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THE HERITAGE OF SUFISM

VOLUME III

*Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501–1750)
The Safavid & Mughal Period*

EDITED BY LEONARD LEWISOHN & DAVID MORGAN

ONEWORLD
OXFORD

Sufi Texts in Chinese

SACHIKO MURATA

The Prophet is reported to have said, "Seek knowledge, even unto China." However, Chinese Muslims, who were already in China, had to seek knowledge from Persia, or at least from Persian texts. Islam entered China early on in Islamic history, though clear historical records do not begin appearing until around the fourth/tenth century. No one knows to what extent the Islamic presence in China derives from immigrants or from Chinese converts to Islam. In any case, many of the immigrants gradually became indistinguishable from the native Chinese, and a large population of Muslims who considered themselves Chinese became established. Until the seventeenth century, however, it seems that Islamic learning was transmitted mainly in Persian and Arabic (and perhaps Turkic as well), since we have no Chinese texts on Islam written by Chinese Muslims before this time. Historians agree on two basic points – that Chinese Muslims began to write on Islam in Chinese in the seventeenth century,[1] and that Chinese Islam in general is heavily influenced by Persianate Sufism.

In order to grasp the full significance of this Chinese writing, we need to remember that China provides us with the only pre-modern case in which Muslims wrote in the language of a major, pre-existing intellectual tradition. Only the Indian, Buddhist, Greek, and a Judaeo-Christian traditions could compare with China in terms of richness and sophistication, but Muslims never had to express themselves in the languages of those traditions. This makes the Chinese example a sort of precursor of what some Muslims have been trying to accomplish today in Western languages, and the evidence seems to suggest that the Chinese Muslims were much more successful.[2]

The Japanese historian Tazaka Kôdô analysed several book lists provided by Chinese, Japanese and European researchers in his monumental study of the history of Chinese Islam and came to the conclusion that the books used were mainly by Persian authors and mostly in Persian, though Arabic works also played an important role.[3] Saguchi Toru, another Japanese scholar, supported Tazaka's conclusions on the basis of fieldwork carried out in China in 1944. He visited seventeen mosques in Inner Mongolia and interviewed the local *'ulamā'*. He provides a list of books used in these mosques and their *madrasas* and concludes that most of the texts were written by Persians.[4] Altogether, he mentions twenty-one titles in Arabic and seventeen titles in Persian found in more than one mosque. The text found most commonly, in thirteen mosques, was *al-'Aqā'id*, the Islamic creed by the sixth/twelfth century theologian al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142-3).[5] According to Saguchi, though it certainly seems strange, only eleven mosques had copies of the Koran. Other commonly found works were on Arabic and Persian grammar, Ḥanafite jurisprudence, and *ḥadīth*. The most commonly found Sufi works were *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, the classic Persian compendium of Sufi lore by the seventh/thirteenth-century shaykh Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, in eight mosques; and the *Lama'āt* of his contemporary Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī, one of the most important Persian Sufi texts on love in the perspective of the school of Ibn al-'Arabī, in seven mosques. In addition, Sa'dī's *Gulistān*, which can certainly be considered a book of Sufi moral teachings, was found in eight mosques.

This brings us to a second issue, which is the translation of Islamic works into Chinese. Few Islamic works are known to have been translated, and even the Koran was not fully translated until 1927. As far as I have been able to determine, only four Islamic books are known for certain to have been rendered into Chinese before the present century, and all are well-known Persian Sufi texts.[6] The earliest text to be translated was Rāzī's *Mirṣād al-*

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[1] See Isaac Mason, "Notes on Chinese Mohammedan Literature," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 56 (1925), pp. 172–3; Donald Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China* (Canberra: Canberra College of Advanced Education 1986), pp. 136–8. The Japanese historian Kuwata Rokuro calls the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the "renaissance" of Chinese Islam. See his "Minmatsu sinsho no kaiju," *Shiratori Festschrift* (Tokyo Tôyôshi Ronkô 1925), pp. 377–8.

