PhD thesis

Indirect dialogue between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis: on the concept of collective transcendence deeply rooted in Chinese culture

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Indirect Dialogue Between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis: on the Concept of Collective Transcendence Deeply Rooted in Chinese Culture

A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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October 2024

Abstract

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Thesis title:	Indirect Dialogue Between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis: on the Concept of Collective Transcendence Deeply Rooted in Chinese Culture
Degree:	PhD
University:	Middlesex University/London School of Theology
Year of submission:	2024

This thesis proposes that Chinese people transcend themselves on a collective basis, named as 'collective transcendence' in this thesis. This cultural transcendence is a product of Confucianism that relates individual quest for eternity to the survival of a person's clan. The notion of collective transcendence facilitates better understanding of the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing' commonly observed with Chinese people. This thesis argues that the concept of collective transcendence is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and its influence is to be found in the thoughts of Chinese theologians and in popular religion in China.

This thesis also examines the interactions of Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam with Chinese culture, using the notion of collective transcendence as a hermeneutical lens. The influence of Chinese culture on Christianity is examined through: a) the tracing of the legacy of popular religion in Chinese converts; and b) the responses of Christian intellectuals to Chinese culture in the first half of the twentieth century. The Islamic response to Chinese culture is evidenced through the study of Muslim Hui Chinese writings, *Han Kitab*. Both Christian and Muslim scholars find that the notion of a personal god is lacking in Chinese culture. Thus, the manifestation of collective transcendence hinges on the survival of a person's clan. It implies a sense of cultural superiority in Chinese culture which is likely to reject foreign religions.

Dialogue between Chinese culture and Chinese Christians on the concept of collective transcendence is compared with similar dialogue with Muslim Huis. This, in turn, facilitates a kind of 'indirect dialogue' between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis regarding the concept of transcendence. This indirect dialogue suggests that the focus of contextualisation of the two religions is to find the means of crossing the religious group boundary, i.e., allowing easy accessibility for Chinese people.

Acknowledgements

I have benefited from the advice and frequent feedback given by my supervisor Dr David Lee. He has provided relevant references for my study and highlighted areas for improvement in terms of knowledge and writing skills. I have made marked progress under his supervision. He also encouraged me during my disappointment regarding the future of China and affirmed me that my efforts will bear fruit. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Graham McFarlane. He looked into details of my writing in his role as the Director of Research. His passion for study encouraged me in my own studying. I also thank Dr Tony Lane who enlightened me concerning the contribution of a research work. Last but not least, thanks also go to my wife Lai Ching for loving me.

List of Abbreviations

CCP:	Chinese Communist Paty
LSWL:	*lishang-wanglai* (a Chinese model of relationships and reciprocity)
NCCC:	National Christian Council of China
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRC:	The People's Republic of China
TSPM:	Three-Self Patriotic Movement

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1. Introduction

Transcendence is usually defined as the presence of 'something above', 'something beyond', or 'something more' than ordinary human experience. The search for transcendence is prompted by an individual's search for a deeper and more profound meaning of life itself and for a sensitising and intensification of human experience.[1] This thesis observes that Chinese people transcend themselves according to their collective culture.

1.1 The Issues

A distinguishing feature of China is its godless state ideology, namely Confucianism. In China, about half of the population declare themselves as being unaffiliated to any religion, and about 20 per cent believe in folk or popular religion.[2] Popular religion is classified as diffuse religion, in contrast to institutional religion. The former is part of the secular world while the latter transcends the secular world.[3] How do Chinese people overcome finitude of life? There is scope to argue that Confucianism has a religious function in that it facilitates self-transcendence.[4] However, no personal god is identified in Confucianism. Another argument is that Chinese people involve themselves in the ritual of popular religion so that they may experience transcendence. Richard Madsen, among others, has pointed out that many people involved in religious rituals do not truly believe in the religion concerned. Their participation is a sign of belonging to their family or to the local community that holds to these religious rituals.[5]

China clearly developed differently from the West. The West evolved from feudal society to modern society and liberated individuals from patriarchal power.[6] By

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1 William A. Johnson, *The Search for Transcendence: A Theological Analysis of Non-theological Attempts to Define Transcendence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 1-2.

2 Cf. Pew-Templeton Global Religious Features Project (http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/china#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2010&region_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016; accessed 11 October 2020).

3 Chong Chor Lau and C. K. Yang, *The Chinese Society* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001) 75-6.

4 Wei Ming Tu, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (rev. ed.; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 94.

5 Richard Madsen, 'Secular Belief, Religious Belonging in China', *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, 1(2014) 21-2.

6 Stephen Feuchtwang explains that European feudal hierarchy was a hierarchy of estates, which are categories of membership, and fixed statuses out of which it was not possible to move. Chinese feudal hierarchy, on the other hand, was based on ranked and differentiated social persons, not ranked and differentiated social groups. Cf Stephan Feuchtwang, 'Social egoism and individualism:

contrast, China appears to continue with the legacy of feudal society, in which kinship – the most important relationship – forms the concentric circles of one's own social influence. These circles are interrelated and touch one another at different times and places. This social pattern reveals the basic characteristic of Chinese social structure, or what the Confucian school called human relationships (*renlun*).[7] Human relationships are further extended beyond the boundary of kinship, made and maintained between families in reciprocal visits (*renqing*) and gift exchanges (*wanglai*).[8] As a result, human relationships are deeply rooted in Chinese society, regardless of the changes of time and social structure.[9]

This thesis proposes that Chinese people transcend themselves on a collective basis, named as 'collective transcendence' in this thesis. It is the product of Confucianism that relates individual existential need, i.e., the quest for eternity, to the survival of a person's clan. The concept of collective transcendence helps the understanding of the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing' commonly observed in Chinese people, who are the major nationals: Han Chinese. Of particular interest for this thesis is the impact the concept of collective transcendence has had on the spread of foreign religions, such as Christianity and Islam, in China.

Chinese Christians and Chinese Muslims are ethnically and culturally different. Most Chinese Christians are Han Chinese, and they are absorbed into Chinese society. On the other hand, some Chinese Muslims form their own communities in northwest China so that they are geographically and socially isolated from Han Chinese. Notwithstanding living within their own communities and practising the Islamic faith, some Muslims do business with Han Chinese. These Muslims are generally regarded as Muslim Huis. The Muslim Huis and the Uyghurs are the two main groups of Chinese Muslims. 'The Hui are ethnically, linguistically and, for the most part, culturally similar to their Han compatriots.'[10] Owing to this similarity, Isaac Halpern considers that Huis

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Surprises and questions for a Western anthropologist of China – reading Professor Fei Xiaotong's contrast between China and the West', *Journal of China in Comparative Perspective* 1.1 (2015) 133.

7 See Fei's social model presented in sub-section 2.4.1.

8 Feuchtwang, 'Social egoism and individualism', 139.

9 In Fei's social model, 'human relationship' is the product of agrarian differentiated society. Now, such relationship extends across the boundary of kinship and becomes a social practice that is commonly found in both cities and rural areas in modern China. It is discussed in chapter 3.

10 James D. Frankel, 'Chinese-Islamic Connections: An Historical and Contemporary Overview', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 36(4) (2016) 573.

can be a bridge between Han and other Muslim groups in China.[11] Therefore, this thesis will give attention to Muslim Hui Chinese writings in order to understand their interactions with Chinese culture.

Against this background of different identities and religious faiths, Christianity and Islam respond to Chinese culture in diverse ways. These different responses reflect the nature of religious transcendence experienced by these two religions and may help us understand better the differences between religious transcendence and cultural transcendence. Meanwhile, these different responses facilitate a kind of 'indirect dialogue' between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis regarding the concept of transcendence. With the above considerations in mind, this thesis investigates the impact of the concept of collective transcendence in the following areas:

a) The historical quest for the development of the concept of collective transcendence is examined in chapter 2.
b) The revival of traditional thoughts and ideology in contemporary China,[12] the People's Republic of China (hereafter: PRC), and people's attitudes toward Christians and Muslims are discussed in chapter 3. This lays the foundations of the dialogue between Chinese culture and the two religions.
c) The dialogue between Chinese Christians and Chinese culture through the hermeneutic lens of the concept of collective transcendence is discussed in chapter 4.
d) The dialogue between Muslim Huis and Chinese culture through the hermeneutic lens of the concept of collective transcendence is discussed in chapter 5.
e) The conclusion of the findings and indirect dialogue between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis are given in chapter 6.

1.2 Research Methodological Framework

This research concerns the influence of the Chinese cultural concept of collective transcendence on the localisation of Christianity and Islam in China. It involves the

[11] Isaac Halpern, 'Comparing the Cultural Roots of Islamophobic Policy in China and France: The Cultural Similarities and Differences behind State Rhetoric, Homogenisation and Repressive Policy', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 42(1) (2022) 81.

[12] It is noted that imperial period of China ended after the collapse of Qing dynasty. Subsequently the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China (PRC) established in 1912 and 1949 respectively. This thesis regards PRC as the contemporary China.

study of culture, which relates to the state ideology and social setting, and the relationship between culture and religions.

Historically, there were government policies against foreign religions.[13] Nonetheless, this thesis considers that cultural concepts, among others, are the driving force of any government policies relating to religions in China. Thus, the political considerations of the development of Christianity and Islam in China will not be elaborated on in this thesis. The research framework is then composed of two parts:

a) cultural study – use of a suitable social model, which is based on anthropological and historical findings, for researching the concept of 'collective transcendence' deeply rooted in Chinese culture; and
b) theological reflection – the relationship between culture and religions in the PRC, which in turn relates to the contextualisation of Christianity and Islam in China.

For the sake of devising the research framework, it is necessary first to review the mechanism of contextualisation of a religion in a particular culture.

1.2.1 Culture and Contextualisation

Contextualisation of a religion is about finding appropriate expressions in a local culture to proclaim the religion itself,[14] such that people of the local culture can comprehend the appropriate expressions and learn the religious faith. Therefore it is a process of communication and interaction between a religion and the local culture in which the local culture is subject to a certain degree of change in order to understand or accommodate the religion. This understanding of a foreign religion relates to the degree of adaptability in the culture concerned which will influence the approach of contextualisation. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there were groups of cultural theorists who sought to understand modern culture.

In the late nineteenth century, there were contests in social sciences about the study of culture, language, social forms and the demarcation of political science,

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[13] In the imperial periods, Chinese emperors sought to control Chinese people in every aspect, including religion. Buddhism, for example, suffered persecution in three dynasties: North Wei dynasty (444-446 AD), South-north dynasty (574-577 AD), and Tang dynasty (842-845 AD). This kind of control was also found in the Republic of China after the collapse of the Qing dynasty. In the 1920s, there was an Anti-Christianity Movement. In the PRC, Muslims in Xin Jiang have been under strict control following the outbreak of riots in 2009.

[14] Cf 'Gospel Contextualisation Revisited', The Lausanne Movement website (https://lausanne.org/content/gospel-contextualisation-revisited; accessed 14 August 2022).

economies, psychology, and sociology.[15] For sociology, Helmut Staubmann reports that there were a cultural turn, a linguistic turn, a cognitive turn or an 'aesthetic or sensory turn' in past decades.[16] Thus, this thesis briefly reviews the socio-cultural views of the contemporary cultural theorists such as Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Georg Lukács, and Jean Baudrillard. Their study areas covered the ontology of social being, human desire, and values of things as well as the effect of economic transactions in modern society.

In feudal society, human relations were mainly natural. Bourgeois society 'carried out the process of socialising society' and human beings became social beings.[17] The reason is that human beings are part of nature, but they distinguish themselves from nature. This distinction makes them subjects and social beings.[18] In this sense, Lukács regards the transition of human beings as part of nature to social beings as a result of the labour process:

> Only with labour does its ontological nature give it a pronounced transition character. It is by its very nature a relationship of interchange between man (society) and nature, and moreover with inorganic nature (tool, raw material, object of labour) as well as organic, … it characterizes above all the transition in the working man himself from purely biological being to social being.[19]

Thus, labour functions as a dialogue with and within nature. It develops interactions between human beings and nature in which human beings identify themselves.[20] Lukács elaborates that the labour process displays the 'essential characteristics of social being',[21] which is 'an original principle of human development' that enables human beings to develop objective reality.[22] In the interaction with one another, people create their culture as objective mental content.[23]

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15 David Frisby, *Simmel and Since: Essays on Georg Simmel's Social Theory* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011) 4.

16 Helmut Staubmann, *Sociology in a New Key: Essays in Social Theory and Aesthetics* (Cham: Springer, 2022) 1.

17 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, (tr. Rodney Livingstone; Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971) 19.

18 Paul Browne, 'Lukács' Later Ontology', *Science & Society* 54(2) (1990), 214.

19 Georg Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being 3: Labour* (David Fembach (tr.); London: Merlin Press, 1980) iv.

20 Browne, 'Lukács' Later Ontology', 214.

21 Browne, 'Lukács' Later Ontology', 204.

22 Antonino Infranca and Miguel Vedda, 'Ontology and Labor in Lukács' Late Thought' in Michael J. Thompson (Ed.), *Georg Lukács and the Possibility of Critical Social Ontology* (BRILL, 2019) 20-21.

23 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 21.

There are two processes in labour. One is objectification, in which there is confrontation of subject and object. The other is the division of labour, in which there is alienation in the opposition between subject and object. In Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, objectification tended to be reduced to alienation in capitalist society.[24] Marx argued that 'the root of evil was alienation' and people became enslaved in capital reproduction.[25] Adorno further elaborates that objects are abstracted from the social relations in the activities of mass production and mass consumption. The abstraction from social relations becomes the 'alienated condition of the object that results in its fetishization'.[26] Therefore, alienation relates to the economic activities in modern society in which money is the medium of economic transactions. As such, Simmel proposes that money is 'the reification of the pure relationship between things as expressed in their economic motion'.[27]

Economic activities involve production and consumption. In commercial markets, the 'entertainment manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses'.[28] This mass culture[29] provides consumers with immediate sensual pleasure and effectively prevents people from chasing after a more just and equal society.[30] Adorno opines that modern culture is a mass culture but capitalism commercialises the mass culture to cover the inequalities of wealth and power. His argument is based on supply and demand in commercial markets. 'The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds',[31] and consequently high culture was decomposed in modern time.[32] Modern technology mechanised labour and became the core of everyday leisure activities. It is a

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24 Browne, 'Lukács' Later Ontology', 208.

25 Andrzej Karalus, 'Georg Simmel's The Philosophy of Money and the Modernization Paradigm', *Polish Sociological Review* 204 (2018) 434.

26 Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2003) 54.

27 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 102.

28 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 127 as cited in David Gartman, 'Bourdieu and Adorno: Converging Theories of Culture and Inequality', *Theory and Society* 41(1) (2012) 46.

29 Jean Baudrillard distinguishes mass culture from popular culture. For him, popular culture is limited to a people group while mass culture 'has englobed everything'. Cf Roger Célestin, 'Interview with Jean Baudrillard: from Popular Culture to Mass Culture', *The Journal of Twentieth Century/Contemporary French Studies/Revue d'études français*, 1(1) (1997) 9.

30 Gartman, 'Bourdieu and Adorno', 43.

31 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 127 as cited in Gartman, 'Bourdieu and Adorno', 46.

32 Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture*, 22.

'continuation and acceleration of the process of the enlightenment goal of total mastery of nature'.[33]

Baudrillard shares the views of Adorno that there is 'unequal distribution of material resources' in modern society.[34] He perceives that promotion of consumption, in particular government expenditure, is one of the means 'to reduce the inequality of the distribution of resources'.[35] He explains that the industrial system in modern society has socialised 'the masses as labour power' and it finally becomes consumption power. [36] Furthermore, the basic problem of contemporary capitalism is the contradiction between 'a potentially unlimited productivity … and the need to dispose of the product'.[37] Thus, needs 'are produced as consumption power' and consumption becomes a function of production, not a function of enjoyment.[38] In addition to the production system, the transaction of money in modern society will change the needs and values of people.

In *The Philosophy of Money*, Simmel proposes that 'the world in the mature economy appears as a world for itself or the culture of things'.[39] In fact, art 'is the representation of that which one characterizes as the formation of things'.[40] Benjamin is of the view that '[t]he authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced'.[41] According to the French sociologist Jean Marie Guyau, social environments are constituted by aesthetic creativity.[42] If the thing is an artwork, Simmel suggests audiences keep a distance from it. This distance, in Benjamin's sense, is the history carried by the artwork. Therefore, 'aesthetic judgment requires the tension of nearness and distance'.[43] Benjamin explains it though the notion of 'aura'. He

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33 Joel Bock, 'Technology, Freedom, and the Mechanization of Labor in the Philosophies of Hegel and Adorno', *Philosophy & Technology* 34 (2021) 1279.
34 Gartman, 'Bourdieu and Adorno', 41.
35 Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage Publications, 1998) 37.
36 Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 82.
37 Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 71.
38 Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 78.
39 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 101.
40 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 98.
41 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt (ed.); Harry Zohn (tr.) (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 221.
42 Staubmann, *Sociology in a New Key*, 9.
43 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 99.

regards the historical testimony and the authority of the object as aura. This aura is unique for an artwork that is associated with tradition and an expression of cult.[44]

The impression of an artwork will have different poles: one on receiving its cult value while the other one is on the exhibition value of the work.[45] Simmel emphasises that the value of an object corresponds to the intensity of human desire of the object.[46] Therefore, an object is valuable when it is desired by human beings. This value hinges on 'the qualities or forms of the thing'.[47] However, money signifies a shift from qualitative to quantitative valuation.[48] Thus, there is tension 'between subjective needs and enjoyment and the objective, autonomous measurement and exchange of one object with another'.[49]

The reproduction of art through modern technology changes the temporal separation between it and the audience as well as 'the reaction of the masses toward art'.[50] According to Bejamin, this temporal separation is the historical testimony which is jeopardized by reproduction.[51] Benjamin investigates further the impact of technical reproduction of art by comparing the impact of an actor's performance on stage and that in a movie. In a stage performance, the actor will interact with the audience and aura is tied to his presence. In viewing a movie, however, the audience will not experience personal contact with the actor and the aura vanishes. Thus, the audience actually identifies with the camera but not with the actor himself or herself. 'This is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.'[52] In Benjamin's view, 'mechanical reproduction brought about a "cultural mass society"'.[53] Nonetheless, he finds that by making 'many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.'[54] Thus, film is a modern art form to

44 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 223-4.
45 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 224.
46 Karalus, 'Georg Simmel's The Philosophy of Money', 432.
47 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 97.
48 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 101.
49 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 101.
50 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 234.
51 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 221.
52 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 228-9.
53 Ferenc Feher, 'Lukács and Benjamin: Parallels and Contrasts', *New German Critique*, 34 (1985) 132.
54 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 221.

satisfy mass audiences which will 'reconcile the rival demands of elite culture and popular entertainment in a "progressive" aesthetic'.[55]

The **reflections** of the above cultural theorists focus on the impact of modernisation on a society in which technology is a key factor. Technological development enables industrialisation and cultivates a consumer culture. Simmel calls this consumer culture a culture of things which socialises everybody. [56] Adorno considers that technological apparatus serves as a tool of self-externalisation to shape people's lives and high culture discomposed in modern time. [57] It appears that contextualisation of a religion in modern time needs to engage in dialogue with the culture of things. However, Benjamin finds that technological reproduction of an artwork helps reactivation of its aura. Culture of things has to face the challenge of traditional values as reproduced by technology.

In the case of China, people will agree that contemporary China is modernised. However, there are different facets of modernisation in China, as discussed in section 3.1. Traditional values, such as filial piety, are still prevalent. Therefore contextualisation of a foreign religion needs to consider the effects of both modernisation, and traditional values as reflected in the state ideology – Confucianism.

1.2.2 Methodology

With the reflection given in sub-section 1.2.1 above, modern culture or modernisation challenges the traditional values of Christianity, Islam and Chinese culture. Nonetheless, Christianity and Islam maintain their religious transcendence while Chinese culture continues to provide cultural transcendence – this thesis names it as collective transcendence – to Chinese people.

Religious transcendence for Christianity and Islam hinges on a personal God. Personal God in this thesis refers to a God with subjectivity and will to interact with believers through religious activities. Although these religious activities involve religious institutions, religious transcendence is not through the religious institution to which the believer belongs but through judgment of the personal God. A believer needs to confess whether he or she has committed to the personal God regarding religious

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55 Robert A. Davis, 'Down Sudden Vistas: Walter Benjamin and the Waning of Modernity', *Counterpoints*, 168 (2003) 49.
56 Frisby, *Simmel and Since*, 101.
57 Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture*, 22.

transcendence or salvation. Thus, a personal God exerts influence on believers so that the believers can understand the will of the personal God. Relationship between God and believers can then be established.

In Confucianism, a human being can interact with the *tian* (sky) to understand heavenly principle or the rules for harmony with nature, which nourishes people on earth.[58] The understanding of heavenly principle is manifested in Confucian ethics which sustains a stratified society. Thus, a personal commitment to the heavenly principle converts to loyalty to a nation or a people group in the secular world.[59] Collective transcendence is based on the fact that Chinese people are attached to a secular organisation, i.e. one's family group, and transcend themselves through the present secular world.[60]

In this thesis, the purpose of contextualisation of a religion is about finding appropriate expressions in a local culture to proclaim the religion itself. Yet another reason for contextualisation may be the survival of the religion concerned. Although these two perspectives are inter-related, the purpose of contextualisation reflects believers' understanding of God's will: willing to cross group-boundary in order to share God's salvation at whatever cost or unwilling to cross group-boundary in order to preserve the religious groups at whatever cost. Thus, the examination of Christian response and Islamic response to Chinese culture, a secular culture, will form an indirect dialogue between these religions which reflects their religious views toward the secular world. Accordingly, the research methodology is outlined as follows:

a) Cultural study to investigate the concept of collective transcendence, which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture:
    - historical approach to the development of the state ideology or Confucianism and its relationship with popular religion;
    - critical analysis of the transcendent models suggested by Chinese scholars in contrast to the state ideology; and
    - the revised social model of Xiao Tong Fei to trace the sustainability of the state ideology and its associated religious elements.

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58 See sub-section 2.4.2 regarding Confucian argument on the unity of heavenly principle with humanity.

59 See sub-section 4.4.7.

60 See discussion in 1.3.3.

b) The impact of the cultural concept of collective transcendence on Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis will be explored through:
    - the theological reflection of Chinese Christians on Chinese culture as well as the characteristics of popular Christianity found in China; and
    - the study of the writings of Chinese Muslim literati (*Han Kitab*) on their understanding of Confucianism and the means of preservation of their Islamic faith through appropriation of Chinese metaphysical concepts.
c) The Chinese Government considers Islam to be a minority religion, which should be 'protected' as a means of respecting ethnic minorities. Therefore, Christians are not encouraged, and are even forbidden, to preach to Muslims in China; interfaith dialogue is rare or superficial.[61] Against this background, this thesis seeks an indirect dialogue between Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis through the comparison of Christians' and Muslim Huis' responses to Chinese culture.

Chapters 2 and 3 seek to study Chinese culture in regard to the cultural concept of collective transcendence and to explore the deep cultural elements that sustain this cultural concept. Chapters 4 and 5 seek to investigate the impact of the cultural concept of collective transcendence that has affected the contextualisation of Christianity and Islam in China. Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the contribution of this research. A more detailed outline of this thesis and the associated literature review are given in section 1.3 below.

There are other approaches, such as scriptural reading and doctrinal study, to understand religious views of Christianity and Islam toward the secular world. It is worth noting that the interpretation of God's will toward the secular view is subject to cultural context. Therefore, this thesis uses sociological approach and the concept of cultural transcendence to conduct indirect dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam. The findings in this approach will reflect believers' responses in real situations in which the two religions need to survive there. However, the findings based on phenomenon in this approach have not disclosed the cultural effect on the interpretation of religious teachings.

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[61] Another reason for the superficial interfaith dialogue is the pluralistic beliefs in China, and people do not have deep understanding of a particular faith. Cf Xin Ping Zhuo (卓新平), 'Harmony Beginning with Dialogue: The Social Meaning of Inter-religion Dialogue', *Proceedings of Lanzhou University on Dialogue between Religions and Harmonious Society* (2007) 16.

1.3 Outline of this Thesis and Literature Review

Cultural study in this thesis involves a historical search for the development of the state ideology, a social model that reflects the manifestation of the state ideology, proposals of transcendence, and so on. As a result, there is no prime literature identified in the study but a rather broad approach to trace the implications of the concept of collective transcendence.

1.3.1 Historical Approach for the Development of the State Ideology

Xiao Qing Ye,[62] Marcel Granet,[63] Chong Chor Lau and C. K. Yang,[64] and Guan Tao Jin and Qing Feng Lau[65] have discussed the concept of 'unchanging China'. That said, Lau and Yang identify two theories, namely the stagnation theory and the evolutionary theory, for reviewing the social development of China.[66]

Jin and Lau consider the concept of great unity leading to the 'unchanging China', while Ding Xin Zhao opts for the evolutionary theory.[67] Nonetheless, they all describe Confucianism's absorption of parts of the thoughts of Buddhism and Daoism during the Tang dynasty (618-907) and the Song dynasty (960-1279) respectively in order to complement its religious dimension. Jin and Lau as well as Zhou consider that Confucianism was used by imperial China as a tool for ruling. Although Confucianism was criticised during the New Cultural or May Fourth Movement in 1919, it was revived again in Communist China during the 1990s.[68] Thus this thesis considers that Confucianism is the state ideology of China.

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62 Cf Xiao Qing Ye, 'Patriotism versus Intellectual Curiosity: Jin Guantao's Approach to Chinese History' in Gloria Davies (ed.), *Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

63 Cf Marcel Granet, *Chinese Civilization* (trs. Kathleen E. Innes and Mabel R. Brailsford; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930).

64 Cf Lau and Yang, *The Chinese Society*.

65 Cf Guan Tao Jin (金觀濤) and Qing Feng Liu (劉青峰), *Prosperity and Crisis: On the Ultra-Stable Structure of Chinese Feudal Society* (Taipei: Storm and Stress Publishing Company, 1994).

66 Lau and Yang, *The Chinese Society*, 131-4.

67 Cf Ding Xin Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Zhao insists that Confucian and Legalist bureaucratic systems were combined during the ancient Chinese imperial state.

68 The Chinese government supported the establishment of the International Confucian Association in Beijing in October 1994. Confucianism is again used as a state ideology for solidarity.

1.3.2 State Ideology and Popular Religion

Joachim Gentz,[69] C. H. Lau and C. K. Yang, Ssu Kuang Lao,[70] Fuk Tsang Ying,[71] and Francis Ching Wah Yip[72] have explored the relationship between Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and the ancient religions in China. Stephen R. Bokenkamp,[73] Christine Mollier,[74] Ying, and Yip find that popular Chinese religions mix the doctrines and practices of the three teachings, i.e., Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, in their cults. Jöel Thoraval believes that China is a secular society consisting of various individual communities that are formed by blood, territorial, or working relationships.[75] Popular religion acts, in fact, as a means of solidarity in those communities.

Both Joachim Gentz and Richard Madsen observe the characteristics of 'belonging' in the popular religions. In imperial China, religion was secular, and secularism was religious.[76] Madsen proposes that Chinese people participating in religious rituals do not really believe in the cult; rather, this constitutes an act of belonging to the community concerned. Regarding the awareness of the function of popular religion, which is used to unite Chinese people, the religious scholar Jordan D. Paper also considers that 'the distinction between religious and secular and between religion and the state has no meaning in the Chinese context'.[77]

1.3.3 The Social Model Explaining the 'Belonging but not Believing' Phenomenon

In 1994, Grace Davie announced her observation of religious participation in Great Britain during the post-war period: that ritual participation and institutional attachment were declining. She named the phenomenon as 'believing but not belonging'. Some twenty years later, she revisited the issue in the second edition of her work *Religion in*

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69 Cf Joachim Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press Ltd., 2013).

70 Cf Ssu Kuang Lao (劳思光), *Essentials of Chinese Culture* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2000).

71 Cf Fuk Tsang Ying (邢福增), 'The Conflicts between the Redemption Doctrine of Christianity and Chinese Culture', *Christianity and China* 2 (2004) 73-92.

72 Cf Francis Ching Wah Yip (葉菁華), 'Protestant Christianity and Popular Religion in China: A Case of Syncretism?', *Ching Feng* 42(3-4) (1999) 130-75.

73 Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (London: University of California Press, 2007) 10.

74 Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008) 10.

75 Jöel Thoraval, 'The Western Misconception of Chinese Religions: A Hong Kong Example', *China Perspectives* 3 (1996) 63.

76 Richard Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 14-7.

77 Jordan D. Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism: The Basis of Chinese Culture, Society and Government* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 108.

Britain.[78] As the expression implies, religious believers may not necessarily belong to any specific religious institution. However, these non-belonging believers are still part of the religion in which they participate. Davie observes that 'there is a continuing shift away from those who believe in a personal God towards those who prefer a less specific formulation'.[79] The theme of the notion 'believing but not belonging' is that '[i]ncreasing heterodoxy is encouraged by the decline in religious practice. Increasing secularity runs parallel.'[80]

There is a different context in China. The sense of belonging concerns attachment to one's family and the community in which the family is grounded. A social model for explaining the 'belonging but not believing' phenomenon will involve the relationship of kinship and the community.

Richard Henry Tawney,[81] Richard Madsen, Xiao Tong Fei, Xiang Qun Chang,[82] and Joachim Gentz have observed the relationship between kinship and the sense of collective belonging in China. Both Tawney and Madsen find that deceased family members continue to be part of the family and the community. Madsen considers that in imperial Chinese society, 'the first and foremost religious site was the family'.[83] In the fieldwork of 1996 in Kaixiangong Village, Jiangsu Province, Xiang Qun Chang found that the family life and religious beliefs of the villagers were closely related.[84] Gentz considers that 'Chinese popular religion is directed towards communal and personal welfare'.[85] In general, the rituals or religious practices involve 'members bound by family ties, by lineage, by clan or by name; or a territorial one'. These religious practices include worship of ancestors, of local gods or of gods who protect a trade, for example, fishermen. In this sense, a community hall is able to serve both sacred and non-sacred activities.[86]

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78 Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox* (2nd edn; Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).
79 Davie, *Religion in Britian*, 73-4.
80 Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 77.
81 Cf R. H. Tawney, *Land and Labour in China* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979; original work published 1932).
82 Xiang Qun Chang (常向群), 'Recipropriety (*lishang-wanglai*): A Chinese Model of Social Relationships and Reciprocity – State and Villagers' Interaction 1936–2014', *Journal of Sociology* 52(1) (2016) 103-17.
83 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 15.
84 Xiang Qun Chang (常向群), *Guanxi or Li Shang Wanglai?: Reciprocity, Social Support Networks, & Social Creativity in a Chinese Village* (Taipei: Airiti Press, 2010) 76.
85 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 112.
86 Thoraval, 'The Western Misconception of Chinese Religions', 61.

