

**Islamic Theology in Muslim Chinese Writings:
Qingzhen Shiyi of Jin Tianzhu as an Example**

**Teologi Islam dalam Karya-Karya Cina Islam: Qingzhen
Shiyi karya hasil Jin Tianzhu sebagai salah satu contoh**

Ma Zhan Ming¹

Abstract

The *Qingzhen Shiyi* is an Islamic theological work in the Chinese language by Jin Tianzhu, an 18th-century Chinese Muslim scholar. His reason for writing the book was twofold: (1) to remove the suspicion in the minds of Chinese government officials that Muslim behaviour went against Chinese culture and practices, and (2) to educate Chinese Muslims on the implications of the teachings of Islam for their daily lives. He thus discusses Islamic practices from two angles: the theological and the jurisprudential. His arguments are to some extent apologetic in that he makes use of the views of Confucius to justify the efficacy of Islamic rites and rituals. At the same time, however, he uses logic to explain why certain Muslim practices are to be appreciated. The aim of this paper is to introduce the *Qingzhen Shiyi* as an example of how Chinese Muslim scholars use their writings to promote understanding of Islam in China. It focuses on Tianzhu's views on God, the lawful and the unlawful, rewards and punishments, the celebration of *Eid*, charitable works, the ritual ablution, and the wearing of the skullcap.

Key words: China Muslim, Jintianzhu

Abstrak

Qingzhen Shiyi adalah sebuah karya teologi Islam dalam bahasa Cina yang ditulis oleh sarjana Cina Islam abad ke lapan belas dikenali sebagai Jin Tianzhu. Karya ini dihasilkan atas dua sebab utama: (1) menghilangkan kecurigaan dari pemikiran pegawai kerajaan negara Cina pada masa itu mengenai salah faham bahawa perilaku penganut agama Islam adalah bertentangan dengan amalan dan budaya mereka, dan (2) mengajar orang-orang Cina Islam pegajaran asal Islam mengenai kehidupan seharian. Karya ini dilihat sebagai sebuah karya teologi merangkap falsafah undang-undang kerana pengarang karya ini telah membincangkan amalan-amalan Islam dari dua sudut tersebut. Pengarang dilihat sedikit kesal kerana untuk menjustifikasikan keberkesanan upacara-upacara Islam beliau telah menggunakan ajaran Konfusius. Beliau juga

¹Associate Professor of Ningxia University, Ningxia, China. This paper is part of his PhD thesis at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, IIUM, (2006-2009).

menggunakan logik untuk menjelaskan mengapa amalan Islam tertentu dianggap tinggi dan penting. Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk memperkenalkan Karyawan Cina Islam Jin Tianzu dan karya beliau berjudul *Qingzhen Shiyi* yang bertumpukan pada pandangan teologis Tianzhu mengenai Tuhan, balasan dan seksaan, hukum halal dan haram, sambutan Hari Raya Eidul Fitri, kerja-kerja amal, pemakaian kopiah, berhadass dan lain-lain.

Kata Kunci: Cina Muslim, Jintianzhu.

Introduction

Islam arrived peacefully in China in an early period of its history. A thousand years later, Muslims continued to maintain their own faith and identity while practicing their religion. As a result, they differed from the majority of the populace in many social aspects, while the majority of the Chinese society was suspicious of Muslims putting Muslims, at times, in a difficult situation. The situation worsened considerably during the Qing Dynasty when a number of officials used the practices of Muslims as an excuse to report them to the Emperor asking for the destruction of mosques and the forcing of Muslims to give up their faith and practices.²

Neo-Confucianism was the mainstream of Chinese culture, and it was for the adherents of this faith to decide if any other religion or culture should be permitted to exist in China. Muslim scholars at the time of Ming and Qing were aware of this and tried to demonstrate the similarities between Islam and Confucianism using Confucian terms to express Islamic concepts so as to help people understand them easily. Later generations called this approach “Yi Ru Quan Yi”, meaning, “To annotate Islam using Confucian terms”. Such works made by Muslim scholars were named by the Muslim populace as, “Han Ki Ta Bu”, meaning, “Islamic books in the Chinese language”. According to some sources, there exist hundreds of such works,³ one of which is Tianzhu’s *Qingzhen Shiyi*, the subject of this study.

Tianzhu: A Brief Life-Sketch

According to some references, Liuzhi (刘智) was born around 1660 and died in 1745. In his preface, Tianzhu referred to Liu as belonging to the older generation. Tianzhu entered Hanlin Academy in 1727 and was able to complete his book in 1737. Eight years later, when he was preparing to publish his book, he wrote a letter to his boss, a senior minister to explain the reason why he wanted him to write the preface which was to remind him after retirement

²Fu Tongxian, *History of Islam in China*. (Ningxia: People’s Publishing House, 2000), p. 78.

³A collection entitled *Reserved Books* had been published in 2008 and contains 235 books.

of the days he had worked under his supervision. This happened during 1746. Based on this, it is established that Tianzhu was born in 1690 and died in or around 1756.⁴

Tianzhu grew up in an intellectual Muslim family. Since his childhood, he was educated in both Islamic teachings and the Confucian doctrine. In the 4th year of Yong Zheng (1727), Tianzhu visited his father's grave in Beijing. Within days of his arrival in the capital, he met the Minister of Hanlin,⁵ who was admitting applicants by examination. Tianzhu successfully passed the exam and started working as an instructor in Si Yi Guan (The Translators' Institute).⁶ As instructor, Tianzhu's job was to interpret textbooks, teach alphabets and pronunciation, explain their meanings and clarify customs and daily etiquette. Ten years later, in the 2nd year of Qianlong (1737),⁷ Tianzhu was promoted to the position of Master of Translators and Lecturers while lecturing in the Huihui Department of the Institute.⁸

As a lecturer, Tianzhu had to be well versed in either Arabic or Persian or both. The contents of his book shows that Tianzhu had not only read the works of Muslim scholars such as Wang Daiyu (1575-1660) and Liuzhi, but had also perused Arabic and Persian works. Tianzhu was well versed in Islamic theology (the science of *KalĒm*), Islamic law and very familiar with the history of Islam and the life of Prophets (Peace be upon them). The quotations provided in the book show that the author was well acquainted with China's traditional culture, particularly with The Four Books and The Five Classics of Confucius.⁹ Tianzhu was also familiar with Buddhism and Taoism, and possessed a detailed knowledge of the history of China and the life of its ancient emperors, and had also studied the science of critical interpretation of ancient texts.¹⁰

As for Tianzhu's later years, my trips to the libraries of Dalian, Peking University and some other libraries in China, in addition to the UM library which has many valuable Chinese books, could not provide

⁴ Hai Zheng Zhong, *Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi in Modern Chinese*. (Yinchuan: Ningxia Publishing House, 2002), p. 18.

⁵ 'Hanlin' is an Academic Institution of the central Government of China since Tang till Qing. ⁶It means the 'Institution of Foreigners'.

⁷Qian Long is the title of the reign of Gao Zong, Emperor of the Qing Dynasty, Hong Li, who occupied the throne from 1736 to 1796.

⁸*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi in Modern Chinese*. p. 156.

⁹The titles of The Four Books are: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of The Mean*, *The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*. The titles of *The Five Classics* are: *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. These were the principal books Chinese learners had to read and learn to pass exams and become officials.

¹⁰*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi in Modern Chinese*. p. 54.

me with any further information. As for his later offspring, we have only two clues about his descendants. First, Chen Dashao—an author of one of the prefaces to *Qingzhen Shiyi*—mentioned that Tianzhu’s two sons were training in the same official institute and that they were accomplished masters in writing who were going to take the imperial examination and would, hopefully, become officials.¹¹ Second, Jin Shihe, a well-known Muslim scholar in the time of the Republic of China (1912-1949) claimed in his preface to Wang Daiyu’s *The Great Learning of Islam* that Tianzhu was his ancestor.¹²

His Book Qingzhen Shiyi

As a Muslim intellectual, Tianzhu had long intended to write a book in the Chinese language to introduce Islam to Chinese people and society. The most important reason that led him to write was the presentations of some officials that incited the discussion of Islam among people and the spread of slander about Muslim behaviours. Tianzhu thought that the reason leading to that situation was the public ignorance about Islam which caused doubts and suspicions. He, therefore, made up his mind to write a book which could help Muslims and also others understand the true face of Islamic law and Muslims’ behavioural pattern.

However, Tianzhu did not start at once, as he was not sure if his writing style was fine and feared that people might despise his book as stated in his letter to the Minister.¹³ The dire political situation which could have potentially caused him many problems may have been another reason causing delay in his project. However, in the second year of Qianlong (1737), Tianzhu’s position had risen which encouraged him to view the situation positively and believe in his own abilities more confidently. It was in those circumstances that Tianzhu started writing. Having studied both Islamic knowledge and Confucian books since childhood and drawn upon his experiences, Tianzhu completed the book *Qingzhen Shiyi* in only a month’s time, following which he took several months for its revision.¹⁴

The book title *Qingzhen Shiyi* means “Removal of Doubts and Suspicions towards Islam”. The book spreads over 140 pages, each page 250 mm long and 155 mm wide. The page frame is 180 mm long and 135

¹¹ Ibid. p. 139.

