China, but the significance this story held to the Chinese Muslims cannot be overstated.

Chinese Muslim intellectuals, in writing this origin story as a part of their literary movement, cemented Muslims' role in Chinese society; the story of the *Huihui yuanlai* gives Muslims a historical reason for existing in China. Muslims came to defend China. Furthermore, in this story, they are given credibility through their association with the Emperor. The story concludes saying, "We have dwelt peacefully in China and have brought perpetual tranquility. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Emperor of the Tang for his ritual solemnity and proper treatment; even today we safeguard the state, without moving anymore."[15] The message is quite clear: the emperor called Muslims to China, and they have stayed there, and will stay there forever. This is an effective technique employed by Chinese Muslims, not only to understand themselves, but to justify themselves in a hostile political climate. The story also explains Chinese Muslims' role in the larger Islamic world, as the descendants of ambassadors sent by Muhammad himself. At the end of the story, the ambassadors and Chinese Muslims are ordered to stay in China.[16]

After this origin story became more popular, Sa'd's "tomb" was discovered in 1751 CE and thereafter became a holy shrine to Chinese Muslims.[17] Thus, Chinese Muslims saw themselves as the inheritors of a proud heritage on both Islamic and Chinese terms, fulfilling the wishes of both the Islamic prophet and the Chinese emperor.

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[15] Ma, Kuangyuan. *Huizu wenhua lunji,* p. 53. Cited in James D. Frankel, "Benevolence for Obedience," 29.
[16] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 205.
[17] Haiyun Ma, "The Mythology of Prophet's Ambassadors in China," 447.

While fictionally calling on the Chinese emperor to defend Islam against would-be critics had its benefits, this strategy backfired in the mid-18th Century.

Seditious Books

As discussed in the previous chapter, Liu Zhi's written works sought to bridge the gap between Islam and Confucianism, arguing that Islam not only belonged in China, but also extended the Confucian tradition. However, these written works were not seen in this light by some in the Qing state. In June of 1782 CE, during the Qianlong Emperor's reign (1736-1795 CE) a Chinese Muslim named Hai Furan was arrested in Guilin prefecture on suspicion of being connected to a gang of Muslim bandits, because during this year in Gansu province there were numerous incidents of violence and unrest involving Muslims, specifically a dispute between sects regarding "old" versus "new" teachings of Islam.[18] As a result, the Qing administration was already on edge regarding potential unrest by Muslims and arrests of potentially rebellious Muslims and "Muslim bandits" were fairly common.[19] However, Hai Furan was arrested in Guilin, on the far opposite side of the empire from where all the unrest was happening. When Qing officials searched his belongings, they found numerous *Han Kitab* books, as well as Arabic and Persian works.[20]

This was during the compilation of the *Siku Quanshu*, or the *Four Treasuries*, a project which sought to compile the most important works in all of the empire in a large anthology, complete with introductions and fully reproduced works.[21] However, this

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[18] For more regarding this conflict, see Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 103-104.
[19] Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 98-99.
[20] Ibid., 214-217.
[21] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 100.

campaign also sought to accomplish another goal, the destruction of works deemed seditious or slandering of the Qing state. As Jonathan Spence writes, "Compiling the *Four Treasuries* also served some of the functions of a literary inquisition, since private libraries were searched and those people owning works considered to be slighting to the Manchus were strictly punished."[22] The governor-general of Guangxi-Guangdong, Zhu Chun, found the confiscated books to be potentially seditious and as a result detained Hai Furan and sent a memorial to the emperor.