Regarding the religious dimension of family, Paper interprets filial piety as a kind of family-oriented religion, which he calls 'familism'.[87] According to Paper, familism can be found in many places in the world, and he perceives that it is a global phenomenon based on an agricultural religious complex structure.[88]

Xiao Tong Fei (1910-2005) was one of the most influential Chinese sociologists of the twentieth century.[89] Since Chinese culture originated from agricultural society and blood lineages, his chief theoretical statement, *From the Soil: the Foundations of Chinese Society*, is regarded as a classic text that lays the foundation for understanding Chinese society.[90] Fei's model of Chinese society proposes that each person forms a web or network of human relationships with his/her family and extended family. The networks of human relationships are sustained by Confucian ethics, and Chinese society is characterised by a 'differential mode of association', i.e., a stratified society. A differential mode of association is a model of rings of association based on the hierarchical differentiation of consanguinity.[91] The British anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang translates the 'differential mode of association' as 'social egoism', to capture Fei's point 'that each ring of association differs according to the position of the person who makes those rings'.[92]

Unlike Madsen and Paper, Fei conceives of family as a kind of organisation. Feuchtwang distinguishes between the concept of social organisation in the West and that in Fei's model. In the West, an organisation consists of a group or groups of people and is characterised by the rules of membership and recruitment. In Fei's model, however, an organisation places each person at the centre of relationship circles so that a family is 'an efficient, flexible and expandable, multi-functional organization'.[93] The family organisation in Fei's model does not need rules of membership and recruitment; rather, the kinship and the commitments given by the state ideology hold family

87 Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism*, 2.
88 Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism*, 54-7.
89 Carsten Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory of Chinese Culture: Its Relevance for Contemporary Cross-disciplinary Research on Chinese Collectivism', *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 34(1) (2016) 28.
90 Xin Xiang Chen (陳心想), *Walk Out from the Soil: Dialogue with Fei Xiaotong's From the Soil* (*Zuochu Xiangtu: Duihua Fei Xiaotong Xiangtu Zhongguo*) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Co., 2017) Preface.
91 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 135.
92 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 131.
93 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 132.

members together. Fei's findings articulated the difference between the development of China and that of the West.

In sum, religion in China is a 'diffused religion, with its theology, rituals, and organization intimately merged with the concepts and structure of secular institutions and other aspects of the social order'.[94] As such, Madsen comments that religion in China is secular while the secular is religious.[95] Unlike the situation in Britain, national or orthodox religion does not exist in China. The notion 'belonging but not believing' emphasises the attachment of Chinese people to a secular organisation or to one's clan to achieve transcendence of their lives. That is, they transcend themselves through the present secular world.

1.3.4 Transcendence Suggested by Chinese Scholars

Xiao Tong Fei and Zong San Mou have suggested organisational and immanent transcendence respectively. Fei considers that Western people can attain organisational transcendence, while Mou advocates immanent transcendence for Chinese people.

For Fei, religious piety and beliefs are not only the source of Western morality, but also offer guidance for Western behavioural norms. The value system of Western ethics originated from Christianity, whereas that in China, the Confucian ethic, is not religion based. From the concept of God, who is actually the symbol of a universal organisation, two important corollaries have emerged. One is that everyone is equal before God, and the other is that God treats everyone with equal justice. For Fei, Chinese society is 'composed of overlapping networks of people linked together through differentially categorized social relationships'.[96]

In short, religious transcendence in the West is conceived of as a kind of 'organisational' transcendence as God is the symbol of universal organisation and members share equal rights before God. By contrast, Chinese society is characterised by a differential mode of association and the ethical standard is context dependent. It is difficult to establish a universal organisation in China for the transcendence of Chinese people. Feuchtwang believes that Fei's observation holds true, 'but it must be seen as a

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94 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) 20 as cited in Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 15.

95 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 20.

96 Xiao Tong Fei (費孝通), *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (trs. Gary G. Hamilton and Zheng Wang; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992; original work published 1948) 20.

contrast between ideologies and discourses prevailing in agrarian China and … in the nineteenth-century West'.[97]

In China, Chinese scholars have their own thoughts of transcendence. Yiu Ming Fung traces the original thoughts of immanent transcendence proposed by New Confucianism in the 1930s.[98] Zong San Mou elaborates on the concepts of immanent transcendence among Chinese thinkers, particularly in his work *The Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*.[99]

Mou proposes that the source of values is actually a universal moral entity that is both transcendent and immanent. The heavenly principle (*tian dao*) is above humanity and possesses the characteristics of transcendence. When it is discovered and understood by human beings, it becomes immanent as humanity. With the connection to the life of heaven, there will be mutual understanding between human beings and heaven, and therefore Confucius said heaven knows him. The study of practising benevolence is similar to religious spiritual study, which looks for the sensation of connection between human beings and heaven.[100] Mou's proposal of immanent transcendence follows the line of union of heavenly principle with humanity in Neo-Confucianism.

Ngan Ying Serina Chan considers that Mou promoted Confucianism as a spiritual philosophy.[101] For Mou, the deepest centre of a person is the infinite moral mind that transcends the finitude of human beings. Jia Dong Zheng finds that Mou appropriates Immanuel Kant's intellectual intuition as 'infinite mind' to qualify the so-called immanent transcendence.[102]

It is necessary to have full understanding of heavenly principle in order to acquire the concept of immanent transcendence. Hing Kau Yeung, a Hong Kong theologian, analyses Mou's understanding of heaven (literally 'sky'). The meaning of

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97 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 142.

98 Yiu Ming Fung (馮耀明), *The Myth of 'Transcendent Immanence': A Perspective of Analytic Philosophy on Contemporary New Confucianism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese University Press, 2003) 179-81.

99 Zong San Mou, *The Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy* (Taipei: Student Book Co., Ltd., 1980).

100 Mou, *The Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*, 32-3.

101 Ngan Ying Serina Chan, 'The Thought of Mou Zongsan' (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2009), *University of Adelaide* web site (https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/67103/8/02whole.pdf; accessed 16 May 2020) 9.

102 Jia Dong Zheng (鄭家棟), 'Transcendence and Immanent Transcendence: Mou, Zongsan and Immanuel Kant', *Social Science in China* 4 (2001) 43-4.

heaven is determined by creativity of the moral mind.[103] Yeung points out that such a moral mind or conscience can judge moral value but not the intellectual ability to manifest morality.[104] As a result, Xiao Feng Tang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, questions whether Mou's proposal can be applied to reality.[105]

1.3.5 Implications for the Concept of Collective Transcendence

Collectivist characteristics relate to family networks and their community as well as popular religions. Hong Kong theologians, Ka Lun Leung and Hing Kau Yeung, have made observations on the issue of death for Chinese people. From his observations of popular religions, Leung points out that Chinese people in general regard the dead as the extension of life in this world.[106] By contrast, Yeung believes that many Confucians do not believe in the existence of ghosts or an afterlife. Building on such a Confucian understanding of death, human activities and their achievements in this world become of absolute importance. Consequently, the Confucian ethical target is that an individual 'needs not only to cultivate his/her morality and devote himself/herself to his/her career, but also to inherit and promote good ideas of previous people in order to merge a small individual into a greater community. A person has died yet his or her thoughts will be continued by the living.'[107]

Leung's view has the implication that Chinese people should work hard for their families and communities because they will continue to be members of their communities after death. This implication is in line with Yeung's prediction of the Confucian ethical target, which will enable individual influence on the present family or community after death. The need to include the dead in the community is the same for the two camps.

Consequently, the possible cultural transcendence for Chinese people is to become a permanent communal member. This needs to maintain proper human relationships in accordance with the Confucian target.

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103 Hing Kau Yeung (楊慶球), *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture: from the Christian Perspective* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co, Ltd., 2004) 134.

104 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 186.

105 Xiao Feng Tang (唐曉峰), 'The Religious Views of Chinese Thinkers in the Twentieth Century' in Zhang (ed.) et al., *A Study of 20th Century Religious Views* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007) 194.

106 Ka Lun Leung (梁家麟), 'Christianity and Chinese Ancestral Worship: A Response from the Pastoral Perspective' in Fuk Tsang Ying and Ka Lun Leung (eds.), *Chinese Ancestor Worship* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1997) 138.

107 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 162.

1.3.6 Modernity and Revision of Fei's Social Model

China is supposed to have modernised, and it appears that Fei's social model may not be applicable to contemporary China. Hong Kong sociologist, Ambrose King, states that modernisation for China was inevitable in the nineteenth century.[108] Fei Wu, a Chinese socialist, observes that modernisation in China 'is accompanied by profound moral conflicts and emotional struggles, which make modern Chinese unable to feel at home or content'. While China has modernised in technological, institutional, and economic ways, it also 'needs to complete modernisation at the level of relationships, subjectivity and moral experience'.[109] Guan Tao Jin argues that the core elements of Confucian culture, namely rationality, determination of value, utopian spirit, and Sino-centrism, remain unchanged over time while their forms, i.e., the mode of organising knowledge, the mode of value integration, the form of idealism, and the view of world order, can be altered and appear in the forms of new ideologies.[110]

Ji Wei Ci, a political philosopher, is of the opinion that nihilism spread in modern China when Marx's utopianism for pursuing collective well-being did not materialise.[111] As a result, the Chinese government supported the establishment of the International Confucian Association in Beijing in October 1994. Once again Confucianism was used as a state ideology to encourage solidarity. Contemporary China is in a state of 'incomplete' modernisation.

Carsten Herrmann-Pillath comments that although Fei's model was primarily applied to rural areas, 'ritual was deeply enmeshed [in] law and also played an important role in urban society' in imperial China.[112] Chang has reviewed the previous research on cultural aspects of social relationships with regard to *guanxi*, *renqing*, *mianzi* in China.[113] The findings echo 'Fei Xiaotong's early work of the foundations of Chinese society … [on] his own concepts of *chaxugeju* and *tuantigeju* in distinguishing

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108 Ambrose Y. C. King (金耀基), *The Modern Turn of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2004) 54.

109 Fei Wu (吳飛), 'Suicide, a Modern Problem in China' in Kleinman, Arthur (eds.) et al., *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person* (London: University of California Press, 2011) 215.

110 Guan Tao Jin (金觀濤), 'Socialism and Tradition: The Formation and Development of Modern Chinese Political Culture', *The Journal of Contemporary China* 2(3) (1993) 7.

111 Ji Wei Ci (慈繼偉), *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution: From Utopianism to Hedonism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) 4-5.

112 Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory of Chinese Culture', 30.

113 The literal meanings of *guanxi*, *renqing* and *mianzi* are 'relationships', 'human feelings', and 'face (dignity)' respectively.

Chinese and western ways of conceptualizing the relations between individuals and society'.[114] Building on Fei's work and previous findings, Chang further conducted fieldwork from 1996 to 2007 in Kaixiangong Village and proposed a social model named *lishang-wanglai* (LSWL model), as explained below:

> The term *lishang-wanglai* originally comes from the Chinese phrase '*li shang wanglai*'. It is taken from the Analects of Confucius (*Lunyu*), translatable as 'for the sake of propriety/etiquette (*li*), people must engage in social intercourse (*wanglai*)' − or, 'giving and repaying is the thing attended to', which would appear to relate to etiquette or propriety but, in *the Book of Rites*, clearly applies to almost every aspect of social life.[115]

The LSWL model is based on empirical findings in the PRC and is regarded as a revision of Fei's social model. Chang claims that this model is helpful to describe and analyse the 'dynamics of Chinese social relationships'.[116] This thesis believes that Fei's revised social model demonstrates that the daily manipulations of human relationships preserve the spirit of Confucianism in the PRC.

1.3.7 Attitudes toward Christianity and Islam

Kwok Leung, a cross-cultural researcher from Hong Kong, has identified that Chinese culture demonstrates characteristics of in-group collectivism, which means that an individual's behaviour will be influenced by his/her reference groups, such as family.[117] Wen Fang conducted a survey of in-group favouritism and out-group hostility with 64 university students who are not believers in any religion. In general, non-believers consider that Chinese Christians have a higher social position than Chinese Muslims.[118] This stereotype may be due to the closed community of Muslim Huis, and it leads to difficulties when dialoguing with them. Fang's survey results reveal that Muslim Huis are marginalised in Chinese society. The different social positions of Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis resulted in different approaches in the contextualisation of these two religions.

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114 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 105.
115 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 106.
116 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 113.
117 Kwok Leung, 'Beliefs in Chinese Culture' in M. H. Bond (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 231.
118 Wen Fang, 'A Comparative Study of Mentality Maps between China's Non-Believer Group and Protestant Group', *The World Religious Cultures* 3 (2015) 65.

1.3.8 Grass-root-class Christians' Response to Chinese Culture

There are official churches and divinity schools in China that represent orthodox Chinese Christianity. Shi Lin Zhao and Qi Duan have identified six influential Chinese theologians from the early twentieth century.[119] Based on the fact that state policies attempt to control the growth of Christian churches, Chloë Starr also considers Sino-Christian non-church theology in her study of Chinese churches.[120] The orthodox teachings focus less on Christ's second coming and eschatology. However, the 'underground' churches, namely popular Christianity, reveal a different picture.

Daniel L. Overmyer has described the difficulties of survival in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In this context, millenarianism emerged, and its central and defining contribution is 'the promise of rebirth after death in the paradise of a compassionate deity'.[121] With regard to the impact of millenarianism on Christianity, Alan Hunter and Kim Kwong Chan recognise that '[t]he increasing interest in Christianity [in Manchuria (northeast China) during the 1900s] was perhaps partly a reaction to the uncertainty of the times: national calamities and poverty, political tension and ideological emptiness'.[122] Xiao Bai Chu compares the storylines of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a Christian writing, and the *Dragon-flower Sutra of the Real Ancient Buddha*, a sectarian writing, in her work *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*.[123] She suggests that the conversion of sect members would be similar to re-affiliation, i.e., changing from one sect to another in a religious tradition.

The legacy of popular religion can also be observed in Christian congregations, such as the Jesus Family. Xi Lian believes that 'the millenarian quest that energized mass Chinese Christianity in the twentieth century … was adapted from the West … [Its main features] also accord with the characteristics of traditional millenarian sects in Chinese society.'[124] Fei Ya Tao believes that the Jesus Family pursued the

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119 Cf Shi Lin Zhao and Qi Duan (eds.), *Christianity in China: Wisdom in Context* (*Jidujiao zai Zhongguo: Chujing Hua de Zhihui*) (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2009).

120 Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016) 14.

121 Daniel L. Overmyer, 'Alternatives: Popular Religious Sects in Chinese Society', *Modern China* 7(2) (1981) 156.

122 Alan Hunter and Kim Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 133.

123 Cf Xiao Bai Chu (褚瀟白), *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China* (Hong Kong: The Logos and Pneuma Press, 2016).

124 Xi Lian, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 15.

establishment of a community of great harmony, which is a Confucian ideal.[125] Although the grass-root-class Christian congregations resembled the traditional local community, they did not focus on the complement of Chinese culture with Christian faith.

1.3.9 Elite class Christians' Response to Chinese Culture

After a brief review of the theological discourse in the early twentieth century, the thoughts of Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu are selected for study of the elite class Christians' response to Chinese culture. Wei Li,[126] David Kwun Ho Tai,[127] and Xiao Feng Tang[128] have studied the thoughts of Zi Chen Zhao. This thesis also cites Zhao's writings, such as 'Christianity and Chinese Culture'[129] and 'Christianity and Confucianism',[130] to understand his responses to Chinese culture. Zhao has identified the problem of Chinese culture regarding the provision of transcendental function to Chinese people. His main point is that there is no personal god in Chinese culture, which results in difficulty in pursuing the union of any heavenly principle with humanity. While he maintains Confucian ethics to be the state ideology for Chinese people, he urges people to know the Christian God and shift their focus to other-worldliness.

Concerning Lei Chuan Wu's thought, this thesis reviews the writings of Alexander Chow,[131] Chloë Starr,[132] Kwong Pui Chan,[133] Zi Chen Zhao,[134] and Wu's

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125 Fei Ya Tao (陶飛亞), *A Christian Utopia in China: The Jesus Family (1921-1952)* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004) 6-7.

126 Cf Wei Li (李韋), 'Harmonisation Theology of Wu Lei-chuan' in Zhao and Duan, *Christianity in China: Wisdom of Contextualisation*.

127 David Kwun Ho Tai (戴觀豪), 'T. C. Chao's Early Indigenous Theology with Ecumenical Vision', *Jian Dao: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57 (2022) 63-86.

128 Cf Xiao Feng Tang (唐曉峰), 'Zi-chen Zhao's Ethical Theology' in Zhao and Duan (eds.), *Christianity in China: Wisdom of Contextualisation*.

129 Zi Chen Zhao (趙紫宸), 'Christianity and Chinese Culture' in Xiao Yang Zhao (ed.), *Zhao Zichen Juan* (Zhao Zichen's Articles) (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015; original work in *Truth and Life* 2 (9-10) (1927)).

130 Zi Chen Zhao, 'Christianity and Confucianism', *International Review of Missions* 17(4) (1928) 593-4.

131 Cf Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

132 Cf Starr, *Chinese Theology*.

133 Cf Kwong Pui Chan (陳廣培), 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology of Wu Lei-chuan' in Xiao-chao Wang (王曉朝) and Xi-nan Yang (楊熙楠) (eds.), *Correlating Chinese and Western Culture* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006).

134 Cf Zi Chen Zhao (趙紫宸), 'Jesus as Christ: Comment on Wu Lei-chuan's Christianity and Chinese Culture' in Xiao-yang Zhao (ed.), *Zhao Zichen Juan* (Zhao Zichen's Articles) (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015; original work in *Truth and Life* 10 (7) (1936)) 320-1.

own works.[135] Wu's intention was to save China with Christianity. Yet his solution was to follow Confucian thought, i.e., the pursuit of a perfect moral life. The Christian God was regarded as an alternative of *tian* (which literally means 'sky' or 'heaven'). For Jesus the Christ, Wu accepted his humanity and expected that the learning of this humanity would help build a new and more perfect society.

1.3.10 Muslim Huis' Response to Chinese Culture

Raphael Israeli and Dru C. Gladney have reviewed the ethnic identity of Muslim Huis but from different points of view. Israeli conceives that there was an uneasy co-existence between the Huis and the Hans.[136] Gladney believes that Israeli was influenced by Huntington's absolutist position on the notion of clash of civilisations. Yet Gladney does not agree with Huntington's position.[137]

With regard to the localisation of Chinese Islam, Shi Ren Ding and Wen Jiong Yang are of different views. Ding insists that the doctrines of Islam will never be localised, and the influence of Chinese culture is only reflected in language, dressing, housing styles, etc.[138] On the other hand, Yang considers that Islamic culture has been fused with Chinese culture through the writings of Chinese Muslim literati.[139]

David Lee,[140] Zhong Jian Mou and Jian Zhang,[141] Kristian Petersen,[142] and Xiao Qin Ma[143] have studied the writings of Chinese Muslim literati and identified that the representative figures are Dai Yu Wang, Zhi Liu, Zhu Ma, and De Xin Ma. All their

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135 Cf Lei Chuan Wu (吳雷川), *Christianity and Chinese Culture* (Shanghai: *Qingnian Xiehui Shuju*, 1934); Zhen Chuan Wu (Lei Chuan Wu), 'Christmas Greetings', *Zhenli Zhoukan* (Truth Weekly Journal) 39 (1923) as cited by Chan, 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology', 268.

136 Cf Raphael Israeli, *Islam in China: Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, and Politics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002).

137 Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities and Other Subaltern Subjects* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2004) 101-2.

138 Shi Ren Ding (丁士仁), 'Discourse on the Localization of Islam' in Chang-kuan Lin (ed.), *Localisation of Islam in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2015) 21-3.

139 Wen Jiong Yang (楊文炯), 'On the Assimilation of Muslim Thoughts and Religious Traditions in China', in Chang-kuan Lin (ed.), *Localisation of Islam in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2015) 76.

140 Cf David Lee (李日堂), *Contextualization of Sufi Spirituality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century China: The Role of Liu Zhi (c.1662-c.1730)* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

141 Cf Zhong Jian Mou (牟鍾鑒) and Jian Zhang (張踐), *General History of Religions in China Part II* (tr. Chi Zhen; n. p.: Paths International Ltd., 2017) 665-7.

142 Cf Kristian Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China: Pilgrimage, Scripture, and Language in the Han Kitab* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

143 Cf Xiao Qin Ma (馬曉琴), 'Interpretation of Islamic Faith through the Concepts of Confucianism: The Successful Example of Islamic-Confucian Dialogue' ('Yi Ru Shijing: Yi Ru Huitong de Chenggong Dianfan'), *Hui Zu Yan Jiu* (*The Study of Hui*) 2(2020) 5-9.

writings mainly make use of the concepts of Neo-Confucianism to explain Islamic doctrines. Some of the works of these literati are listed below, in chronological order:[144]

Author	Work (year)
Dai Yu Wang (王岱舆)	*Zhengjiao Zhenquan* (正教真詮) (1642)
	Xizheng Zhenda (希正真答) (1658)
Zhu Ma (馬注)	*Qingzhen Zhinan* (清真指南) (1683)
Zhi Liu (劉智)	*Tianfang Xing Li* (天方性理) (1704)
	Tianfang Dianli Ze Yao Jie (天方典禮擇要解) (1708)
	Wu Gong Shiyi (五功釋義) (1710)
	Tianfang Zimu Jie Yi (天方字母解義) (1710)
	Tianfang Zhi Sheng Shilu (天方至聖實錄) (1721)

In the study of Zhu Ma's *Halal Guidelines*, Jie Wen Feng finds that the dialogue between Islam and Confucianism is based on the humanity and religious dimensions of Confucianism.[145] Ming Liang Ma further categorised the dialogue into three areas: a) cosmology and epistemology; b) ethics; and c) moral cultivation and spirituality.[146]

This thesis reviews a selection of the writings of the Chinese Muslim literati from the perspective of appropriation of Chinese metaphysical terms. The findings are that their writings aimed to preserve the Islamic faith and sought the orthodox position of Islam in China. Their writings assigned a subject behind traditional Chinese thoughts, such as *tian*, *dao*, and heavenly mandate. This subject is their True Lord, and therefore Chinese people needed to know the True Lord first before they could understand heavenly principle (*tian dao*) and human nature.

Unlike its Christian counterpart, Islam in China does not need Chinese converts to sustain its congregations. In addition, most of the Chinese Christians are Han Chinese while Muslim Huis are a minority in China. Thus, there is less intention to complement or make improvements to the Chinese culture with the Islamic faith.

144 Ertuğrul Ceylan, 'A Review on the Huiru Movement and Key Terms of Traditional Chinese Thought Used in Wang Daiyu's Work', *International Journal of China Studies* 11(2) (2020) 378.

145 Jie Wen Feng (馮杰文), 'A Study of Communication between Islam and Confucianism in *Halal Guidelines*', *Hui Zu Yan Jiu* (*Study of Hui*) 112 (2018) 30-5.

146 Ming Liang Ma (馬明良), 'On the Activity of "Commentary to the Islamic Classics with Confucianism" and its Apocalyptic Significance to the Dialogue between Civilizations in the Present Age', *Hui Zu Yan Jiu* (*Study of Hui*) 60 (2005) 101-5.

1.4 Intended Contribution

The basic characteristic of Chinese social structure is human relationships (*renlun*),[147] and Confucian ethics have been developed based on it. Based on Confucian ethics, New Confucian Zong San Mou advocates the concept of immanent transcendence in order to provide existential meaning for Chinese people.[148] However, there are difficulties in the manifestation of Mou's proposal.[149] Taking the 'belonging' characteristics of Chinese society, this thesis proposes that Chinese people transcend themselves on a collective basis, which is named as 'collective transcendence'. It is the product of Confucianism that relates individual existential need, i.e., the quest for eternity, to the survival of a person's clan. The concept of collective transcendence helps the understanding of the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing' commonly observed in Chinese people.[150] This finding challenges the notion of 'immanent transcendence' proposed by New Confucians and seeks to facilitate reflection on the quest of existential meanings in Chinese culture.

An important condition for the sustainability of collective transcendence is the survival of the collective society itself. In order to sustain the concept of collective transcendence, a sense of cultural superiority, such as Sino-centrism, is necessary to affirm the survival of the collective society. This sense of cultural superiority is reflected in the Confucian belief that human beings stand in the same position as heaven and earth.[151] For this reason there is no need of a personal god in Confucianism. Rather, Confucians participate in the nurturing operations of heaven and earth, i.e., they study the heavenly principles, or *dao*, in order to pursue well-being in this present world.

This finding reveals that the notion of a personal god does not have a place in Chinese culture. However, there is an understanding of a unique God in both the Christian and the Islamic faiths. Thus, the preaching of Christianity or Islam to Chinese people offers the provision of an alternative transcendence.

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147 See Fei's social model presented in sub-section 2.4.1.
148 See Mou's proposal in sub-section 2.4.2.
149 See discussion in sub-section 2.4.2.
150 Richard Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 13-28.
151 The Confucian classic *Zhongyong* considers that the person of entire sincerity 'can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth' (*Zhongyong* 23), and thus human beings take part in the nurturing operations of heaven and earth.

2. Cultural Transcendence in Chinese Collective Society

China is a country that has a long history with a deeply rooted culture; its development is quite different from the West. Richard Henry Tawney, an English economic historian, made the following perceptive observation about China in his book *Land and Labour in China* in the eighteenth century:

> China is an organism, however, of a peculiar kind, which has no modern western analogy. Her unity … rested on the Chinese family, uniting, not the living alone, but the living, the dead and those yet to be born, in an undying community; on the stable, patient routine of the Chinese village; on the common heritage of a philosophy which made personal relations, and the conduct appropriate to them, not metaphysics or political obligations, the foundation of its scheme; on a tradition and style of behaviour which turned each individual into the expression a whole people, and to perpetuate which in himself and his descendants was happiness and virtue; on a common sense of the insignificance of the present in the great ocean of the past, which even to-day causes many Chinese to think in centuries where the West thinks in decades.[152]

Tawney's observation reveals that China was a very specific organism that does not behave like a mechanical system that follows rigid rules and regulations but changed its ideas in a quite unpredictable way. Additionally, the Chinese also counted their deceased family members as members of their present communities that extended the thoughts and spirits of the deceased members to the communities. Thirdly, Chinese philosophy and traditions had provided a sense of collective belonging to their communities. That said, Tawney's observation did not include the religious practices or beliefs of Chinese people, which can be considered as having provided an understanding of the meaning of life for Chinese people.

In the twenty-first century, Richard Madsen shares part of Tawney's observation regarding the sense of collective belonging of Chinese people. Madsen describes China is in a state of 'belonging without belief'.[153] Although Chinese people do not commit themselves to 'religion', they still need to find meaning to sustain their lives. How do they perceive ultimate reality and eternity without religious beliefs? In order to answer this question, this chapter will discuss the matters as follows:

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[152] Tawney, *Land and Labour in China*, 164.
[153] Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 13-28.

- the terms and concepts used in this thesis;
- the historical development of the state ideology, i.e., Confucianism,[154] and its relationship with popular religion;
- the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing' in China and the social model explaining such phenomenon;
- types of transcendence suggested by Chinese scholars; and
- the implication of a concept of cultural transcendence in Chinese culture, which is named as 'collective transcendence' in this thesis.

2.1 Terms and Concepts

There are terms and concepts widely used in academic fields and it is necessary to clarify the meanings of those terms and concepts in this thesis, which are identified to be culture, popular religion, typology of collectivism, transcendence and immanence. These will be discussed below.

2.1.1 Culture

The culture of a nation or a people group has a profound impact on every aspect of life, and it is difficult to find a concise way to describe it. In this connection, Sir Roger Scruton summarises the definitions of culture from the perspectives of anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists. His findings are briefly described as:[155]

a) Anthropologists: culture means 'those customs and artifacts which are shared, and the sharing of which brings social cohesion';
b) Ethnologists: culture 'include[s] all intellectual, emotional, and behavioural features that are transmitted through learning and social interaction, rather than through genetic endowment'; and
c) Sociologists: culture 'mean[s] the thoughts and habits whereby people define their group identity and stake out a claim for social territory'.

[154] Confucianism had been developed as a state ideology and evolved to neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, which absorbed the idea of the union of sky (heaven) and humanity. After the new cultural movement (May Fourth Movement) in 1919, Chinese scholars tried to revive the state ideology and the movement is called New Confucianism.

[155] Roger Scruton, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), 1.

The proposed definitions indicate that a culture is featured with customs, artifacts, thoughts, emotions, and its functions are to promote social cohesion and define set social territory. From the perspective of Christian mission, Louis J. Luzbetak, a professor of mission and culture, defines culture integrally as 'a plan that consists of a set of norms, standards and associated notions and beliefs for coping with the various demands of life. ... It is shared by a social group and is a dynamic system of control.'[156] In China, the Chinese philosopher Ssu Kuang Lao opines that the study of culture is the study of cultural spirit behind the phenomenon of culture. Cultural phenomena involve a host of activities, namely concepts, attitude of life, social systems or institutions, and customs. Cultural spirit is the free will of people.[157]

Although Chinese philosophers are interested in the study of cultural spirit, the suggested cultural phenomena are similar to that in Western definitions, such as thoughts, habits, and customs. What can be said is that the above descriptions illustrate that culture is associated with the human need for membership, and describes a shared asset of a social group' and Scruton distinguishes culture and civilisation as follows:[158]

Civilization	A social entity that manifests religious, political, legal, and customary uniformity over an extended period, and which confers on its members the benefits of socially accumulated knowledge.
Culture of a civilization	The art and literature through which it rises to consciousness of itself and defines its vision of the world.
Culture	The accumulation of art, literature, and humane reflection that has stood the 'test of time' and established a continuing tradition of reference and allusion among educated people.

The above definitions of culture, including that from Scruton, have not explicitly included the role of material civilisation in modelling a culture. That said, sociologist Tim Dam observes that whilst there was little progress in the material aspects of social life between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries a rapid change in material civilisation took place in the nineteenth century.[159] Material civilisation, then, is a sign of modernity but it is not necessary leading the progress of a society. Scruton's definition of culture is adopted in this thesis since it helps to explain the contemporary situation that Chinese

156 Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988) 156.
157 Lao, *Essentials of Chinese Culture*, 4-7.
158 Scruton, *Culture Counts*, 2.
159 Tim Dant, 'Material Civilization: Things and Society' in *The British Journal of Sociology* 57(2) (2006) 292.

people will not significantly change their religious, political, legal, and customary uniformity over an extended period in Chinese history.