¹² See, Yu Zhengui, One-volume Edition of Wang Daiyu’s *The Real Commentary on The True Teaching, The Great Learning and The True Answers*, (Yinchuan: Ningxia Publishing House, 1988), p. 227.

¹³ *Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 156.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 156.

mm wide. On each page, there are nine lines, each of which contains twenty characters. The number of characters on each page is 180 and the total number is 15200 characters. Because of the empty spaces however, the actual number of characters in this book-manuscript is around 15000 characters.

As stated in his preface, Tianzhu's main objective in writing this book was to remove biased suspicions to Islam and Muslims. Tianzhu proposed that Buddhism, Taoism, Mohism and the theory of Yangzhu¹⁵ were all, to varying extents, contrary to Confucian doctrine; however, people did not say anything against them. Islam, on the other hand, was in accord with the dominant culture, but was doubted. Those suspicions, for Tianzhu, would eventually lead to a ban on Islam and the assimilation of Muslims. Tianzhu wrote his book to defend Islam and Muslims, to remove suspicions and to demonstrate that Islam is harmonious with Confucianism, except in the case of some minor points and therefore had the right to spread in China. Tianzhu intended to demonstrate that Muslims had always been good citizens of China since their arrival during the Sui and Tang dynasties (618-622) and that they had served the country faithfully and made great contributions to it; which earned them the right to live in China without giving up their identity. Most probably, *Qingzhen Shiyi* was the first book on Islam written by a Chinese Muslim scholar and composed entirely in the Chinese language, and was not a translation written for this purpose.¹⁶

Qingzhen Shiyi consists of six prefaces written by Hu Huiyuan, the author, Shi Kezong, the publisher, Ma Tingfu and Chen Dashao. These do not include Hu Huiyuan's poem, which comes after his preface and a letter by the author addressed to the Senior Minister. In the main body of

¹⁵He was a philosopher in the Wei state during a period of warring states (403-221 B.C). His philosophy of life was to benefit one's self. Mencius criticised both Yang and Mo saying that the former was so selfish to the extent that if you asked him to pull out a fine hair to benefit whole world, he would say no. The latter, who stood for love of people, loved others so much that he did not care even if all his hairs lost and his feet were tattered (ragged) because of long travel, as long as it was beneficial to others. According to Mencius, Confucianism is the doctrine of the mean (balanced doctrine). <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/38054261.html>.

¹⁶The academic works done by Chinese Muslim scholars before Jin Tianzhu are translations and compilations of Arabic and Persian Islamic books. Moreover, their objective was to spread the teachings of Islam among Muslims and not to remove the doubts and suspicions of Chinese society because their main targets were Muslims. See *Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi in Modern Chinese*, p. 18.

the text, the first page gives the following information: the year in which the book was retyped (on the top of the page), the title of the book, the names of reviewers, Chen Dashao, Hu Huiyuan and Ma Tingfu and their places of origin, the author's name and his place of origin, and those of two proofreaders, "Ke Yuandu" and "He Yuanjiao". In addition, the term "Nan" appears on the page before these two names.¹⁷

The contents of the text fall mainly under the category of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and the objectives of the *SharĒ'ah* (*MaqĒ'id al-SharĒ'ah*). It covers topics such as the purification (*ĪahĒrah*), prayer, fasting, *zakĒt*, food, drink, slaughtering animals, and dressing. The author also gives answers to questions raised by one of his guests as to why Muslim practices differ from others. The author also discusses some aspects of the Islamic faith with his guest and criticizes other religions, especially Catholicism, Buddhism and Taoism. Tianzhu presents his own opinion about *TalĀwwuf* and other matters. In brief, the text contains a variety of topics.

The book was reprinted fourteen times throughout different periods of the history of China, (i.e.,) there are fourteen editions of the book, in each of which, the word "Chong Ke" appears on the cover page which means "recut". Looking at the form of characters, with exception of the cover and title pages, there is no difference from one edition to another. Related resources show that wood cuts were mostly used to print books during the time of the Qing Dynasty (as stone cuts appeared much later), and the movable type was the most popular one, especially for printing religious books.¹⁸ Based on that, it may be concluded that the book—except for its title page—was not hand-copied, but was wood cut first, copying the former edition in movable-type and then printed.

Tianzhu's View of Confucius

A question frequently asked by people in China and abroad is whether or not Confucius was a prophet or messenger of God. Before we go into details, it is necessary to first clarify the term "Sheng Ren" which

¹⁷It refers to one of the two possible meanings: son, which means the two men are Tianzhu's two sons, or the title of the last rank among the five ranks of nobility in ancient China, which are Gong, Hou, Bo, Zi and Nan. I am inclined to the second meaning because their family names are different from Tianzhu, which is 'Jin'. Chinese do not change their family names unless confronted with extremely special cases or dangerous situations.

¹⁸ See Wei Yinru, *History of Printing Ancient Books in China*. (Beijing: Printing Industry Publishing House, 1984.), p. 225.

appeared many times in the author's presentation. In brief, the term has two meanings: 1) wise man or outstanding figure, 2) ancient Emperor. It seems that there is no connection between the term and prophet-hood or messengership. However, the term came to be used to refer to prophets and messengers as well. In his discussion with the "guest", Tianzhu mentioned the term "Sheng Ren" repeatedly. When Tianzhu referred to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), he used the phrase "Wu Jiao Sheng Ren", which means "the Prophet of my religion" or "Muslims' Prophet".¹⁹ Tianzhu also used the term in referring to ancient Chinese wise men in general. When mentioning Confucius in specific, he never used it, he called him "Kong Zi" alone instead or blended with "Meng Zi" to say "Kong Meng". He nonetheless never used the term "Kong Sheng" or any other term which would indicate that Confucius was a prophet or a messenger. If this can prove anything, it shows that Confucius is not a prophet according to Tianzhu, and that the author did not deny the possibility of one or more prophets in ancient China.²⁰

If this is what Tianzhu actually meant, it may then be supported by the following dialogues: Taizai²¹ asked Zi Gong the following question:²² "Is Confucius a Sheng Ren? Why is he so knowledgeable?" Zi Gong replied: "It must be that God sent him as a Sheng Ren and made him versatile." When Confucius heard this, he said: "Does Taizai know me? I was poor when I was small; that was why I learned some superficial skills."²³ This means that people at that time were familiar with the concept of prophet and messenger God sent and bestowed with the knowledge of many things. However, Confucius denied Zi Gong's statement by telling people that he acquired knowledge through learning. In another dialogue, he denied being a prophet: "Speaking of prophet-hood and kind-heartedness, how dare I accept that?"²⁴ From an Islamic perspective however, a prophet received revelation from God and the messenger proclaimed himself as such and showed people miracles as evidence for his claim. Confucius stated that his knowledge was received from intense learning, and that it was not divinely inspired.

¹⁹ Literally, "Wu Jiao" means "my religion". Tianzhu referred by the term to "we Muslims."

²⁰ *Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 97.

²¹ It is the title of an official position in the time of Confucius. ²² He is one of the students of Confucius.

²³ See Chen Puqing, *Translation and Commentary on the Four Books*, p. 121.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 109.

Also, Confucius neither claimed to be a messenger nor did he show any miracle. Although he believed in God and claimed that he knew “Tian Ming”,²⁵ Confucius never called people to believe in God nor did he emphasize His oneness and uniqueness as done by prophets throughout history. He rather encouraged them to respect “Gui Shen”²⁶, but remain far away from them. When Zi Lu²⁷ asked him how to worship “Gui Shen”, Confucius answered: “You haven’t yet properly served the living; how would you serve the dead?” And when the former asked him about death, he replied: “You don’t know about life yet, how could you know about death?”²⁸ This means that although Confucius did not reject the belief in the Hereafter, his focus was rather on the worldly life. He deliberately downplayed the ultimate destination of humanity. If he were a prophet or messenger, he would not have done so. Based on this, we conclude that Confucius was neither a prophet nor a messenger, but rather, was a wise man and a great thinker.²⁹

Tianzhu’s View of Confucianism

As the term suggests, Confucianism was founded by Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and expanded by Mencius (372–299 B.C.),³⁰ Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.) and others. Confucius’ main sources are the thoughts of Yao (26th–22nd century B.C.), Shun (26th–22nd century B.C.), Yu (22nd–21st century B.C.), Wen Wang (11th century–771 B.C.)

²⁵“Tian Ming” means ‘mission from God and His Pre-arrangement.’