What Zhu Chun found troubling was both the content of the books as well as the language. Since many were written in Arabic and Persian, how was he to know what they said? In his message to the emperor he writes, "In general, all these books contain language that extols the king of the western country of the Hui teaching, Muhanmode [Muhammad]. Among the books there is a book, *The Veritable Records of the Most Sagely of Islam*, of a very presumptuous (*jianwang* 僭妄) kind, which does not respect the prohibitions regarding using the name of the emperor. Moreover it… [and its arguments] are full of defiant and reckless [language]."[23] Zhu Chun was apparently unaware that this man was unconnected to the unrest in the Northwest; however, Hai Furan's status as a Muslim was enough to rouse suspicion.[24] After a second message sent by Zhu Chun, the emperor responded, chastising Zhu Chun for his overzealousness, saying, "These are simple and ignorant Hui people faithful to their teaching and if we feel constrained to hamstring them with the laws there will be immense trouble."[25]

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[22] Ibid., 100-101.
[23] Zhu Chun, "Wei panhuo Huifei," 6a. quoted in Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 217 .
[24] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 222.
[25] Qianlong imperial edict, 7.12.1782, Ma Saibei, ed., *Qing shilu Musilin ziliao jilu*, I: 737 quoted in Ibid., 224.

Similar to the Kangxi Emperor, the Qianlong Emperor understood the importance of playing cultural politics to keep various ethnic and cultural groups on the side of the Qing state. For example, in an effort to keep the Buddhists of Tibet and Mongolia on their side, the Qing emperors, especially Qianlong, sought to construct themselves as the reincarnation of the bodhisattva Maňjuśrī, with this title being given to the Qing emperorship by the fifth Dalai Lama. Qianlong also endorsed the construction of numerous Buddhist temples and monasteries, as well as visiting many locations important to Buddhism, such as Mount Wutai.[26] The Qianlong emperor put much work into projecting the state in a positive light to all of its constituents in an effort to keep the empire together. To see this sort of work undone by others in the Qing state frustrated the emperor, but his message of disapproval arrived too late.

Zhu Chun, convinced that the intellectual network was in fact a large Islamic conspiracy against the state, at this point had already warned other officials in the neighboring Hubei and Jiangnan regions and continued to search the homes of other Chinese Muslims. The incident resulted in the jailing of numerous Chinese Muslims, including the great-grandson of Liu Zhi.[27] However, the end result of this incident also earned for Zhu Chun and other alarmist officials the Qianlong Emperor’s ire. The Qianlong Emperor, understanding that his empire was multi-ethnic and contained many different cultures, was able to differentiate between Muslims of the Northwest and Muslims in other parts of the empire, something that Zhu Chun had not, and thus knew that the arrested Muslims and their Islamic texts were not seditious. In response to Zhu Chun’s allegation that calling Muhammad the utmost sage was “arrogant and perverse”

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[26] Farquhar, David M. 1978. "Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978): 5-9, 24

[27] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 224-225.

the emperor responded saying, “This book for the most part praises Muhammad’s esteem[able qualities] – how can that be taken as arrogance and perversity?”[28]

With this whole incident, we are given a clear view into the political and social minefield that Chinese Muslims had to face in the Qing Dynasty. The emperor understood the value in managing a culturally diverse empire, while others in the administration were more concerned with managing potential threats. This incident also reveals one of the main reasons why Muhammad could not become a sage to the rest of the China; Muslims were an outside group and while the violence in the Northwest was not connected to the *Han Kitab*, few could make the distinction. Thus, no matter how much Islam and Confucianism shared in common, no matter how sagely the Prophet Muhammad was, the political and social climate of the early Qing ensured that Muslims were always thought of as Muslims, first and foremost, and as such were viewed through a lens of violence.

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[28] Qianlong imperial edict, “Yupi *Zhisheng Shilu*” (Imperial Commentary on the *Zhisheng Shilu*), Liu Zhi, *Tianfang zhisheng shilu* (1874), 29b-33b. cited in Ibid., 229.

Conclusion

Chinese Muslim intellectuals of the late-Ming and early-Qing Dynasties were faced with a number of internal and external threats and anxieties. On the one hand, they feared losing their identity and their faith as a result of being disconnect from the rest of the Islamic world as well as an ever-growing unfamiliarity with Arabic and Persian and the knowledge that texts in these languages brought. On the other hand, there was their status as an outside group whose faith was shared by rebels in the Northwest of China. They sought to make sense of and create a place for themselves within both the Chinese World and the Islamic one by constructing an intellectual tradition.