2.1.2 Working Definition of Confucianism

It is worth noting that Confucianism developed as a state ideology and evolved to neo-Confucianism during the Song and Ming dynasties, which absorbed the idea of the union of sky (heaven) and humanity.[160] Confucianism is a kind of political philosophy[161] which is useful to unite people and stabilise the country. Historically, the Confucian concepts 'inner sage' and 'outer king' are inherently connected, and they drove toward moral cultivation and political application respectively.[162] In pre-modern China, society was dominated by Confucian literati, and they were the core officials to operate an empire. When a dynasty collapsed, they continued to dominate in the new dynasty and made the new one a virtual carbon copy of the previous one.[163] For moral teaching, the elites taught lay people about Confucian rituals which covered nearly every sphere of life: weddings, funerals, festivals, and ancestral rites. As such, Confucianism established moral codes and also was actively involved in the governance of the state.[164] It is clear that historically the elites followed Confucianism to establish an ideal state while lay people, e.g. rural residents, were taught to follow Confucian ethics to maintain social order.

In the early twentieth century, Confucianism suffered severe criticism in the new cultural movement (May Fourth Movement). That said, Chinese scholars have attempted to revive Confucianism, and the movement is called New Confucianism. There are three development stages of New Confucianism, of which the different development periods and the representative scholars are tabulated below:

Period	Location	Representative scholars
1920s	Mainland China	Shu Ming Liang (梁漱溟), You Lan Feng (馮友蘭), and Shi Li Xiong (熊十力) etc.

[160] See sub-section 2.2.2 for the historical development of Confucianism.
[161] Xiao Feng Liu (劉小楓), *Rujiao yu Minzu Guojia* (儒教與民族國家) (Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2007) 5.
[162] Qi Yong Guo (郭齊勇), 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism' *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49(2) (2018) 160.
[163] Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, xi.
[164] See sub-section 2.2.3.

1950s to 1980s	Hong Kong and Taiwan	Jun Yi Tang (唐君毅), Zong San Mou (牟宗三), and Fu Guan Xu (徐復觀) etc.
1980s onward	Overseas, Hong Kong and Taiwan	Wei Ming Du (杜維明), Shu Xian Liu (劉述先), and Ren Hou Cai (蔡仁厚) etc.
	Mainland China	Qing Jiang (蔣慶) and Yi Jun Luo (羅義俊) etc.

The first development stage evolved in the 1920s when the scholars intended to revive Confucianism. Communists took power in 1949 and communism, or socialism, was promoted thereafter. During the period 1950s to 1980s, the second development stage, Communist China nearly isolated itself from the world; meanwhile the New Confucians in Hong Kong and Taiwan left Mainland China and encountered Western culture. They attempted to continue to develop Confucianism through: a) finding the religious thoughts of Confucianism; [165] b) clarifying misunderstandings of Confucianism owing to Western concepts; and c) enriching Confucianism through comparison with other cultures.[166] The two main scholars, Jun Yi Tang and Zong San Mou, emphasised the importance of personal moral and spiritual cultivation.[167]

In the third development stage, New Confucians in Hong Kong and Taiwan pointed out the plurality of modernity that would characterise East Asia as the result of interaction between Westernisation and East Asian traditions, which included Confucianism. The characteristic of this stage was advocation of civilisation dialogue. In Mainland China, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) interrupted cultural development.[168] China then entered the reformation period in 1978,[169] when Qing Jaing was inspired by the works of Tang and Shu Ming Liang. He then advocated Confucian revival in 1989, arguing that:

> [T]wentieth-century New Confucianism, basing itself on the 'moral Confucianism' of Mencius and the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians, focuses primarily on inner self-cultivation; insofar as these New Confucians paid attention to politics and institutions.[170]

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165 See discussion of Mou's immanent transcendence in sub-section 2.4.2.

166 Rong Zhang (張嶸), 'New Confucian's View on Islamic Civilisation: from Tang Jun Yi to Du Wei Ming', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Study* 4 (2004) 20.

167 Stephen C. Angle, 'The Adolescence of Mainland New Confucianism', *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49(2) (2018) 85.

168 Zhang, 'New Confucian's View', 20.

169 See section 3.1 for the background of the reformation period.

170 Angle, 'The Adolescence of Mainland New Confucianism', 86. See sub-section.7 for the discussion of Jiang's idea.

While Jiang advocated political Confucianism, he also stressed 'the sacredness of Confucianism, insisting that it needs to be established as China's state religion'.[171]

While the elites develop New Confucianism in contemporary China, ordinary people believe that life becomes meaningful if people follow Confucian moral order.[172] Qi Yong Guo observes that lay persons also attempt to take 'the values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith, loyalty, filial piety, honor, shame, and other core values into the homes'.[173] In fact, a survey conducted in the early 2010s revealed that important topics for understanding Chinese people are those relating to family, human relationships, and traditional rituals.[174] These issues originated from Confucian ideology which provides a meaning of life. Judging from the above observations, the working definition of Confucianism in this thesis is set to be the Confucian ethics that govern human relationships and substantially support a stratified society.

2.1.3 Popular Religion[175]

It is worth noting that when Chinese people perform religious practices or traditional rituals, they do not necessarily believe in the cult or religion they are involved in. Rather, the performance acts as a means of belonging to their community or people group. Some observations are given below:

- one of the missionaries in the nineteenth century opined that '[a]ncestral worship, or the worship of the dead, has not hitherto been regarded as a system of religion, but merely as a commendable reverence for parents or filial piety';[176]
- Joachim Gentz, a sinologist, observes that 'many Chinese who burn incense daily to various gods and ancestors deny practising, or believing in, religion';[177]
- Peng Li, a contemporary Chinese sociologist, finds that his uncle has prayed hard to the Christian God for half an hour while he used to kneel down for less than a

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171 Angle, 'The Adolescence of Mainland New Confucianism', 86. See sub-section 3.2.2 for the revival of Confucianism.

172 Xiao Feng Liu (劉小楓), *Zhengjiu yu XiaoYao* (*Delivering and Dallying*) (Shanghai: SDX Joint Publishing Co., 2001) 79.

173 Guo, 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism', 162.

174 See Table 3.1 in sub-section 3.1.1.

175 Popular religion is also known as folk religion. Both terms refer to the beliefs and practices of the masses. Cf Feng Gang Yang (楊鳳崗) and Anning Hu, 'Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2012) 51(3) (2012) 506.

176 Rev. M. T. Yates, 'Ancestral Worship and Fung-Shuy', *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, 1-2 (1868-69) 23.

177 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 113.

minute, in a perfunctory manner, for ancestor worship before his conversion to Christ.[178]

What are the reasons behind the religious practices of Chinese people? Actually, the beliefs or the meaning of life will be reflected in the traditional teachings of a people group. There are three main teachings in China, which are Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism (the 'Three Teachings'). Daoism was founded by Laozi as a school of thought in the sixth century BC about the relationship between human beings and nature. It was later used to explore the status of afterlife and added many supernatural elements. Thus, the Daoist explanation of the afterlife is referred to as 'religious Daoism' in this thesis. Gentz summarises the goals of Confucianism, religious Daoism, Buddhism, and Chinese popular religion as follows:[179]

a) Confucianism advocates the moral cultivation of self and society;
b) religious Daoism seeks the immortality of the self;
c) Buddhism pursues the extinction of the self; and
d) Chinese popular religion aims at communal and personal welfare.

Buddhism became popular in China following the East Han dynasty (25-220 AD).[180] It is both religion and philosophy,[181] and its basic doctrine is to teach people how to escape from suffering due to delusion and karma.[182] It believes that there is reincarnation for everyone. One will attain the state of awakening or enlightenment in the cycle of reincarnation. With this enlightenment, one will finally attain the state of nirvana.[183]

A person's karma affects their next life in the cycle of reincarnation. If this person seeks to cultivate him/herself, he or she will eventually finish the cycle of reincarnation and attain the state of nirvana.[184] That is, the ultimate concern of Buddhism is to escape from the suffering of life and death and ultimately arrive at the

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178 Peng Li, *God and Ancestor: the Christianity and Blood Lineage System of Northeast Chinese* (Guangzhou: The World Book Publishing in Guangdong, 2015) 1.
179 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 112.
180 Hua Wen Bai (白化文), *Hanhua Fojiao yu Fosi* (*Sinicised Buddhism and Buddhist Temple*) (Hong Kong: Cosmo Books, 2019) 25.
181 Li Tian Fang (方立天), *Fojiao Zhexue* (*Philosophy of Buddhism*) (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1986) 5.
182 Delusion refers to greed, rage, and addiction, while karma is the consequence of personal behaviour.
183 Lu Ping Wang (王路平), *Da Cheng Fojiao yu Zhongji Guanhuai* (*Mahayana Buddhism and Ultimate Concern*) (Chengdu: Sichuan Bashu Press Co. Ltd., 2001) 382.
184 Kazuo Okabe and Ryosho Tanaka, *Zhongguo Fojiao Yanjiu Rumen* (*Elementary Study of Chinese Buddhism*) (Ru Yi Xin (辛如意) (tr.); Taibei: Dharma Drum Publishing Corp., 2007) 19-20.

state of freedom from all suffering (nirvana).[185] Therefore, cultivation of oneself is crucial for attaining the state of nirvana. In fact, the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, regarded himself as an awakened one. After his death, however, his followers worshiped him and made a statue of him. Siddhartha then became a divine Buddha.[186]

While Chinese elites studied Buddhism at a theorical level, the lay Buddhists could not benefit from their study. They practised Buddhism in accordance with their personal needs, which led to the development of popular Buddhism.[187] The ideas of popular Buddhism are reflected in virtue books and the formation of secret societies,[188] which are signs of popular religion. One of the characteristics of popular Buddhism is the belief of individual deity. This belief did not originate from the doctrines of Buddhism but from the mixing of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.[189] In fact, it has been mixed with Confucian ideology since the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD).[190]

In a survey by China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) undertaken in 2018, '20.5% of respondents claim to believe in two religions, while 29% believe in three or more religions'. Those believing in multiple religions are popular religion believers.[191] For Buddhism, 2.1% of survey respondents believe in single worship of Buddha/bodhisattva, while 31.3% believe in multiple religions including Buddha/bodhisattva.[192] This thesis interprets that the 2.1% of respondents practise Buddhism by studying the doctrines of Buddhism for cultivating themselves for attaining the state of nirvana, while the multiple religious believers are popular religion believers pursuing personal well-being.

Both Confucianism and popular religion focus on pursuing well-being in the present world. However, Chinese popular religion has no canonical scriptures nor unified institutions independent of secular institutions. It is mainly transmitted through vernacular fiction and oral storytelling.[193] What, then, is the difference between 'popular religion' and religion?

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185 Wang, *Da Cheng Fojiao yu Zhongji Guanhuai*, 335.
186 Bai, *Hanhua Fojiao yu Fosi*, 57-8.
187 Okabe and Tanaka, *Zhongguo Fojiao Yanjiu Rumen*, 495.
188 Okabe and Tanaka, *Zhongguo Fojiao Yanjiu Rumen*, 495-500. See sub-sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 for the discussion of secret societies and virtue books.
189 Okabe and Tanaka, *Zhongguo Fojiao Yanjiu Rumen*, 500.
190 Bai, *Hanhua Fojiao yu Fosi*, 25.
191 Chunni Zhang et al., 'Exploring Chinese Folk Religion: Popularity, Diffuseness, and Diversities', *Chinese Journal of Sociology* 7(4) (2021) 581.
192 Zhang et al., 'Exploring Chinese Folk Religion, 583.
193 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 112-3.

C. H. Lau and C. K. Yang classify popular religion as diffuse religion in contrast to institutional religion such as Christianity and Islam. The former is part of the secular world while the latter transcends the secular world.[194] The Chinese historian Ding Xin Zhao explains diffuse religion that theology, rituals, and organisations of popular religion is 'merged with the concepts and structures of the institutions and practices of daily life. It takes many forms and is highly mutable.'[195] Jöel Thoraval, a French anthropologist, further analyses the structure of religious institutions and communities in the West and that in China, respectively, as shown in Figure 2.1 below.[196]

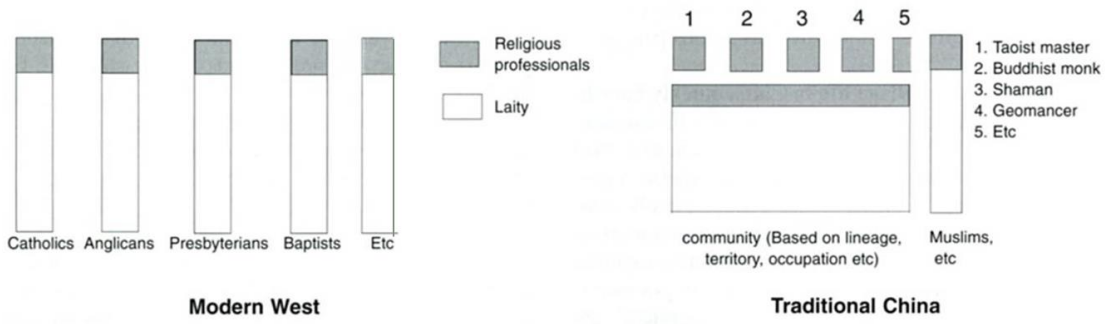

Figure 2.1 Structure of communities of believers

In Figure 2.1, Geomancer is the master of *feng shui*, which literally means 'wind' and 'water'. '*Feng shui* is a philosophy of setting and placing buildings and elements in an environment. It aims to realise physical environments that encourage well-being through the utilisation of flowing energy.'[197] Thoraval cites several examples of local cult ceremonies to illustrate the leading role of laity as shown in Figure 2.1:[198]

Cults	Officiating officer
Ancestral cults of families and lineages	Senior members of the kinship group
Ordinary cult of the Earth Deity (*tu di*)	Inhabitants of the village
Temples of fishing communities	No priests and they serving as community halls

194 Lau and Yang, *The Chinese Society*, 75-6.
195 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 342.
196 Thoraval, 'The Western Misconception of Chinese Religions', 63.
197 Marino Bonaiuto et al., 'Feng Shui and Environmental Psychology: A Critical Comparison', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 27(1) (2010) 23.
198 Thoraval, 'The West's Misconception of Chinese Religions', 61.

Thoraval identifies that China is a secular society consisting of various individual communities that are formed by blood, territorial or occupational relationships. These communities are different from the communities or churches in the West, which serve their individual community with their own specialists and rites. Chinese Muslim communities, for example, are isolated from other Chinese communities and follow the structure of Western religious institutions.[199]

For Chinese communities, they are united in their customs and shared most of the religious terms. In this connection, Chinese people practise 'popular' religion 'which they would have difficulty to giving a name to.'[200] That said, the Chinese religious scholar Xiao Bai Chu finds that popular religion is also known as secret religion, sect, new religion or local religion.[201] These religious sects formed their collective society for the pursuit of salvation. In sum, 'popular religion is usually employed to designate phenomena that do not fit into other neatly designed categories: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.'[202]

From the perspective of governance, the British anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang considers that popular religion, a host of local cults, is a religion for ordinary people. Since the local cults was not that of centralised administration in imperial China, it linked with 'many centres and with a distinctive character.'[203] Feuchtwang's observation hints at the fact that the state ideology of imperial China did not provide sufficient support of existential values for the Chinese people so that there was room for the development of popular religion. This will be further discussed in section 2.2 below.

2.1.4 Typology of Collectivism

There is no absolute individualism in a community since a community member should behave in respect of the social norm or constraint. Durkheim recognises that 'what is most essential in the notion of social constraint' is 'that collective ways of acting and thinking possess a reality existing outside individuals, who, at every moment, conform

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199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*,10.
202 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 29.
203 Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001) vi-vii. Official or State religion is further discussed in section 2.2.

to them.' [204] From the perspective of psychological experiments, it is found that 'individualistic' individuals can also manifest strongly collectivistic behaviour. Accordingly, psychologists identify that there are vertical and horizontal perspectives in both individualistic society and collectivistic society as shown in Table 2.1 below:[205]

	Individualistic society	**Collectivistic society**
Vertical	'Emphasis of status differences between individuals and competitive behavior in advancing in the status hierarchy.'	
	'Behaviour that is strongly competitive in pursuing individual achievement goals', e.g. the US.	'Emphasizes authority relations in groups which in turn may stay in a competitive relationship with other groups', e.g. China.
Horizontal	'Individuals mutually respect each other and aim at creating a cooperative environment allowing for equal opportunities in self-expression.'	
	'Emphasizes individual emotional needs and self-expression in interpersonal relations.'	-

Table 2.1 Characteristics of individualistic society and collectivistic society

In fact, both 'collectivism and individualism are analytical concepts often used to categorize and describe cultures and societies as well as individuals.'[206] The Global Leadership & Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project conducts surveys, 'which concentrate on the issue of leadership in business but' also 'on culture and society.' It distinguishes 'institutional collectivism' and 'in-group collectivism' in its surveys. 'The former refers to individual expectations regarding institutionalised patterns of group-oriented behaviour, such as redistribution by the government. The latter relates to behaviour in the context of individual reference groups such as family and kin.'[207] Institutional collectivism is expected even in an individualistic society while in-group collectivism should be demonstrated in a collective society.

[204] Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (2nd edn.; tr. W. D. Halls; New York: The Free Press, 1982) 44-5.
[205] Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory of Chinese Culture', 34.
[206] Arnulf Kolstad and Nini Gjesvik, 'Collectivism, Individualism, and Pragmatism in China: Implications for Perceptions of Mental Health' in *Transcultural Psychiatry* 51(2) (2014) 266.
[207] Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory of Chinese Culture', 31-2.

Based on research on the belief system of Chinese people,[208] Kwok Leung, a cross-cultural researcher from Hong Kong, considers that 'Chinese culture is characterised as collectivistic,' and he summarises the findings of Chinese collectivism as follows:[209]

a) the well-being of in-group members depends on their collective effort;
b) an effective way to achieve one's goal is through one's *guanxi*, which literally means relationship;[210]
c) out-group members are less trustworthy;
d) Chinese from Mainland China 'perceived Chinese as more homogeneous than other national groups'; and
e) in contrast, 'Chinese from Hong Kong and Mainland China regarded their group as less effective than did Americans.'

K. Leung has identified that Chinese culture demonstrates the characteristic of in-group collectivism, which means that individual behaviour will be influenced by his/her reference groups such as family and kin. Thus, collectivism in this thesis refers to in-group collectivism, which will be further discussed in Fei's social model of China in sub-section 2.3.3.

2.1.5 Concepts of Transcendence and Immanence

Wei Ming Tu, a New Confucian scholar and public intellectual, who has participated in many Christian-Confucian dialogues, has discussed the religious dimension of Confucianism and the concept of transcendence:

> [b]eing religious, in the Confucian perspective, informed by sacred texts such as *Chung-yung* [literally means 'in the middle'], means being engaged in the process of learning to be fully human. We can define the Confucian way of being religious as ultimate self-transformation as a communal act and as a faithful dialogical response to the transcendent. This is also the Confucian prescription for learning to be fully human... We can say that Confucian religiosity is expressed through the infinite potential and the inexhaustible strength of each human being for self-transcendence.[211]

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208 Kwok Leung has analysed the results of behavioural and psychological studies, mainly conducted by Chinese scholars, from 1984 to 2006.

209 Leung, 'Beliefs in Chinese culture', 231.

210 The term *guanxi* is a short form of human relationship or interpersonal relationship. In Leung's paper, it is used in a negative sense that people seek to obtain advantages through human relationship or interpersonal connection. It will be further discussed in section 2.4 and sub-section 3.3.2.

211 Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, 94.

For Tu, self-transcendence means to be fully human through the manifestation of Confucian ethics. This is a typical response of New Confucianism to the enquiry of religiosity. For instance, Zong San Mou, an influential New Confucian and the teacher of Tu, named the self-transcendence as immanent transcendence.

As discussed in chapter 1, transcendence is usually defined by the presence of 'something above', 'something beyond' or 'something more' than ordinary human experience. The search for transcendence is one which is prompted by the individual's search for a deeper and more profound meaning of life itself and for a sensitising and intensification of human experience.[212] The literal meaning of 'transcendence' is 'out' of one's situation while that of 'immanent' is 'inside' oneself. It appears odd to put the two terms together to describe the unique characteristics of Confucianism for transcending Chinese people. In fact, Western thinkers may refer to different meanings in employing the terms immanence and transcendence. The concepts of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' have a long lineage in the history of Western metaphysics.[213] Since Mou appropriated Kant's infinite mind in his thought, Kant's notion of 'immanent' and 'transcendence' is briefly reviewed below. Kant conceives that,

> the employment of idea is related to possible experience that is transcendent or immanent. An idea is employed transcendently when it is applied to an object falsely believed to be adequate with and to correspond to it. [It is employed immanently] when it is applied solely to the employment of the understanding in the sphere of experience.[214]

Based on Kant's notion of reason, Rolli argues that reason can define the boundaries of experience and operate within such boundaries. Reason needs to prove 'itself up to this task by being able to pass a synthetic judgment *a priori*, which defines the subjective legalities that function as the necessary conditions for any possible experience of things.'[215]

However, it is problematic how Kant distinguishes a realm of immanence as a world of appearance from another realm that stands under the sign of transcendence. Rolli argues that the ability of reason 'to self-differentiate makes up for its helplessness

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212 Johnson, *The Search for Transcendence,* 1-2.
213 Marc Rolli, 'Immanence and Transcendence', *Bulletin de la Societe Ameriacnie de Philosophie de Langue Francais* 14(2) (2004) 50.
214 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (A643/B671) as cited by Rolli, 'Immanence and Transcendence', 54.
215 Rolli, 'Immanence and Transcendence', 54.

with regard to epistemological questions and thus legitimates philosophy as the transcendental foundation of all individual sciences.'[216] Kant seeks to reduce reason to its immanent use and let transcendence lie entirely beyond experience such that transcendence is unknowable. The New Confucian, Mou, appropriates the concept of 'transcendence' and 'immanence' in another way, which is discussed in sub-section 2.4.2.

2.2 Cues from Chinese History: the Development of the State Ideology

It is worth noting that the concept of the 'unchanging China' was apparently popular until the late twentieth century.[217] The French historian Marcel Granet, for example, opined that Chinese civilisation matured in the beginning of the imperial period.[218] Granet's view hints that Chinese culture tended to be stationary throughout the imperial period.

In fact, C. H. Lau and C. K. Yang have identified two theories, namely theories of stagnation and evolution, for reviewing the social development of China, in which the concepts of the 'great unity' and the combination of Confucian and Legalist bureaucratic systems of imperial states are the views, among others, supporting the theories of stagnation and evolution respectively.[219] Since state ideology will steer the social development of a country, this section seeks historical evidence of the evolution of the state ideology and its relation with popular religion in China.

2.2.1 Changing or Unchanging China in the Changes of Dynasties

Contemporary Chinese historians Guan Tao Jin and Qing Feng Liu hold to the concept of the great unity while Ding Xin Zhao contends that China has evolved through the interaction of Confucianism and Legalism.

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216 Rolli, 'Immanence and Transcendence', 59-60.

217 Xiao Qing Ye, 'Patriotism versus Intellectual Curiosity: Jin Guan Tao's Approach to Chinese History' in Gloria Davies (ed.), *Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001) 193.

218 Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, 427. The imperial period referred to the period from the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC) to the Qing dynasty (1644-1912).

219 Lau and Yang, *The Chinese Society*, 131-4.

The feudal or primitive society of premodern China remained unchanged over some two thousand years.[220] Jin and Liu propose that an organisational 'deep' structure existed in premodern China that caused the distinguished feature of the cyclic rise and fall of dynasties, all of which were founded on the goal of achieving great unity. They call the deep structure an ultra-stable structure, which was comprised of Confucian ideology and the patriarchal-state social structure system. This structure maintained the long-lasting feudal society.[221] Another Chinese historian, Zhao, also observes a similar rise and fall of the dynasties in premodern China:

> China is the only place in the world where a consistent imperial system persisted most of the time for over two millennia between the founding of the Qin dynasty in 221 BC and the Republican Revolution in 1911. … [In this connection,] imperial China was the only world civilisation where transcendental world religions exerted no major influence on politics. [222]

Jin's and Liu's suggested ultra-stable structure in 1980s caught the attention of Zhao and other Chinese intellectuals.[223] Zhao summarises Jin's and Liu's arguments as follows: [224]

a) the over-expanding bureaucracy of imperial China resulted in despotism and corruption in local government;
b) the corruption then brought down each of the Chinese dynasties;
c) Chinese society was dominated by Confucian literati and they were the core officials to operate the collapsed empire. They continued to dominate in the new dynasty and made the new one a virtual carbon copy of the previous one; and
d) consequently, it formed the 'ultra-stable structure' in premodern China.

Zhao does not quite agree with Jin's and Liu's proposal and argues that a 'Confucian-Legalist political system emerged in China during Western Han dynasty [206 BC to 8 AD and] lasted for over two millennia.'[225] Jin and Liu's proposed ultra-stable structure

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220 Guan Tao Jin, 'Interpreting Modern Chinese History through the Theory of Ultrastable Systems' in Gloria Davies (ed.), *Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001) 182. Premodern China refers to some two thousand years of dynastic rule that preceded the founding of the Chinese republic in 1912.
221 Jin, 'Interpreting Modern Chinese History', 157.
222 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 8.
223 Guan Tao Jin was one of the most famous intellectuals in China during the 1980s. Cf Ye, 'Patriotism versus Intellectual Curiosity', 185.
224 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, xi.
225 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 4.

and Zhao's Confucian-Legalist political system were developed in parallel in history as shown below:

Period[226]	**Ultra-stable structure**[227]	**Confucian-Legalist political system**[228]
Qin to Han dynasty (221 BC to 220 AD)	Formation	Formation
Wei to Southern and northern dynasty (220 to 581)	Consolidating with nomadic culture	Nomads embraced Chinese culture, including Confucian-influenced politics
Sui to Yuan dynasty (581 to 1368)	Matured	Penetration of Confucian ideology into people's daily lives in Song dynasty (960 to 1279) and contributed to the perpetuation of the Confucian-Legalist political system
Ming to Qing dynasty (1368 to 1912)	Fossilised	Confucian-Legalist political system adopted for governance

Jin and Zhao share similar observations of Chinese history and find that Confucian ideology is the backbone sustaining an ultra-stable structure and the Confucian-Legalist system. Whilst there is still room to debate theories of stagnation and evolution, nonetheless, Confucianism is identified as the key to understand Chinese culture. Its role as state ideology is discussed in sub-section 2.2.2 below.

Jin believes that the ultra-stable structure was dominant over the two thousand years history from Qin to Qing dynasty while Zhao argues the formation and revival of Confucian-Legalist system in the period of the Qin to the Han and the Song dynasty. Zhao lists the classical doctrines of legalism that centred on: a) penal law and bureaucracy, b) administrative techniques coupled with the ruler's artful deviousness, and c) a ruler's authority over his subjects.[229] For Jin, however, Legalists did not have a well-defined moral standard and value system for people to follow and thus it mainly promoted penal law and administrative techniques only. Nonetheless, Confucianism would need to absorb legalism in the formation of state policy for the maintenance of a unified state.[230] During the age of total war (419-221 BC), Xunzi, a Confucian,

[226] The 'Period' is outlined by Jin while Zhao's arguments of the development of the Confucian-Legalist system roughly fit into the Period.
[227] Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 345.
[228] Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 274-346.
[229] Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 185.
[230] Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 377.

'advocated ruling the state with a combination of moral example and Legalist prescription, a stance that has led people to identify him as Confucian-Legalist.'[231]

In reviewing Zhao's work, Peter K. Bol observes that Zhao, on the one hand, claims that 'the centralized bureaucratic state ruled through legalism and was legitimated by Confucianism' and yet, on the other hand, Zhao concludes that 'the most enduring dynastic states in Chinese history found ways of institutionalizing the collaboration of central power and semi-autonomous elites through bureaucratic governance.'[232] Zhao, however, has not elaborated on the manifestation of legalism in bureaucratic systems of imperial states over the two millennia of premodern China. Therefore, the development of legalism in Chinese history will not be explored further, but the development of Confucian ideology will be, which continues to assume the role of state ideology.[233] The above historical review reveals that there was political consideration in the development of a state ideology in China. Our interest here is twofold: why the emperors preferred Confucianism to other ideologies, and, the reasons Confucianism survived over two millennia as the state ideology of China.

2.2.2 Confucianism as State Ideology

Sinologist Joachim Gentz identifies that there are six traditions in China, namely 'ancient religion, state religion, Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and popular religion.'[234] The ancient religion and state religion are, however, not clearly differentiated. The religious scholar John Lagerwey explains that Chinese god *Di* was an anthropomorphic god which was found in Shang dynasty (1600 BC – 1046 BC). He was the god responsible for the fate of the state and the harvest.[235] The belief of 'sky' or Heaven emerged in the Zhou dynasty (1046 BC- 256 BC). The 'sky' had its own will and arranged the destiny of people. Sacrifice for the 'sky' was only offered by the royal families, not lay persons.[236] Lagerwey classified both *Di* and 'sky' as state religions while Chinese philosopher Lao calls both *Di* and 'sky' ancient religions. Nonetheless, those ancient concepts of *Di* and 'sky' are still prevalent in contemporary Chinese

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231 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 182.
232 Peter K. Bol, 'Book Review of *The Confucian-Legalist State*' in *American Historical Review* 122(1) (2017) 499-500.
233 Hui Lin Lu, 'From traditional China to Modern China' in Chan (ed.) et al., *The Difficult Transition: Modernization and the Chinese Society* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2016) 7.
234 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 4.
235 John Lagerwey, *China: A Religious State* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010) 20.
236 Lao, *Essentials of Chinese Culture*, 173-4.

society although some people do not believe in them anymore. The development of different Chinese philosophies and beliefs are tabulated below in summary form:

Period	Philosophies/Beliefs
Early Han in the second century BC	'Confucianism became the dominant state ideology in the unified empire of the Early Han in the second century BC.'[237]
202 BC – 220 AD	Daoism was transformed to a religious sect.[238] This thesis refers it as religious Daoism thereafter.
220-420 BC	Buddhism arrived and was widely accepted in early Tang dynasty.[239]
The Song period (960-1279)	Syncretistic ideas appeared within all three main traditions as well as in the newly emerging sectarian lay movements.[240]

It is worth noting that there was a bloom of ideologies or philosophies in the fifth century BC. The most influential schools were Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, and Yin-yang cosmology. If the ideologies could be used as 'political tools, they would be adapted to fit the agendas of the state actors.'[241]

Jin's key term in his analysis of the Chinese society is the integrative tendency (*yiti hua*) or great unity to denote the interdependence and inseparability of moral ideology and social organisation.[242] The concept of great unity was the political driving force to advocate a state ideology for achieving state stability. The same concept is still prevalent in China that the Chinese Government emphasises the achievement of 'complete reunification of the country is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation'.[243]

Jin perceives that there were two frameworks for the changes and recoveries of the feudal dynasties in premodern China, namely, Confucian ideology and the patriarchal-state social structure system.[244] The ideal Confucian society is a stratified

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237 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 27. Daoism was originally a branch of philosophical thoughts that assumed that there is a metaphysical principle, called *dao*, governing the operation of all things. The metaphysical principle was interpreted as the Heavenly principle by popular religion.