[2] Of course, the Chinese Muslims were faced with a situation very different from that of the modern world, given that the principles that have moulded modern thought are largely

hostile to religion, while no such hostility is found in the Chinese traditions. Although, one might argue that Far Eastern metaphysics and cosmology are impersonal and alien to the Islamic worldview, this was certainly not the view of the early Muslim authors of Chinese books.

[3] Tazaka Kôdô, *Chūgoku ni okeru kaikyō no denrai to sono gutsū*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Tôyô Bunko 1924), pp. 1261–97.

[4] Saguchi Toru, "Chūgoku isuramu no kyōten," *Toyōgakukō* 32 (1950), pp. 480–508.

[5] An English translation of the Arabic text, along with that of the commentary by Taftazānī, was done by E.E. Elder, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press 1950).

[6] Other texts were certainly translated, but the present state of research makes their status difficult to determine. Most of the secondary literature has been written by scholars conversant with Chinese but unable to make use of the Islamic sources. Statements or suggestions by the Chinese authors that a work is a translation need to be tested against the original texts. Take, for example, Liu Chih's most famous book, to which he gave both a Persian and a Chinese title, *Tarjama-ye Muṣṭafā: T'ien-fang chih-sheng shih-lu* (The Translation of Muṣṭafā: The

'ibād, which was published by Wu Tzu-hsien in the year 1670.[7] The second was the *Lawā'iḥ* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, translated eighty years later, in 1751, by Liu Chih, perhaps the greatest Muslim scholar of China. The third book to be translated was the *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* by the well-known Sufi 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. *c.* 700/1300). This was done in 1679 by She Yün-shan, who also went by the pen-name P'o Na-ch'ih. He was a disciple of Ch'ang Chih-me (d. 1683), who was author of a popular Persian grammar (which Saguchi found in eight mosques).[8] The fourth book, *Ashi"at al-lama'āt* – Jāmī's well-known commentary on 'Irāqī's *Lama'āt* – was also translated by She Yün-shan, though it is not known to have been published before 1930.[9] The fame of the first three of these books can be judged partly by the fact that they are among the small number of Sufi texts that have been translated into English.[10]

It should not be surprising that the Muslims of China translated Sufi texts rather than any other sort of Islamic text, given that the primary need of the Chinese Muslims, who were already practising their religion, was to be able to

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Biography of the Ultimate Sage of Arabia). Leslie thinks that the main body of the text is in fact a translation of a fourteenth-century Persian work, *Tarjuma-yi mawlūd-i Muṣṭafā*, by 'Afīf ibn Muḥammad al-Kāzirūnī, which in turn is a translation from the Arabic original by 'Afīf's father (D. Leslie, *Islamic Literature in Chinese*, Canberra: Canberra College of Advanced Education 1981], p. 49). Another work, *Han i tao hsin chiu ching* (The Chinese Translation of the Final Investigation into the Progress of the Faith) by Ma Fu-chu, a prolific nineteenth-century scholar who was executed for his alleged involvement in a rebellion in Yunnan, is based on a Persian book by the same author (n.p.: 1870, p. 1). For present purposes, perhaps the most interesting of the works waiting to be carefully studied is *Ta hua tsung kuei* (The Great Transformation of All Returning), which is described as having been dictated and edited by Ma Fu-chu and written down by Ma Kai-ko. It is presented as a translation of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which must mean Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Nonetheless, Ma Kai-ko states in the introduction that the significance of the book is that, in contrast to the works of Wang Tai-yu and Liu Chih, it explains the nature of death and resurrection, but, as we know, the Arabic *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* has little to say about this topic. It was compiled in 1865, when Fu-chus was 72 years old (Beijing 1922, p. 3; see also Chang-kuan Lin, "Three Eminent Chinese Ulama of Yunnan," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 11/1 [1990], pp. 103–8).

[7] According to Leslie (*Islamic Literature in Chinese*, p. 29), a second translation of the *Mirṣād* was published in 1686-7, without the translator's name.

[8] Leslie lists two translations of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, a dated one by She Yün-shan and an undated one with a different title by P'o Na-ch'ih (Leslie, *Islamic Literature in Chinese*, pp. 32–4). Yu Zhen-qui says that "P'o Na-ch'ih" is She's pen-name." (*Zhongguo yisinan wanxian zhuyi tiyao* [Ningshia] 1993), p. 111. This book does not seem to be extant, though an outline of its contents follows the Persian text closely (see R. Maerczak, "Littérature Sino-musulmane," *Revue du monde musulmane*, 28 [1914], pp. 147–9).