The Chinese Muslim intellectual movement took form as a literary tradition as a result of a convergence of multiple interrelated factors. First, the acculturation measures put into place during the Ming Dynasty catalyzed the anxiety over loss of identity, as Chinese became the language of most Chinese Muslim homes. Second, in response to this threat there emerged a Chinese Muslim intellectual network of families, teachers, and students, which flourished most vibrantly in the eastern cities of the Jiangnan region, such as Nanjing. Third, with the Manchu takeover of China and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, the civilized-barbarian dichotomy of the Ming-Dynasty was replaced with an officially multiethnic society, in which Chinese Muslims were given an opportunity to

explore their identity. As a result of these events, the time and the place was right for Chinese Muslims to form their faith as a Dao and their prophet as a Chinese sage.

By depicting Muhammad as a sage, Chinese Muslims were giving themselves a context for their faith being relevant to Chinese society. By following the teaching of their sage, Muhammad, they carved a niche for themselves in the Confucian tradition. For the first time, a large amount of Islamic work, both translations and originals, was produced in Chinese, and in the process Islam became a branch of Confucianism. Chinese Muslims thought of Muhammad as a sage as a reflection of both their equally Chinese and Muslim identity, as well as justifying their existence in Chinese society. Indeed, Chinese Muslims needed such justification, as other non-Muslim Chinese viewed them as a potential threat and questioned their status in society.

In addition to giving themselves legitimacy through calling Muhammad a sage, Chinese Muslims also sought the protection of the emperor in order to legitimize their teachings and justify their place in China. While the Qing emperors understood the value of keeping Chinese Muslims on their side, others in the Qing state and in Chinese society could not differentiate Chinese Muslim intellectuals from those causing unrest in far off places in the empire. While the *Han Kitab* authors sought to create a space for themselves in Chinese society, one in which their existence was essential to China's success, they could not overcome the political realities of the time and thus Muhammad was to remain a sage to Chinese Muslims alone.

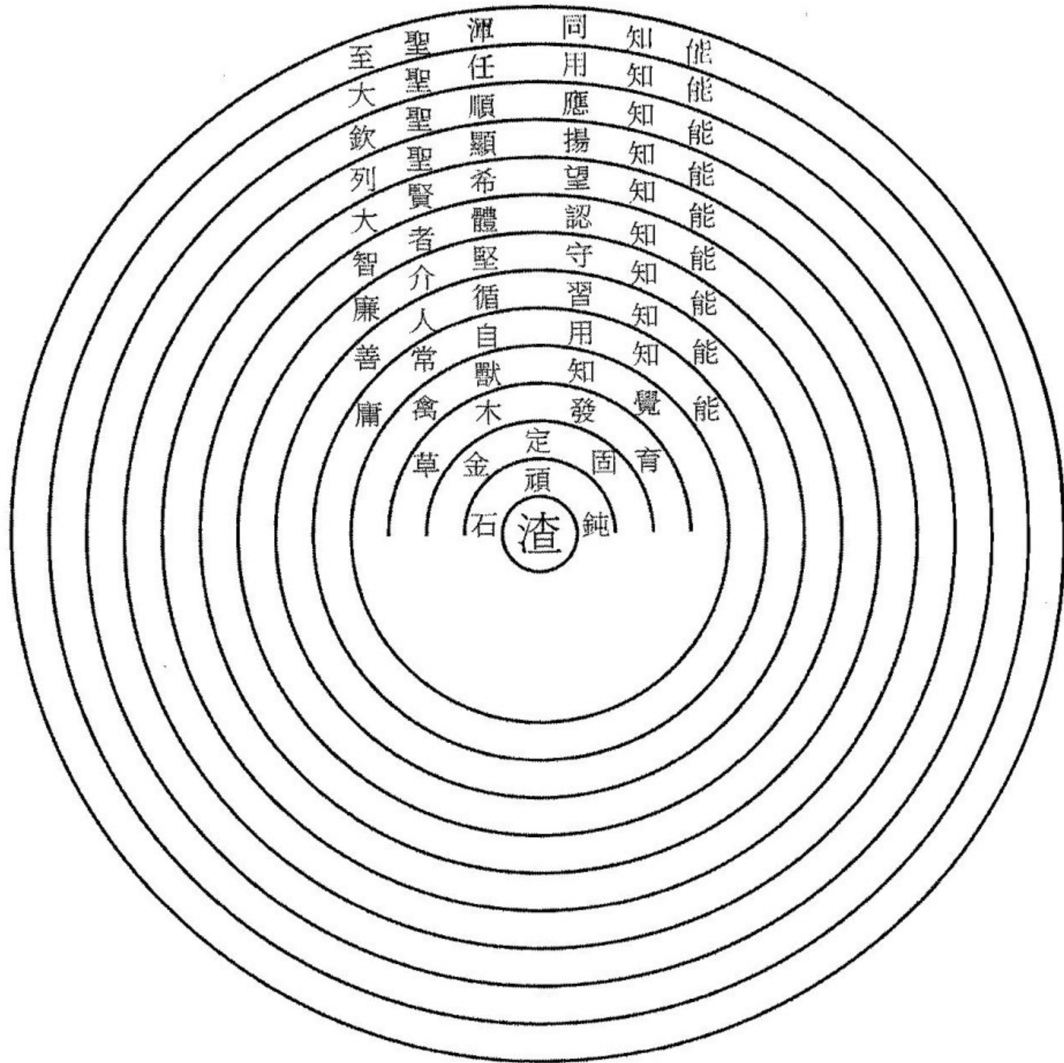
What emerges when one looks at the Chinese Muslim intellectual movement is a portrait of a group trying to make sense of its hybrid identity. They knew that they were a distinct group but at the same time they sought to find legitimacy among the rest of