238 Lao, *Essentials of Chinese Culture*, 176.

239 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 28.

240 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 28. Sectarian lay movements will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

241 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 176-7.

242 Jin, 'Interpreting Modern Chinese History', Note 2.

243 State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, White Paper titled 'China's National Defense in the New Era' (24 July 2019), 7. The State Council website (http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201907/24/content_WS5d3941ddc6d08408f502283d.html) accessed 21 August 2021.

244 Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 201-220.

society that will be based on a patriarchal system and on self-control by means of morals and rites. To maintain the core values of such society and the patriarchal system, Confucius set filial piety as the foundation of benevolence (*ren*) in which love and care of people will be in hierarchical order.[245]

Zhao agrees that the state shared similar structure of a family clan. It was in a hierarchical structure and resembled to an extension of patriarchal relations. Since Confucianism justified state power, the ruler placed the state above the society.[246] Confucianism also satisfied the religious needs of Chinese people. It set the rituals for ancestral worship and suggested means for union with the ways of Heaven through cultivation of moral piety.[247] That said, if Confucianism is to become the state ideology, it still needs to demonstrate that its principal thought will fit the needs of people and the state.

Jin and Liu consider that Mencius (372-289 BC) enriched Confucianism and introduced the concept of benevolence into state ideology. Mencius said,

> He who, using force, makes a pretence to benevolence is the leader of the princes. A leader of the princes requires a large kingdom. He who, using virtue, practises benevolence is the sovereign of the kingdom. To become the sovereign of the kingdom, a prince need not wait for a large kingdom.[248]

Thus, Mencius classified state ruling into 'virtue way' and 'forcing way' from the perspective of Confucianism. Furthermore, Mencius proposed that '[t]he people are the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is the lightest'. Consequently a ruler could achieve his ruling by means of love and protection of the people.[249] Jin and Liu are of the opinion that Mencius's political thought enabled Confucianism to be a state ideology.[250]

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245 Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 370-1.
246 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 275.
247 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 279.
248 Mencius, *Gong Sun Chou I*, 3. An English translation can be found at https://ctext.org/mengzi/gong-sun-chou-i/zh?en=on; accessed 17 April 2020.
249 Mencius, *Jin Xin II*, 60. An English translation can be found at https://ctext.org/mengzi/jin-xin-ii/zh?en=on accessed 17 April 2020.
250 Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 378-9.

2.2.3 State Ideology and Popular Religion

Confucianism needed to interact with other ideologies after Confucius and Mencius. Zhong Shu Dong, a Western Han thinker, was influenced by the Daoist worldview – the *yin-yang* cosmology.[251] He affirmed that Heaven and its regularities. Under the principle of the union of sky (heaven) and humanity, Heaven grants mandates to good rulers only.[252] Jin and Liu interpret that the principle of 'union of sky and humanity' implies a mythical connection between human behaviour and the natural operation of the universe. It is used to refrain the rulers from corrupt ruling since they should act in correspondence to the universal principles for continuous ruling of their empire.[253] Jin and Liu consider that Dong's teachings provide the arguments for supporting the supreme authority of the emperors.[254]

The adoption of a Daoist worldview (*yin-yang*) and the principle of 'union of sky and human being' were absorbed into the revival movement of Confucianism in Song dynasty (960-1279). The background of the revival movement of Confucianism, called Neo-Confucianism, is that Buddhism was well accepted during the Tang dynasty (618-907). It affected all spheres of life and threatened the position of Confucianism as the state ideology.[255]

Neo-Confucianism expressed the universal ethical principle in terms of filial piety. In the interpretation of Mencius's teaching of 'great filial piety', Zhuxi, a representative figure of Neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty, promoted that all parents would not do harm to their children and, therefore, all fathers and sons in the kingdom were established in their respective duties, in which great filial piety could be achieved.[256] Therefore, sons and government officers should not focus on the mistakes of their fathers and the emperor respectively but obedience to the issued orders. It

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[251] Literally, *yang* and *yin* mean sunshine and absence of sunshine, respectively. 'In later developments, the *yang* and *yin* came to be regarded as two cosmic principles or forces, … opposite but interdependent, … [and] work together to produce all things in the universe.' 'The yin yang doctrine is not just its naturalistic outlook on the universe and human life, but also its dialectical way of thinking.' Cf Xin Yan Jiang, 'Chinese Dialectical Thinking: The Yin Yang Model', *Philosophy Compass* 8/5 (2013) 438, 442.

[252] Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 278.

[253] Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 383.

[254] Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 382.

[255] Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 331.

[256] Zhuxi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu: Liliu Zhangju I*, 28.

helped centralise imperial control and further reinforced Confucianism as the state ideology.[257]

In combating the Buddhist influence, Song scholars taught Neo-Confucianism through education and practice of Confucian rituals. The rituals covered nearly every sphere of life: weddings, funerals, festivals, and ancestral rites. Zhao regards the ritual practices had articulated 'the religious impact of Confucianism and galvanised its search for the ultimate source of moral order.'[258]

As a result, there was a noticeable development of popular religion in the Song dynasty with the dominance of Neo-Confucianism. For Zhao, 'the extremely diverse and localised Chinese popular religions represented a more pristine state of religious development, in the sense that religious imagination at their inception were intimately bounded by people's local experiences.'[259] Zhou explains the survival of popular religion in China with reference to Confucianism:

> Confucianism embodied the pragmatic Chinese mentality shared by all major Chinese intellectual traditions. Though its focus was on this-world ethics, it incorporated many religious elements from ancient China, such as ancestor worship, a supernatural concept of heaven, divination, predetermination and *yin-yang* cosmology. Since these elements were also the basic ingredients of Chinese popular religion, they provided legitimacy for its development. [260]

Jin and Liu observe that many intellectuals in premodern China were Confucian when they were in good conditions but would become Daoist if they were in poor conditions. Actually, Confucianism and Daoism are so different that the former establishes moral codes and is actively involved in the governance of the state while the latter would let things develop or evolve naturally or 'do nothing'. However, during the riots in the late Eastern Han period (25-220), there were lots of casualties and people needed to think about death. Daoism and Buddhism addressed the problem that supplemented the pragmatic attitude of Confucianism. Jin and Liu consider that both Daoism and Buddhism would complement the ideology of Confucianism.[261] After

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257 Zi Quan He, *Six Lessons of Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (HK) Co. Ltd., 2009) 84-5.
258 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 338.
259 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 342-3.
260 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 344.
261 Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 386-94.

absorbing part of the thoughts of Daoism and Buddhism, Confucianism could be conveyed through religious rituals that have a profound impact on lay persons.[262]

2.2.4 Summary of Historical Findings

It could be reasonable to assume an evolutionary hermeneutic to explain how China has been changed dramatically over two millennia. However, it can equally be argued that whether by means of an 'ultra-stable structure' or the so-called stagnation theory exhibited in Chinese history, the works of Jin and Zhao cited above have shown that Confucianism is the main teaching of Chinese culture and regarded as the state ideology.[263] As discussed in sub-sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, there was political driving force to enable Confucianism to be a state ideology.

In order to address the needs of people and to complement its deficit in religious dimensions, Confucianism has absorbed the worldview of Daoism, which has interchanged the concepts of rebirth and afterlife with Buddhism, that reinforced the legitimacy of an emperor if he would follow the Heavenly principles as a result of the manifestation of Confucian morality. In this connection, Confucianism took part in the popular religion and continued to influence Chinese culture.

These historical settings have been changed in modern China and it is sensible to question the influence of traditional culture. Nonetheless, the influence of traditional culture, as found in popular religion discussed in sub-section 2.2.3 above, is still prevalent in modern China. Belonging to a people group is key in participating in traditional beliefs or rituals. Xiao Tong Fei makes similar observations as Madsen and he explores the sense of 'belonging' in terms of Confucian morality and the social settings of rural China, which is discussed in section 2.3 below. After the comparison of Western culture, Fei then proposes the concept of 'organisational transcendence' found in the West. On the other hand, the New Confucian Zong San Mou proposes the concept of immanent transcendence in accordance with the traditional culture. Their concepts of transcendence will be discussed in section 2.4 below.

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[262] Li Zeng, 'Complement of Confucianism and Religion: Exploration of the Religious Relation between Confucianism and Religion in Dong Jing Hui of Yunnan' in Feng Gang Yang (ed.), *Fieldwork and Beyond: Social Scientific Studies of Religion in Chinese Societies III: Ethics and Community* (New Taipei City: Taiwan Christian Literature Council, 2016) 338.

[263] The Chinese government supported the establishment of the International Confucianism Association in October 1994 in Beijing. Confucianism is again used as a state ideology for solidarity.

2.3 The Social Model Explaining the 'Belonging but not Believing' Phenomenon

As discussed in sub-section 2.1.2, the combination or mixing up of the Three Teachings is an identifiable phenomenon of Chinese popular religion that it combines teachings from Buddhism and religious Daoism to form new cults or sects.[264] In general, different streams of popular religion share the basic assumptions of correlative cosmology that formulated in eighth century BC. One of the main distinctive features of popular religion is its social and local criteria of belonging. Belonging to a cultic community in popular religion identical with belonging to a particular kinship group.[265] As ancestral worship is in general a gathering of the whole village, it is an effective means to connect with others in a local community.

2.3.1 'Belonging but not Believing' Phenomenon in Contemporary China

China entered an age of reformation in 1978 and 'peasants were liberated from direct subservience to the economic plans of the party-state.'[266] At that time, there were changes in a) the party-ordained moral values and resulted in an ideological vacuum; and b) basic social units in the countryside that was dissolved and leading to reemergence of feudal clan values and structures.[267] The ancestor temples and deity temples are symbols carrying such clan values and structures.

Both ancestor temples and local deity temples are multipurpose institutions that provide public spaces for community activities.[268] For those people who participate in the 'spirit writing, fire walking, and other expressions of ecstatic possession' in front of an ancestor temple, many of them may respond that they are atheists.'[269] Xiang Qun Chang finds that the family life and religious beliefs were closely related.[270] In fact, it would be 'more than common for an average Chinese person to observe Confucian ethics, pray to Buddha and hire a Daoist priest for certain ritual services, without being bothered by the inconsistencies among these teachings.'[271]

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264 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 344-5.
265 Gentz, *Understanding Chinese Religions*, 117.
266 Madsen 'Secular Belief', 21.
267 Ye, 'Patriotism versus Intellectual Curiosity', 195.
268 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 21.
269 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 22.
270 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 76. Her finding of the relationship between family life and religious beliefs is due to her study in Kaixiangong Village, Jiangsu Province.
271 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 342.

According to the Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism – 2012, 47 percent of China's people declared themselves to be atheists.[272] However, a previous survey conducted in 2007 showed that among the Chinese adult population (ages 16 to 75), 85 percent of the people either held some supernatural beliefs or practiced some kind of religion.[273] Madsen thinks that in pre-modern Chinese society, the identity of Chinese people were maintained through worship of its ancestors. Individual families participated in the worship of common-lineage ancestors and local deities to link up with the local community. Members of the community included ancestors as well as the living one. Community rituals mixed the elements worship, commerce, and play together. Unsurprisingly, then, Madsen observes that religion was secular and secular was religious in pre-modern China.[274]

The main function of ancestral worship is to foster a sense of belonging to the family clan. This is not unique to Chinese culture – a similar observation was also made about ancient Rome:

> Men of alien descent were admitted, and amalgamated with, the original brotherhood. . … The men who formed the various political groups were certainly in the habit of meeting together periodically for the purpose of acknowledging and consecrating their association by common sacrifices. Strangers amalgamated with the brotherhood were doubtless admitted to these sacrifices; and when that was once done, we can believe that it seemed equally easy, or not more difficult, to conceive them as sharing in the common lineage.[275]

Regarding the awareness of the function of popular religion, which are used to unite Chinese people, the religious scholar Jordan D. Paper also thinks that 'the distinction between religious and secular and between religion and the state has no meaning in the Chinese context.'[276] Thus, rituals developed in primitive societies, whether in the West or China, are signs of identity and acts that demonstrate belonging

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272 WIN-Gallup International, 'Global Index of Religion and Atheism – 2012', Sidmennt website (http://sidmennt.is/wp-content/uploads/Gallup-International-um-tr%C3%BA-og-tr%C3%BAleysi-2012.pdf accessed 16 May 2020)

273 Feng Gang Yang (楊鳳崗), 'The State of Religion in China: The First Glimpse through a Survey', *Center on Religion and Chinese Society* 3(2) (2010), Purdue University website (https://www.purdue.edu/crcs/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CRCSNewsletter-V3N2E.pdf; accessed 16 May 2020).

274 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 14-7.

275 Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society and its Relation to Modern Ideas* (16th edn; London: John Murray, 1897) 130-1.

276 Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism*, 108.

to a people group. Chinese people in general do not seriously consider committing to a religious belief but are rather keen to pursue blessings and well-being.

2.3.2 Kinship and Community

Xiao Tong Fei (1910-2005) was one of the most influential Chinese sociologists of the twentieth century. Based on his village studies, he developed new concepts for rural development, especially rural industrialisation and township development.[277] As Chinese culture is originated from agricultural society and blood lineages, his chief theoretical statement, *Rural China* (*Xiangtu Zhongguo*), concerns the nature of Chinese society in such a context.[278] It has been translated to English *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* by Hamilton, Gary G. and Wang Zheng and is regarded as a classic text that lays a foundation for understanding Chinese society. Fei's model of Chinese society is so influential and frequently referred to in contemporary social studies of China. His monograph, 'Differential Mode of Association', has had extensive impact on the contemporary scholar community.[279]

Fei believes that Confucianism is influential and cultivated a specific type of culture and human relationship. With reference to the Confucian classics, such as *Book of Rites* and *Analects*,[280] Fei proposes that the basic characteristic of traditional Chinese social structure rests on hierarchical differentiations that an individual should first cultivate oneself such that one could control oneself by the rituals (*ke ji fu li*). After attaining control over one's inner self, one then can extend oneself out into other circles of human relationships. Kinship is the most important relationship and it is the concentric circles producing social influence for an individual. The human relationship circles of Chinese people are interrelated.[281] This social pattern reveals the basic characteristic of Chinese social structure, or what the Confucian school called the human relationships (*renlun*). Fei observes that the 'ten relationships' given in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji*) formed a rigid classification for Chinese people.[282] Fei further describes Chinese social pattern as ripples that appear on the surface of a lake when a stone is

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277 Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory of Chinese Culture', 28.
278 He, *Six Lessons of Chinese Culture*, 10.
279 Chen, *Walk Out from the Soil*, Preface.
280 Human relationships are rigidly defined in the *Book of Rites* that 'no one failed to receive his/her proper place in their common relationship.' Cf Book of Rites, Book 25, chapter 20. For the requirement of control of oneself by the rituals, it is recorded in *Analects*, Book 12, chapter 1.
281 Fei, *From the Soil*, 62.
282 Fei, *From the Soil*, 65. Cf *Book of Rites*, Book 25, chapter 15.

thrown into it. Fei conceives that standing in any circle, one can say that everyone in that circle is part of the public. 'In such structure, the way to go beyond oneself and reach out to the world is to extend oneself circle by circle.'[283]

Interestingly, the notion of 'concentric circles' about social pattern can be found in ancient Roman, a country of Western culture. Fei's findings match that from Henry S. Maine in his study of Roman's ancient law and primitive society. Maine argues that 'communities began to exist wherever a family held together instead of separating at the death of its patriarchal chieftain.' The Family, House and Tribe of the Romans can be conceived as follows:

> [They are] a system of concentric circles, which have gradually expanded from the same point. The elementary group is the Family, connected by common subjection to the highest male ascendant. The aggregation of Families forms the Gens or House. The aggregation of House makes the Tribe. The aggregation of the Tribes constitutes the commonwealth.[284]

Although Roman and China are both geographically and culturally separated, their primitive societies carried similar social pattern which was the 'concentric circles' of family clan. This finding reveals that there were some cultural elements affect the development of Chinese society that leading to different developments from the West.

Human relationships in rural China, itself was a feature of a primitive society, were established under specific living conditions. Fei finds that the inhabitants of rural China stay at the same place for a long time and appear to identify themselves with their homeland. He opined that an individual developed an intimate feeling or familiarity through repeated interactions with the local people over a long period of time. In practice, the repeated interactions were rituals and customs that formed the social norms. In this way, society and the individual become one.[285] Therefore, trust in rural society is based not on dependability of people. Within this culture, people only need to know which human relationships required to accomplish their tasks.[286] Thus, people in rural society do not need so much to seek universal truths but, rather, to follow the rules of human relationship.

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283 Fei, *From the Soil*, 66.
284 Maine, *Ancient Law*, 128.
285 Fei, *From the Soil*, 42.
286 Fei, *From the Soil*, 43.

2.3.3 Fei's Social Model

Fei develops the social model for rural areas of China in accordance with the teachings of Confucianism. Confucius promoted ritualised decorum because he believed that wholeheartedly practice of ritualised decorum in daily life would achieve benevolence. Virtues and ritualised decorum should be learned in one's family that virtues and ritualised decorum would become second nature. He expected that a humane ruler was first learned in the family by being a good son and then a good father.[287] Mu Qian, a renowned Chinese historian, also observes that, 'Family clan is the most important pillar in Chinese culture. …. Humanity was developed with the concept of family clan. …. Chinese people do not aim at expanding territory nor pursue the relationship with a god of other world because they find humanity comes first.'[288]

'The Confucian [ethics] … is a value system that maintains and promotes a stable society built upon the family as the basic social unit.'[289] The family, in turn, is the basic unit of a kinship network. Husband and wife of a family will support each other emotionally and economically even when their children grow up.[290] In this context, Fei perceives family is part of an organisation, and he tries to compare the organisational characteristics of families in the West and in China as tabulated below:[291]

	The West	**China**
Boundary	Strict boundary	Not strictly defined
Main axis	Husband and wife	Father and son, Mother and daughter-in-law, Vertical relationship

Whereas western families have strict relational boundaries where the main task of the parents is to raise their children, in contrast, Chinese families do not have strict organisational boundaries in rural society because these Chinese family groups can extend, as needed, by incorporating ever more distant categories of relatives. Those

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287 Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State*, 180-1.

288 Mu Qian (錢穆), *Introduction of Chinese Cultural History* (*Zhongguo Wenhua Shi Daolun*) (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1994) 51.

289 Wen Rong, Liu, 'Intergenerational Support' in Xu et al. (eds.), *The Chinese Family Today* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017) 210.

290 Fei, *From the Soil*, 82.

291 Fei, *From the Soil*, 82-5.

people who make up the family and who form what Fei called social circles are not limited to parents and children, and the route of expansion is patrilineal.[292]

In this way, kinship and lineages were used as a medium to create social groups and to carry the responsibility for political, economic, religious, and other functions. As such, the family structure cannot be limited to simple combinations of parents and children but must expand outward in order to handle so much activity. Moreover, since politics, economy, religion and social activity all require long-term continuity, the basic social groups, i.e., families, must have continuity. As such, a family does not end when individual members die. Fei calls this kind of social group a 'small lineage', to emphasise its inherent long-term qualities.[293]

Fei's social model attracted the attention from anthropologists, Sinologists, and sociologists. The British anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang explains that there is a sharp distinction between family and lineage in respect of Maurice Freedman's social model.[294] He reports that a lineage should be a permanent one while a family represents a more transient group. Fei identifies a family as a small lineage because it forms links of social relationships for an individual, who is named a social person by Feuchtwang. Feuchtwang's findings show that Fei's understanding of family is both expandable and a multi-functional organisation.[295]

Socialists An Qi Xu and Ya Li Xue also support that a Chinese family functions as an organisation for Chinese people living together. Although China has changed a lot in past decades, 'the characteristic feature of Chinese family structure has not changed. … [T]he extended family has not declined during the process of modernization.' [296] Herrmann-Pillath summarises Fei's interpretation of Chinese social network and Western social network as shown in the following diagram:[297]

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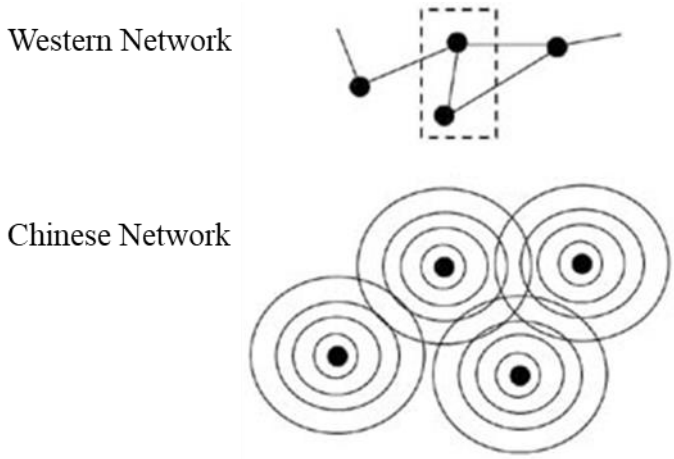
292 Fei, *From the Soil*, 82-83.
293 Fei, *From the Soil*, 84.
294 Maurice Freedman, (1920-1975), a British scholar, who was one of the world's leading experts on Chinese anthropology. Encyclopaedia Britannica's website (https://www.britannica.com/biography/Maurice-Freedman; accessed 11 October 2020).
295 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 132.
296 An Qi Xu and Ya Li Xue, 'Family Structure' in Xu (ed.) et al., *The Chinese Family Today* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017) 26.
297 Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory', Figure 1.



Herrmann-Pillath compares the Western network with the Chinese network where individuals in the West (the nodes in the above diagram) are delineated by group borders defined by categories. In the Chinese network, social networks of individuals are flexible and there are interferences between the circles.[298]

The new China born in 1949 allowed an individual to escape from the constraints of the family and kinship networks. However, its political control placed people into the all-encompassing systems of socialist redistribution. Consequently, an individual's identity was also defined by the collective socialist state.[299]

Although Fei's social model is influential, Xiang Qun Chang suggests revision on it. She has reviewed the previous research on cultural aspects of social relationships with regard to *guanxi*, *renqing*, *mianzi* in China.[300] Building on Fei's work and previous findings, Chang further conducted fieldwork from 1996 to 2007 in Kaixiangong Village and proposed a social model named *lishang-wanglai* (hereafter: LSWL model) as explained below:

> The term *lishang-wanglai* originally comes from the Chinese phrase '*li shang wanglai*'. It is taken from the Analects of Confucius (*Lunyu*), translatable as 'for the sake of propriety/etiquette (*li*), people must engage in social intercourse (*wanglai*)' − or, 'giving and repaying is the thing attended to', which would appear to relate to etiquette or propriety but, in *the Book of Rites*, clearly applies to almost every aspect of social life.[301]

298 Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory', 29-30.
299 Arthur Kleinman et al., *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person* (London: University of California Press, 2011) 3.
300 The literal meanings of *guanxi*, *renqing* and *mianzi* are relationships, human feelings and face (dignity) respectively.
301 Chang, 'Recipropriety (*lishang-wanglai*)' 106.

The LSWL model is based on empirical findings in PRC and it is regarded as a transformed Fei's social model. The LSWL will be elaborated in chapter 3.

Fei notes the value system of Western ethics is originated from Christianity but that in China, Confucian ethic, is not religion based. He then compares the two value systems through a common frame of reference, which is social or organisational structure. As a result, the notion of religious transcendence in the West is conceived as a kind of 'organisational' transcendence, with God understood as the symbol of universal organisation and where members share equal right before the God. On the other hand, Chinese society is characterised by a differential mode of association and consequently it is not possible to have a universal moral standard. Thus, Fei proposes that an individual could find transcendence as in the notion we have identified in Western 'organisation'.

2.4 Types of Transcendence Proposed by Fei and Mou

Fei's model of human relationship and organisational transcendence was founded in the early twentieth century when China entered into an era of change. Chinese scholars were shaken by the defeat of the Opium War (1839-42) among others. They were loath to give up their claims about the superiority of Chinese. [302] Ci, a political philosopher, perceives that 'the Opium War could be seen in retrospect as the beginning of a prolonged process of enforced modernisation or modernisation under pressure – a process that is still unfolding.'[303] Hong Kong sociologist, Ambrose King, also describes that China was forced under Western imperialism in the nineteenth century and condemned to modernise.[304] Confucians faced the challenge of modernisation thereafter. Against this background, Fei and Mou proposed the concepts of organisational transcendence and immanent transcendence respectively in the twentieth century.

2.4.1 The Concept of Organisational Transcendence

In the Song period, Neo-Confucianism promoted Confucian ethics through education and practice of Confucian rituals for weddings, funerals, festivals and ancestral rites.[305] As discussed in section 2.2 above, Madsen observes that in pre-modern Chinese society,

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302 Frederic E. Wakeman, *Telling Chinese history: A Selection of Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 46.
303 Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 249.
304 King, *The Modern Turn of China*, 54.
305 See sub-section 2.2.3.

the first and foremost religious site was the family, whose identity and continuity was maintained through worship of its ancestors. The ancestral rites, which are a moral requirement, would allow transcending an individual's life through connecting to the long existing blood lineage.

Fei explains the notion of possible individual transcendence through an organisation. He considers that morality is the belief that people in a society should abide by certain norms of social behaviour. Morality always includes regulations, beliefs and sanctions, all of which are shaped by the constraints imposed by a social structure.[306] He therefore compares the organisational structure and the regulated behavioural norms, i.e. moral, of the societies in the West and in China as tabulated below:

	The West[307]	**China**[308]
God	'the symbol of universal organisation'	No God
Members	All members 'are equal before God.'	Members' status will depend on their human relationship.
Norms	'Religious piety and beliefs are the only sources.'	'An organisation is composed of webs woven out of countless personal relationships.' 'To each knot in these webs is attached a specific ethical principle.'
Organisational transcendence	An organisation provides 'a common will that precedes individual members' and thus transcend the members	'[T]he traditional Chinese moral system was incapable of producing a comprehensive moral concept' and 'all the standards of value in this system were incapable of transcending the differential personal relationships of the Chinese social structure.'

In Fei's view, the major difference of organisational structure between the West and China is the religious beliefs. Religious piety and beliefs are not only the source of Western morality but also guidance for Western behavioural norms. From the concept of God, who is actually the symbol of universal organisation, two important corollaries have emerged. One is that everyone is equal before God, and the other is that God treats everyone with equal justice. Fei notes that 'Jesus symbolises each person within this universal organization by sharing the heavenly father – an all-encompassing organization.'[309] The universal organisation is ruled by God and it is the kingdom of

306 Fei, *From the Soil*, 71.
307 Fei, *From the Soil*, 72.
308 Fei, *From the Soil*, 32, 78.
309 Fei, *From the Soil*, 72.

God from the Christian perspective. Therefore, organisational transcendence is actually religious transcendence.

The central theme of Confucian thought is *ren* or benevolence. Fei cites Wu Bo Meng's questions about whether the behaviours of Zhilu and Qiu could be classified as benevolence.[310] However, Confucius replied 'I do not know' after describing the official duties or achievements of Zhilu and Qiu. Fei then interprets that Confucius had difficulty to define *ren*. The reason is that 'the concept of *ren* is, in fact, only a logical synthesis, a compilation of all the ethical qualities of private, personal relationships.'[311] In essence, the meaning of life is illustrated by oneself in practicing benevolence and does not require a god to affirm it. In addition, benevolence requires people trying hard to satisfy moral requirements in daily life.[312] Fei concluded that all value standards could not be established in China without regarding the differential mode of human relationship such that it would not be possible to achieve a universal moral standard.[313] Therefore Chinese people will not experience organisational transcendence in Fei's view.

2.4.2 Transcendence and Immanence in the Context of New Confucianism

The principle of 'union of sky (heaven) and humanity' implies a mythical connection between human behaviour and the natural operation of the universe.[314] Thus, New Confucians regard that heavenly principle, a metaphysical or transcendent entity, can be embodied in human beings as humanity. The writings of Jun Yi Tang and Zong San Mou in the 1950s introduced the concepts of immanent transcendence to Chinese thinkers. However, Mou was the main thinker to pursue the subject after the 1960s.

Mou believes that the development of Confucian human relationships (*ren lun*) was based on a 'divine entity' or a 'source of values'. The source of values is actually a universal moral entity that is both transcendent and immanent. He proposes that the heavenly principle (*tian dao*) is above human and it possesses the characteristics of transcendence. When it is embodied in human beings as humanity, it becomes immanent. Jia Dong Zheng believes that Mou appropriates Kant's intellectual intuition

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310 Fei, *From the Soil*, 75. Wu Bo Meng's (孟武伯) questions and Confucius's replies were recorded in *Analects*, Book 5, Chapter 8.
311 Fei, *From the Soil*, 75-6.
312 Jin and Liu, *Prosperity and Crisis*, 359-360.
313 Chen, *Walk Out from the Soil*, 143.
314 See discussion in sub-section 2.2.3.

as 'infinite mind' to qualify the so-called immanent transcendence.[315] Yet Serina Chan contends that Mou departed from Kant as he 'identifies the pure will with the moral mind (innate moral consciousness) … as not only the real (noumenal) self but also the sagely or divine self by virtue of its being the heavenly-decreed human nature - understood as the heavenly principle immanent in human beings.'[316] The moral mind is also termed as the infinite mind as stated in his work *Theory of Perfect Good*:

> The transcendence [characteristics] of the infinite mind and a personal god are different. The latter is just transcending but not immanent while the former is both transcendent and immanent. … [The infinite mind] is absolutely universal and superior to everyone and everything but will not be experienced by sensation. It is therefore transcendence. However, it is also the self of everyone and everything and therefore is immanence.[317]

The infinite mind is referred to as the infinite moral mind hereafter. Mou argues that the heavenly principle, transcendence in nature, is objectively present while the subjectively accessible human being's infinite moral mind is immanence. The concept of the unity of transcendence and immanence is 'an important theme underlying the three main traditions of Chinese thought.'[318] Mou assumes everyone possesses an inner moral intuition. He argues that 'the infinite moral mind is a presence one can intuit directly.'[319]

While Mou explains the rationality between infinite moral mind and the heavenly principle, he also observes their relationship from the perspective of spirituality. In *Lun Yu*, Confucius said, '[m]y studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven - that knows me!'[320] Mou interprets that the study of practicing benevolence is expected to reach the status of possessing all heavenly virtue, i.e. connecting one's own life with the life of Heaven. With the connection to the life of Heaven, there will be mutual understanding between human being and Heaven and therefore Confucius said Heaven knows him. The study of practicing benevolence is

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315 Zheng, 'Transcendence and Immanent Transcendence', 43-4. Kant believed that human beings possess intellectual intuition that lies absolutely outside human cognition.
316 Chan, 'The Thought of Mou Zongsan', 139.
317 Zong San Mou, *Theory of Perfect Good (Yuan Shan Lun)* (Taipei: Student Books, 1985), 340. This thesis translates the citation into English.
318 Chan, 'The Thought of Mou Zongsan', 139.
319 Chan, 'The Thought of Mou Zongsan', 140-1.
320 *Analects*, Book 14, Chapter 35.

analogous to religious or spiritual study which looks for a deep experience of the harmony and unity with the heavenly principle.[321]

Mou's is a quest for the calibre needed for possessing all heavenly virtue through the study of the Confucian classic *Zhongyong*. In *Zhongyong* 33, it is identified that 'only the individual possessed of the most entire sincerity that can exist under Heaven, who can adjust the great invariable relations of mankind, establish the great fundamental virtues of humanity, and know the transforming and nurturing operations of Heaven and Earth'. Thus, sincerity is the basic requirement needed to achieve heavenly virtue and the person of entire sincerity 'can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth' and the person 'may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion' (*Zhongyong* 23). The teaching of *Zhongyong* thus affirms that people of great sincerity can participate in the nurturing operations of Heaven and Earth. Interestingly, Mou describes the relation of Heaven, Earth and human being as a trinity, in which the sincerity of human being can understand the outside world, including Heaven and Earth, and can finally connect to Heaven and Earth. However, Mou considers that such connection is not transcendent but immanent.[322]

Theologian Ewert Cousins understands spirituality as relating to the inner dimension of a person who experiences ultimate reality.[323] Mou promoted Confucianism as a spiritual philosophy that '[t]he highest goal of "moral attainment" is sagehood – becoming a person of empathetic compassion or benevolence (*ren*), a great person; and its true significance lies in obtaining in an individual's finite life a meaning that is infinite and full. This means that morality and religion mutually entail, thus, establishing for humanity a "moral religion".'[324] Ultimately, for Mou, the deepest centre of a person is the infinite moral mind that transcends the finitude of human beings.