[9] Leslie, *Islamic Literature in Chinese*, p. 43; Yu Zhen-qui, *Zhongguo yisinan wanxian zhuyi tiyao*, pp. 111–12; Saguchi, *Islam no kyōten*, p. 112.

[10] *Mirṣād* has an excellent translation by H. Algar as *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books 1982), *Lawā'iḥ* an adequate translation by E. H. Whinfield and M.M. Kazwini as *Lawā'iḥ: A Treatise on Sufism* (London 1906), and *Maqṣad* a misleading and inadequate paraphrase by E.H. Palmer as *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on the Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians* (London 1867).

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think about it adequately in their native language, which was by now Chinese. Of course, philosophy and *kalām* represent two other theoretical approaches to Islamic knowledge, but both were much more technical and assumed a broad acquaintance with the Islamic intellectual tradition. There is no book on philosophy or *kalām* that begins to approach *Mirṣād al-'ibād* in clarity, simplicity, and broad accessibility. In the Islamic languages themselves, only sophisticated scholars are able to read texts on philosophy and *kalām*, whereas various Sufi texts – especially Sufi poetry – are readily accessible to all Muslims.

Moreover, Sufism is well known for the broadness of its point of view, especially when compared with *kalām*. The earliest Muslim authors of books on Chinese demonstrate a great open-mindedness toward the three traditions of China – Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism – and they were well acquainted with Neoconfucian scholarship, which in certain respects brings the three Chinese traditions into harmony. They must have found the Sufi approach to metaphysical and cosmological teachings much more congenial than the polemical approach of *kalām*, and much easier to render into Chinese than the extremely technical discussions of the philosophers.

WANG TAIYU

The first Muslim author of Chinese books about Islam was Wang Taiyu, who seems to have died in 1657 or 1658. He was a member of a Muslim family that traced itself back to an astronomer who had come to China to serve the emperor three hundred years earlier. Despite the fact that his family had been in China for three centuries, he gained his Islamic learning in the Islamic languages. He did not begin a serious study of literary Chinese until the age of thirty when, he tells us, "I was so ashamed of my stupidity and smallness that I started to read books on metaphysics and history." Clearly, to be ashamed of his stupidity he must have been dealing mostly with learned Chinese-speakers, whether or not they were Muslims.

Wang provides a case study to demonstrate why Muslims should have undertaken to write in Chinese in the first place. One can conclude both from what he himself says explicitly and from the general content of his works that he was addressing two groups of people. One group consisted of the traditional Chinese intellectual classes, who would have been aware of Islam but had no idea about basic Islamic teachings other than the fact that Muslims did not eat pork (the truly outstanding Muslim characteristic in Chinese eyes). The other group was made up of Muslims who had become assimilated to the Chinese tradition to such a degree that they were unable to study Islamic literature in the Islamic languages, although they were familiar with the intellectual currents of China itself.

Wang has left us with one major work and four minor works. The major work, 'The True Commentary on the Real Teaching' (*Cheng-chiao chen*

ch'üan), was first published in 1642 during his lifetime and has since been reprinted many times, most recently in 1987. This work has often been considered the foremost classic of Chinese Islam. In it, Wang summarizes Islamic teachings in two volumes, each of which is divided into twenty chapters. The first volume focuses on theological and metaphysical issues, such as the divine attributes, creation, predestination and the nature of the perfect human being. The second is more concerned with spiritual attitudes, ethics, and certain issues having to do with the *sharī'a*. The book has little to say about Islamic practice, which was presumably being passed on in the social context. Rather, it focuses on why Islamic teachings make sense and why they should be accepted. In cases where practice is discussed, the issues are usually those that would go against traditional Chinese teachings, such as the prohibition of pork.