²⁶“Gui Shen” means the spirits of the dead and sometimes, supernatural beings in general. ²⁷Another student of Confucius.

²⁸See, *Translation and Commentary on the Four Books*, p. 37.

²⁹Professor Osman Bakar argues that the well-known Malay-Indonesian scholar namely Hamka is of the view that Confucius may be accepted by Muslims as a prophet, and that Indonesian Confucians refer to Confucius as a *nabi*. To him, Confucius’s *Analects* might be the evidence if he was indeed a prophet. See *Islam and Confucianism, A Civilizational Dialogue* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1997), p. 72. I would like to also share here that it is well known that the sources of Confucianism are derived from the thoughts of Yao, Shun, Yu, Wenwang and Wuwang; and what Confucius tried to do was to revive *Zhou Li* (the rites of the Zhou Dynasty). In this sense, it would be reasonable if we considered one of those people or someone else in their time as a prophet and messenger, and Confucius as a *Mujaddid* (reviver) of his teachings.

³⁰Mencius (372-299 B.C.): his name was Ke, his title Ziyu. He studied Confucian thought, then traveled to the states in his time to persuade the rulers to follow ancient Emperors and Kings in the ways of governing societies but failed. In his late age, Mencius turned back to his mother town and started teaching. He wrote “Mengzi”, only seven chapters of which left. See Wang Jiafan and Xie Tianyou, *Chinese Ancient Civilization*, (Zhejiang ancient books publishing house, 1999), p. 462.

and Wu Wang (11th century–771 B.C.).³¹ His ultimate aim was to renew the rites of the Zhou Dynasty (11th century–771 B.C.) in order to teach people the way to deal with one another. Confucianism's principal doctrine is composed of *San Gang* and *Wu Chang* (three categories of guidance and five constants). The *San Gangs* are: the Emperor or King guides the subjects, the father guides sons, and the husband guides the wife. As for *Wu Chang*, they are: *Ren* (benevolence), *Yi* (righteousness), *Li* (propriety), *Zhi* (wisdom) and *Xin* (fidelity).³²

The doctrine is contained in *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics*. The titles of *The Four Books* are as follows: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of The Mean* and *The Analects of Confucius* and *Meng Zi*. The titles of *The Five Classics* are: *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. These books represent the main books Chinese learners were required to read, according to which the Chinese Government tested candidates in their examinations on the history of China.

The history of Confucianism, on several occasions, shows to have conflicted and even mixed with Taoism and Buddhism. This caused qualitative changes to the doctrine. Consequently, Song-Ming Li Xue, the Confucian school of idealist philosophy of the Song and Ming dynasties or “Neo-Confucianism” made its advent in the history of China, casting away the concept of “Tian”, absorbing the concept of Yin and Yang in terms of the creation of everything in the universe, and thus turning into atheism. These events undoubtedly weakened the concept of “Tian” in people's mind.

Throughout his presentation, it becomes clear that Tianzhu was aware of the changes that occurred to Confucianism, and considered its original doctrine—rather than the changed one—as the orthodox one. He frequently quoted from Confucian classical books to support the validity of Islam. In his discussion of the regulations of food for example, Tianzhu said: “These people did not read the book of Confucius, where the chapter of *Xiangdang*³³ describes certain circumstances in which

³¹ Yao and Shun are two of the five Emperors and leaders of tribes in ancient China; Yu is the first Emperor of the Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 B.C.); while Wenwang and Wudi are the Kings of the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 B.C.). These men managed their societies successfully and were considered wise men to be admired by later Chinese generations, especially Confucius and his followers.

³² See: *Modern Chinese English Dictionary*, p. 756.

³³ It is the title of one of the chapters of *Lunyu* (The Analects of Confucius).

animal meat cannot be eaten. This is when meat is improperly slaughtered, when the right condiments have not been added to it, when it is putrid and spoiled, when the color of the food or its smell has changed, when it is cooked incorrectly or at the wrong time, when it is beef jerky (dried beef) that is bought from the market, or when the meat is offered as a sacrifice to a god or to the ancestors when it is more than three days old. All of these prohibitions were meant to protect people's property and lives and to embody the good intention of Tian and Di³⁴ who favoured leaving things to live rather than hurting or killing them." Based on that, Tianzhu criticised Confucian people in his time saying: "Most people in the country respect Confucius and realize that his doctrine should be followed. How many however refrain from eating what was forbidden?"³⁵

Neo-Confucianism cast away the concept of Tian from its doctrine and became atheistic in nature. With regard to the existence of God, Tianzhu said: "The term God was mentioned many times in Confucian books. The clearest and easiest way to understand it is to refer to what Zhuxi³⁶ said when explaining the sentence of "*Ke Pei Shang Di*" as in *Shijing*, 'Shangdi is the Dominator of Tian (the Heavens).' He also said, 'The Heavens and the Earth are constantly changing because they have a Dominator' and 'Be reverent, so that you can converse with Shangdi.'³⁷ These words are not drawn from Islamic books but from Confucian ones. If God does not exist, it would mean that both the poems of ancient people and Zhuxi's interpretation were wrong."³⁸

Jin Tianzhu also discusses the origin of Confucianism while criticizing people's practices. For instance, burning paper money and offering sacrifices to the dead was and is still considered to be one of their practices. Tianzhu writes:

³⁴Literally, *Tian* means sky and *Di* the earth, but they also refer to the creator especially in the view of people in ancient times. This is why the Chinese Emperors called themselves Tianzi which means the 'son of God' in order to make known that their power was derived from God.

³⁵*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi Chinese*, 37.

³⁶Zhuzi is Zhuxi (1130-1200) who was originally from Huizhou (today's Jiangxi). He grew up in Fujian. During his lifetime, Zhuzi was appointed to several official positions and wrote many works. The most famous of which is *the Variorum of the Four Books*. For more information about him, see the *History of Chinese Philosophy*, (Beijing University: Department of Chinese Philosophy, 2003), p. 283.

³⁷*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 38.

³⁸*Ibid.*

Everyone has parents. They should be attended to, supported and respected before their deaths, and it is natural and reasonable to hold a ceremony after they die. However, burning paper money and offering sacrifices to the dead are only to show a modicum of kindness by living persons like sons or daughters to the dead. If you trace this practice to its original source, you will find that burning paper money was a way of Buddhism and Taoism. It was not in accordance with Confucian doctrine. The Confucian method of ceremony is to spill wine on the earth and burn cotton and silks, after which the ghost comes to consume the smell. Currently, it has become mixed with the ways of Buddhism. I think dead forefathers do not like to receive it. Eighty to ninety percent of Confucian people join in fasting and ceremonies in the way of Buddhism and Taoism. This means that they have inclined to the teaching of the two religions even if they claim to be followers of the Confucian doctrine.³⁹

Tianzhu also criticizes them:

“Most Confucian books contain principles of the truth and guidance to the right path. Followers of Confucian doctrine however, either abandon the difficult contents and follow the easy ones or mix it with other religions. Thus they end up believing in the superstitions of Buddhism and Taoism, attracting people’s minds and promising them good fortune. They are unaware that God does not have any relative and that He assists only the moral people. Whosoever seeks fortune from those men loses everything, including their conscience.”⁴⁰ Through the examples given above, it could be stated that Tianzhu respected the original doctrine of Confucianism and considered them as orthodox. As far as Neo-Confucianism is concerned, Tianzhu’s attitude appears to be generally negative. His criticism of non-Muslim Chinese shows us that he had strong faith that gave him great courage to do so, especially in a period when no freedom of speech existed.

Tianzhu’s Theological Views

As stated above, the *Qingzhen Shiyi* was initially written to clear doubts held by the Chinese society towards Muslims’ behaviour. The author focused not only on issues relevant to Islamic law (*SharĒ’ah*). But since faith influences the behaviour of human beings, he also dealt with some theological issues pertaining to the Islamic religious doctrine (*kalĒm* or *’Aqidah*). In his *Qingzhen Shiyi* Tianzhu discussed the following major issues: God and His Existence, Oneness, Names, Position or Direction, Creation and Punishment, differences between Islam and Catholicism, and the reasons as to why Muslims do not worship idols. Tianzhu also criticized the Buddhist theory of reincarnation and the magical arts of Taoism.