In Mou's notion of immanent transcendence, moral achievement transcends people. However, he regards that infinite moral mind is a subject that can understand the heavenly principle through sincerity and the heavenly principle is objectively present. Thus, the heavenly principle is not a subject but an object to be understood. In contrast to Fei's organisational transcendence, Mou's immanent transcendence is a kind of cultural transcendence because: i) the pursuit of moral achievement is the central

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321 Mou, *The Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*, 32-3.
322 Mou, *The Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*, 36.
323 Ewert Cousins, 'Preface to the Series' in Wei Ming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker (eds.), *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003) xii.
324 Chan, 'The Thought of Mou Zong San', 9.

idea of Confucian culture; and ii) there is no personal god in Mou's notion of transcendence.

Mou skilfully assigned the religious characteristics to Confucianism so that Chinese will not need to find foreign religions, such as Christianity, to fulfil their religious needs. This echoes the slogan 'Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application' in the 1920s that the essence of Chinese culture is to be preserved in modern time. In sum, Mou asserted that human beings can self-transcend by fully living out Confucian ethics with their own infinite moral mind. However, two questions arise from this: a) what is the goal of Confucian ethics; and b) how do people recognise and make use their infinite mind to fulfil Confucian ethics? Regarding the first question, Fei finds that Confucianism has difficulty defining empathetic compassion or benevolence (*ren*), the central theme of Confucian ethics, within a loosely organised rural society.[325] For the second question, Mou is of the opinion that an individual should have 'entire sincerity' for understanding heavenly virtue so that Confucian morality can be fulfilled. The problem is how to attain the state of entire sincerity and whether full understanding of heavenly principle is ensured. Indeed, Xiao Feng Tang, a researcher of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, questions whether Mou's proposal is applicable in reality.[326]

That said, Mou's effort of promoting the concept of immanent transcendence reflects that new Confucians are aware of the need to answer the meaning of life or the problem of transcendence. Tang and Mou articulated the characteristics of immanence and transcendence in Confucianism in their writing in the 1950s in order to respond to the challenges from Christianity and Buddhism.[327] Although Mou accepted that there is a transcendent heavenly principle, he insisted that it is not a personalised god but a moral entity, which is immanent in human beings. He named it as infinite moral mind and manifested it as humanity. He abandoned the boundary between God and human beings to liberate human finitude such that the pursuing for an infinite and full meaning of life is possible.

In the age of New Confucianism, Mou and others still have not been able to outline the ultimate reality of life. What will happen after death? Why do we need to

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325 See sub-section 2.4.1.
326 Tang, 'The Religious Views of Chinese Thinkers in the Twentieth Century', 194.
327 Zheng, 'Transcendence', 44.

struggle for survival? What are the benefits for an individual in attaining moral requirements?

2.5 Implications of the Concept of Collective Transcendence

As discussed in sub-section 2.3.3, Fei proposes an ego-centred personal network in which human relationships for an individual are developed. Human relationships help building up social networks and facilitating social exchanges. Fei's social model is based on Confucian ethic which is a core element of Chinese culture. Although there is no state religion in China, Chang perceives that there is spiritual belief driving people to mobilise resources or maintain human relationships in additional to the purpose of social exchanges.[328] Chang's spiritual belief is not a religion but a part of culture that maintaining human relationships. According to the psychologist Ernest Becker, culture itself is sacred that:

> there is really no basic distinction between sacred and profane in the symbolic affairs of men. As soon as you have symbols you have artificial self-transcendence via culture. Everything cultural is fabricated and given meaning by the mind, a meaning that was not given by physical nature. Culture is in this sense "supernatural," and all systematizations of culture have in the end the same goal: to raise men above nature, to assure them that in some ways their lives count in the universe more than merely physical things count.[329]

Becker's view outlines the possibility of cultural transcendence. This thesis proposes cultural transcendence on a collective basis and the above discussions on the collectivist characteristics of Chinese people are tabulated below in summary form:

Scholars	Time	Characteristics of Chinese People
Tawney	18th century	Deceased family members are members of their communities.
Fei	20th century	Not possible to achieve organisational transcendence (a form of religious transcendence)
Mou	20th century	Manifestation of Confucian ethics and achievement of immanent transcendence
Chang	20th century	Mingling of family life and religious beliefs
Lau & Yang	20th century	Popular religion forms part of the secular world
Madsen	21st century	Belonging without belief in popular religion
Gentz	21st century	Both personal and communal dimensions in Chinese popular religion

328 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 106.
329 Ernest Becker, *Escape from Evil* (New York: The Free Press, 1975) 4.

The above observations reveal that the identities of Chinese people are mainly defined by their families or local communities, even after their death. This, of course, raises the question regarding how the world of the afterlife is perceived in Chinese culture.

Daoism and Buddhism seek to outline the ultimate reality for Chinese people. However, according to Madsen, religion in China is secular and the secular is religious. 'The social nature of Chinese religion … is more about belonging than belief. Rituals and sacred myths meaningfully anchor persons to families and communities. … Belonging in China is religious … even though belief is secular.'[330] Here, Madsen's observation is in line with Fei's social model, in which belonging to a family is crucial in personal development while families take the functions of organisation by extending their boundaries to form communities.

State ideology, Confucianism or New Confucianism, emphasises the construction of this world and advises people actively to take part in the issues of this world. The starting point is the cultivation of oneself. Subsequently an individual can regulate his or her family and finally order the state well. At the same time, one should respect parents and the superiors while taking care of one's subordinates. Life is perfect when the requirements of morality are fully discharged.[331] Understandably, since Confucianism rejects the thought of afterlife,[332] the activities of this life become important.[333]

The religious scholar Julia Ching has suggested that the Confucian school finds the meaning of life through the existential quest for moral perfection. Confucian social virtues govern human relationships that 'represent a structure of existence comprehending that which transcends the relationships themselves'.[334] She perceives that filial piety 'is the virtue by which the child is not only serving the parents, but also the ancestral spirits, and even Heaven, from whom all life comes'.[335] In fact, ancestral worship relates to the attitude towards death. Ka Lun Leung observes that Chinese people in general regard the dead as the extension of life in this world. Therefore, favourite food of the dead will be offered in the rituals of ancestral worship.[336] On the

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330 Madsen, 'Secular Belief', 13.

331 Wei Tian (田薇), 'From the Concept of Salvation to View the Mutual Support of Christianity and Confucianism' in *Christianity and China* 2 (2004) 128.

332 Cf, *Lun Yu, Xianjin* 12b, 'While you do not know life, how can you know about death?'

333 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 162.

334 Julia Ching (秦家懿), *Chinese Religions* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993) 68-9.

335 Ching, *Chinese Religions*, 69.

336 Leung, 'Christianity and Chinese Ancestral Worship', 138.

other hand, Hing Kau Yeung observes that Confucians tend to not believe in the existence of ghosts or an afterlife and he predicts their attitude towards death is translated as follows:

> If there is no individual entity after death, human activities [and their achievements in this world] become absolutely important. [It implies that an individual] needs not only to cultivate his/her morality and devote himself/herself to his/her career, but also to inherit and promote the good ideas of previous people in order to merge a small individual into a greater community. A person has died yet his thoughts will be continued by the living people. [337]

Yeung's prediction of Chinese attitude can also apply to those who believe there will be an afterlife because the afterlife will keep connection and belonging to the present family or community. The need to merge the dead into the community is the same as the case for not believing in an afterlife.

Consequently, the possibility of achieving cultural transcendence for Chinese people is located in becoming a communal member permanently and the need to maintain proper human relationships in this world. The proper human relationships are grounded in Confucian ethics, which have influence in every aspect of daily life.

Taking the 'belonging' characteristics of Chinese society, this thesis proposes that Chinese transcend themselves on a collective basis, which is named as 'collective transcendence'. Since Chinese society is formed and supported by human relationships, the demarcation between the private sphere and the public sphere is blurred. Given the blurred boundary between the private sphere and the public sphere, collective here is mainly confined to the extended family circle. Accordingly, collective transcendence overcomes the finitude of Chinese people as follows:

a) an individual is involved in a number of overlapping human relationship networks in which people are linked together and become one single entity (the 'Single Entity');
b) the individual's core family is the centre of the Single Entity;
c) deceased family members continue to be members of the Single Entity through the moral requirement of filial piety and affirmed by the participation of ancestral worship; and

[337] Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 162.

d) the individual finds transcendence by being a member of the Single Entity, which will exist after one's death, and thus overcomes the finitude of the individual.

How do Christians and Muslims interact with the collective transcendence, a cultural transcendence without God,? Their interactions reflect their religious views toward the secular world.[338] They may choose to open their doors to share religious faith with people around them, or they may simply close their doors to maintain their religious integrity. Thus, Christian and Muslim responses will represent their understanding of their God's will: to share their faith with non-believers or to protect their religious life.

As discussed in sub-section 1.2.2, the degree of their readiness to share their faiths with others indicate the degree of their readiness to cross group boundaries and enter the secular world. Consequently, Christian and Muslim interactions with Chinese culture constitute an indirect dialogue between the two faiths regarding their religious views toward the secular world.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

The historical quest for Chinese culture reveals that Confucianism, which absorbed parts of Daoism and Buddhism forming popular religion, was the state ideology and guided the behaviours and beliefs of Chinese people. In the process of modernisation, Confucianism suffered serious attacks in the New Cultural Movement, which took place in the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, modernisation in China exists predominantly on the material side of civilisation while China seeks to keep its own cultural identity. [339] The 'incomplete' modernisation resulted in a vacuum of values and lacked resources for spirituality. Confucianism therefore began to revive with Government approval in 1990s.

Although the central theme of Confucianism is about compassion or benevolence (*ren*) and moral achievement, it is used as a state ideology to unite Chinese people in contemporary China. The purpose of solidarity is to pursue well-being and

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338 See discussion in sub-section 1.2.2.

339 As discussed in section 2.4, the Opium War resulted in a prolonged process of enforced modernisation. Chinese people painfully recognised that the Western culture was technologically superior for survival. A slogan 'Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application' was then proposed to stick to 'the Chinese way in what was supposedly important but adopting the Western way in what was merely practical significance for self-preservation'. Cf Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese revolution*, 26-7.

prosperity, which is beneficial in the ruling of China. As a result, the Chinese Government reported in 2018 that the priority of human rights was to achieve subsistence and develop economics.[340] In addition, in 2019, it regarded living a happy life to be the primary human right.[341] In fact, the Chinese government inherited the traditional cultural norm that well-being and prosperity are the chief targets of the whole country.

The concept of collective transcendence, a product of Confucianism, offers a form of transcendence to Chinese people through their attachment to their own family network or a local community. As mentioned in sub-section 2.2.3, Confucianism embodied a very pragmatic Chinese mentality which urged each person to actively cultivate his or her moral character with final goal of managing the country as a whole. This pragmatic attitude results in pursuing well-being and prosperity, i.e., the means by which to survive in this present world. Religious transcendence, on the other hand, provides a form of existential meaning that is other to survival in this present world. Therefore, there remains a real very tension between the choice of collective transcendence as located in traditional Chinese culture, and whether is to be found in any foreign religion. The concept of collective transcendence is therefore used to examine Chinese culture interacting with Christianity as well as with Islam.

For the dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam, it is difficult, if not possible, to commence with scriptural reading or doctrinal comparison. This thesis is of the view that both any Christian understanding of Koran or Muslim understanding of Bible will be subject to the critique of lacking relevant religious experience to fully understand the scripture of the religion concerned. In addition, doctrinal comparison will easily be trapped into the conclusion of 'right or wrong' or 'black and white' due to different stance.

When the concept of collective transcendence, on the other hand, is used to illustrate the differences among Chinese culture, Christianity, and Islam in China, it

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340 State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, White paper titled 'Progress in Human Rights over the 40 Years of Reform and Opening Up in China' (12 December 2018) 3, The State Council website (http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/12/13/content_281476431737638.htm; accessed 17 August 2021).

341 State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, White paper titled 'Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China' (22 September 2019) 3, The State Council website (http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201909/22/content_WS5d87752fc6d0bcf8c4c13d32.html; accessed 17 August 2021).

introduces an indirect dialogue between Christianity and Islam in the context of Chinese culture. Chapter 3, then, discusses the approaches to have dialogues between Chinese culture and Christianity and Islam.

3. Approaches to Dialogues between Foreign Religions and Chinese Culture in the Socio-political Context of Contemporary China

In Chapter 2, this thesis proposes that the concept of collective transcendence is implied in Chinese culture. The quest is mainly through historical review of the state ideology, Confucianism, and Fei's social model developed from agricultural social settings in the 1940s. Feuchtwang believes that Fei's observation holds true 'but it must be seen as a contrast between ideologies and discourses prevailing in agrarian China and … in the nineteenth-century West'.[342] Yet Carsten Herrmann-Pillath thinks that Fei's model is also applicable to urban China because the ritual of Confucian ethics was enmeshed in law and also 'played an important role in urban society'.[343]

This thesis proposes that this agricultural society fostered the development of Confucianism in which consanguinity became the core elements of human relationship and the agricultural society finally developed the personal social networks in Fei's model. However, contemporary China has been modernised and Chinese culture has changed accordingly. In addition, the advocacy of socialism could displace the traditional state ideology so that the foundation of the concept of collective transcendence would be eroded. Thus, it is necessary to understand the situation of contemporary China in order to conduct dialogues with Chinese Christians and Chinese Muslims. The following sections are presented to address the issues:

a) Section 3.1 explores the changing and unchanging parts of Chinese society which reflect the effect of modernisation and the ideology prevalent in contemporary China.
b) Section 3.2 continues the quest for the elements and mechanisms that preserve traditional culture.
c) Section 3.3 compares the human relationships or social person discovered in Fei's social model with the above findings. It is anticipated that human relationships, the core element of Fei's model and the basis for the concept of collective transcendence, are implemented in urban China in a way different

[342] Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 142.
[343] Herrmann-Pillath, 'Fei Xiaotong's Comparative Theory', 30.

from that in rural areas. Some means of revision from rural settings to urban settings will be necessary.

d) After reviewing the current situation in China in sections 3.1 to 3.3, section 3.4 addresses the attitudes toward Chinese Christians and Chinese Muslims in Chinese society. It is anticipated that such attitudes reflect the concept of collective transcendence and form the framework for dialogue with the two religions on the perspective of Chinese culture.

e) The last section of concluding remarks summarises the approaches to dialogues between Christianity and Islam in China based on the findings in previous sections.

3.1 Changing or Unchanging China Revisited

The issue of 'changing or unchanging China' has been briefly discussed in sub-section 2.2.1 from a historical perspective, and this section hints at the fact that there is still room for further discussion on this issue. In general, there are traditions or ideologies preserved in the process of modernisation which are regarded as belonging to the 'unchanging' China. The crucial point is whether the concept of collective transcendence, which is a focal point of inter-religious dialogue in this thesis, will be preserved and exerting its influence in contemporary China.

Socialism was implemented in the beginning of PRC. Therefore, this section will concentrate on the discussion of whether socialism has become the new state ideology of China. For discussions in this thesis, the PRC can be roughly divided into two periods, namely the 'socialism period' (1949-1978)[344] and the 'reformation period' (1978 to early 2000s).[345] It is anticipated that Chinese traditions, which largely related to popular religion, suffered serious attacks when socialism was advocated in the period 1949-1978. In the reformation period, the then Chinese leader Xiaoping Deng re-opened the doors of China and thus transformed most parts of China from poverty to prosperity.[346] The open-door policy not only brought economic benefits to Chinese

[344] There are different terms used to denote the period from 1949 to 1978, namely socialism, communism, or Mao's period. Nevertheless, 'socialism' is used here because it is quite frequently used by Chinese intellectuals, for example Guan Tao Jin, and Ai Lei Xie etc.

[345] There are views that the reformation period was going to end by early 2000s because of the fundamental change of the CCP and 'Chinese politics devolved into something resembling a feudal oligarchy'. Cf Carl Minzner, 'The End of China's Reform Era', *Asia Policy* 13(4) (2018) 88.

[346] Jiahong Sun and Andrew G. Ryder, 'The Chinese Experience of Rapid Modernization: Sociocultural Changes, Psychological Consequences?', *Frontier in Psychology* 7(477) (2016) 2, Frontier in

people but also allowed relative freedom for the revival of traditions. In this context, many statistics of peasant activities included in the following discussion will refer to the year 1978, the beginning of the reformation period.

The Chinese historian Xue Wei Zhai identifies four key elements that constitute the socio-cultural background of contemporary China, which are peasant civilisation, familism, Confucian thought, and bureaucracy.[347] With regard to the process of modernisation in China, Zhai observes:

> Changes in China due to modernity happened in the recent century, particularly in the reformation period. The Chinese peasant civilisation is going to be replaced by industrialisation, marketisation, and urbanisation. The size of Chinese families is decreasing due to family planning policy. Confucian thought continues influencing people's daily lives although civil servants do not need to familiar with it. Democracy and the legal system are developing while the bureaucratic system is criticised from time to time.[348]

Zhai argues that peasant civilisation, familism, and Confucian thought have their foundations in Chinese traditions and they will survive without governmental intervention. Thus, Zhai believes that these three elements will continue influencing Chinese people.[349] This section will first review the different facets of modernisation in China while the cultural influence of the peasant civilisation, familism, and Confucian thought is elaborated in sub-sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

3.1.1 Different Facets of Modernisation in China

What is modernisation in general? Use of technology is definitely a sign of modernisation. However, modern attitudes and values are also important elements of modernisation.[350] Zhai describes that China is changing rapidly with the development

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Psychology website (https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00477/full; accessed 18 January 2022).

347 Xue Wei Zhai (翟學偉), *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi: Time-space Order, Life Desire and their Changes* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011) 160. Zhai has not stated clearly the meaning of bureaucracy. Nonetheless, taking into account the context, bureaucracy refers to the legacy of official practices developed in Chinese empires.

348 Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 162.

349 Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 162.

350 Alex Inkeles, et al., 'Causes and Consequences of Individual Modernity in China', *The China Journal* 37 (1997) 31. The modern attitudes and values include concepts of individual responsibility, being open to new experience, freedom from absolute submission to received authorities etc. Cf Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern* (London: Heinemann, 1983) 109 as cited by Inkeles et al., 'Causes and Consequences', 33.

of technologies in the fields of commerce, industry, marketing, and communications. However, human relationship (*guanxi*) is gaining influence in contemporary China, and it remains one of the basic characteristics of the Chinese society.[351] Zhai's observation hints that traditional thought and behaviours are still prevalent in contemporary China. To understand modernisation in China, it is necessary to examine the meanings carried by the signs of modernisation and traditional culture for Chinese people.

The pursuit of individualism is also regarded as a sign of modernisation. Yi Xu and Takeshi Hamamura,[352] Jia Hong Sun, and Andrew G. Ryder[353] have reviewed the changes of China. The changes include the shift from collectivism to individualism from the psychological perspective. The works reviewed include the surveys conducted by Jiaming Sun and Xun Wang,[354] Xin Yin Chen et al.,[355] Hua Jian Cai et al.,[356] and T. Talhelm et al.[357]

Surveys on children's shyness and narcissism support the trend of individualism in contemporary China; however, a survey on interdependency suggests the survival of traditional culture. The survey results are briefly described below:

a) A survey of 2,350 respondents in Shanghai indicated that more than half of the participants between the ages of 14 and 18 pursue an individual living style.[358] Traditionally, shyness is associated with social and academic achievement. Surveys of school children of ten years old were conducted in 1990, 1998, and 2002, and in 2002 Xin Yin Chen et al. found a shift of attitude toward shyness that is associated with depression and peer rejection.[359]
b) Vertical individualism is assumed to be associated with narcissism.[360] Online surveys were conducted in the period 2008 to 2010 regarding narcissism of

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351 Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 293. Human relationships and Fei's social model are discussed in sub-section 3.3.2.

352 Cf Yi Xu and Takeshi Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', *Frontier in Psychology* 5(1066) (2014) (https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01066/full; accessed 19 January 2022) 1-8.

353 Cf Sun and Ryder, 'The Chinese Experience of Rapid Modernization', 1-13.

354 Cf Jiaming Sun and Xun Wang, 'Value Differences between Generations in China: A Study in Shanghai', *Journal of Youth Studies* 13(1) (2010) 65-81.

355 Cf Xinyin Chen et al., 'Social Functioning and Adjustment in Chinese Children: The Imprint of Historical Time', *Child Development* 76(1) (2005) 182-95.

356 Cf Huajian Cai et al., 'A Sociocultural Approach to Narcissism: The Case of Modern China', *European Journal of Personality* 26(5) (2012) 529-35.

357 Cf T. Talhelm et al., 'Large-Scale Psychological Differences within China Explained by Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', *Science* 344(6184) (2014) 603-8.

358 Sun and Ryder, 'The Chinese Experience of Rapid Modernization', 5.

359 Chen et al., 'Social Functioning and Adjustment in Chinese Children', 182.

360 Cai et al., 'A Sociocultural Approach to Narcissism', 530. The characteristics of vertical individualism are given in Table 2.1.

Chinese youngsters. The findings are that 'the most likely to be narcissistic are those who are only-child, rich, lives in urban environments and individualistic'.[361] It is anticipated that narcissism will grow with the process of urbanisation and associated higher social economic status, etc.[362]

c) T. Talhelm et al. explain that farming rice will require more labour than farming wheat.[363] According to the subsistence style theory, farming rice requires more functional interdependence than farming wheat. 'Over time, societies that have to cooperate intensely become more interdependent, whereas societies that do not have to depend on each other as much become more individualistic.'[364] Therefore T. Talhelm et al. conducted surveys to test the trend of interdependency with people from rice and wheat regions in China. The number of participants was 1166 Han Chinese. The 'results consistently showed that participants from rice provinces are more holistic-thinking, interdependent, and loyal/nepotistic than participants from the wheat provinces'.[365] T. Talhelm et al. opine that 'cultures that farm rice and wheat over thousands of years pass on rice or wheat cultures, even after most people put down their plows'.[366]

It is noted that the survey of Xin Yin Chen et al. was conducted in Shanghai, one of the most modernised cities in China. However, scholars have not addressed whether the shift of attitude toward shyness also occurred in rural areas of China. With regard to the suggested growth of narcissism in Chinese youngsters, who are living in cities and of higher social economic status, this phenomenon agrees with the hypothesis that individualism grows with modernisation. However, this hypothesis 'has difficulty explaining why Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong are persistently collectivistic despite per-capita gross domestic products higher than that of the European Union'.[367] The fruits of using modern technologies are evidence of modernisation accomplished in China. However, it is arguable whether the other signs of modernisation, such as individualism, have been developed.

Alex Inkeles et al. have introduced the theory of individual modernity, which is an individual development of modern attitudes and values after exposure to 'certain

361 Cai et al., 'A Sociocultural Approach to Narcissism', 532.
362 Cai et al., 'A Sociocultural Approach to Narcissism', 533.
363 Talhelm et al., 'Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', 604.
364 Talhelm et al., 'Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', 603.
365 Talhelm et al., 'Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', 607.
366 Talhelm et al., 'Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', 604-5.
367 Talhelm et al., 'Rice versus Wheat Agriculture', 603.

kinds of social experiences and organizational context'.[368] They then conducted surveys in China by early 1990 regarding the 'attitudes, values and behaviour in twenty-four thematic areas, such as a sense personal efficacy, a positive valuation of planning, [and] scheduling time', etc.[369] In previous similar surveys, education was found influential on individual levels of modernity. In China, however, the results of their survey showed that more education resulted in lower the level of individual modernity. Inkeles et al. found that there was a stratified education system re-activated in the reformation period.[370] Obviously, this education system does not favour the development of individual modernity. In fact, traditional Chinese society is a stratified society moulded by Confucianism.[371] The findings of Inkeles et al. reveal that the social setting and the cultural thinking of China do not facilitate full modernisation in China.

With regard to the influence of traditional culture, it is also reflected in the survey of T. Talhelm et al. about the comparison of interdependency between those farming wheat and those farming rice. Sun and Ryder explain that 'modernization is a non-uniform process that impacts different strata of Chinese society at varying speed, and that increasing individualism does not necessarily signify the end of traditional meanings and practices'.[372] Xu and Hamamura further study the rise of individualism and influence of traditional culture by inviting participants from Renmin University, Beijing, to propose topics 'that have become more or less important in understanding Chinese people of the past and present'.[373] The survey was conducted in the early 2010s, and the results are summarised in Table 3.1 below:[374]

Trend	**Topics**	
Rising[375]	materialism	spiritual life
	propriety	knowledge of psychological health
	care much about money	stress
	successful career	democracy
	individuality	freedom

368 Alex Inkeles, et al., 'Causes and Consequences of Individual Modernity in China', 31.

369 Ibid, 38. The survey was conducted in Tianjin and 738 participants recruited. The participants were farmers, rural industrial workers, urban non-industrial workers, urban individual household entrepreneurs, and urban industrial workers.

370 Ibid, 41-4.

371 See discussion in sub-section 2.2.2.

372 Sun and Ryder, 'The Chinese Experience of Rapid Modernization', 6.

373 Xu and Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', 2.

374 Xu and Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', Table 1. The Chinese terms in Table 1 have been removed and 'familial bonding' has been replaced with 'family' in Table 3.1 as translation for the Chinese term *qinqing* (親情).

375 Topics marked as 'Rising' are 'seen as more important in understanding Chinese people of today'. Cf Xu and Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', 3.

	individual happiness	humaneness
	Western culture	rights
	Western festivals	open-minded
	divorce	diverse
	gender equality	
Declining[376]	collectivistic	restrained
	traditional ethics	reserved
	Confucian ethics	doctrine of Mean[377]
	traditional Eastern values	food and clothing
	Loyalty	social class
	hierarchy within family	
	obedience	
Continuing[378]	patriotism	friends
	loyalty to country	Chinese New Year
	family	moral judgment
	familial bonding	stable life
	friendships	

Table 3.1: Important or Less Important Topics for Chinese People

It is worth noting that Confucian ethic becomes less important in contemporary China while moral judgment continues to be one of the important issues today. What is the foundation of moral judgment if it is not Confucian ethics? Actually, there was a debate about the meaning of life in 1980. The anthropologist Yun Xiang Yan comments that the debate marks 'the first open departure from the dominance of a collective ethics that can be tracked back to Confucian ethics in Chinese history'. Although Yan claims the collective ethics originated from Confucianism, it actually refers to the Communist ethical discourse to deny oneself and offer one's life to the country.[379] The political philosopher Ji Wei Ci perceives that the collective well-being is a utopianism inspired by Marx. However, it did not materialise in China and disappointed people. Nihilism then grew in China.[380] It explains the pursuit of moral judgment in the reformation period. Regarding the 'Continuing' topics as shown in Table 3.1, such as family, human

376 Topics marked as 'Declining' are 'seen as more important in understanding Chinese people of the past'. Cf Xu and Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', 3.

377 One of the Confucian classics is called *Zhongyong*, which literally means 'in the middle'. The doctrine advocated in *Zhongyong* is translated as 'doctrine of Mean' in Xu and Hamamura's paper.

378 Topics marked as 'Continuing' are 'seen as always important in understanding Chinese people'. Cf Xu and Hamamura, 'Folk Beliefs of Cultural Changes in China', 4.

379 Yun Xiang Yan, 'The Changing Moral Landscape' in Arthur Kleinman et al., *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person* (London: University of California Press, 2011) 42.

380 Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 3-5. Ci also points out that the way out of nihilism is hedonism. Cf Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 5. However, hedonism does not tell the changes with regard to moral codes and ideology, but it reflects that Chinese people return to the basic instinct of a human being – pursuing satisfaction of one's physiological needs only. Therefore, this thesis prefers using 'nihilism' to describe the state after the collapse of the utopianism inspired by Marx.

relationships, and traditional rituals, they are issues originated from Confucian ideology. Thus, the foundation of moral judgment is part of Confucian thought.

The above discussions reveal that China has been modernised with the use of technology, yet Confucianism, the long-lasting ideology, is still exerting its influence on Chinese people. In fact, the CCP has advocated socialism which tried to minimise or even replace the influence of traditional culture. An example is that those peasants who followed traditional rituals were regarded as backward and feudal.[381] However, traditional culture survived in the socialism period and exerted its effect thereafter. The survival of traditional culture in the socialism period means that the foundation of the concept of collective transcendence is preserved, and the myth of its survival is discussed in the next sub-section.

3.1.2 Socialism versus Tradition

In the socialism period, 'Confucian social relationships came under attack because they ran contrary to the ideology of comradeship, which … called for an abolition of the in-group and out-group distinctions.'[382] The Chinese historian Guan Tao Jin contends that the emerging new ideologies, whether Marxism-Leninism or the Three Principles of People,[383] continued to maintain the deep structure of Confucian culture. In fact, traditional rituals have been re-activated in the reformation period.[384] With regard to the suppression of traditional ideology, the anthropologist Andrew B. Kipnis discovered the trick of the CCP when he joined the social research project conducted between 1988 and 1990 at Zhouping County in Shandong Province where the peasants promoted traditional rituals again as a means of their identity. This sub-section will first discuss Jin's arguments and then Kipnis' findings at Fengjia in order to understand how traditional culture survived in the socialism period. The next sub-section then explains the cultural structure to enable its survival in the socialism period.