In explaining Islamic teachings, Wang makes skilful use of the terminology of the three Chinese traditions to prove his points. He depicts Islam in a way that agrees with basic Chinese ideas. He shows respect for the Chinese traditions and is happy to quote from the Chinese classics or to employ Buddhist and Taoist terminology to make his points. He is not uncritical of these traditions, but the degree of his criticisms probably does not transgress the degree of the mutual criticisms that were common among these traditions. Hence, his works do not suggest that Islam was alien to Chinese civilization. The Chinese reader would not feel that Islam is very different from the Chinese religions, and in fact, unless one has specific knowledge about Islam, it would be difficult to decide which religion much of the book is discussing. (When I showed this work to a Chinese colleague, opened randomly, and asked him about the topic, he read it for a few minutes and then said "Buddhism.")

Of course, I do not want to suggest that all Chinese Muslims were happy with the way in which Wang Taiyu was presenting Islam. He himself remarks that certain Muslim scholars had read his manuscript and criticized him for quoting too much from the Chinese classics and going too deeply into the metaphysics of Taoism and Buddhism. Wang says that his only concern was how the 'Principle' worked; he did not want to borrow any of the words. And why should his readers consider Buddhism or Taoism as strange? He agrees with his critics that everything can be found in the classical books of Islam, but he points out that Chinese speakers do not have access to these books. Hence, he has presented Islam in such a way that those unfamiliar with its teachings can understand it. In short, Wang followed the prophetic dictum, "Speak to listeners according to the level of their understanding."

Little is known about Wang's personal life or training, but it is obvious from his writings that he was thoroughly grounded in the Sufi intellectual tradition. It is well known that certain Sufi orders were active in China during this period, and there is no reason to suppose that the sophisticated theoretical

doctrines of Sufism had not been brought along with more practically oriented teachings. The most obvious candidate for intellectual influence on Wang Taiyu was the school of Ibn 'Arabī, which was flourishing throughout the Islamic world at this time. However, Wang almost never cites Arabic words or mentions names of Muslim scholars in his writings, so it would be difficult to argue historically for such influence. Rather, I think we can assume the influence simply on the basis of the content of his works.

The influence of Sufi theoretical teachings is most obvious in one of Wang's shorter works, called 'The Great Learning of the Pure and the Real' (*Ch'ing-chen ta-hsüeh*), or, as one could also translate it, 'The Principles of Islam'. This book is a study of the concept of unity, and it employs a much more philosophical style than Wang's other books. Its basic topics are God, the Muḥammadan Reality, and the perfect human being, though these Arabic terms are not mentioned. Wang calls these realities 'The Real One' (*chenyi*), 'The Numerical One' (*shuyi*), and 'The Embodied One' (*tiyi*). He tells us that the Real One is the lord of heaven, earth, and the Ten Thousand Things; the Numerical One is the seed of heaven, earth, and the Ten Thousand Things; and the Embodied One is the fruit of heaven, earth, and the Ten Thousand Things. Throughout the text, Wang's goal is to explain the relationship between God and the perfect human being and to explicate the manner in which human beings can actualize their own true nature. Anyone familiar with the writings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī should find themselves quite at home in these discussions, despite the unfamiliar use of Chinese terminology.

LIU CHIH

A second important scholar, and a much more prolific author, is Liu Chih, who is ranked with Wang Taiyu as one of the two fathers of Chinese Islam.[11] He was born around 1670 and wrote the culminating work of his career in 1724, though it is not known when he died. Liu Chih tells us that he wrote several hundred manuscripts but only published ten per cent of them. His father was a scholar who felt deeply the lack of Islamic materials in Chinese. After a preliminary Islamic education, Liu Chih began studying the Chinese classics at the age of 15, then devoted six years to Arabic and Islamic literature, three years to Buddhism and a year to Taoism. He also tells us that he completed his education by studying 137 books from the West. Scholars have assumed that he means European books, and this is plausible, given the fact that the famous Jesuit Matteo Ricci had arrived in China more than a century earlier, in 1601, and he and his successors had written many Chinese tracts on Christianity and

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[11] Several of the details about Liu Chih provided here are taken from the article by A.D.W. Forbes, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), pp. 770–1.