1- On the Almighty God:

Islam is considered monotheistic which implies that there is no god but Allah. The oneness of God is the key idea in Islam. As a Muslim, Tianzhu strongly believes in the existence of God and maintains that

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 79.

because of God, the universe continues to change. He demonstrated his idea through Zhuxi's words: "There is a Dominator in the heaven and the earth, and that is why they continually change."⁴¹ Tianzhu also believes that there is only one God. In this regard, he said: "There is only one sun in the sky, and there is one king for people. It has been clear for a long time that only one should be respected." In order to better illustrate his idea, Tianzhu quotes Confucian scholars who argue: "If you make Tian angry, you would find nothing to pray to". About the name of God, Tianzhu used several terms, with the exception of "Zhuzai" (the Dominator), he called God "Zhenzai" (the Real Dominator), "Shangdi" (God), "Tian" (sky, but it refers here to God) and "Shangtian" (the heaven, providence, God).⁴²

The issue of the position or direction of God is an important question in the Islamic theology, over which Muslim theological schools have long argued with each other. When discussing this issue, Tianzhu said:

We may use our body to understand the concept of God. As mentioned earlier, the human body is a small world and its Dominator is the life in it. Who amongst us has seen it? What does it look like? Where is it located in the body? If we say it is in the head, then there is no life in the body and feet. If there is no life there, then there is no suffering either; therefore, those parts are dead. On the other hand, if we say it is located in the lower part of the body then there is no life in the higher part. From this we know that life has no space and direction in the body; it occupies the whole corpus, and this explains the sensations and feelings in every part of it. The Islamic books say that God is everywhere in the world but we are not able to determine His position and form.⁴³

What Tianzhu presented here is the opinion adopted by the majority of Chinese Muslims on this question. It may, however, be argued that there is no specific position or direction for God; one may rather disagree on the notion that 'God is located everywhere in the world'.

2- Creation of the Universe

According to Islam, God created everything in the universe. Tianzhu states this several times in his book. He argued the Confucian theory says that everything exists because of the airs of Yin and Yang. The two airs need a place to lay (store) in. Tianzhu here asks a question: "Where were they laying before the existence of the heavens and earth?"

⁴¹Ibid. p. 38.

⁴²*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 103.

⁴³Ibid. p. 75.

Tianzhu believes that even if they do not need any place to store, the airs of Yin and Yang are unable to do anything by themselves without an external power. He used the calendar as an example:

Let us take the calendar issued every winter as an example. Who would dare to issue it before the set time? We must wait for the time to come before handing out the calendar. Because of the existence (and authority) of the King, people's actions were unified. If there were no craftsman to cut and print the calendar, or the King who issues the order for the calendar at the beginning of each winter, no one would believe this could have been cut or published by itself.⁴⁴

Tianzhu also highlighted some self-contradictions in Confucianism. He states: "It was said that it is the air of Yin and Yang and not God that creates the heavens and the earth; that causes the coming and going of the four seasons, the changing of the times, the movement of the sun and moon and the rise or fall of nations. It is the natural law. At the same time, it was also said that everything has been pre-arranged." Tianzhu then answered his own question: "Who is the pre-arranger? It is the Dominator who created everything, for if everything existed naturally, there would be no prearrangement necessary. Confucianism however, admits the prearrangement, and since they admit it, then they have no choice but to admit the pre-arranger who is the Creator."

3- God's Reward and Punishment

Muslims believe in the divine reward and punishment while majority of non-Muslims do not. Non-Muslims believe there are too many things for God to do, and hence is unable to know who is a doer of good and who is a spreader of evil. Tianzhu gives the following example: "Think about the thick clothes people wear in winter when their bodies are fully covered. Their eyes are in their head. They know whenever there is a louse on the body; they can easily catch it regardless of where it is. How are the fingers that have no eyes, able to catch such a small thing that is under our clothes? It is because of the light of life that envelops the whole body. This is an evidence for the reward and punishment. God is with everything in the heavens and the earth. He knows all single movements of every person, and rewards and punishes them accordingly."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 77.

⁴⁵Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, 77.

Tianzhu provides the following example to explain the reasons leading ignorant people to punishment. He writes: “People living in a village far away from the capital city are not aware that there is an Emperor (King) and a strict system of the law. Yet if they go against the law and are discovered, they would be investigated. If they commit a grave crime, they would be punished according to the law. They would not be let off because they have not seen the Emperor or were ignorant of the law.”⁴⁶ For the impact this belief has on human behaviour, Tianzhu said: “Muslims know that there will be reward and punishment, so they fear God and follow the rules of Islam and rarely commit sins.”⁴⁷ Tianzhu urged non-Muslims to know God and worship Him before it is too late. He said: “If Non-Muslims study Islam sincerely and follow its rules, they might commit fewer crimes and thus would not be punished by the laws of the state.”⁴⁸

4- The Nature of the Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him)

Both Catholicism and Islam declare that God created everything, and people of the time believed that the two religions were one and the same. Tianzhu denied this and listed the various differences between them: 1) Catholics worship God facing an idol or image of Jesus and Mary whereas Muslims do not worship any idol; 2) Catholics do not have food or drink regulations to follow whereas Muslims do.

As far as the position of Jesus in Catholicism is concerned, Tianzhu pointed out the following contradictories: 1) they call him “Tianzhu” (the Dominator of heaven or God) however, they call his mother “Shengmu” (the mother of prophet); why do not they directly call her “Tianzhuzhimu” (the mother of the Dominator or God)? 2) They argue that God created everything, which means that God also created Mary. If this is true, how then could God have been reborn by her? 3) They said that God came to earth to persuade people to believe in Him and do good deeds. According to Tianzhu, this is absurd. He said: “They did not realize that if he could create the Heavens and the Earth and everything between them, then why can he not send down rain, wind, thunder and lightning, and make them to be full in society?”⁴⁹ Floods, landslides and earthquakes are symbols God uses to warn people; why

⁴⁶Ibid. p. 78.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 93.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 93.

⁴⁸Ibid. p. 93.

⁴⁹As a result of this, they would not dare to commit evil.

would he have to take on human form and be born (into the world)?” 4) Tianzhu believed that God does not leave the heavens or earth for a single second, Jesus however did, and this means he is not divine, “The Dominator, whom Muslims believe in, does not leave the heavens and the earth even for a moment. Why? It is said that heaven is a big world and the human being a small one. The former has its own Dominator as has the latter. The Dominator of the big world is the one who created the heavens and the earth and everything between them. He lets the four seasons come and go every year, makes the day bright and the night dark and sends the wind and rains, while the Dominator of the small world lets our hands and feet move, our ears listen and our eyes see. It is our life (命) which, does not separate from the body even for a moment; how then could the ruler of the cosmos leave?” Since Jesus left the earth and human society, it means that he is not God.

5- Muslim Critique of Worshipping Buddha

As Confucianism’s focus is on worldly affairs rather than on man’s spiritual life, Buddhism went ahead and occupied people’s spiritual world in China. Most people in China worship images of Buddha and other Buddhist idols; they fail to understand why Muslims do not worship them in the same way they do, and they even feel strange about that. Tianzhu provides the following explanation: 1) there is only one sun in the sky and one king for people in the country. If Muslims worship Buddha, then that means they believe in him, which makes God angry; 2) Buddha is not worthy of belief as a god. To further illustrate his explanation, Tianzhu quoted Hanyu’s statement about Buddha:

Who was the Buddha? Did he behave like a gentleman or as a dishonourable person? If his behaviour was that of a gentleman, he would not allow his followers to wallow in misfortune. If he was a dishonourable person, he is dead and his ghost (spirit) does not work anymore. There are so many angels in heaven and earth, and every one of them has its own position that cannot be replaced by anyone else. How could his ghost be allowed to ride roughshod over others and do whatever it wants?⁵⁰

According to Tianzhu, the most important thing for the human being is his behaviour. Tianzhu writes: “If people do not follow Yao and Shun’s actions, but hang their images in the living hall and worship them, while disobeying their parents and older brothers; God will send down

⁵⁰Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 99.

misfortune on them, and the spirits of Yao and Shun would not be able to save them even if they are with them.”⁵¹

Generally, Buddhists worship Buddha to seek his blessing and protection. The reality however, is that they are not in peace and good fortune while others are not in misfortune and disaster. In addition to the above, Tianzhu argued against the reincarnation in Buddhism and Taoism’s magical arts.

6- Tianzhu’s Legal Views

As cited earlier, Tianzhu’s main purpose was to remove doubts and suspicions concerning Muslims’ behaviour. Therefore, jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) matters occupied most of his book. It encompasses food, clothes, funerals, bathing, prayer, fasting and charity (*zakât*). Tianzhu tried to explain why Muslims do certain things and the significance of certain acts.⁵² In a sense, the book represents the field of *Maqâ'id al-Shar'ah*.

a. Regarding Food Regulations

In Islamic law, there are regulations and limitations regarding food. Chinese Muslims were and still follow the Islamic regulations as interpreted by the Hanafî School of thought. Non-Muslims in China slandered Muslims and described them as fussy and obstinate and further argued that Muslims had lived for a long time in China and should have changed their way of life instead of adhering to their religion. Tianzhu listed some food regulations reported in a chapter of *Xiangdang of Lunyu* to demonstrate that Confucianism also has such regulations. Tianzhu states that Buddhism prohibits eating meat, which implies that not only Islam has those food regulations and limitations and that people should not talk about Islam in this regard.