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381 Andrew B. Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi: Sentiment, Self, and Subculture in a North China Village* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997) 172.

382 Irene Y. M. Yeung and Rosalie L. Tung, 'Achieving Business Success in Confucian Societies: The Importance of Guanxi (Connections)', *Organizational Dynamic* 25(2) (1996) 58.

383 Yat Sen Sun, the founder of the Republic of China, advocated the Three Principles of People that contain the concepts of democracy and human rights etc.

384 The phenomenon has been discussed in sub-section 2.3.1.

To address the phenomenon of 'unchanging' China, Guan Tao Jin perceives that there is a deep structure determining the substance of Confucian ideology as shown in Figure 3.1 below:[385]

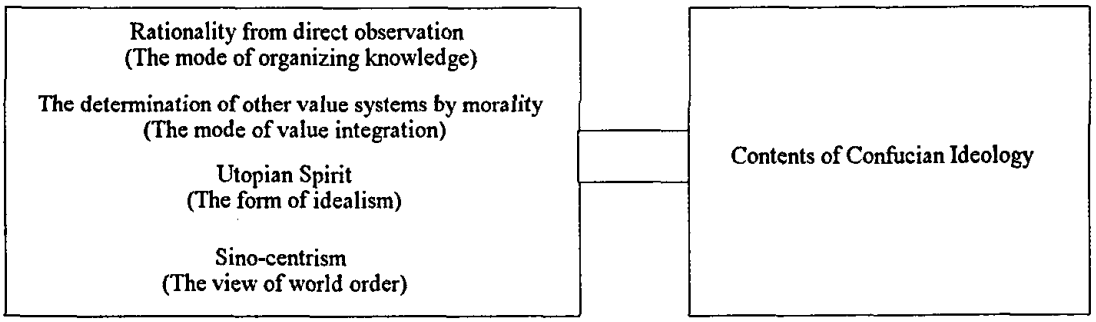

Figure 3.1 Deep Cultural Structure

In Figure 3.1, the 'rationality from direct observation' refers to the mode of thinking which suggests that we do not need to challenge the knowledge or the concept originated from common sense so that we could apply it as a foundation to deduce high level philosophical thought.[386] Jin argues that the core elements of Confucian culture, namely rationality, determination of value, utopian spirit, and Sino-centrism, remain unchanged over time while their forms, i.e. the mode of organising knowledge, the mode of value integration, the form of idealism, and the view of world order, can be altered and appear in the forms of new ideologies.[387]

According to Jin, there was an ideological displacement after the eruption of the New Culture Movement in 1915.[388] He outlines the background and the pursuit of the Movement as follows:

> To face the invasion of the Western countries, the state had to develop the capacity to penetrate the rural areas and carry out mobilization. The political structure of traditional Chinese society … could not perform these two functions. … As long as the landlords controlled a majority of the agricultural revenue, the state could not smoothly transfer agricultural accumulation to industrial

385 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 8.

386 Guan Tao Jin (金觀濤) and Qing Feng Liu (劉青峰), 'The Ideological Grip on Chinese Culture', *Twenty-First Century* 9 (1992) 38, The Chinese University of Hong Kong website (http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/21c/media/articles/c009-199200028.pdf; accessed 1 February 2022). The Chinese term used by Jin and Liu for 'direct observation' is *zhi guan*, which is the same Chinese translation for 'intuition' in Kant's work *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact, Jin's and Liu's meaning of 'direct observation' is quite close to Kant's 'intuition' (A19/B33).

387 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 7.

388 The New Culture Movement has been mentioned in section 2.6.

> investment. In short, while the emperor penetrated and controlled the rural areas through the gentry and the patriarchal system, which of course was very effective in maintaining the internal integration of rural society, the system could not at the same time undertake the various political and economic mobilizations needed for modernization.[389]

Chinese intellectuals sought to find new ideologies 'to overcome the impotence of Confucian ideology with regard to mobilization for modernization'.[390] As a result, the historian Gung Wu Wang observes that Confucianism was marginalised from 1925 to the mid-1950s by the pursuit of technological development and modernisation.[391] Jin finds that the forms of the key elements of Confucian ideology had been displaced as a result of the influence of the New Culture Movement, as depicted in Table 3.2 below:[392]

Forms of the structural element of Confucianism	**Forms of new ideologies emerging in 1920s**
Rationality: knowledge is organised by means of common sense	Rationality: scientism took the position of common sense in Confucianism
Morality: • Key features: benevolence and family ethics • Social view: rule of rites • Economic ethics: humane government and characterised as a system of hierarchical equilibrium	Morality: • Key features: economic equality • Social view: economic equality was used to evaluate the soundness of both political and economic systems
Utopian spirit: • Idealistic moral society centred on individuals and families	Utopian spirit: • Collectivist moral idealism which evolved into a) anarchism and communism; and b) Three Principles of the People advocated by Yat Sen Sun
View of world order: • Sino-centrism	View of world order: • Internationalism that fostered the acceptance of Marxism-Leninism and anarchism • Nationalism that was absorbed in the Three Principles of the People

Table 3.2: Displacement of the forms of Confucian ideology

It is worth noting the intended change of the utopian spirit from the moral society centring on individuals and families[393] to the establishment of a collectivist moral idealistic society in the 1920s. The moral society centring on individuals and families is reflected in Fei's social model, which proposes that the extension of oneself

389 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 6.
390 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 8.
391 Gung Wu Wang, 'Nationalism and Confucianism' in Sin Kiong Wong (ed.), *Confucianism, Chinese History and Society* (Hackensack: World Scientific, 2012) 27.
392 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 9-10.
393 The Confucian requirement to cultivate oneself and extend oneself out into circles of human relationships has been discussed in sub-section 2.3.2.

will form circles of human relationships with oneself at the centre. Jin's observation of Confucianism agrees with Fei's model. Furthermore, Zhai perceives that human relationships in contemporary China are not merely developed in social interactions but evolve from family relationships.[394] Zhai's view of human relationships coincides with that proposed by Fei, which was based on findings from the 1940s. Why did Confucianism survive during the socialism period?

In fact, the CCP did try to change the ideology of the Chinese people, one example being the land reform in the periods 1946-1949 and 1950-1952.[395] The first step of the land reform was to divide landlords and peasants into different classes. Peasants were further divided into rich peasants, middle-class peasants, and poor peasants. The goal of the land reform was not only to redistribute the cultivated fields from landlords to peasants, but also to try to break the influence of the traditional blood league relationship in villages so that the CCP's control could penetrate into rural areas of China.[396] According to Kipnis, the effect of the land reform in Fengjia was that the ancestral temple and many copies of the family genealogy had been destroyed so that the blood lineage became insignificant.[397] Furthermore, the CCP initiated collective emotion by asking poor peasants to tell people about their bitter experience of labouring work before 1949. The collective emotion was called class emotion which 'was simultaneously personalised, in that the speakers and audience all were closely related, yet congruent with an impersonal, generalised Marxist theory'. Class designations then replaced the original social hierarchy. However, due to years of overuse, class designations lost their effectiveness.[398]

To regain their identities, as argued by Kipnis, Fengjia residents revived traditional rituals, such as ancestral worship and wedding rituals. This shows the influence of peasant civilisation and familism, as suggested by Zhai. Kipnis perceives it as another version of class emotion or peasant subculture.[399] The Fengjia residents advocated peasant subculture in 1988-1990 and reactivated past practices regarding

394 Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 295.
395 Ping Han Luo (羅平漢), 'Land Reform Movement and the Establishment of Chinese Communist Party's Rule', *Twenty-First Century* 111 (2009) 48, The Chinese University of Hong Kong website (https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/21c/media/articles/c111-200812065.pdf; accessed 1 February 2022).
396 Luo, 'Land Reform Movement', 51.
397 Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi*, 137.
398 Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi*, 162-3.
399 Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi*, 166.

filial piety.[400] It appears that the CCP's attempt to displace the traditional ideology by socialism had failed. The development of peasant subculture or revival of traditional rituals and the pursuit of moral judgment mentioned in the previous sub-section are possibly responses to nihilism.[401]

3.1.3 Relationship between Religion and the State

The CCP's reputation of authoritarianism is well known.[402] Therefore, 'China is constantly portrayed in the West, particularly by the United States, as a Marxist state that persecutes religion and accordingly violates human rights.'[403] It set up the National Religious Affairs Administration and the TSPM Committee respectively to regulate religions in general and Christianity in particular. In general, it regulates religions with the concept of Sinicization,[404] which demands religious believers to love the country.[405] The religious regulations require that 'religious organisations, places of worship, and religious festivals have to register'.[406] The policies imposed on Christianity which include: a) cancellation of Christian denominations; b) asking believers to join TSPM churches; c) having reduced the number of Christian churches in the 1950s; and c) asking the churches to engage in society and in serving people.[407]

Feuchtwang notes that 'the intense mass mobilisation politics eliminated all local temples, halls and their open rituals' during 1964-1978. However, the wealth that religious believers 'generated by economic reforms after 1978 has been used in widespread, but not universal, rebuilding of temples and halls and the revitalisation of rituals'.[408] The religious regulations did not have marked changes before and after 1978 but the religious activities were revived after 1978. This thesis regards that the government attitudes toward religions are driven by both traditional thoughts and political ideology. As an example of foreign religion, the following paragraphs attempt to explore the Confucian political influence on Christianity.

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400 Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi*, 172.
401 Ci observes that nihilism spread among people at the beginning of the reformation period.
402 Fuk Tsang Ying (邢福增), 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government: The Experience of the Three-self Church and Home Church' in *A Winding Path: The Church and the Power* (Hong Kong: VW Link, 2015) 211.
403 Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism*, 115.
404 See sections 4.4 and 5.1 for the Sinicization of Christianity and Islam respectively.
405 See section 4.4.
406 Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 213.
407 See section 4.4
408 Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 215.

There is familial value and communal value in Confucianism. The former 'places the nuclear family at the center of a person's social network' while the latter 'places "public" or "communal" interests above those of the family'. The doctrine of the mean (*Zhongyong*) balances these two extremes.[409] The anthropologist Yuan Xiang Yan opines that Confucian ethics, emphasising 'the absolute primacy and supremacy of the collective over the individual', continues into the age of Communist China. The CCP then replaces family, kinship groups, and emperor with socialist collectives, the CCP, and the Chairman of the CCP respectively.[410] In this sense, the collectivistic society advocated by the CCP can be regarded as an extreme concept of Confucianism which places national interest above personal benefits.

Furthermore, Confucianism sets ancestral worship as a foundation of *li* (etiquette) which regulates personal behaviour and social norms. In addition to remembering ancestors, ancestral worship advocates filial piety and faithfulness to family and the nation. Thus, ancestral worship unites family members and stabilises society. If a particular religion poses a threat to ancestral worship, the government may consider it dangerous to the country.[411] In this sense, Confucianism exerts its influence in the political regime.

There were numerous confrontations between the Chinese government and Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. During this time, Confucianism had already been set as the state ideology and the basis of national rule. Confucian ethics were then the moral orthodoxy to judge other religions. Cheng Mian Wang considers that in addition to the government's approval, any foreign religion in China needed to be accredited by Confucianism.[412] Consequently, Chinese governments, whether in the imperial period or in the post-imperial periods, exerted control over religions.[413]

Paper finds that the Opium Wars and US gunboats patrolling the Yangtze River to 'support missionaries and their converts' scared the Chinese government at that time. Consequently, the contemporary Chinese government is 'highly suspicious of

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409 Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 63.

410 Yan, 'The Changing Moral Landscape', 42.

411 Cheng Mian Wang (王成勉), 'Church-state Relationship: The Important Means to Study the History of Christianity in China' in Peter Tze Ming Ng (吳梓明) and Xiao Xin Wu (吳小新) (eds.), *Studies in Christianity and Chinese Society and Culture: Essays from the Second International Houg Scholars' Symposium* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2006) 3.

412 Wang, 'Church-state Relationship', 2.

413 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 212.

Protestant churches influenced by fundamentalist evangelical American churches'.[414] In 1949, a group of Chinese Protestants expressed the thought of Communists:

> Christian church has been intimately related to imperialism and capitalism. It is a fact that the Christian church in China in the past has been entangled with the unequal treaties imposed upon China under duress, it did enjoy special privileges accruing from them. It is also a fact that the churches in China have had close connections with the churches in Britain and America in personnel and financial support. It is also a fact that the church life and organization here in China has been modelled after the pattern in Britain and America. Traditions of denominations have been imported and taken root here. Much of the church administration is still in the hands of missionaries.[415]

With the worry about Western influence or even control over China, there was a call for indigenous Christianity before the birth of the PRC.[416] Thus, following the establishment of the PRC, the TSPM, which was linked with the political agenda, evolved and established the TSPM churches as a means to stop overseas influence on local religion. However, those who rejected TSPM churches set up underground churches or 'house churches' in Protestant groups.[417] The Roman Catholic Church rejected Communism through the 1950s, although it has changed its policy recently to cooperate with the Chinese government.[418] Based on a CFPS survey in 2016, Yun Feng Lu et al. estimated that there were about 28.29 million TSPM church members and 11.67 million house church members in China.[419] Thus, about 30 per cent of Christians do not acknowledge Chinese government religious policy.

TSPM Committee is the CCP's tool to control and change Christianity. However, its policy was to finally eliminate religion from China during the period 1949 to 1966. Thus, the TSPM Committee would cease to function if the elimination of religion were successful.[420] The CCP controls religions because religious institutions

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414 Paper, *Chinese Religion and Familism*, 116-7.

415 Merwin and Jones, *Documents of the Three-Self Movement*, 15 as cited in Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 161-2.

416 See sub-section 4.4.2 for the background of seeking indigenous Christianity in the early twentieth century.

417 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 157. See section 4.4 regarding the development of TSPM.

418 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 158.

419 Yun Feng Lu (盧雲峰) et. al., 'How many Christians in China?: Based on Estimation from China Family Panel Studies' Survey', *Open Times* 1(2019) 175.

420 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 224.

are social organisations. The control of social institutions is to ensure the ruling of the CCP. In the *Curriculum of Patriotism (2005)*, it states:

> The first identity of a religious believer is a citizen and needs to love his/her country … Patriotism is a concrete action to align individual political stance with the CCP and the government … A religious believer cannot turn away from CCP's leading on the excuse of separation of church and state.[421]

The tone of the *Curriculum of Patriotism (2005)* sounds familiar with that of the New Confucian Qing Jiang who suggests an individual, including each religious believer, must be loyal to his/her nation.[422] Although the Communist government attempted to shape society with concrete actions, people suffered during various political movements, and the sufferings reduced distinctions among Christians and between Christians and others.[423] This thesis interprets that these sufferings disappointed people and helped the spread of nihilism after the cultural revolution.[424] That is, the advocation of socialism was not efficient in changing Chinese culture and therefore Confucianism revived.

That said, government religious policies do have an effect on Chinese religions. This thesis holds the view that cultural concepts are the driving force of any government policies relating to religions in China. As discussed, these cultural concepts are mainly from Confucian ideology.

3.1.4 Summary of the Findings

Based on previous observations, we conclude that changing China is the adaptation of material civilisation while the unchanging China is the Confucian ideology, which was developed from a specific worldview: Sino-centrism.

It is no doubt that PRC has been modernised. The changing China is about infrastructure developments, city living style, and higher education etc., i.e., the standard of living has been improved with the use of technology. The highly stratified education system in China provides an explanation, among the others, of the 'incomplete' modernisation of China. In fact, ancient China was a stratified collective

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421 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 225-6.
422 See sub-section 4.4.7.
423 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 159.
424 See discussion in sub-section 3.1.1.

society, which was sustained by Confucianism. It explains why Confucian ideology is the unchanging China.

The unchanging China is about the state ideology, the Confucianism, and the associated metaphysical concepts regarding eternity. In fact, the CCP has sought to displace Confucianism with socialism by means of social movements and political pressure. As observed by Ci, nihilism spread across China in the beginning of reformation period Interestingly Confucianism was revived although it is no longer regarded as an official state ideology.

Ci's and Jin's proposals of nihilism and deep cultural structure respectively explain the causes of the survival of traditional culture. Jin's proposed deep cultural structure supports and sustains Fei's social model. That said, Fei's social model needs further examination and will be discussed in section 3.3. The next section attempts to identify the cultural elements that have preserved Confucian ideology.

3.2 Cultural Elements Preserving Confucian Ideology

When Chinese people enjoy modern life with the use of technology, this may also foster the development of individualism in contemporary China.[425] Regarding the learning of technologies, the slogan 'Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application' emerged in the New Culture Movement.[426] As China suffered the influence of Western imperialism in the early twentieth century,[427] the 'application' in the slogan obviously referred to the use of Western technology to strengthen the national power of China. It is questionable whether individualism, another sign of modernisation, will be accepted by Chinese people. The Chinese philosopher Su Ming Liang insisted that the New Culture Movement adopted materialism but ignored the spirituality in Chinese culture.[428] Against this background, the slogan suggested that modernisation meant learning Western technologies only in order to preserve the core of Chinese culture. The reaction to the West showed the worldview of Chinese people, namely that China was still the centre of the world and that they were proud of their culture. This reaction

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425 Modern life here refers to the material civilisation exhibited in society. Material civilisation has been discussed in sub-section 2.1.1; it can be achieved through allocation of resources in the education sector and through transplanting of technology from overseas. It is likely to master technological skills and knowledge within a few decades, but it takes time to change a state ideology that is culturally based.

426 See discussion in sub-section 2.4.2.

427 This has been discussed in section 2.4.

428 Wakeman, *Telling Chinese History*, 46-7.

related to the concept of Sino-centrism in Jin's proposed deep cultural structure. In order to find the cultural element preserving Confucian ideology, the following paragraphs will first distinguish between egoism and individualism based on Ci's and Feuchtwang's views. Second, the connection of traditional rituals to Sino-centrism will be discussed.

3.2.1 Individualism and Egoism

Confucianism faced severe challenges in the early twentieth century. After a century of trials, however, Confucianism has been revived through the practices of traditional rituals. The observations made in the above sections are summarised in the following table with respect to the different time periods.

1915	New Culture Movement launched
1925 to mid-1950s	Incubation and emergence of new ideologies while Confucianism marginalized.
1949 to 1978	Socialism period • Introduction of new identities/classes and forming of a collective society.
1978 onward	Reformation period • Nihilism. • Use of technologies in various fields. • Signs of individualism such as narcissism. • Signs of collectivism such as revival of traditional rituals, tendency of interdependency etc. Human relationships evolved from family relationships.

The concepts of 'altruism' and 'egoism' can explain the signs of 'collectivism' and 'individualism' mentioned in the above table. In his work *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution,* Ci explains that the collective society in the socialism period required that 'loyalty to the state must always override loyalty to family and friends.'[429] That is, the collective society advocates altruism to demand people serving the country. Regarding Fei's social model, Feuchtwang points out that it is comprised of circles of 'social relatedness spreading out from each social person'.[430] Furthermore, 'Fei's social egoism and differentiation, *chaxugeju*, is a hierarchy based on ranked and differentiated social persons'[431] Thus, each social person is ego-centric and develops human relationships starting from his or her own family. As Feuchtwang's social person is ego-

[429] Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 127.
[430] Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 132.
[431] Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 133.

centric, this social person will not regard the state as the first place to serve because he or she must deny him- or herself in the socialism period. The concept of social egoism agrees with Jin's thinking that an idealistic Confucian moral society, a collective society, is centred on individuals and families as shown in Table 3.2.

Ci further points out that the concept of altruism had been applied in the socialism period but has been interpreted differently in the West and in the PRC. In the PRC, collectivism required an individual to give every weight to other people's interests and none to one's own.[432] Ci calls it complete altruism and that in the West limited altruism. His findings are summarised as follows:[433]

	Limited altruism	**Complete altruism**
Function	Regulating the conflict of interests among individuals	Serving the state
Context	• Pursuit of private interests morally allowed. • Development of both capitalism and individualism.	Collectivism promoted by the CCP
Fruit	Justice	Self-denial

Ci perceives that the opposite of complete altruism is complete egoism, 'which means putting one's interests above everyone and everything else'.[434] In fact, there are two poles regarding public and private interests in Confucianism. The sociologist Yi Min Lin describes the two poles as follows:

> The value system of Confucianism covers a span between two poles: (1) the familist value that places the nuclear family at the center of a person's social network differentiated according to the closeness of kinship ties and the degree of mutual affection and maintained through internalization and various forms of expressive reciprocities, and (2) the communal value that places "public" or "communal" interests above those of the family. A balance between the two poles and between relationships within the private or public sphere of social life is suggested by the principle of *zhongyong* (the doctrine of the mean emphasizing relational harmony and non-excessiveness).[435]

[432] Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 128.
[433] Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 128-9.
[434] Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 128.
[435] Yi Min Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange: *Guanxi* and Third-Party Effects' in Thomas Gold et al. (eds.), *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 63.

The collectivistic society promoted by the CCP in the socialism period may be regarded as one pole of Confucianism, namely that public interests are placed above those of the family. However, the promised well-being did not materialise. Accordingly, Confucianism swung back to the other pole of family-centred social network in the reformation period. The value system then heavily inclined to the centre of an individual's social network and evolved into complete egoism in Ci's perception. Complete egoism may involve selfishness. Fei finds that one of the problems of the differential mode of association in his social model is selfishness.[436]

In the reformation period, there is more room for the development of individualism, but the return of individual power was not allowed 'to be expressed either in ideology or in institutions.'[437] Ci further elaborates on the development of narcissism as follows:

> Individual power returned as unrestrained selfishness rather than the regulated selfishness characteristic of individualism. Maoist collectivism had depended on a group ideal in the shape of communism and a group leader in the person of Mao Zedong. With the failure of the ideal and the demise of the leader, the group could no longer hold itself together. Solidarity, while it lasted, had acted as a brake on what Freud calls narcissistic self-love and drawn its cohesive strength from such restraint. Once solidarity was gone, narcissistic self-love returned, for, as Freud put it so well, "Love for oneself knows only one barrier - love for others."[438]

In Ci's view, narcissism is a by-product of nihilism. From the perspective of psychology, both narcissism and egocentrism are defined through the concept of 'self'. The psychologist Drew Westen tries to distinguish narcissism from egocentrism, relative emotional investment in self and others, self-concept, and self-esteem. He finally defines narcissism as follows:

> Narcissism refers to a cognitive—affective preoccupation with the self, where "cognitive preoccupation" refers to a focus of attention on the self; "affective preoccupation" refers to a

436 Fei, *From the Soil*, 68.

437 Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 199-200.

438 Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 200. The phenomenon of narcissism has been discussed in sub-section 3.1.1. Ci's citation of Freud's idea is about the restraint of narcissism in group activities. Cf Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (5th impression; tr. James Strachey; London: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1949) 56.

preoccupation with one's own needs, wishes, goals, ambitions, glory, superiority, or perfection; and "self" refers to the whole person, including one's subjective experience, actions, and body.[439]

On the other hand, 'egocentrism refers to a relative lack of differentiation in some aspect of the relation between self and other' from a psychological point of view.[440] In contemporary China, egocentric behaviour is interpreted in a negative sense, namely that it includes the promotion of self-interest by sacrificing or taking advantage of friends.[441] Another psychologist, Susan Krauss Whitbourne, puts it simply that egocentric people in will not see other views while narcissistic people may see the points of others but not care about them. She proposes that it is possible to slip from egocentrism to narcissism.[442] While egocentrism is discussed from the psychological perspective, Feuchtwang extends the concept of individual egocentrism to a social phenomenon, which he calls the ego-centred social person. Since a Chinese social person is ego-centred, Feuchtwang distinguishes the concept social egoism from individualism in the West in summary form in Table 3.3 below:[443]

	Individualism	**Social egoism**
Legitimacy	Governed by laws.	Governed by rituals.
Cultivation	Mainly outside family.	In family, 'taking consanguinity as the priority of loyalty'.

Table 3.3: Individualism versus social egoism

This sub-section mainly discusses the views of Ci, Feuchtwang and Fei on the issues of individualism and egoism. Ci perceives the issues from the ideological perspective while Feuchtwang and Fei visualise the issues from the social development perspective. Ci regards that Chinese people were easily trapped into the state of narcissism after the failure of the ideal of socialism. Regarding Fei's social model, he proposes that an individual will situate at the centre of his or her social network, which starting from his or her family. Feuchtwang then interprets the individual as a social person and is ego-centric. In Feuchtwang's view, taking into account the different

439 Drew Westen, 'The Relations among Narcissism, Egocentrism, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem', *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 13(2) (1990) 226.
440 Westen, 'The Relations among Narcissism, Egocentrism, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem', 190.
441 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 58.
442 Susan Krauss Whitbourne, 'It's a Fine Line between Narcissism and Egocentrism', Psychology Today website (https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201204/it-s-fine-line-between-narcissism-and-egocentrism; accessed 29 January 2022).
443 Feuchtwang, 'Social Egoism and Individualism', 142.

contexts of China and the West, individualism is immaturely developed in China. After a century of searching new ideology, the phenomenon of the ego-centric social person continues to influence Chinese people. It implies that some cultural elements have preserved the ego-centric social person.

3.2.2 Revival of Traditional Rituals and Sino-centrism

Since the New Culture Movement, Chinese people have sought to modify their state ideology in order to strengthen the national power. They have considered the Three Principles of the People and Marxism-Leninism. As suggested by Jin, Sino-centrism remains the deep cultural structure of the two new ideologies.[444] The former is a kind of nationalism that was the spirit of the Republic of China while the latter, a kind of internationalism, was upheld by the CCP, which advocated socialism 1949.

It is worth noting that the Chinese social person is governed by rituals, which is a process of socialisation. According to Peter L. Berger, socialisation is part of a human world-construction and transmits its objectivated meaning:

> The new generation is initiated into the meanings of the culture, learns to participate in its established tasks and to accept the roles as well as the identities that make up its social structure. … The individual not only learns the objectivated meanings but identifies with and is shaped by them. He draws them into himself and makes them *his* meanings, but one who represents and expresses them.[445]

In the socialism period, the CCP also intended to construct its socialism utopia for Chinese people through the introduction of classes. This world-construction is an ideology displacement in Jin's perception. The CCP's attempt, however, appears not to have been very successful since the traditional rituals were revived. Berger explains that an individual will apprehend 'various elements of the objectivated world as phenomena internal to his consciousness at the same time as he apprehends them as phenomena of external reality.'[446] Ci maintains that there was a gap between the socialism utopia and the reality:

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444 Jin, 'Socialism and Tradition', 11.
445 Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990) 15.
446 Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 15.

> This gap between future and present, meaning and actuality, consciousness and fulfillment, which had been the locus of an energizing tension as long as people anticipated that the gap would one day be closed, became, once that anticipation evaporated through disappointment and loss of stamina, the very site of nihilism.[447]

In the atmosphere of nihilism, Chinese people suffered a moral crisis in the reformation period.[448] Yan describes that there was diversity of values, which resulted in a moral vacuum in the 1980s.[449] What will the moral reference be to maintain social stability when nihilism emerging? The collectivistic society advocated by the CCP can be regarded as an extreme concept of Confucianism which places national interest above personal benefits.[450] If it fails, the ideology will likely swing back to another extreme of Confucianism: the family-centred social network or the ego-centric social person in Feuchtwang's concept. It is possible that Confucianism will be revived to recover the so-called moral crisis.

According to the New Confucian Ming Chen, New Confucianism in Mainland China began to take shape in the early twenty-first century, some twenty years after the beginning of the reformation period.[451] Another New Confucian, Yun Chen, opines that New Confucianism, developed during the May Fourth Movement, is confined to a passive and defensive position, which was 'trying to legitimize Confucianism's existence in the modern age.'[452] Both Ming Chen and Yun Chen share similar views, namely that Confucianism needs not focusing on the problems of Chinese and Western culture. Instead, it needs to address the contemporary problems in China such as laying foundational political values, preserving social identity, and providing bases for individual spiritual lives.[453] Similarly, the leading Confucian scholar Qi Yong Guo opines that although Confucian scholars in Mainland China have inherited the Chinese traditions, which includes inheriting the ideas of New Confucians Shi Li Xiong, Zong

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447 Ci, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*, 5

448 Ji Wei Ci (慈繼偉), *Moral China in the Age of Reform* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 14.

449 Yan, 'The Changing Moral Landscape', 51.

450 See sub-section 3.1.3.

451 Ming Chen (陳明), 'Mainland New Confucianism's Problematique, Discourse Paradigm, and Intellectual Pedigree have already Taken Shape' *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49(2) (2018) 120.

452 Yun Chen (陳贇), 'The Mainland Confucian Revival and its Problems as Seen from the Perspective of "Civilizational Theory"' *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 49(2) (2018) 141. The development of New Confucianism is discussed in sub-section 2.4.2; the leading scholars such as Jun Yi Tang and Zong San Mou etc. were active in Hong Kong and Taiwan but not in Mainland China.

453 Cf Chen, Yun, 'The Mainland Confucian Revival', 146 and Chen, Ming, 'Mainland New Confucianism's Problematique', 121.

San Mou and Jun Yi Tang etc., they have tried hard to go beyond them by 'deploying the resources of Confucianism to respond to the challenges of modern times.'[454] The views of the New Confucians in Mainland China reveal that Confucianism will solve the problems of modernity. China is still the centre of the world, and Sino-centrism exerts its influence in China.

As the new Confucians in Mainland China emphasise the application of Confucianism in daily life, Guo reports that there is spontaneous emergence of popular Confucian revival movements as described below:

> Popular Confucianism is a type of cultural thought that nourishes the root and soul of Confucianism and returns it to everyday society, taking the values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith, loyalty, filial piety, honor, shame, and other core values into the homes of the common people. It becomes the compass for common people's lives, the path that provides a basis for their physical and spiritual lives.[455]

Although Confucianism has been put forward by private organisations, but Guo opines that 'we have not yet gone far enough'.[456] He requests Confucians to practise and preach academic findings on Confucianism.[457] Could there be a revival of Confucianism in contemporary China? Traditionally Confucianism has been a kind of ruling tool that fits the role as the state ideology.[458] Guo believes that 'there has never been a split between moral Confucianism and political Confucianism'.[459] Furthermore, Yun Chen reports that 'the red-hot development of Confucian thought is routinely understood to be a consequence of China's rise'.[460] Therefore, it is not surprising that the Chinese Government supported the establishment of the International Confucianism Association in October 1994 in Beijing. It appears that the 'revival' of Confucianism is one of the tools to unite Chinese people. That said, Confucianism acts as a moral code

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454 Guo, 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism', 160-1.
455 Guo, 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism', 162.
456 Ibid. Guo's original words 'popular organisations' means non-official organisations and it is translated as 'private organisations' here. An example of these private organisations was Benyuan Community College in Zhengzhou, which was established by Central China, a construction company. Cf Qi Yong Guo, 'New Development of Confucianism in Mainland China', Shanghai Jiaotong University website (http://www.jwc.sjtu.edu.cn/info/1222/6111.htm; accessed 11 May 2023).
457 Guo, 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism', 163.
458 See discussion given in sub-section 2.2.2.
459 Guo, 'How to Properly View the Properly View of Mainland Confucianism', 160.
460 Chen, 'The Mainland Confucian Revival', 144.

for Chinese people, and traditional rituals are performed in order to ensure one's identity and belonging to a community or a family group.