Western knowledge in general. One Japanese scholar, however, thinks that this might simply mean Persian and Arabic books.[12]

From the age of 33, that is, around the year 1700, some forty years after the death of Wang Taiyu, Liu Chih turned his efforts towards making Islamic learning available in Chinese. Western scholars have remarked that he is more sympathetic toward Confucianism than any other Chinese Muslim author. Like Wang Taiyu, he saw no fundamental discrepancy between Islamic teachings on God and the world and the grand philosophical systems of Neoconfucianism, which by this period was the predominant philosophical and religious perspective of China. He wrote that the guiding principle of the Koran is similar to that which motivated Confucius and Mencius. Here he uses the term *li*, the basic Neoconfucian term for the 'principle of all things', and he writes that this "*li* is the same *li* that exists everywhere under heaven." He seems to be expressing in Chinese the Koranic view that God has sent prophets to teach *tawhīd* to all peoples. In the preface to Liu Chih's first major work, 'The Philosophy of Arabia' (*Tien-fang hsing-li*), published in 1704, a non-Muslim mandarin, who was Vice-Minister of the Board of Ritual, wrote as follows: "The ancient Confucian doctrine has been undermined at different times by Buddhists and Taoists ... Now, however, in this book of Liu Chih, we see once more the way of the ancient sages ... Thus, although this book explains Islam, in truth it illuminates our Confucianism."

Liu Chih's 'Philosophy of Arabia' presents basic Islamic teachings on *tawhīd* and cosmology. The six-volume edition that I have seen includes an introduction and five chapters. The introduction provides ten basic diagrams illustrating various relationships among macrocosmic, microcosmic, and metacosmic realities. The five chapters explain each of these diagrams in systematic detail, employing twelve more diagrams in each chapter. On the one hand the diagrams are reminiscent of those common in the Arabic and Persian works of the school of Ibn 'Arabī from about the eighth/fourteenth century onwards,[13] and on the other they appear to be traditional Chinese descriptions of the cosmos.

By 'Philosophy' Liu Chih does not mean *falsafa* in the technical Islamic sense, but rather 'wisdom' as formulated in Sufi texts. This becomes completely clear in the introduction, in which he quotes by name from seven different Persian and Arabic books. The titles of the books and the frequency of his mentioning them are highly significant. The most often cited is *Mirṣād al-'ibād* (twenty-nine times), then Jāmī's *Ashi''at al-lama'āt* (fifteen times), then Nasafī's *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* (twelve times), and then Jāmī's *Lawā'iḥ* (eleven

times). The next most frequently quoted book (nine times) is *Mawāqif*, the famous Arabic text on *kalām* by the eighth/fourteenth-century scholar al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). Liu Chih also quotes four times from what he calls *Tafsīr*, which is probably the well-known Persian commentary on the Koran by Ḥusayn Wā'iẓ-i Kāshifī; and he quotes once from a book he calls *Aḥkām-i kawākib*, which is presumably a Persian work on astronomy.

In his 'Philosophy of Arabia' and in another well-known work called 'A Selection of Important Arabian Rules and Ceremonies' (*T'ien-fang tien-li che-yao-chiai*), Liu Chih provides lists of the titles that he has employed as his sources. Altogether, these consist of sixty-eight different works, of which eighteen are used in both books, and of which at least fifteen are on Sufism.[14] Although the identity of all these titles has yet to be established, there do not seem to be any significant works pertaining to the fields of *kalām* and *falsafa* other than the work of Ījī. In other words, most of the works that provide theoretical explanations of the nature of things – God, the cosmos, the soul – belong to the Sufi tradition. It is clearly the Sufi works, along with the Chinese intellectual tradition – Neoconfucianism in particular – that form the basis for Liu Chih's explanation of Islamic teachings.

Liu Chih's last major work, which he considered the climax of his career, was a biography of Muḥammad, completed in Nanking in 1137/1724. This work has been wholly or partly translated into Russian, French, English, and Japanese.[15] I have examined the English and Japanese translations, and both suffer from the translators' lack of knowledge of Islam, though they do provide a good idea of the contents of the work. Although the article on Liu Chih in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* calls his life of the Prophet "undoubtedly Liu Chih's greatest work," we may be allowed to doubt this, given that 'greatness' should not necessarily be assumed on the basis of widespread appeal. I think that Liu Chih's efforts to harmonize Islamic metaphysical, cosmological, and spiritual teachings with the Chinese tradition may in fact have been a much more important contribution to the permanent establishment of Islam in China.