Tianzhu enumerates the following prohibited foods in Islam: pigs, dogs, carnivorous beasts, birds with sharp claws, animals that died a natural death, aquatic animals with scales and shells of strange shapes and sizes as well as any intoxicant such as alcohol. For him, these things are forbidden because they hurt the nature and lives of humans, while their consumption is bad for the spread of human beings. Besides, although cattle, sheep, chickens and ducks are allowed (*halâl*) for

⁵¹Ibid. p. 99.

⁵²This is what 'Iz al-Dîn and some other scholars did; see, Al-Sulamî, 'Iz al-Dîn 'Abd al-'Azîz 'Abd al-Salîm, *Qawâ'id al-'Alkîm fî Ma'âli' al-An'âm*, (Beirut: Dêr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1420/1999)

Muslims; their blood, eyes, brains and kidneys should be thrown away because they accumulate dirt, smell bad and hurt property.⁵³

Tianzhu's guest asked him (if this was true) why ancient wise men had not said anything regarding it. The guest also quoted the words of Mencius, "I heard that foreigners could be changed to Chinese but I never heard that Chinese could be changed to foreigners" and argued that Muslims should change their lifestyle to become like others since they live in China. Tianzhu responded: "Not so. Ancient generations of virtue used to adhere to certain etiquettes and regulations of their own according to which everything was treated. The system of three cardinal guides and five constant virtues as specified in the feudal ethical code in addition to human relations and disciplines as well as the rules and regulations for food and drink was the standard that wise men urged people to follow, and virtuous men educated them accordingly."⁵⁴ As for the guest's argument, Tianzhu's response was as follows:

Muslims should be changed or their way of life had been changed long time ago if they had separated the monarch and his subjects, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers and friends; or they had refused to pay government taxes, or had given up etiquette between old and young, or had been against righteousness and justice. If this was the case, they would have been changed a long time ago and would not wait for a reminder. What is the behaviour of the Muslim's towards the things mentioned above? Why do they need to change [their way of life]?⁵⁵

Tianzhu quoted the words of a Confucian scholar to support his statement: "If it is a right way, it should not be changed for life; if it is not, why would you wait for three years to change it?" According to him, ancient wise men denounced people who did not like to be (the) subjects of (the) monarch, manage their family's property, or associate with the Princess under the Emperor. Muslims are not this kind of people, why then should they be questioned?

b. Why Muslims Use their Own "Calendar" and Celebrate their Own "New Year"?

Chinese Muslims put up in their houses, time-tables that are written in Arabic or Persian, and congratulate each other during the Eid al-Fiīr. This aroused suspicions and caused doubts in the minds of some

⁵³Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 29.

⁵⁴Ibid. p. 33

⁵⁵Ibid. p. 34.

officials who accused Muslims of using their own calendar instead of the official one, and celebrating their own New Year instead of the Chinese New Year. According to Tianzhu, the Muslims' practice was against the royal rule at that time. In his response to his guest's question, Tianzhu went straight to the point and explained why Muslims do all that:

As for Islamic books, Chinese characters are not used in pronunciation (to spell the *Qur'an*) because we are afraid of deviating from the original phonology of the book or losing its original style. That is why we have maintained the pronunciation of the early times. They (non-Muslims) are unaware of the ways of Muslims, and so it is not surprising that they consider Muslims' time-tables for prayer and fasting a calendar.⁵⁶

To help people better understand his point, Tianzhu took the official calendar as an example. He says:

Today, the government produces a calendar every year. Besides, Tai Changsi also produces time-tables in the form of slips for religious activities and anniversaries of parents' deaths, which are selected (decided) by the Qin Tianjian. These are usually stacked in government offices. In recent years however, they have put circles on the calendars to help people know the dates better. They did all that because books are always closed and more difficult to use as opposed to slips. Likewise, the government makes people aware of the time. An analogy of this is where ordinary people hang their own time-tables of the anniversary of their parents' death in their homes. Would it be reasonable to consider these timetables as calendars?⁵⁷

Of the New Year, Tianzhu said:

This originated from fasting which is considered to be an obligation in all religions. Fasting in Islam is different from that of other religions. Our prophet understood and sympathized with the poor. He said that monarchs, their subjects and the rich, do not lack food and drink and therefore do not suffer the way hungry people do. Their conditions have never been as difficult as those of the widows, widowers, and orphans and childless, even when they experienced a year of crop failure. Islam set a month for fasting during which Muslims are required to eat a pre-dawn meal (*SuĒr*) at the breaking of dawn and break their fast when the stars brighten. During daytime, Muslims are not allowed to eat a single grain or drink a drop of water, whether it is during the bitter cold of winter or the intense heat of summer.

In the month of fasting, people repent from their mistakes. They realize from the experience of fasting that God loves people to live well and that they are fortunate compared to the poor. It can also help dukes and princes understand their Emperor and be just in making political decisions. In turn, senior officials

⁵⁶Ibid. p. 49.

⁵⁷Ibid. p. 50.

can understand dukes and princes and try to find a proper way to use the power of punishing or interrogating plaintiffs. Lastly, it helps common people understand the Dominator (God), the Emperor, princes and senior officials, so that they may purify their thoughts, decrease their desires, correct their mistakes, improve their selves to become better people, and empathize with the helpless during difficult situations. Muslims fast for a complete month with these intentions. When the month ends, Muslim take a special bath, put on new clothes and go to the mosque for prayers. Afterwards, they congratulate each other on completing the month-long obligatory fast in which they close their doors, unlike other months. This is the reason for the felicitations.⁵⁸

Tianzhu expounded the reason why Islam requires people to fast, its timing, purposes and rules of fasting as well as its significance. Interestingly, he underscores the impact of fasting upon the spirit of officials, princes and the Emperor. Therefore, each of them tries their best in their job, and as a result society shall live in peace and harmony. As to why fasting has such an impact, Tianzhu asserts that it is “because it leads them to contemplate hardship, which can help them become more compassionate. On the contrary, a situation of ease might lead to excessiveness, causing them to forget to be kind and possibly resulting in evil or forming a vicious circle.” Thus, Tianzhu clarified that Muslims congratulate each other because they completed the fasting and not because it is their New Year.

When Tianzhu’s guest was confused as to why revered persons such as his Excellency or rich people are required to emulate hungry people, Tianzhu enumerated three arguments to support his statement: 1) Ancient Emperors once tilled the earth; their wives fed the silkworm; and government officials of different levels and common folk were all intellectual and physical labourers engaged in heavy work. They did that “to experience for themselves how hard it is for farmers to produce grains, so that people might take good care of them.” 2) The story of the King of NanSong (420-479) who requested his subjects to experience hunger to let them know ways to economize grain and materials. 3) Etymology, according to which, the character “Zhai” (fasting) was formed through laminating two Chinese characters together, Bu (meaning do not), and Shi (eat); this is the meaning of fasting according to ancient Chinese people, and this implies they fasted. 4) Mencius said: “If a person in the world is drowned in water, Yu felt that he was the one who caused him to drown. When he was told about a hungry person, Ji

⁵⁸ibid. p. 51.

felt that he was the one who caused him hunger.” If fasting in Islam makes people inflexible and troubled, the actions of those wise men do the same, yet no one says this.

c- Zakah and its Significance

Zakah (obligatory charity) is one of the five primary obligations in Islam. According to a famous *ḥadīth*, *Zakah* comes before fasting,⁵⁹ which would apparently indicate that there is no connection between the two. However, Muslim Chinese scholars changed the order of the two and mentioned *Zakah* after fasting when translating this *ḥadīth*, so that the order of the five obligations in their works are as follows: Nian (*Shahādah*), Li (prayer), Zhai (fasting), Ke (*Zakah*), and Chao (*ḥajj*),⁶⁰ which establishes a certain connection between the two. In his work, Tianzhu did the same when he mentioned the *niḥāb* (the minimum amount of property which causes *Zakah* to become due), the purpose of *Zakah*, the types of properties upon which *Zakah* is payable, the recipients of *Zakah*, and some other exceptional cases. He said: “This is why the Emperor,⁶¹ revered persons, their Excellencies, and rich people fast for a whole month until today.” What he means is that those people fast to experience hunger; as a result of which, they pay *Zakah* easily. A more interesting point is his mention of the significance of *Zakah* to the state, “It is also good for our Emperor to alleviate his burden.” *Zakah* is an obligation in Islam and therefore, the Islamic state appoints people to collect it. Tianzhu writes: “This money is given willingly for helpless people in the town without any pressure from the government.” Based on this statement, one understands that *Zakah* is voluntary and not an obligation. We do not think however that this is what he exactly means. We rather believed that he said this due to the political situation of the time.

d- Comparing Muslim and Non-Muslim Funerals

Non-Muslims in China pay great attention to their dead, especially dead parents. To protect the body of the deceased from the earth, they make a coffin and bury the corpse in it. Muslims however, do not do that. They enshroud their deceased and bury them directly in earth. As a

⁵⁹There are differences in the order of Zakat as stated in the *ḥadīth*. In al-Bukhārī, *Zakah* comes after prayer and before *ḥajj*, while fasting comes at the end of the five pillars. See Al-Zubaydī, *Mukhtaṣar Ḥadīth al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-'Imān*, (Riyad: Dār al-Salām, 1417/1996), 24. In *Ḥadīth Muslim*, it comes after prayer and before fasting; *ḥajj* however comes at the end. See 'Abd al-'Aḍīm, *Zakiyyi al-Dīn, Mukhtaṣar Ḥadīth Muslim*, (Riyad: Dār al-Salām, 1417/1996), p. 39.