After a hundred years of struggle, the standard of living has improved. This improvement is based on the use of technologies, which is a part of material civilisation. Individualism, one of the core elements of modernisation, has not been developed as part of the state ideology. Feuchtwang concludes from Fei's social model that a social person is ego-centric and develops human relationship starting from his or her family. In fact, the study of human relationships (*guanxi*) can be traced back to Fei's *Rural China* in the 1940s. Since the late 1970s, human relationships became 'an important notion and a general analytic concept for the understanding of social exchange and relationships in Chinese society.'[461] The influence of Confucian ideology can be seen in the development of human relationships and the differential mode of association or social egoism, which will be discussed in the next section regarding the revision of Fei's social model. The concept of collective transcendence can be observed in the surveys of non-believers' attitudes toward religious groups in China.

3.3 Revised Form of Fei's Social Model

In the study of the religious rituals of North China, Tian Ji Xu reports that popular religion in China took place in a dynamic local networks of human relationship networks.[462] Fei's social model of human relationship has been introduced in sub-section 2.3.3, which refers to Confucian ethics to explain the social pattern in rural areas observed in the 1940s. Section 3.1 has discussed the 'incomplete' modernisation of China and the revival of Confucianism, which appears in the form of traditional rituals. However, Fei's social model is subject to challenge whether it is still applicable in the scenarios of urbanisation and modernisation of China. Thus, it is necessary to explore how to connect the 'rural' culture to urban people. Furthermore, the connection of rituals and human relationships will be discussed in sub-section 3.3.2.

461 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 452-3.

462 Tian Ji Xu (徐天基), 'Gift, Guanxi and Local Religion: the Multi-village Ritual Alliances in Contemporary North China Plain', *Qinghai Journal of Ethnology* 25(3) (2014) 34.

3.3.1 Connection of Rural China to Urban China

Kenneth Dean, professor of Chinese culture, perceives that there is a split between urban and rural China. Evidence for this is that little or no access to communal ritual events for city children; and urban intellectuals feel cut off from rural culture. However, Dean also observes that while rural areas are being modernised, rural labours flocked into cities. He concludes that there is no clear dividing line between rural and urban areas.[463]

According to the studies of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), cities are of more dense population than rural area. Cities also offer a higher quality of life to people.[464] Will these characteristics of cities change the culture of the residents? It is true that when a peasant migrates into a city, the city settings will replace his or her community as well as identity so that practising traditional rituals becomes subject to venues and time constraints. Yet there is connection of rural and urban China. This connection will be discussed with regard to the preservation of traditions in the following way:

a) the impact of demographic changes on rural areas and the works of the historians Dong Lian Xiao and Xue Wei Zhai; and
b) the impact of the agricultural civilisation on ancestral worship and family style will be discussed. The survey conducted by the historian Xiang-ping Li et al. and views of the sociologist Anthony Giddens, among others, will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The demography of China has been changing since 1949. The newly formed PRC recruited soldiers who were peasants from the countryside as cadres for the official departments. Thus, the peasants 'developed personal networks in urban administrative centers while maintaining social ties with their relatives in rural areas.'[465] Xiao studied the demographic changes of rural areas in the first year of the PRC being in power and at the beginning of the reformation period. His findings are summarised as follows:[466]

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463 Kenneth Dean, 'Local Communal Religion in Contemporary South-east China' in Daniel L. Overmyer (ed.), *Religion in China Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 39-40.

464 OECD/European Commission, *Cities in the World: A New Perspective on Urbanisation* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020) 10.

465 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 70.

466 Dong Lian Xiao (肖冬連), 'A Historical Investigation of the Formation of Dualistic Social Structure in China', *CCP History Studies* 1 (2005) 25.

	Rural working population	Rural population
1949	91.5% of total working population	84.9% of total population
1978	76.0% of total working population	82.1% of total population

While the percentages of the rural population stayed roughly the same between 1949 and 1978, the working population decreased significantly according to Xiao's findings. This reveals that some country people worked in cities but were counted as rural people.[467] Zhai reports that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were 700 million peasants, which accounted for more than half of the total population of China.[468] Thus, there was a significant migration from rural areas to cities when comparing the population to the one in 1978. Since economic reform needed huge labour force, there was migration from rural areas.

Economic reform also changed rural life. For the peasants who stayed in villages, not all of them were involved in agricultural production because there were lots of opportunities to work in other sectors such as village enterprises and private enterprises. Consequently, the percentage of labour in the agricultural sector is decreasing, as shown in Figure 3.2 below:[469]

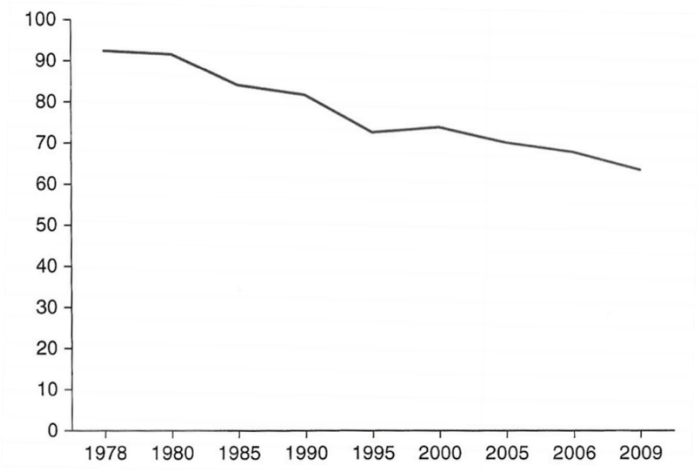

Figure 3.2: Rural labour involved in the agricultural sector

[467] The difference between the rural working population and the rural population during the period of 1949-1978 is possibly due to the household registration system, which limits the flow of people into cities. In the late 1970s, there was 'a large "floating population" of urban migrants who lack[ed] the entitlements of permanent residents.' Cf Xiao Gang Wu and Donald J. Treiman, 'The Household Registration System and Social Stratification in China: 1955-1996', Demography 41(2) (2004) 363.

[468] Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 140. The current population of China is about 1,300 million.

[469] Ai Lei Xie, *Family Strategies, Guanxi, and School Success in Rural China* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016) 5-6.

By 2011, the urban population first exceeded the rural population.[470] That said, there is still a significant rural population in contemporary China, and 'the heritage of the countryside continues among recent migrants to the cities.'[471] The Chinese historian Zhai thinks that the agricultural population has the following implications:

a) Agricultural activities depend on the weather conditions. These activities stimulate people to think the relationship between *tian* (sky) and human being. In addition, agriculture involves unmovable earth and people living in a closed community. Thus, kinship and mother land play a key role in human relationships in China;[472] and
b) Confucian thinking as a value system has a profound impact on Chinese people. However, it needs a practical foundation to sustain its influence. Zhai proposes that the practical foundation of Chinese behaviour is the family lifestyle.[473]

Zhai's first point is in line with the survey of interdependency discussed in sub-section 3.1.1, namely that traditional culture can be passed on over thousands of years. Ancestral worship is a sign of traditional culture that is still prevalent in contemporary China. Xiang-ping Li et al. conducted a survey on the religious beliefs of Chinese people who lived in the Yangtze River Delta areas in the period of December 2011 to February 2012.[474] Out of the 3,000 respondents, 69.3% of them admit that they practise ancestral worship as depicted in Table 3.4 below:[475]

Sector	**Ancestral worship**	
	Yes	No
Local non-agricultural households	65.9%	34.1%
Local agricultural households	77.6%	22.4%
Migrant non-agricultural households	63.3%	36.7%
Migrant agricultural households	76.6%	23.4%
All sectors	69.3%	30.7%

Table 3.4: Ancestral worshippers of different sectors

The survey further divides the respondents into agricultural and non-agricultural residents living in cities.[476] It is obvious that agricultural residents are more inclined to

[470] Cf China Statistical Yearbook 2016 website (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2016/indexeh.htm; accessed 17 March 2022).
[471] Chang, 'Recipropriety (*lishang-wanglai*)', 104.
[472] Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 141.
[473] Zhai, *The Principles of Chinese Guanxi*, 146.
[474] Xiang Ping Li (李向平) et al., *Study of Chinese Beliefs Part 2* (中國信仰研究第 2 輯) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2012) 3.
[475] Li et al., *Study of Chinese Beliefs*, 71.
[476] The term 'household' refers to the household system, which has been discussed in sub-section 3.2.1.

practise ancestral worship than urban people. Li et al. also recorded the educational level of the ancestral worshippers as shown in Figure 3.3.[477]

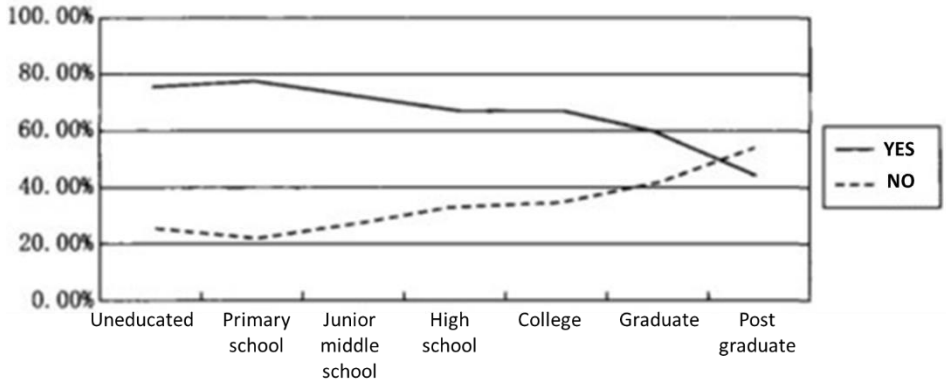

Figure 3.3: Participation rate of ancestral worship with respect to education level

Figure 3.3 suggests that the participating rate of ancestral worship decreased when the educational level increased, and the 50 percent point is at graduate level. As reported by Kipnis in sub-section 3.1.2, peasants following traditional rituals were regarded as backward and feudal. It does not seem surprising to discover that Chinese intellectuals would regard ancestral worship as a sign of feudalism or superstition and that it should be decreasing when young students learning scientific knowledge in schools.

Yet there is a social foundation to justify tradition. According to the sociologist Anthony Giddens, tradition incorporates power and represents a kind of truth.[478] There are beliefs behind ritual truth and these beliefs have the same weight as scientific rationality. Giddens describes the social role of tradition as follows:

> Ritual, ceremonial, and repetition have an important social role, something understood and acted upon by most organisations, including governments. Traditions will continue to be sustained in so far as they can effectively be justified – not in terms of their own internal rituals, but as compared to other traditions or ways of doing things. … Yet in a cosmopolitan world, more people than ever before are regularly in contact with others who think differently from them. They are required to justify their beliefs, in an implicit way at least, both to themselves and others.[479]

[477] Li et al., *Study of Chinese Beliefs*, 72.
[478] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives* (New York, Routledge, 2003) 40-1.
[479] Giddens, *Runaway World*, 45.

The belief behind ancestral worship is Confucian ethics which develop social egoism for Chinese people. If this traditional ritual is to be phased out, other ideology will replace Confucian ethics. However, no other substitution has been found, and traditions persist 'because they give continuity and form to life.'[480] How do we understand the decreasing rate of ancestral worship with higher education level? It is common for country people with higher education to seek non-agricultural jobs in cities. Thus, the drop of the participation rate in ancestral worship for people who have gone through higher education may also be due to a busy city life. In addition, the change of village community to urban community will also change their membership of previous local community.[481]

With regard to Zhai's second point on family lifestyle, the Chinese sociologist Fei Wu investigates the human relationships within the Chinese family. He observes that modernisation in China is inclined to technological and economic development but 'is accompanied by profound moral conflicts and emotional struggles, which make modern Chinese unable to feel at home or content.'[482] Family is actually the place to teach and practise human relationships and morality. Wu describes the features and functions of a Chinese family as follows: [483]

a) the central institution in Chinese society;
b) happiness indicator: a harmonious family life;
c) family life is threatened by confrontation between family members for divergent stakes and obligations; and
d) deep emotional attachment to and moral responsibility for family members.

Wu's observation is based on the extended family style, i.e., families consisting of three generations and the family members have divergent stakes and obligations. Wu's observation is supported by the results of the China Social Survey 2011 that extended families account for 36 per cent of all families in China. Sociologists An Qi Xu and Ya Li Xue think that the percentage of extended families has remained stable during the process of rapid social change.[484] Why can the mode of the extended family

480 Giddens, *Runaway World*, 45.
481 As discussed in sub-section 2.3.1, ancestor temples and local deity temples, which are usually established in rural areas, provide public spaces for community activities. Those facilities are seldom found in modern cities because urban residents come from various villages, and it is difficult to gather people belonging to a same homeland to build and run a temple.
482 Fei Wu, 'Suicide', 215.
483 Wu, 'Suicide', 214.
484 Xu and Xue, 'Family Structure', 27.

still survive in contemporary China? The Chinese sociologist Wen Rong Liu finds that 'the pattern of provision for and inheritance from the elders remains the same'[485]. Liu consolidates some cultural comparative studies of Chinese scholars published between 1990-2010 regarding intergenerational relations:

a) there are close relationships among relatives to care for and support each other;
b) such responsibility extends to ancestors and future generations of the family line; and
c) this culture of filial piety fosters 'strong responsibility for family members and an ethical orientation'.[486]

Zhai's observations on the impact of agricultural civilisation are then supported by the recent social studies that reinforce the applicability of Fei's social model in contemporary China. However, the rural background of Fei's model has been changed by urbanisation in contemporary China, and the model should be updated to meet the current situations. Since Fei's proposal of the social network in the form of human relationships is still prevalent in today's China, this thesis suggests that Fei's social model needs to be revised in terms of rules of rituals, which is the driving force behind the development of human relationships.

3.3.2 Human Relationships in Fei's Social Model

Scholars from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and management science have been actively involved in the study of human relationships in contemporary China. The works of sociologists Thomas Gold et al. and Yi-min Lin, psychologist Kwang Kuo Hwang, anthropologists Kipnis and Chang will be briefly discussed in the following paragraphs. For the purpose of identifying a suitable modification of Fei's social model, this thesis will not analyse the appropriateness of each proposed relationship model but intends to conduct a comprehensive review of the studies that analyse the situation of contemporary China.

Social relationships in China involve relationships (*guanxi*), and human feelings (*renqing* or *gangqing*) etc. The sociologists Thomas Gold et al. conclude that human relationships have distinct features in China and it covers the scope of sentiments

485 Liu, 'Intergenerational Support', 210.
486 Liu, 'Intergenerational Support,' 210-1.

(*ganqing*), human feelings (*renqing*), face (*mianzi*) and reciprocity (*bao*),[487] which has been captured in Fei's model. However, Kipnis identifies two camps with regard to studying human relationships in contemporary China: a) philosophers and cultural historians regard human relationship as a product of Confucian culture; and b) economists, political scientists and sociologists insist that human relationship is part of the socioeconomic structures in contemporary China.[488] Kipnis has pointed out the manifestation of human relationships in socioeconomic structures which involves both rural areas and cities in China. Based on different socioeconomic structures, the 'use' or 'calculation' of the benefits due to human relationships should be different in rural and in urban areas.

The Taiwanese psychologist Kwang Kuo Hwang integrates the views of the two camps into his theory of obligations and exchange of benefits. He observes that, in Chinese society,

> norms of reciprocity (*bao*) are intense, but these norms are heavily shaped by the hierarchically structured network of social relations (*guanxi*) in which people are embedded, by the public nature of obligations, and by the long time period over which obligations are incurred through a self-conscious manipulation of face and related symbols. These special cultural symbols, as well as the historical monopoly of valuable resources by powerful leaders, help explain the origin of these patterns.[489]

Hwang's study of human relationships resembles Fei's social model. He perceives that an individual is at the centre of his or her unique network such that the individual can be involved in several different groups and develops different relationships or ties with others.[490] Hwang opines that interpersonal relationships are 'divided into three parts (expressive ties, mixed ties, and instrumental ties)'.[491] He then classifies the first two ties into expressive ties for the family, mixed ties for people outside the family such as colleagues and classmates, and finally instrumental ties for business relationships. He further distinguishes between three different rules governing social exchange in the use

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487 Thomas Gold et al., 'An Introduction to the Study of Guanxi' in Thomas Gold et al. (eds.) *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 4.

488 Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi*, 6.

489 Kwang Kuo Hwang, 'Face and Favor: The Chinese Power Game', *American Journal of Sociology* 92(4) (1987) 944.

490 Hwang, 'Face and Favor', 952.

491 Kwang Kuo Hwang, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (New York: Springer, 2012) 111.

of different human relationships, which are the need rule, the *renqing* (human feeling) rule, and the equity rule.[492] Hwang's contribution to Fei's model is to extend the basis of human relationships from consanguinity to business transaction.

The sociologist Yi-min Lin organises Hwang's classification of interpersonal relationships into two functions: collective relations and individual benefits. He analyses the functions of human relationship, including a) 'weaving personal networks and cultivating indebtedness'; and b) facilitating the exchange of favours.[493] Although Lin articulates the functions of human relationships on the basis of instrumental rationality or exchanges of benefits, which is commonly found in the reformation period,[494] he also acknowledges the importance of cultural and relational factors on social interactions. The influence of values on human relationships is found in two dimensions: a) symbolism - the meaningfulness of action itself; and b) instrumental rationality - the usefulness of the outcome of action.[495] Lin then applies the influence of values to Hwang's concept of human relationships as shown in Figure 3.4 below:[496]

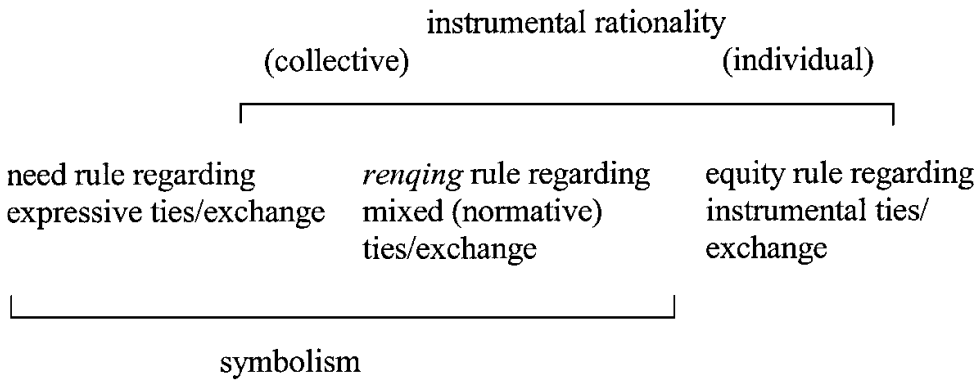

Figure 3.4: Influence of values on human relationships

Lin's symbolism absorbs Hwang's expressive ties and mixed ties for family members and close friends, which supports Fei's concept that an individual weaves his or her own human relationship network starting from his or her family. On the other hand, the instrumental rationality is used for the exchanges of benefits only. In contrast to the view of Kipnis, symbolism and instrumental rationality are a product of Confucian

492 Hwang, 'Face and Favor', 949-53.
493 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 57-8.
494 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 58.
495 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 60. Lin has not explicitly stated what kinds of values he refers to. It appears that the term 'values' is a general term that refers to anything deemed useful or valuable for an individual.
496 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 61.

culture and a form of socioeconomic structures. Lin also draws the reader's attention to the urban state bureaucracy of China that both local people and outside favour-seeks need 'to approach local officials for resources, regulatory flexibilities, and market access, which, under a more coherent political authority structure, tend to be granted according to a more consistently prioritized order.'[497] It explains why Confucian type human relationships continue exerting influence in contemporary China.

Following Hwang's observation that the norms of reciprocity in Chinese society, Lin notes that reciprocity is a common feature of all the three rules within human relationship context.[498] The anthropologist Chang prefers reciprocity (*bao*) to human relationship (*guanxi*) for description of Chinese society because 'the character and the meanings of *guanxi* are too confused for it to be an appropriate general analytical concept [and cannot cover] the change [of human relationships] in different historical periods.'[499] Chang's fieldwork showed that villagers relied on their own individual and family-based networks to deal with daily life. As a result, '[t]hese family-based networks are altered and updated from time to time to accord with changing situations: births, marriages and deaths, shifts in affection or alliance, economic change.'[500] In addition, after reviewing of the discussions of human relationships in China, Chang finds that those discussions are mainly about 'urban areas, but cannot be generalized to rural personalized relationships.'[501]

The brief review above indicates that Hwang has successfully classified human relationships into three different ties: expressive, mixed, and instrumental. Since human relationships are developed from family circles and extended to include other social members, they are expressive ties in nature. Lin finds that the common feature in human relationships is reciprocity. The requirement of reciprocity turns expressive tie to instrumental tie in the human relationships.

3.3.3 Contribution of Chang's LSWL Model

Although Fei's proposed ego-centred social relationships of differential mode of association are based on rural social settings, which are impressive and influential, Chang criticises that: a) they lack empirical data to support their claims; b) the

497 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 70.
498 Lin, 'Beyond Dyadic Social Exchange', 59.
499 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 460.
500 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 113.
501 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 107.

contemporary propriety/etiquette (*li*), moral codes and law are not up-to-date; and c) the process of changing ego-centred relationships has not been addressed.[502] However, this thesis regards that Chang's comment will not fail Fei's social model because:

a) the lack of empirical data is not necessarily lead to failure of the model, but the model needs further verification to meet current situation;
b) it is true that Confucianism is no longer the official moral teaching, but its influence is still prevalent in contemporary China as discussed in previous sections; and
c) it is not possible for Fei to address the development of ego-centred relationships with respect to the context of contemporary China.

Thus, it is necessary to broaden Fei's model to not only include rural social settings but also urban China. Consequently, Chang proposes a networks-based model named *lishang-wanglai* (LSWL).[503] It is useful to explain 'changes in the relationships between the state and the villagers, and [the mechanism of changing relationships] is the real power which holds local society together.'[504] The first letter of the LSWL model means propriety/etiquette (*li*), which has been implemented in traditional rituals for Chinese people.[505] The term LSWL is also named as '*reciprocity*' to represent 'a technical term in a specialized conceptualization'.[506] Thus, *lishang-wanglai* represents a Chinese model of relationships and reciprocity, and it is based on empirical findings in contemporary China.[507] It is helpful to describe and analyse the 'dynamics of Chinese social relationships'.[508]

The first term, *lishang*, refers to guiding principles or criteria 'that motivate and govern the making of relationships'. The second term, *wanglai*, means 'a relationship as a whole'.[509] The LSWL model consists of static and dynamic frameworks which are briefly outlined below:

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502 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 444.
503 The meaning of *lishang-wanglai* can be found in sub-section 2.3.3.
504 Chang, 'Reciprocity', 113.
505 As discussed in sub-section 2.2.3, Song scholars taught Neo-Confucianism through education and the practice of Confucian rituals for weddings, funerals, festivals, and ancestral rites etc. These teachings formulated the traditional rituals for Chinese people.
506 Chang, 'Reciprocity', 106.
507 Chang, 'Reciprocity', 104.
508 Chang, 'Reciprocity', 113.
509 Chang, 'Reciprocity', 106.

a) the static framework of the LSWL model consists of the elements of criteria of rational choice, human feelings, moral judgement and spiritual belief will lead to instrumental, expressive, negative and generous relationships; and
b) Chang describes the dynamic framework as ego-centred. It explains why people seek social support with respect to sources and resources. Examples of sources are family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, local government, ancestors and local gods etc. This means that the sources generate the needs which call for the allocation of available resources. An example is that family members need house construction and an individual has to gather labour and financial resources etc. to satisfy the need.

The static framework captures and modifies the concepts of human relationships developed by scholars of anthropology, psychology, and history.[510] Chang highlights that she adds the 'spiritual belief' dimension to the 'criteria of rational choice' because 'the religious sense sometimes dominates how and why people mobilize resources or maintain relationships.'[511]

Chang is aware that the previous research on human relationships have not addressed 'the dynamic changes within different types of relationship or reciprocity (*wanglai*)'. Therefore, she introduces the dynamic *lishang-wanglai* networks which originates from the study of social support networks. The elements of these networks include sources, resources, events, and ranges.[512] Chang replaces 'events' and 'ranges' with 'needs' and 'fields' respectively in the LSWL model. She describes the dynamic networks as ego-centred networks because:

> all the relationships an ego, e.g. one household, has and find out how different relationships relate to the ego and what kind of resources and quantity of support they provide to the ego, and how the ego maintains the different relationships within the ego-centered networks.[513]

Social support resources are transferred in such an ego-centred network when people 'change, start, maintain, alter, and stop their social relationships'. [514] Chang describes

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510 Chang cites the works of the 21st century scholars Harumi Befu, Hongguang Luo, Yunxiang Yan, Yiyin Yang, Marshall Sahlins, and Xue Wei Zhai with respect to their works in the late twentieth century.

511 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 106. As discussed in sub-section 2.3.1, family life and religious beliefs of villagers of Kaixiangong Village were closely related.

512 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 106-7.

513 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 412.

514 Ibid, 438.

this ego-centred network as social creativity, which is 'a driving force for *lishang-wanglai* and a combination of principles, criteria and motivation, etc.'[515] She believes that LSWL can be applied to the analysis of the human relationships found in various fields such as village, town, and overseas etc. She also believes that the calculation of human relationship is indeed an essential part of the Chinese culture.[516]

Chinese sociality is governed by rituals, which is in line with Fei's social model.[517] That is, rituals are the practices of propriety/etiquette (*li*). Chang admits that *li* is 'the most important factor in building personal networks' in Fei's social model,[518] and its influence applies to every aspect of social life.[519] Therefore, Fei's social model is still valuable as an analysis of the Chinese society. Chang's contribution to Fei's social model focuses mainly on the dynamic social network which covers the changing ego-centred relationships in various situations. These situations are represented by 'fields' and 'needs' in the model.

This thesis regards Chang's LSWL model as being helpful to broaden Fei's social model in two areas: a) expanding the rural settings to the contemporary Chinese society; and b) the mechanism of making use of human relationships to achieve personal benefits. Chang develops the LSWL model after her empirical study in Kaixiangong Village, which Fei visited in the 1940s. Therefore, this thesis proposes that Chang's LSWL model is a revised form of Fei's social model.

A suitable social model can serve as a theoretical framework for the understanding of the behaviour of Chinese people and the prediction of their attitudes toward eternity. The same can also be predicted by social surveys. In fact, some surveys have been conducted regarding Chinese people's attitudes toward Chinese Christians and Muslims, which provides the contextual information for inter-religious dialogue between the two religions. The next section will examine the survey results, which will be used to outline the framework for inter-religious dialogue.

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515 Ibid, 431.
516 Chang, 'Recipropriety', 108.
517 Fei, *From the Soil*, 100. See sub-section 3.1.3.
518 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 443.
519 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 416.

3.4 Attitudes toward Christians and Muslims in China[520]

An individual's ego-centred network forms one's community. The attachment to one's own community is likely to develop stereotyping of other people groups. Therefore, Christians or Muslims are subject to non-believers' stereotyping. It is worth discussion of the surveys about religious profile, religious conversion mechanism and stereotyping.

The survey conducted by Li et al. portrays the religious profile of Chinese in different religious denominations. The survey results are tabulated below for discussion:[521]

Atheists	1143	38.10%	
Buddhists	823	27.43%	
Idol worshippers (occasionally)	535	17.83%	
People who do not find a suitable god for them	369	12.30%	95.66%
Christians	81	2.70%	
Other religions	21	0.70%	
Muslims	12	0.40%	
Catholics	9	0.30%	
Religious Daoists	7	0.23%	4.33%

Table 3.5: Religious profile of Chinese living in the Yangtze River Delta areas

There are several points worth noting with respect to the survey results: a) the number of Muslims is small; b) religious Daoism is a Chinese religion but its percentage is less than that of Muslims; c) popular religion is not included in the survey while Buddhists account for 27.43%; and d) the sum of atheists and people who do not find a suitable god for them account for 50.4%, which is close to the findings of the 'Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism – 2012,' namely that 47 percent of Chinese people declared themselves as atheists.[522]

Since there were only 12 Muslim respondents found in the survey, their responses may not be representative.[523] Due to the small percentage of religious Daoists

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520 Christians in this thesis refers to Protestant Christians because the term 'Christians' is widely used in China for Protestant Christians.

521 Li et al., *Study of Chinese Beliefs*, 19-20. The survey has been introduced in sub-section 3.2.1.

522 See sub-section 2.3.1.

523 Chinese Muslims make up about 1.74% of the total population in the early twenty-first century. Cf National Bureau of Statistics, 'Table 1-6a, 1-6b, 1-6c', Tabulation of the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China website (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm ; accessed 6 March 2022).

and the absence of popular religion in the survey, it is noted that there are true and false religions in the view of Chinese officials:

> [The Chinese government] distinguishes between "true'' and "false "religions, with the first being allowed to survive under surveillance and the second marked down for extinction. On the one hand the followers of the various teachings are organised into national associations, such as the Buddhist Association and the Taoist Association. On the other hand every effort is made to deny the existence of, or repress as "superstitions", the vast universe of "popular" beliefs and practices.[524]

As discussed in sub-section 2.1.2, popular religion is a mix of Confucianism, religious Daoism and Buddhism,[525] and it is regarded as a 'false' religion. As shown in Table 3.4, 69.3% of participants take part in ancestor worship. The percentage of non-believers, i.e. atheists, idol worshippers (occasionally), and 'people not finding a suitable god' given in Table 3.5 is 68.23%. Since the figures given in Table 3.4 and 3.5 are sampled from the same participants, those 'non-believers' should also be involved in the activities of ancestral worship. It is reasonable to assume that 70% people are involved in popular religion.

In Chang's survey at Kaixiangong Village, she classifies 95% of villagers as having general spiritual beliefs, which are popular religion in Feuchtwang's term.[526] With regard to the survey results given in Table 3.5, there are 95.66% participants who are atheists, Buddhists, idol worshippers (occasionally), and 'people not finding a suitable god'. The percentage is quite close to that of Chang's general spiritual beliefs. Although we cannot simply assume that those who declared themselves as atheists and Buddhists etc. to be believers of popular religion, it is true that popular religion in China consists of the concepts and rituals of Buddhism. Atheists may also participate in traditional religious rituals.[527]

Chinese culture exhibits the characteristic of in-group collectivism, which means that individual behaviour will be influenced by one's reference groups such as family and kin.[528] In order to find the in-group favouritism and out-group hostility of

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524 Thoraval, 'The West's Misconception of Chinese Religions', 64. As discussed in sub-section 2.1.2, Gentz finds that Chinese popular religion has no canonical scriptures and well-established institutions and is therefore not regarded as a religion. The same problem applies to religious Daoism.