The Translation of the Lawā'iḥ

One of the most interesting and significant of Liu Chih's works is his translation of the *Lawā'iḥ* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), which has already been mentioned. Jāmī, as is well known, was one of the most famous and influential of the later scholars in the eastern lands of Islam, and he was

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[12] Nohara Shiro, *Tempō tenrei taku yōkai no hōyaku ni saishite kaiyyōken*, IV, 2 (Tokyo 1940). p. 81.

[13] For a collection of twenty-eight such diagrams provided by the Sayyid Haydar Āmulī, see *Kitāb naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. by H. Corbin and O. Yahia (Tehran: Bibliothèque Iranienne 1975).

[14] In his list of sources, he mentions several other Sufi works, including the *Kashf al-maḥjūb* of Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-asrār* of Maybudī, and *Tadhkirat al-awliā'* of 'Aṭṭār. Tazaka, *Chugoku*, gives twelve titles on Sufism, pp. 1286–89.

[15] The whole text was translated into Japanese, and about the first half of the book was rendered into English by Isaac Mason (Shanghai 1921).

widely read wherever Persian was known. Some of Jāmī's Persian works, including the *Lawā'iḥ*, are sophisticated presentations of the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī, and Dāwūd al-Qaysarī.[16] In what follows, I would like to illustrate the way in which the Sufi texts were translated with an example of what Liu Chih does with the *Lawā'iḥ*. What I will say also holds more or less true for the translation of the *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, though, of course, the *Lawā'iḥ* is a much more difficult and technical book. It should not be surprising to anyone who has read both works that the *Mirṣād* should have become a standard text in the *madrasas*; the *Lawā'iḥ* was certainly reserved for a minority of philosophically and metaphysically minded scholars and students.

Like Wang Taiyu, the translators of these two works avoid mentioning Arabic or Persian words unless it is absolutely necessary. Thus, for example, in the translation of the *Lawā'iḥ*, Liu Chih mentions the words *Allāh* and *Raḥmān* only once. Neither translator makes any attempt to translate Islamic ideas in a literal way. The translations are really paraphrases, in which the translators are not concerned with finding exact equivalents for Arabic and Persian terms, but rather with presenting the general ideas in a manner that accords with the Chinese tradition. This is especially so when the ideas and concepts are alien to China. In such cases, the translators are likely to drop the passage. In short, they present the texts so that they will make sense not only to Chinese Muslims, but also to non-Muslim Chinese.

In the *Lawā'iḥ*, Jāmī alleviates the denseness of the philosophical discussion by interspersing his text with quatrains which summarize his points with the usual lightness of Persian poetry. If one has not quite understood what he is getting at in the prose sections, at least the poetry delights the ear and suggests in more straightforward language the point of the discussion. In his translation, Liu Chih is interested only in the prose text, and with two exceptions, he makes no attempt to translate the quatrains. Hence the Chinese text keeps the high philosophical level throughout, and readers have no opportunity to refresh themselves with poetical diversions.

Liu Chih not only drops the poetry, he also, on occasion, adds commentary to the text, and he does not tell the reader that the translator rather than the author is speaking. Some of his commentary helps us understand how he sees

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[16] Jāmī's influence and fame, however, were far greater than these prose works would have warranted, because he was also a great poet. He was a master of the ghazal, and many of his ghazals are explicit in their use of the technical terminology of Ibn 'Arabī's school. No doubt his seven *mathnawī*s, however, were even more widely read, since they retell many of the classic stories of Islamic literature, such as "Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā," "Laylī wa Majnūn," and the "Iskandar Nāma." Like the *mathnawī*s of 'Aṭṭār or Rūmī, these stories are full of digressions in which the author explains points of Islamic doctrine, but in contrast to those works, the doctrines in these works are firmly grounded in the world view codified by Ibn 'Arabī and his followers.