⁶⁰See Da Pusheng, *Islamic Six Books*, (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2003), p. 105.

⁶¹He means *khalīfah* or 'Amīr al-Mu'minīn.

result, society censured Muslims for disrespect of their loved ones. Tianzhu's response was as follow: "Whatever method is used to bury the dead, the dead will return to the earth in the end. What is wrong with burying the corpse directly into earth? The method used by Muslims does not necessarily lead to the earth touching the body of the dead. Tianzhu clarified the way Muslims conduct their burial through placing the deceased in a niche at the bottom of the grave. He argues that this way would prevent the body from earth for a long time. Burying the dead in a coffin may not necessarily protect the corpse from earth. Furthermore, insisting on the use of a coffin would cause two negative situations: First, poor people would not be able to afford purchasing a coffin, and this would expose their dead. Second, rich people normally put precious objects such as gold and silver into the coffin together with the body, and enjoyed high publicity of their funerals. This would encourage thieves to rob graves and steal treasured objects. If those thieves were caught, they would be killed simply for opening the coffin. The punishment would be twice as severe if they stole any objects.⁶² Such ostentation entices the living to commit wrongdoing and cause disturbance to the dead. Tianzhu then cited some advantages of Islamic funerals, he says:

It neither leaves dead exposed nor opens the door for thieves. A Muslim's grave has never been robbed, [not] even once in a thousand years. If Confucius and Mencius had been asked to evaluate the Islamic funeral, they would probably have commented that it is perfect.⁶³

e- The Reason Why Muslims Wear White Skull-Caps

Chinese Muslims observe a number of clothing traditions. One of the more distinctive practices they hold fast to is the wearing of a white skullcap. The 'UlamÉ' and common Muslims, especially those who establish daily prayers, wear the white skullcap all the time. However, non-Muslims wear white clothes only while making funeral arrangements during the mourning period of a family deceased. Therefore, wearing white clothes violates one of their taboos. Tianzhu's first strategy in this regard was to reduce the sensitivity of the issue and said the following:

Since ancient times, people have preferred different colours during different periods. It was black during the Xia Dynasty, red during the Zhou Dynasty; and

⁶²For example, his family could be involved and killed because of him.

⁶³*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 65.

white during the Shang Dynasty with preferred white clothing, jewellery and vehicle curtains. Just imagine we were following the Shang system where all people prefer the white colour; would you then be suspicious?⁶⁴

The answer of course is negative. Tianzhu said that Muslims wear the white skull-cap and clothes only at the time of prayer, not because of any colour preference, but because Islamic rules require them to do so:

To show that there is no disparity between their outward and inner thoughts and that their hearts are pure, without any pretence just like the white colour. Besides, white is the origin of other colours not mixed with any other. Therefore it is the purest. Muslims who do not know the cardinal principles of righteousness wear white hats all the time in order to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims, and it has turned to a custom and habit.⁶⁵

f- Interaction between Men and Women

In traditional Chinese culture, men and women were not allowed to freely mix with each other. Perhaps it is because of this that Chinese Muslim women did not generally go to the mosque for prayer.⁶⁶ However, some officials pressed the case that Muslim men and women gathered in mosques and interpreted it as an offence against decency. Tianzhu vigorously denied the accusation. “As for saying that men and women are mixing with each other, it is unfair to attribute this to Muslims.” He listed four reasons in support for his statement: 1) According to the Islamic book, boys and girls are not allowed to eat together in the same place when they are seven years old; certain part of a man’s body from the navel to the knee should not be seen by others; for the female, almost the whole body from the head until the feet must be covered; women are not allowed to meet men except relatives of seven categories: grandfather, father, brothers, husband, children and grandchildren, mother’s blood-brother and father’s blood-brother; females are not allowed to meet others whom they are allowed to marry; women are required to wear *ĪjĒb* (scarf) to cover their heads when they leave their homes or take a chair (sedan) or carriage; and no part of women’s body should be seen. 2) Women are not allowed to go to mosques for prayers nor visit their parent’s graves; they should stay home, pray and remember God. 3) In addition, mosques must be kept clean, which is why Muslims are required to purify their bodies (by making *wuĒ* and *ghusl*) before entering the mosque for prayer, whereas women might pollute the mosque with their menses. 4) If men and women are mixed, then licentious actions might happen out of the view of others and would encourage evil instead of promoting good. Based on the above, Tianzhu

⁶⁴Ibid. p. 67.

⁶⁵Ibid. p. 67.

⁶⁶The situation has now changed as more women go to pray in mosques.

concluded that there was definitely no mixing between Muslim men and women.

It is necessary however, to note that Tianzhu made a wrong judgment when he said that women are not allowed to go to mosques for prayer. According to the *ÁadÊth* of the Prophet, although women are not encouraged to go to mosques for prayers, they are also not prohibited from doing so. In fact, the Prophet Mohammed explicitly prohibited men from preventing women from going to mosques. What Tianzhu presented here again might be an individual opinion of some scholars in China or abroad. As regards his view that the mixing of men and women might lead to licentious actions away from people's sight, it is negative assumptions about Muslim men and women () while Islamic teaching is to maintain positive opinion about them () unless we have concrete evidence proving the contrary.

g- The Reason Muslims Gather at Night and Disperse in the Early Morning

During the Qing era, some people tried to overturn the dynasty in certain religious names. They would gather at night to discuss their plans causing restraint of freedoms of speech and assembly. The Muslim practice of gathering in mosques for congregational prayers attracted the attention of some officials who suspected that Muslims might be plotting against the government. In response, Tianzhu made the following analysis: A gathering will either be every night or on some nights. If those officials have the impression that Muslims gather every single night, then that it is not possible because of the fact that Muslims have families to support and businesses to look after. If a Muslim works all day and gathers with other Muslims every night he would die. This is understood in light of the fact that human energy is too limited to maintain such a schedule. If they mean that Muslims gather at certain times, then, there is nothing wrong with that. Muslims might gather for weddings or funerals, or when a Muslim died far from his own town, local people may arrange a funeral for them at night to bury his body the following day. Some people might not have performed their daily prayers on time, and so they make up for the missed prayers at night. It might also be the fasting month in which the number of Muslims attending *TarÉwÊÍ* prayer (>?@ABCD ;<=) will be ten times bigger than other times. These examples are possible and reasonable. Muslims should not then be doubted or questioned. To further persuade people about Muslims' good intentions towards the government, Tianzhu said:

It is said in the Islamic book that it is forbidden to take anything that does not belong to you. Moreover, the aim of prayer in the fasting month is to repent.

Muslims dare not to have any presumptuous intention. Instead, they submit to the will of God whether they are rich or poor, at times of ease or hardship.⁶⁷

In other words, Muslims do not have any intention to usurp the power of the current ruling class and therefore will do nothing against the government because Islam taught them to do so; especially in the month of fasting.

h- The Harms of Drinking Alcohol

Since ancient times until today, drinking in public has been a social phenomenon in China. When officials gathered on ceremonial occasions, they would drink alcohol together and clink glasses with each other. Anyone who did not join in would be ostracized for not being “a regular person”. Tianzhu adhered to the Islamic regulation that prohibits drinking alcohol and, as a result, faced great social pressure with some people trying to convince him to change his lifestyle and be like others. Tianzhu contrasted drinking alcohol with honesty to the Emperor and filial piety to parents, which are two of the three cardinal principles of Confucianism. According to him, whoever drinks alcohol is not respectful or obedient to his parents and “if he could disobey his loved ones today, he will disobey the Emperor tomorrow.” Therefore, “if there is a minor post in the government to be filled, he should not be appointed to it.” Tianzhu also pointed out that drinking alcohol is harmful, and it was because of this that the ancient Emperors strictly prohibited it. He requested non-Muslims not to entice Muslims to drink alcohol, because it may prevent them from eventual retribution. Tianzhu writes:

I say these words today, not only to persuade Muslims to adhere to their root principles, but also to persuade non-Muslims not to lure ignorant Muslims when they meet them and not to draw them into wrong actions. How do they benefit from doing so? They give themselves a bad reputation which, may lead to harm of the following generations. If you persuade others not to forget their roots, there will be someone who does the same for your children in the future. As a result, they might be perfect ones who deal with people according to the principles of Xiao (filial piety to father), Ti (showing respect to one’s elder brother), Zhong (being loyal to the emperor) and Xin (being honest to friends).⁶⁸

i- Slaughtering Animals

With the exception of vegetarians, there is no limit for Chinese people to consume meat. They eat all animals they like, so long as they are edible, regardless of whether they die naturally or are slaughtered. If the animal is slaughtered, it does not matter how or who slaughtered it.