Chinese society. While Islam and Confucianism have their share of similarities, ones which were embraced by Chinese Muslim intellectuals, the differences are great enough that while Muhammad could be a Chinese sage to some, he could not become one to all. The emperor could help give an explanation to Chinese Muslim's status in the empire, but that did not entirely shield them from misunderstanding. However, the fact that such a synthesis could be made, even if by a small group of Chinese Muslim intellectuals for the span of roughly a century, was still promising. It showed that such an identity can exist and that the barriers between two monolithic cultures are much more permeable than one assumes at first glance.

Appendix I: Figures and Maps

Figure 1

性品知能圖



"Diagram of the Knowledge and Power of the Levels of the Natures" By Liu Zhi

(Source: Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*)

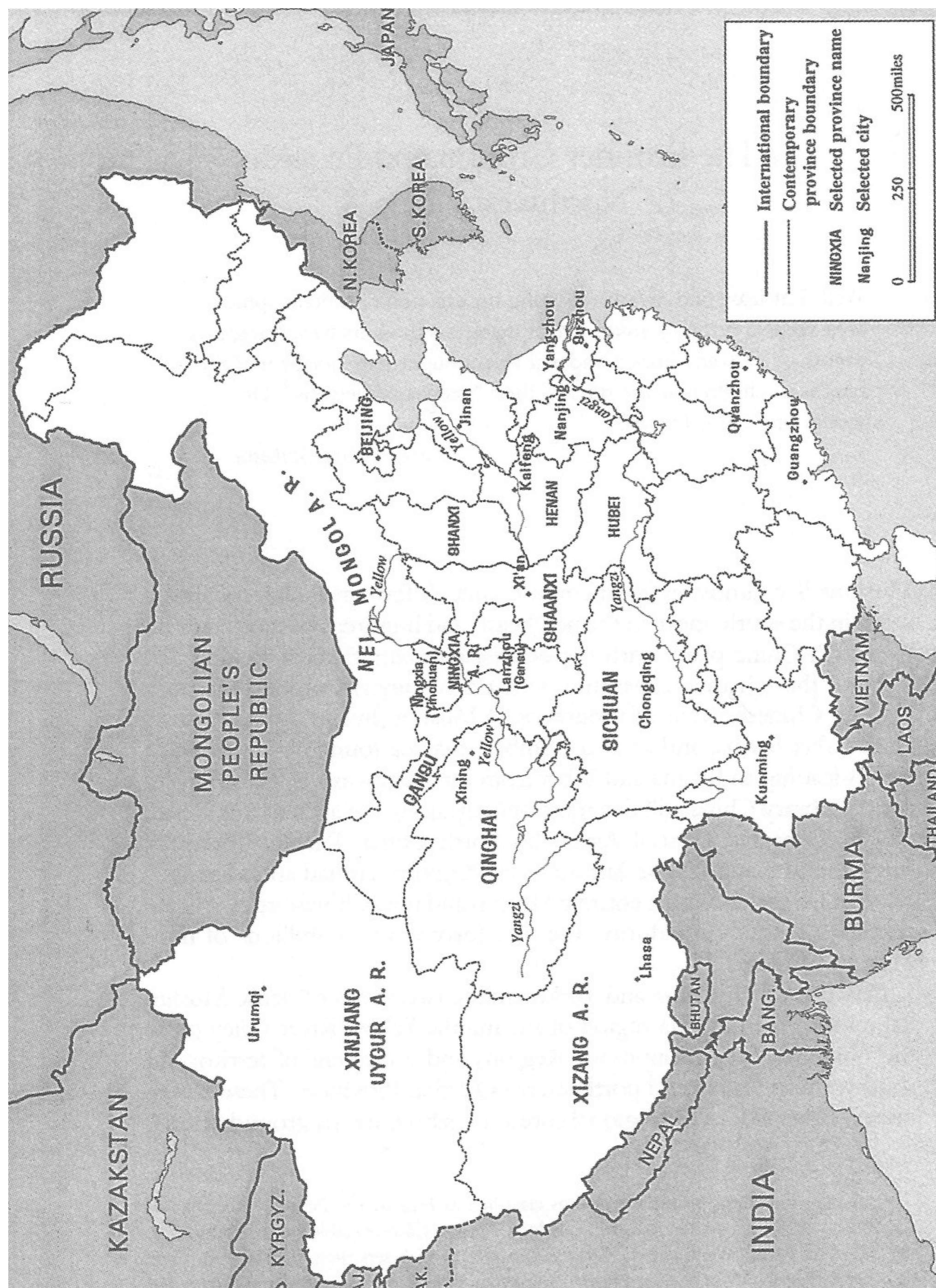
Figure 2

2.2
Diagram of the Knowledge and Power of the Levels of the Natures

“Diagram of the Knowledge and Power of the Levels of the Natures” By Liu Zhi

(Source: Murata et al., *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi*)

Figure 3: Map of China



Map of the People's Republic of China by Philip M. Mobley.

(Source: Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*)

Appendix II: Chronology of Chinese Dynasties and Important Figures

- Eastern Zhou Dynasty: 771-256 BCE
    - Confucius: 551-479 BCE
    - Mencius: 371-289 BCE
- Qin Dynasty: 221-206 BCE
- Early Han Dynasty: 206 BCE-8 CE
- Later Han Dynasty: 25-220
- Period of North-South Disunion: 220-589
- Northern Wei Dynasty: 386-535
- Sui Dynasty: 589-618
- Tang Dynasty: 618-907
    - The Prophet Muhammad: 570-632
    - Taizong Emperor's Reign: 626-649
    - Arrival of Islam in China in early Tang Dynasty
- Northern Song Dynasty: 960-1125
- Southern Song Dynasty: 1127-1279
    - Zhu Xi: 1130-1200
- Yuan Dynasty: 1279-1368
- Ming Dynasty:1368-1644
- Qing Dynasty: 1644-1912
    - Kangxi Emperor's Reign: 1662-1722
    - Liu Zhi: 1670-1724
    - Qianlong Emperor's Reign: 1736-1795

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