this text in relation to traditional Chinese thinking. Thus, for example, at the end of the twelfth chapter, Liu Chih writes that the first twelve chapters have dealt with the virtues of seeking the path and walking upon it, while the remaining twenty-four chapters concern the meanings of the Principle that is both manifesting and non-manifesting. The Chinese term here is the already mentioned *li*, the key concept in Neoconfucian philosophy and cosmology, while the Persian/Arabic word that he has in mind is *ḥaqīqa*. In Neoconfucian thought, Tai Chi or the 'Great Ultimate' (also called the Tao) is considered the Principle of the universe. Then the movement and quietude of the Principle bring yang and yin into existence, and these are considered the *chi* – the 'energy' or the 'material force' of the Principle. Thus, the whole of creation is looked upon as a manifestation of the Principle by means of the Principle's two energies or forces. Liu Chih and other Chinese Muslim scholars saw this as completely in harmony with Islamic thinking.[17]

Jāmī calls each chapter of *Lawā'iḥ* simply a *lā'iḥa*, or 'flash', but Liu Chih provides a specific title for each. He calls chapter 18 'Gathering the Levels'. Before translating Jāmī's explanation of how everything goes back to the very reality of Being (*'ayn-i ḥaqīqat-i wujūd*), he provides his own commentary, employing the terms *li* and *chi*, Principle and Energy. I quote:

> When there is true Being, there is true knowledge. When there is true knowledge, there is true power. Knowledge and power are the functions of Being, and they act to create. After the action of creation, Principle and Energy become separate. After the separation of Principle and Energy, the things appear. After the things appear, the growing forms appear. After the growing forms appear, animate life is born. Then the kinds of the things become distinguished, and the classes of the things are divided in accordance with the names. Names and forms depend upon each other, but these are not real things. The real things are nothing but the True Being, which first manifests all its affairs on the level of knowledge, which is contained in the Principle. Then, on the level of power, the forms appear separately, which means that the things come into being outwardly. Existent things depend upon the demarcating names of the True Being. Life depends on growth; growth depends on the composition of the elements; the composition of the elements depends on Energy; Energy depends on Principle. Principle is the subtle storehouse of the True Being's knowledge and power.

Liu Chih now proceeds to paraphrase Jāmī's chapter. Jāmī is reviewing a well-known philosophical method of reducing all multiplicity to the One and showing that everything perceived in the universe manifests the Absolute

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[17] Long before I was familiar with these Chinese books, I myself felt, on the basis of my Far Eastern background, that Islamic thought was basically in harmony with that of traditional China, and I tried to show this in my *Tao of Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press 1993). I have been delighted over the past three years to discover that I have been following in the footsteps of these Chinese teachers.

Being. He begins with the individuals, and then he shows how all the individuals go back to the species, the species back to the genera, the genera back to body, the body back to substance, substance back to possible existence, and possible existence back to the Necessary Being . Then he explains that the 'immutable entities' (*a'yān-i thābita*) – a term made famous by Ibn 'Arabī's writings – pertain to God's knowledge. These entities are the things as known by God, and hence they are the things 'before' their entrance into existence. God creates the universe by giving existence to these objects of his own knowledge. Hence God is at once the source of all multiplicity, because of his knowledge of all things, and of unity, because of his own one Being. As Ibn 'Arabī sometimes expresses this idea, God is *al-wāḥid al-kathīr*, 'the One/the Many'.

In order to give a flavour of the changes that occur in the Chinese, I will translate Jāmī's text from the Persian, passage by passage, then Liu Chih's text from the Chinese. Notice that Jāmī, in typical Persian style, employs a good deal of technical terminology, often using two different but basically synonymous words, in order to bring together various well-known ways of saying the same thing. In contrast, Liu Chih is not concerned to preserve the technical terminology, but rather to express the idea in a straightforward manner.

> Jāmī: "Once you remove the individuations and the entitifications that are subsumed under the individuals and species of the animals, then the individuals of every species come together under *species*. When you remove the distinctions of the species, which are the specific differences and the characteristics, then all come together under the reality of *growing body*."

Liu Chih summarizes this paragraph very briefly: "If you remove the distinctions of the names that demarcate the 'animate things' all of them become growing bodies."