⁶⁷Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 84.

⁶⁸Ibid. p. 93.

However, Muslims normally eat beef and mutton slaughtered by them in the name of God. This seems strange and incomprehensible to non-Muslims. They say that Muslims recite certain incantations, which is obviously a mistake. Tianzhu corrected that mistake first and informed them that Muslims mention the name of God in their slaughter of animals. He pointed out that Muslims are required to do that “to attach importance to living things and exercise sympathy for animals.” According to Tianzhu, even a plant should not be abused, so how could animals possessing real life be abused? He maintains that animals are slaughtered by Muslims only when there is an important occasion such as wedding or funeral arrangement. He emphasizes that slaughter must be conducted by a pious man; and those who conduct the slaughtering of animals as a paid job are just evil-doers (wrongdoers).

There are three points in Tianzhu’s presentation in need of comment: 1) Tianzhu did not answer the question of his guest as to why there are no Muslim vegetarians. 2) His stand that Islam permits Muslims to slaughter animals only on important occasions is not Islamically justified. It is stated in the Holy *Qur’an* (2:29) that God created everything on earth to meet the needs of humanity; therefore, everyone including Muslims have the right to enjoy natural resources without causing any waste to them.⁶⁹ 3) In regard to the slaughter of animals, there is no regulation in Islam that only a pious Muslim can conduct slaughtering.⁷⁰ On the contrary, it is stated in the Holy *Qur’an* and the books of jurisprudence that Muslims are allowed to eat the meat of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book so long as they have mentioned the name of God before doing so. 4) Regarding Tianzhu’s judgment that those who slaughtered animals for a living are evil-doers, it might be argued that since animals are made lawful for us and not everyone knows how to slaughter, there must be people who would conduct slaughtering as a job. It might be acceptable to say that to slaughter animals is a permitted job.⁷¹

⁶⁹See *chapter 7*: 31-32.

⁷⁰Practically speaking, common Muslims (*‘AwĒm al-MuslimĒn*) in China prefer to invite Mosques leaders-Imams or their students to slaughter animals.

⁷¹It is somewhat like divorce (*ĪalĒq*) in terms of Jurisprudence, in that it is most disliked by God amongst the lawful things. This is deduced from the *ĪadĒth*, “EFGH

.O<PDA NA KLM I<JDA”, narrated by AbĒ DawĒd and Ibn MĒjah. See al-ShawkĒnĒ, Muhammad Ali Muhammad, *Nayl al-‘AwĒr* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah, 1423/2002), vol. 2, 1386, No. 4.

j- The Reason for Muslims Taking Bathe after Sexual Intercourse

Following sexual intercourse, Muslim couples are required wash their bodies (*ghusl*) with water before prayer or recitation of the *Qur'an*. Intercourse is a shameful act in the view of non-Muslims. When it is time for prayer, Muslims wash the seven orifices in the head using water in a pitcher which seems very burdensome and difficult for non-Muslims. Tianzhu explains:

“The Islamic way of life, starting with major issues like the relationship between the monarch and his subjects or fathers to their children, and ending with minor questions such as daily regulations of drink and food, are all recorded in the Islamic books without exception. Even lazy people examine their own consciences before they do anything. When it is time to perform devotional activities like prayer, fasting and so on, they will not go if they have not had a bath. The reason being that Islam teaches Muslims not to deceive themselves. Besides, everything about sexual intimacy must be dealt with carefully. Hence, Muslims should be very vigilant not only in arranging a match as per the parent’s instructions and on the matchmaker’s word, but also in dealing with wet dreams.”⁷²

Interestingly, Tianzhu tried to show the impact of bathing on future generations. He said that the Islamic way of bathing prevent illegal sexual actions and cleansed and purified the human body and heart. If the wife became pregnant at this time, the baby would be a wise or gentle man. This is understood from the following, “If you want to make a stream of water clean, you must first clean its source.” According to Islam, the source of the stream is already clean, and therefore, the stream must be clean.

As for non-Muslims, their concern is that bathing might let people know that the couple had sexual intercourse. Tianzhu’s responded that it depends on whether the act was done legally or illegally. If it was done illegally, it is then considered to be a shameful act. But if it was done legally, then it is not. It is similar to a woman giving birth; if she gave birth before getting married, people would consider it shameful. But if she did so after marriage, they would call it a happy event.

Concerning the use of a water pitcher rather than a bathtub for bathing, Muslims uses the former because water stored in the pitcher is clean and can be used for purification. According to Islamic rules, used water is dirty. As to why Muslims wash the seven orifices of the head, it

⁷² Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 107.

is because prayer is a ritual in which Muslims worship God and show their devotion to Him. Therefore, they have to clean their ears, eyes, mouths, noses, hands, feet and bodies.

k- Tianzhu's Views on Some Other Issues

In his discussion with the guest, *Tianzhu* seems to have presented brilliant ideas on some other issues like humanity, use of natural resources, and the life.

1- Humanity

One of the distinctive characteristic of Islam is its view of humanity. According to Islam, God created everything on earth before humanity, and then created man as a vicegerent (*khalîfah*),⁷³ to carry the trust (*'amânah*)⁷⁴ and made him the noblest of creatures. The *Qur'an* states: "We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our creation."⁷⁵ *Tianzhu* was aware of this Qur'anic teaching, and on many occasions stated that humanity is the most honourable creation on earth. For instance, when speaking about funerals, *Tianzhu* said: "According to the sayings of our Prophet, man is nobler than any other living. People are equal in terms of birth and death, even if they differ in terms of wealth in their lifetime." He also said: "Man is the noblest of all living things in the world. If people did not exist, there would be no bridge on earth, and even if there was one, it would have been useless." According to him, Islam decrees the prohibitions of certain things to protect humanity: "These things are forbidden because they hurt nature and life of humans. Eating them is bad for the growth of human beings." This is considered to be one of the five purposes of the *Sharî'ah*.⁷⁶ Another example is that according to the *Sharî'ah*, a rich person with enough wealth and who must pay *Zakah* has no right to accept *Zakah* from other people. But when that same person would face difficulty or danger

⁷³*Quran*, 2: 29-30.

⁷⁴*Quran*, 33: 72.

⁷⁵*Quran*, 17: 70.

⁷⁶The five objectives of the *Sharî'ah* intend to preserve man's life, faith, property, intelligence and propagation. For more details see Yusuf 'amid 'Alim, *al-MaqÉlid al-'Ômmah*, (Cairo: DÊr al-×adÊth, 1997); See also Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (ILMIAH PUBLISHERS, 2nd ed., 2004), p. 395-408.

because of lack of money, he would then be allowed to accept *Zakah* from others. This legal judgement in Islam is made in accordance with the principles of jurisprudence that the prohibited act becomes permissible in cases of necessity. It appears that Tianzhu was very conscious of these Sharĕ‘ah principles and purposes, and consequently, the importance and position of mankind in Islam.

It is important to note that there exists a crucial difference between the view of humanity in Islam and the Western view, which emphasizes the importance of humanity against God and the right of the former against the latter. The view of humanity in Islam appears to be similar to ancient Chinese culture in its emphasis on the value of humanity and mankind as compared to the rest of creation. According to Islam, God is the Creator, and humanity is His creation. They cannot be compared at all and there is no conflict between them. Modern Chinese scholarship however, has been influenced by the West. As a result, its concept of humanity goes as follows: “everything is for the benefit of humanity and everything is dependent on humanity.” In fact it is a denial of God’s status and function while it justifies the release of all limitations on human desires, allowing people to do whatever they like at any time they wish.

2- Limitation of Natural Resources

As late as the twentieth century, most people believed that natural resources were unlimited and inexhaustible. It was only in the twenty-first century that more people are beginning to realize that those resources are limited. Interestingly enough, in the eighteenth century, there were people in China who already knew that. When our guest asked Tianzhu about Muslim conditions for slaughtering animals, which he considered unreasonable, Tianzhu responded:

Have you ever heard that things in heaven and the earth are limited, while the desires of men’s hearts are endless? If we do not nip an evil in the bud and are not very careful (in the use of natural resources) to meet man’s desires, the consequences will be uncontrollable.⁷⁷

This means that there were already people who realized this, and that Tianzhu had already accepted that view, which led him to conclude that human actions should be regulated and the desires limited; otherwise, it would bring about serious consequences. What he stated

⁷⁷ Translation of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, 105.

has taken place since the Industrial Revolution and continues to happen today as a result of human ignorance and arrogance.