> Jāmī: "When you remove the distinctions of the growing body and everything subsumed along with it under the body, then everything comes together in the reality of *body*. When you remove the distinctions of the body and everything subsumed along with it under substance – I mean the intellects and the souls – then everything comes together under the reality of *substance*. When you remove that through which substance and accident become distinct, everything comes together under the reality of the *possible thing*."

Here Jāmī has taken three steps to move from the concept of growing *body* to the concept of *possibility*. Possibility is contrasted with Necessity. Possibility is the characteristic of creation, while Necessity is the exclusive property of God or Being. Liu Chih does not bother trying to explain these three steps or to enter into a discussion of possibility and Necessity. Instead, he expresses a parallel idea in Neoconfucian terms. Thus he jumps from *growing body* to the matter in which Energy displays itself. Energy, of

course, is *chi*, which is contrasted with *li* or Principle. *Chi* and *li* together play a role in Neoconfucianism analogous with possibility and Necessity in Islamic thought. Thus Liu Chih writes: "If you remove the distinctions of the names that demarcate the growing bodies, all of them become the matter of Energy."

Next Jāmī writes, "If you remove that through which the Necessary and the possible become distinct, both come together under the reality of the Absolute Existent [*mawjūd-i muṭlaq*]." Liu Chih renders this as, "If you remove the distinctions that demarcate the names of the matter of Energy, everything makes up one Principle."

Now Jāmī explains that the Absolute Existent is nothing but pure Being, which has the attribute of necessity. In contrast, possible existence is rooted in the immutable entities. These entities are also called the divine 'tasks' (*shu'ūn*), one of Ibn 'Arabī's technical terms, taken from the Koranic verse, "Each day He is upon some task" (LV:29). Thus each entity is a 'task' of God, or a concomitant of His very reality, which is nothing but Being. Hence all multiplicity goes back to the One Essence.

> Jāmī: "This [Absolute Existent] is nothing but the reality of Being. It exists through its own Essence, not through an existence that is superadded to its Essence. Necessity is the manifest attribute of Being, while possibility is Its nonmanifest attribute. [By possibility] I mean the immutable entities that are actualized when He discloses Himself to Himself as clothed in His own tasks. Thus all the mentioned distinctions – whether the specific differences, the characteristics, the entifications, or the individuations – are the divine 'tasks'" that are subsumed and contained under the Oneness of the Essence."

In his translation of this passage, Liu Chih once again ignores the discussion of Necessity and possibility; nor does he pay any attention to the issue of the immutable entities and the term divine 'task', a word which, after all, is used in Arabic and Persian mainly because it supports the argument with a Koranic context. The Koranic context is obvious in the Persian, but it is unknown to most Chinese readers and would take too much time to explain. Instead of going into the discussion of immutable entities and God's self-disclosure to Himself in the entities, Liu Chih presents the distinction between the entities and God's self-disclosure as the complementary attributes of Knowledge and Power, which can easily be assimilated with yin and yang, though he does not do so here. He writes:

> If you remove the distinctions of the names that demarcate the Principle of the things, all of them become the knowledge and the power of the One True Being. If you remove the distinctions that demarcate the names of Knowledge and Power, all of them become the Absolute Being.

In the next two sentences, Jāmī tells us that all the distinctions mentioned in reducing multiplicity to unity are already present in the immutable entities,

and they become manifest when God bestows existence on the immutable entities, thus making manifest the existent entities. He writes:

> The distinctions come forth first at the level of knowledge in the form of the immutable entities. Second, they take to themselves the form of external entities at the level of actual existence. They do so by becoming clothed in the properties and the traces of the tasks through the manifest domain of Being, which is the locus of disclosure and the mirror for the non-manifest domain of Being.

In rendering this passage, Liu Chih pays no attention to the technical terminology, but instead represents the idea in straightforward terms. "True Being is one, but the manifesting demarcations of the names are not one." Then he provides his own commentary by summarizing the significance of the point: "Those who have a narrow vision do not reach the Origin, and thus they think that the Lord is outside the things. The fact is that the Lord delimits Himself through the Ten Thousand Things."