3- *Tianzhu's Outlook on Life*

The outlook of most ancient religions towards the worldly life was negative in varying degrees. One of the important manifestations of such a view was withdrawal from social life and seclusion to the life of monks. Most Chinese Muslim scholars during the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing were Sufis to various degrees, and Tianzhu was one of them. When talking about prayers in Islam, Tianzhu said:

Muslims pray five times a day and a Jum'ah prayer once a week. They always fear God. They sincerely turn directly to God in their prayers. They are so pious that they forget and devote themselves totally to the worship of God.⁷⁸

The terms "they forget and devote themselves totally to the worship of God" is an expression of the concept of *fanÉ'* (QRLSDA), which is one of the highest degrees of devotion to God in the tradition of Sufism. This indicates that Tianzhu was a Sufi. On the other hand however, he was against monasticism, which can clearly be seen in his criticism of Buddhist and Taoist monks. According to him, monks neither weave cotton cloth nor plough the earth, and live in high and wide buildings [temples] and play in the mountains and forests together with wild birds, or sleep leisurely, free of care, leaving the difficulties of cultivation and farming, spinning and weaving to the public.⁷⁹

According to Tianzhu, when man intends to leave his family to devote his heart and soul to God, he should first satisfy some requirements; otherwise, he is not allowed to do so. Even if the man fulfilled those conditions, he was still not encouraged to do so because the following:

To serve one's Emperor and be honest with him; to serve parents and show respect to them; to make friends and be honest with them; to support your wife and servants; to show tender care for the widower, the widow and the childless; to maintain one's prayer and fasting and not leave them; and to perform good deeds, is a thousand times better than leaving family for the sake of devotion. In brief, Islam attaches more importance to human relations and does not encourage people to withdraw from society and live in solitude.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Ibid, p. 84.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 131.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 133.

We agree with Tianzhu's view and believe that it represents the right view of Islam in this regard, and that it is supported by the sayings of Prophet Muhammad: "A believer who mingles with people and bears their harm with patience is better than a believer who doesn't mix with them and does not bear their harm with patience."⁸¹ This supports the fact that there is no monasticism in Islam at all.⁸² According to Islam, humanity is created on earth to fulfil the role of a vicegerent whose duty is to worship God and build civilization in its physical and spiritual sense according to the divine will. To help and guide humanity fulfil its responsibilities with success, God sent down revelations to Prophets and sent them as messengers to people throughout different periods of history. This however required them to be involved with their societies instead of running away. Besides, people came to earth to undergo God's test, and that test must be related to the substance of their lives in all their aspects. If we leave our society and stay in solitude, it then implies that we have tried to escape God's test, which goes against God's purpose of creation.

Conclusion

Human acts, without any exception, cannot be free from mistakes or shortcomings. During my study of *Qingzhen Shiyi*, I noticed that some points in Tianzhu's presentation are open to debate and criticism. They include the following: 1) Some of his answers are irrelevant as in p.52, where he mentions education in Muslim areas and why Muslims do not use Chinese characters to pronounce Islamic books (the *Qur'an* for example), even when his guest never asked him about that; 2) Disorganization: see for instance p.54 and 56, where Tianzhu argued with his guest on the function of Yin and Yang in the creation of everything. His argument seems repetitive and disordered; 3) Self-contradiction: see for example p.55, where Tianzhu argues that people in various periods of history preferred different colours and that white was the preferred colour during the Shang era, which means that there is nothing wrong with preferring the white colour. Tianzhu however, denies that Muslims wear white hats because of any colour preference.

⁸¹ Al-ÙabarÈnÈ, 'AbÈ ÙÈhir Ahmad Muhammad Ahmad Ibrahim Al-'AsbahÈnÈ (360), *MakÈrim al-'AkhÈq*, (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilmiyyah, 1421/2000), p. 323.

⁸² *Quran*, Chapter 57:27. Monasticism is a way of devotion initiated by religious men before Islam in which people devote themselves to the worship of God and isolate oneself from society. See Al-Sa'adÈ, 'Abd al--RaïmÈn, *TaysÈr al-KarÈm al-RaïmÈn fÈ TafÈr KalÈm al-MannÈn*, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-RisÈlah, 1417/1996), p. 782.

Tianzhu might be asked the following question: “If you (Muslims) do not prefer the white colour, then why do you not wear hats of other colours? This self-contradiction becomes more obvious in the following passage:

According to the Islamic rules, both hats and clothes should be white, perhaps to show that there is no difference between outward manifestation and inner thoughts and that their hearts are pure, without any pretence, just like white colour. Furthermore, white is the origin of other colours, not mixed with any other thing, and therefore it is considered to be the purest.⁸³

This is a reasonable explanation showing the reasons why Muslims prefer white; 4) Tianzhu imposed certain views on the other party as in p.51 where his guest never mentioned God. Tianzhu quoted some words from ancient Confucian sages and then asked his guest: “If God does not exist, wouldn’t it mean that both the poems of the ancient people and Zhuxi’s interpretation were wrong?” One would assume that it would be right to ask such a question if the other party had denied the existence of God; 5) Erroneous judgments: see for example p. 58, where Tianzhu argues that women are strictly prohibited from entering mosques for prayers. This is of course wrong because the Prophet Mohammed never prohibited them from going to mosques, even if he did not encourage them to do so either. Another example is Tianzhu’s statement in p.58 that drinking alcohol is a minor sin when it is one of the seventy two major sins (*al-kabÉ’ir*) as held according to the consensus of the Ummah; 6) Farfetched and unconvincing comparisons as in p.59, when he speaks about the reason why Muslims males trim their moustache. Here Tianzhu compares the mouth with the emperor and the moustache with his subjects and says that when the Emperor eats, subjects should not be disturbing him, but if they do so they should then be removed. This comparison is very farfetched in my view; 7) incomplete answers; see p.60 for example where one of his guest’s questions is why Muslims prefer eating the meat of cows and sheep and are not vegetarians. Tianzhu did not answer this; 8) Digression from the subject; see for example p.64, where he mentions the stories of ancient Emperors who were deceived by alchemists and swallowed poisonous elixirs, causing them dehydration, intense thirst and unbearable pain. This, in my view, should have been mentioned when discussing Taoist priests and their magic arts, not in the context of leaving one’s family to

⁸³*Translation of Qingzhen Shiyi*, p. 67.

the life of monks. This is because it was the Taoist priests who concocted the alleged elixirs and provided them to the Emperors as the greatest achievement of their magical arts.

These questionable points led me to doubt the completeness and accuracy of the editions I found. I therefore believe it necessary to find the first edition of the book or Tianzhu's original manuscript for further examination and analysis. Nevertheless, these shortcomings found in Tianzhu's work are insignificant when compared to the following advantages: 1) Tianzhu uses many examples familiar to readers to assist in the proper understanding of his ideas; 2) His presentation is very simple and brief, and therefore readers would do not feel bored or tired; 3) His arguments against other religions are strong in most points, and show readers their shortcomings; 4) His exposition of Islamic beliefs and practices is generally convincing; the reason why when his conversation was ended, the guest asked him to collect their dialogue in the form of a published book; and when his friend Chen Dashao read the book, he was convinced with it and urged him to publish it; 5) His language is generally beautiful and even wonderful in some places of the book, which gained him many praises; 6) He also presented a number of brilliant ideas as summarized above.

Finally, one more aspect that increases the value of Tianzhu's book is the fact that it was the first book written by a Chinese Muslim scholar to defend the religious rights and identities of Muslims in China and the continuation of their Muslim identities.⁸⁴ Tianzhu could not have written his book without a great deal of faith and courage, especially in a period of time when there was no freedom or democracy in the contemporary sense.

References :

Fu Tongxian. *History of Islam in China*. Ningxia: People's Publishing House, 2000.

⁸⁴ See Yu Zhengui and Yang Huaizhong, *Abstracts of Chinese Islamic literature* (Ningxia Publishing House, 1993), p. 80.

- Wang Daiyu. *The Real Commentary on The True Teaching, The Great Learning and The True Answers*, Yinchuan: Ningxia Publishing House, 1988.
- Wei Yinru. *History of Printing Ancient Books in China*. Beijing: Printing Industry Publishing House, 1984.
- Chen Puqing. *Translation and Commentary on the Four Books*, No place publication: no publisher, no date. Al-Sulami Iz Al-din, Abd al-Aziz Abd Al-Salim. *QawÉ'id Al-'AÍkÉm fi MaÍÉlíí Al-An'Ém*, Beirut: DÉR al- Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999.
- Da Pusheng. *Islamic Six Books*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2003.