525 See sub-section 2.1.2.

526 Chang, *Guanxi or Li Shang Wangle?*, 76.

527 The phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing' has been discussed in sub-section 2.1.2.

528 This has been discussed in sub-section 2.1.3.

Chinese people, Wen Fang conducted a survey with 64 university students who are non-religious. The survey was based on the terror management theory,[529] and items in the questionnaire are derived from the behavior from intergroup affect and stereotypes (BIAS) map framework.[530] Fang has added some other items regarding the legitimacy of social positions etc. in the survey in order to reflect the social context of the changing China.[531] He uses the survey results to explore similarities and differences between the in-group and out-group members. In-group members are non-believers, namely the 64 participants, and Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Catholics belong to the out-group.[532]

With regard to the employment of the terror management theory, Fang notes that there is a mortality salience hypothesis in the theory. This hypothesis states that:

> if a psychological structure provides protection against the potential terror engendered by knowledge of mortality, then reminders of mortality should increase the need to maintain that structure. The theory posits that an important function of cultural worldviews is to reduce the anxiety associated with the awareness of vulnerability and death.[533]

Accordingly, Fang set the elements of 'potential terror' to be tooth pain and death. He believes that if the survey is conducted with priming with the word 'tooth-pain' and priming with the word 'death', the participants (non-believers) attach more to their in-group cultural worldview to alleviate their terrors.[534] Some of the survey results are

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529 Terror management theory assumes that 'self-esteem and cultural worldviews function to protect the individual from the potential for existential terror that is engendered by awareness of the inevitability of death in an animal instinctively programmed for self-preservation and continued life.' Cf Jeff Greenber et al., 'Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews: Empirical Assessments and Conceptual Refinements', *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 29 (1997) 66.

530 Wen Fang (方文), 'A Comparative Study of Mentality Maps between China's Non-Believer Group and Protestant Group', *The World Religious Cultures* 3 (2015) 62-5. The BIAS map identifies different dimensions of behavioural tendencies due to stereotypes and emotions. Cf Amy J. C. Cuddy et al., 'The BIAS Map: Behaviors from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92(4) (2007) 633-5.

531 Fang finds that 'status' and 'competence' are assumed to be positively correlated, i.e. the higher the status the more competence for an individual. The assumption may be applicable to a stable society but may not apply to a changing China. Cf Fang, 'Mentality Maps', 63.

532 Fang, 'Mentality Maps', 65-6. The average age of the participants was 19.56 and the standard deviation of the survey results was 2.60.

533 Greenber et al., 'Terror Management Theory', 78.

534 The questions used for priming with the word 'tooth-pain' and priming with the word 'death' are a) What will your bodily response and experienced emotion be if you are having a tooth extracted? and b) What will your bodily response and experienced emotion be if you are dying? Cf Fang, 'Mentality Maps', 65.

summarised in Table 3.6 and 3.7 with items of status, competence, warmth, envy, contempt, pity, and admiration.[535]

	Status	Competence	Warmth	Envy	Contempt	Pity	Admiration
Buddhists	1.23	0.88	-0.31	0.30	0.14	-0.31	-0.22
Muslims	1.54	0.86	0.75	0.81	-0.73	-0.64	0.56
Christians	0.07	0.00	-0.41	-0.14	0.03	0.00	-0.17
Catholics	0.46	0.48	-0.03	0.23	-0.08	0.00	0.11
Standard deviation	0.23	0.23	0.24	0.27	0.25	0.26	0.25

Table 3.6: Difference of valuation (in-group minus out-group) on religious groups when priming with the word 'tooth pain'

	Status	Competence	Warmth	Envy	Contempt	Pity	Admiration
Buddhists	-0.81	0.86	-0.36	0.70	0.22	-0.31	0.19
Muslims	1.19	1.13	0.64	0.94	-0.48	-0.36	0.97
Christians	-0.18	0.00	-0.36	0.20	0.22	0.17	0.22
Catholics	0.07	0.31	-0.22	0.34	0.13	0.27	0.47
Standard deviation	0.23	0.25	0.25	0.29	0.27	0.27	0.28

Table 3.7: Difference of valuation (in-group minus out-group) on religious groups when priming with the word 'death'

An individual value given in the above tables shows that the valuation of the in-group is higher than or lower than the out-group. The positive value represents valuation of in-group higher than the individual group while the negative value means the valuation of the out-group is higher than the in-group. The following paragraphs will analyse the general observations, and attitudes toward Christians and Muslims. The general observations and the interpretation of the survey data are given below:

a) The participants marked an individual item for their in-group (non-believers) and the religious believers (out-group). The markings are about the degree of appropriateness. The difference in marks between in-group and a religious group represents whether this religious group is more or less suitable to the marked item.
b) This thesis interprets the items Status, Competence, Warmth, Envy and Admiration as items of appreciation:
    i) Positive difference of a marked item means non-believers are superior to the assessed religious group; and

[535] Those items are derived from the BIAS map.

ii) Negative difference of a marked item means non-believers are inferior to the assessed religious group.

c) This thesis interprets the items Contempt and Pity as items of disappointment:
   i) Positive difference of the one of these items means the item is more suitable for non-believers than for the assessed religious group; and
   ii) Negative difference of one of these items means the item is more suitable for the assessed religious group than non-believers.

d) The standard deviations given in Table 3.7 (priming with the word 'death') are in general higher than those in Table 3.6 (priming with the word 'tooth-pain') except the item Status. This implies that the imagined experience of death provoked individual reflection on eternity and meaning of life and therefore resulted in a higher deviation of marks. This eschatological dimension (death) urged the participants to understand different religions from a religious or transcendent point of view.

e) When priming with the word 'tooth-pain', the participants, regard themselves to have a higher status than the religious groups (Table 3.6).

f) When priming with the word 'death', the participants accept that Buddhists and Christians are of higher standing (Table 3.7). The status of Buddhists is higher than that of Christians while Christians are seen to be more competent than Buddhists. The participants' view regarding on one's status (the item Status) reflects their thinking that Buddhists and Christians will be in a better position to handle death. With regard to the item of competence, the mark differences for Buddhists and Christians in Table 3.7 remain more or less the same as those in Table 3.6. Obviously, competence is regarded as a matter of doing things in this present world, and the threat of death will not change the competence of Buddhists and Christians. The higher status of Buddhists than Christians in Table 3.7 implies that the participants are more impressed by Buddhism, although they are not religious believers.

g) The valuation of the four religious groups regarding the items Contempt and Admiration have decreased in the scenarios priming with the word 'tooth-pain'

and priming with the word 'death', i.e., the degree of Contempt and Admiration of all religious groups decreased,[536] as shown in the table below:

	Contempt		Mark increased (b-a)	Admiration		Mark decreased (d-c)
	Priming with 'tooth-pain' (a)	Priming with 'death' (b)		Priming with 'tooth-pain' (c)	Priming with 'death' (d)	
Buddhist	0.14	0.22	0.08	-0.22	0.19	0.41
Muslim	-0.73	-0.48	0.25	0.56	0.97	0.41
Christian	0.03	0.22	0.19	-0.17	0.22	0.39
Catholic	-0.08	0.13	0.21	0.11	0.47	0.36

The decrease of valuation of the four religious groups regarding the items Contempt and Admiration means that the religious groups are felt less contempt and less admirable when faced with death. It is understandable that the perception of contempt will be fading when a subject is going to die. For the decrease of the degree of Admiration, it echoes mortality salience hypothesis in the terror management theory, namely that the participants attach more to the in-group cultural worldview and reject the religious worldview in order to alleviate their terrors.

With regard to the non-believers' attitude toward Christians, Christians are accepted as a friendly group who make a positive impression on the participants in general. Since both Christians and Catholics are of Christian faith, their marks are compared and analysed as follows:

a) When priming with the word 'tooth-pain' (Table 3.6), there is no difference of valuation regarding the items Competence and Pity, i.e., the participants think that Christians are of the same level of competence with them. Therefore, they do not take pity on Christians. In addition, the differences of valuation with regard to the items Status and Contempt for Christians are the smallest compared to the other religious groups. On the other hand, Catholics are of lower status and competence than Christians. It is worth noting that the participants rate Christians higher than Catholics with regard to the item Warmth. It implies that Christians are more easily approachable and accepted

[536] Since the values given in Table 3.6 and 3.7 are the difference of the valuation scale between the in-group and out-group, the positive mark of the item Admiration of an individual religious group means this group is less admirable; the negative mark means this group is more admirable.

by Chinese people. This thesis proposes that the difference is due to the institutionalisation of Catholicism that sets a more rigid boundary than that of Christians.[537]

b) When priming with the word 'death' (Table 3.7), the mark for the item Status of Christians is higher than non-believers. The item Warmth is marked differently in the scenario of death and tooth pain. Its valuation is lower in the scenario of death. That is, the impact of death prompted the participants to be aware of the fundamental difference between non-believers and Christians, and suddenly Christians become not so 'warm'. For Catholics, their status is also higher than non-believers in the scenario of death. Christians and Catholics as out-group are alienated from Chinese culture when non-believers face the challenge of death.

With regard to non-believers' attitude toward Muslims, participants' rate for Muslims are the lowest among the other religious groups. Muslims are marginalised. Since both Muslims and Buddhists got lower marks, valuations of Muslims are then compared to that for Buddhist as shown below:

a) When priming with the word 'tooth-pain' (Table 3.6), the participants' rate for Muslims was the lowest except for the item Competence. Buddhists were rated the lowest on the Item Competence. The reason could be that Muslims participate in economic activity to earn their living while Buddhists beg for offerings.

b) When priming with the word 'death' (Table 3.7), the item Status has different changes of marks for Muslims and Buddhists when comparing them with the condition of priming with the word 'tooth-pain' (Table 3.6). The Status of Muslims dropped from 1.54 to 1.19 while Buddhists rose dramatically from 1.23 to -0.81.[538] Muslims get the lowest rating among the religious groups on this

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[537] In sub-section 2.1.2., C. H. Lau and C. K. Yang describe popular religion as a diffuse religion in contrast to an institutional religion. Jöel Thoraval also distinguishes between the structures of religious institutions and communities in the West and those in China. Their findings imply that a Chinese non-believer will find it easier to accept popular religion than an institutional religion. The home churches for Christians are quite common in Chinese society and will allow non-believers to approach and understand the Christian faith. On the other hand, the Catholic buildings (churches), rituals, and religious professionals set clear boundaries from ordinary Chinese people.

[538] Since the 'difference of valuation' of each item is shown in Table 3.6 and 3.7, the change of the valuation of Status for Buddhists from 1.23 to -0.81 indicates a rise of status. See also the explanation given in the paragraph immediate under Table 3.7.

item. This implies that the eternal position for Muslims is the lowest or is very uncertain for the participants.

Li's et al. and Fang's surveys on the religious profile of Chinese people and their stereotyping of the four religious groups provides a window to understand the mentality of Chinese people with regard to eternity. The discussion in sub-section 2.3.1 suggests that Chinese people are used to participating in traditional or religious rituals to illustrate their belonging to a community. As discussed above, the comparison with the figures given in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 implies that about 70% of people take part in ancestral worship, which is regarded as a religious activity. Yet it also is a means for an individual to identify his or her blood lineage. Therefore, the majority of Chinese people will get involved in the activities of popular religion whether they are religious believers or not. What is the eternal hope found in popular religion?

The survey of stereotyping of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and Catholics reveals the eternal imagination of Chinese people. The participants, non-believers, believe that human efforts are necessary to strive for survival. Therefore, solidarity of group members is mandatory. This leads to the requirement of a clear group boundary. In addition to the analysis given in the above paragraphs, the cultural worldviews of the participants are summarised below:

a) When priming with the word 'tooth-pain', the participants think that their Status is higher than all religious groups. Status is associated with competence, which is about the human effort to survive. This human effort avoids falling into a 'pity' situation. Therefore, Chinese people think that human effort is the only way to survival.[539] Human effort will gain its power in a collective society.
b) With reference to Table 3.5, Buddhists and Christians are 27.43% and 2.70% of the population respectively. Although Christians are small in number, they are thought to be the same as non-believers with regard to the items Competence and Pity (Table 3.6). This thesis predicts that there are more than 2.70% Christians in the peer groups of the participants,[540] so that the testimony and preaching would give a relatively good impression to the young university

[539] There is a Chinese saying: 'Man will conquer the sky'. Cf 'Wen Chuan Jie' in *Yi Zhou Shu*.

[540] There are about 4-6% students studying in universities are Christians. Some 60% students are seekers. Cf Ke-Hsien Huang, 'Two-Layered Reflexivity of Believers in a Secular Age: Religious Discourse and Religious Experiences among Christian College Students in China', *Taiwan Journal of Sociology* 61 (2017) 15.

students. The participants treat Christians as one of their friends or even a member of their community.

c) When Christians are compared to Catholics, Christians are seen to be warmer in both scenarios. This thesis predicts that the rigid institutionalisation of Catholicism, in comparison to that of Christians, means relatively strict group boundaries were set and non-believer segregated. The same applies to Muslims who have their own community for living and religious activities.

The participants of Fang's survey of stereotyping are young university students in Beijing. The survey results reflect the attitudes of 64 educated young people toward the religious groups. Their attitudes reflect the influence of Chinese culture in 2010s.[541] They considered Buddhists and Muslims were of lower social status. One of the reasons may be that Buddhists and Muslims are relatively poor and have lower productivity. Therefore, the Chinese culture in 2010s still carried the pragmatic nature of Confucianism, which required people to work hard and strive for well-being in the present world.

Interestingly, the participants were friendly to Christians and regards Christians as of similar level of social position with them. One of the reasons is that a number of university students were Christians and were members of the participants' human relationship circles.[542] The participants' attitudes illustrated the collective characteristic of Chinese culture. That said, the sense of collective transcendence, if any, is not sufficient for them to get rid of the terror of death. When they were tested for terror of death, they in general showed admiralty to religious believers. The survey results provide insight into the requirements of inter-religious dialogues in Chinese culture.

3.5 Approaches to Dialogues between Christianity, Islam and Chinese Culture

This thesis proposes that the concept of collective transcendence helps to understand the eschatological dimension of the Chinese culture. The phenomenon 'belonging but not believing' suggests that there is a connection between popular religion and the concept of collective transcendence.

[541] Fang's survey results published in 2015.
[542] See the discussion of manipulation of human relationships in sub-section 3.3.2.

It is necessary to clarify the eschatological or eternal dimension of the Chinese culture and the manifestations of eschatological thoughts. With reference to the survey about intergroup stereotyping conducted by Fang, Chinese Christians are regarded as ~~one of the~~ members of Chinese society, and Christians and non-believers are grouped together with regard to daily work and activities. Chinese culture has already exerted its influence on Christian churches seen in the manipulation of human relationships and the requirements of filial piety, etc. However, Christians could affect non-believers through human relationships and exchanging ideas regarding filial piety. Filial piety is one of the issues of collective transcendence, i.e., an individual not only transcends himself or herself but also his or her family members and close friends.

For the Sino-centric worldview, China has once suffered invasion and rebellion of barbarians, but eventually those invaders learned the Chinese culture and relied on Chinese intellectuals for ruling the country. Those historical events, among others, reinforced the sense of Sino-centrism. Against the background of Sino-centrism, a religious believer needs to tell Chinese people about the benefits of inter-religious dialogue so that the Chinese culture would be enriched with an alien culture.

Accordingly, the dialogues between the Chinese culture and Christians, to be discussed in Chapter 4, are arranged as follows:

a) The connection of eschatological views found in popular religion to the cultural worldview (Sino-centrism) and the concept of collective transcendence;
b) the attempts of Chinese intellectuals to harmonise Christianity and Chinese culture; and
c) ways to cross the group boundary.

In the dialogue with the Muslim group, the most difficult part is to cross its group boundary. A Muslim belongs to his or her community and believes in the Islamic faith. Thus, there are two layers with regard to the group boundary: ethnic and religious layers. Muslims are marginalised mainly due to their ethnic identity. Qing Lai briefly explains the historical context regarding Islamic writings in Chinese (*Han Kitab*):

> To gain tolerance of the Han officialdom and society, Muslim scholars had to master the keys to the Han elite mentality—high literacy and Confucian knowledge. Consequently, a body of literature known as Han Kitab [was] produced from late Ming to the end of imperial China.[543]

[543] Qing Lai, (賴慶) 'The Making of Sino Muslim Identity: Han Kitab in the Chinese Xidaotang', *Chinese Sociological Review*, 52(2) (2020) 169.

Muslims need to interact with Chinese society and to encounter Chinese culture or even undergo Sinicization. They need to play the game of human relationships for social exchanges, for example. Therefore, the manipulation of human relationships is a key for approaching Muslims. The dialogue between Chinese culture and Chinese Muslims is discussed in Chapter 5 and is arranged as follows:

a) Sinicization of Chinese Muslims;
b) the concept of collective transcendence and Islamic eschatological view;
c) appropriation of the concepts of Neo-Confucianism and *Han Kitab*; and
d) ways to cross the group boundary.

It is difficult to conduct dialogue with two religions on doctrinal issues because such debate would easily slip into the arguments of 'right or wrong' or 'truth or false' which would result in the dialogue not being fruitful. An example is Lian Yuan Ma's defence of the truth of Islam after his reading of the Christian treatises given by a missionary in 1899. Ma disagreed with Christian doctrine of Trinity and the death of Jesus on the cross.[544]

In fact, Leirvik suggests that a shared socio-cultural condition is a starting point for interreligious dialogue.[545] Since both Chinese Christians and Huis live in the context of the Chinese culture, the dialogues between the Chinese culture and the two religions will have the effect of an 'indirect' dialogue between Chinese Christians and Huis and will offer more understanding of them. The approach of inter-religious dialogue and the associated contextualisation models for Christians and Muslims will be elaborated in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

3.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has reviewed the socio-cultural context for religious development in contemporary China. China has been modernising its use of technology, but the component of the deep cultural structure, Sino-centrism, undermines the development of new ideologies that would facilitate the implementation of modernity. Consequently,

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544 Jing Ma and Jian Bin Wang, 'The Responses and Cognition of the Hui Muslim Community in Yunnan to Christianity during late Qing Dynasty and Early Republic of China: A Study Based on Ma Lian-yuan's *Quotations on Clear Explanation and Evidence*', Journal of the Second Northwest University for Nationalities 1 (2008) 92-3.

545 Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) 37.

modernisation in China promotes technological and economic developments. The CCP did try to replace the traditional state ideology with socialism; however, the promised collective well-being, a Marxist-inspired utopianism, has not been realised. As a result, nihilism follows the collapsed utopia and provides the room for researching resources to meet basic human needs. Regarding the traditional rituals found in China, Hans Küng is of the view that, 'what is evidently behind these ancient and yet still contemporary religious phenomena are *basic human needs*: the need for protection and help, for consolation and encouragement, for an explanation and interpretation of human existence and this world.'[546] However, based on the concept of Sino-centrism, the official revival is not about religions but Confucianism which is used as one of the ruling tools to foster social stability.

Sociologically, urbanisation and industrialisation have changed the landscape of the demography and rural settings of China. That said, those changes have not suggested a new cultural identify to replace Confucianism. On the contrary, ego-centred human relationships, which is a consequence of Confucianism, are still prevalent in contemporary China. To address the contemporary context, this thesis suggests that Fei's social model should be revised with Chang's LSWL social model which reinforces Fei's model with a dynamic network of human relationships.

Against the socio-cultural background, surveys have been conducted regarding the religious profile of Chinese people and the stereotyping of Christians, Muslims, and others. Although popular religion has not been included in the survey of the religious profile, majority Chinese exhibits a 'belonging but not believing' character and join activities of popular religion. Thus, with regard to the religious dialogue with Chinese people, popular religion is one of the subjects to be addressed in Chapter 4.

The survey on stereotyping reveals that the higher degree of closure of a religious community will lead to misunderstanding and finally a hostile attitude. Since house churches are commonly found in Christian groups, it is more open and more easily accessible than the closed communities of Muslim groups. Muslims are marginalised due to historical anti-Muslim sentiment[547] and the relatively closed Muslim community.

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546 Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989) 48.

547 The origins of anti-Muslim sentiment can be traced back to the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) since Mongols brought Muslims to China and installed them at the top of Chinese society. Cf Raphael Israeli, *Muslims in China: A Study in Cultural Confrontation* (London: Curzon Press, 1980) 21.

4. Chinese Christians and Collective Transcendence

What is the goal of contextualisation of a foreign religion? From the Christian perspective, the goal of contextualisation is to 'find fuller expression in the whole life of people in every culture'.[548] This thesis proposes to make use of the hermeneutical lens of the notion of collective transcendence to interpret Chinese attitudes toward eternity. The discussions in chapters 2 and 3 reveal that the concept of collective transcendence exhibits collectivistic characteristics in the forms of a) Sino-centrism; and b) pursuit of well-being in the present world.[549]

The New Confucian Qi Yong Guo perceives that Confucianism is the basis for both the physical and the spiritual lives of Chinese people.[550] An implication from Confucianism is the concept of collective transcendence. In the pursuit of eternity, people may divide to groups: one group stratifies the eternity guaranteed by collective transcendence while the other group does not. The influence of this concept on Christianity and Islam is observed in two directions:

a) if people satisfy their needs for transcendence through the sense of collective transcendence, they will continue to adhere to the orthodoxy of Chinese culture and have little interest in Christianity or Islam. Those non-believers will likely request Christianity and Islam to demonstrate their compliance with the orthodoxy of Chinese culture; or
b) if people discover that Chinese culture does not guarantee their need for transcendence, non-orthodox religions or ideologies will become attractive to them. Thus, the Christian and Islamic mission need to articulate how they provide eternal salvation.

In both cases, Christianity and Islam are subject to challenge by Chinese culture since the conversion of community members to foreign religions will pose a threat to

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548 The Lausanne Movement, 'Gospel Contextualisation Revisited', The Lausanne Movement website (https://lausanne.org/content/gospel-contextualisation-revisited; accessed 14 August 2022).

549 Don C. Price reports that the elite heterodoxy in late Qing dynasty, i.e., radical reformers and revolutionists, rejected Sino-centrism. Cf Don C. Price, 'Popular and Elite Heterodoxy toward the End of the Qing' in Kwang Ching Liu and Richard Shek (eds.), *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) 433. The elite heterodoxy's rejection of Sino-centrism illustrated the orthodoxy of Sino-centrism.

550 Qi Yong Guo (郭齊勇), 'How to Properly View the New Developments of Mainland Confucianism', 160.

the collective society. This is a hint for the building of a suitable contextualisation model.

In fact, there was an Anti-Christianity movement in the 1920s, which is a typical example of case a) above.[551] Therefore, the elite Christians needed to meet this challenge and kicked off theological discourses on the harmonisation of Christianity and Chinese culture. For the development in case b), there are reports about group conversion of popular religious sect members to Christianity in the nineteenth century.[552] Tze Ming Ng, a Hong Kong religious scholar, observes that both grass-root class Christians and social elite class Christians had contributed to the contextualisation of Christianity in China. The Jesus Family is an example of grass-root Christians who experienced Christianity through the perspective of Chinese culture, while the elites, such as Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu, attempted to use different theoretical models to harmonise Christianity with Chinese culture.[553]

Historically, the preaching of Christianity in China started in 635, and the fourth missionary movement was initiated by Protestantism. The first Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, arrived in south China in 1807.[554] The distinguishing feature of the fourth missionary movement was to target grass-root class people for preaching.[555] Tin Yan Yeung agrees that a popular Christianity based on grass-root class believers has been established.[556] In fact, 'Chinese religion has long been analysed in terms of elite and folk levels'.[557]

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551 There was an anti-foreign sentiment in the Anti-Christianity movement and therefore it was a political instance. Cf Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 60. However, this thesis regards that cultural concepts, among others, are the driving force of any government policies relating religions in China (see discussion in section 1.2). The sentiment of Sino-centrism is one of the causes of anti-Christian movement. See discussion in sub-section 4.4.2.

552 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 31.

553 Tze Ming Ng (吳梓明), 'Foreword' in Fei Ya Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China: The Jesus Family* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004) xiii.

554 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 3-6.

555 Tong Su Liu (劉同蘇) and Yi Wang (王怡), *Observation on the China's House Churches in Cities* (Taipei, Christian Arts Press, 2012) 87.

556 Tin Yan Yeung (楊天恩), 'Indigenous Church as an Offspring of Pneumatic Christianity: A Re-examination of the Development of Christianity in Modern China' (PhD thesis, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002), Chinese University of Hong Kong web site (https://repository.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/item/cuhk-343213?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=9b7280aaf58f5da462f0&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=1&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=2; accessed 23 November 2022) 9.

557 Catherine Bell, 'Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an assessment of "Popular Religion"' in Xinzhong Yao and Zhifeng Zhong (eds.), *Religion in Contemporary China Volume IV* (London; New York: Routledge, 2018) 128.

In addition to the conversion of sect members, indigenous popular Christian movements were found in the late Qing dynasty.[558] Popular Christianity is still active today and it is worth exploring whether the popular religious sects and popular Christianity share similar concepts of salvation. This thesis proposes that the concept of collective transcendence will influence such developments. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter is organised as follows:

a) section 4.1 clarifies some metaphysical and supernatural concepts found in Chinese culture, which are frequently referred to in the theological discourses. It includes the reason of practising filial piety;
b) as grass-root class people are the target audience of Protestant missionaries, section 4.2 is the dialogue with popular religious sects. It is a development of case b) above, i.e., the concept of collective transcendence implied in the culture cannot satisfy people's spiritual needs;
c) section 4.3 reviews the transcendental imagination of the popular religion and its legacy in Chinese Christianity. The utopia of the Jesus Family is discussed as an example;
d) section 4.4 reviews the theological thoughts of elite class Christians and New Confucians regarding their relation to the concept of collective transcendence in Chinese culture;
e) section 4.5 suggests the key elements for an appropriate contextual model for Chinese Christianity; and
f) section 4.6 is the concluding remarks.

4.1 Some Chinese Metaphysical and Supernatural Concepts

The concept of collective transcendence is inherited from the state ideology and some supernatural beliefs of Chinese people. There are metaphysical concepts in the state ideology and in other branches of Chinese philosophy. When the metaphysical concepts are manifested in traditional rituals, they are usually assigned supernatural status. Thus, it is necessary to clarify these metaphysical or supernatural concepts before attempting to conduct dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture. The terms *tian*, *dao*, heavenly principle, etc., are widely used in Chinese philosophy and popular religion in

[558] Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 26. See also the definition of popular religion or popular sects in sub-section 2.1.2.

contemporary China. In fact, Christian intellectuals have appropriated these terms to express the concepts of Christianity. Therefore, it is necessary first to identity the meanings of these terms employed by Confucianism and Daoism and to discover whether these terms have been appropriated in Chinese Christianity.[559]

4.1.1 Tian (sky) and Dao (way)

There was a concept of *tian* (sky) in ancient religion in China.[560] This term is used in Confucianism and other Chinese philosophies. In order to study the concept of *tian* in Confucianism, Hing Kau Yeung compares the description about *tian* recorded in ten chapters of the *Analects*. Consequently, he is inclined to believe that *tian* represents a sort of personal god.[561] Although the New Confucian Zong San Mou notes that *tian* was regarded as a metaphysical entity in Neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty, he contends that the life of Confucius was remotely united with *tian*, i.e., the transcendent subject. Therefore, he believes that *tian* represents a 'Personal God' in Confucian thought.[562]

The interpretation of *tian* in Daoism is not the same as in Confucianism. There are two classics for Daoism, namely *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*. After the study of *Zhuangzi*, Ru Jun Wu interprets the term *tian* as signifying the natural sky only.[563] The philosopher Hans-Georg Moeller understands that *tian* means universe in ancient China. *Tian* is translated as 'heaven' in some circumstances. After the study of *Daodejing*, Moeller explains:

> the ancient Chinese concept of 'heaven' is quite different from its 'capital H' Christian counterpart. It does not indicate a transcendent realm where God dwells. It is not some paradise 'beyond' from which the world 'below' is somehow cut off. As *tian*, the Chinese concept of heaven designates the world in its entirety, including the 'secular,' or, rather, without any distinction between the secular and the sacred.[564]

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559 As discussed in sub-section 2.1.2, the three main teachings in China are Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. The terms *tian* and *dao* are less used in Buddhism than in Confucianism and Daoism. Therefore, these two terms are discussed in the context of Confucianism and Daoism only.

560 The concepts of *tian* and *shangdi* are introduced in sub-section 2.2.2.

561 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 87-90.

562 Mou, *Chinese Philosophy*, 40. As discussed in sub-section 2.4.2, Mou assigned the religious characteristics to Confucianism to fight against the invasion of foreign religion, such as Christianity.

563 Pei Rong Fu (傅佩榮), *Fupeirong's Interpretation of Zhuangzi* (*Fupeirong Jiedu Zhuangzi*) (Taipei: Li Xu Press, 2002) 187.

564 Hans-Georg Moeller, *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) 44.

This thesis considers that the assignment of a personal god for Confucian *tian* is not appropriate. A personal god is a subject who will reveal itself. If there were a Confucian personal god, revelation from this god would be found. However, Chinese people do not think that Confucian teachings are revelations from a personal god. *The Britannica* has a balanced view on the meanings of *tian* and it explains:

> *tian* is sometimes perceived to be an impersonal power in contrast to *Shangdi* ('Supreme Ruler'), but the two are closely identified and the terms frequently used synonymously. Evidence suggests that *tian* originally referred to the sky while *Shangdi* referred to the Supreme Ancestor who resided there. … The importance of both *tian* and *Shangdi* to the ancient Chinese lay in their assumed influence over the fertility of the clan and its crops; sacrifices were offered to these powers solely by the king and, later, by the emperor.[565]

This thesis holds that the meaning of *tian* given in *The Britannica* is prevalent in Chinese people. Since there is a concept of union of heavenly principle with humanity in Confucianism, this thesis considers that the Chinese concept of *tian* still represents the transcendent dimension in Chinese culture, such as in Confucianism, but it does not denote a personal god.[566]

If there is a supernatural force directing the fate of human beings, there will be a rule or principle for such operation. This principle is called *dao* in Chinese. *Dao* literally means way, method, or principle. In fact, the terms *yin*, *yang*, *qi*, *dao*, and *de* were widely used in Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, and Mohis.[567] The use of *dao* in Confucianism and Daoism is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

In Confucianism, *dao* is used to denote 'right way' or the truth.[568] Hing Kiu Yeung further points out that *dao* in Confucianism is benevolence (*ren*).[569] Thus, *dao* has dual meanings in China. Julia Ching explains that *dao* was originally recognised as a kind of personal god in ancient China but gradually it pointed to impersonal cosmic

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565 Cf Encyclopædia Britannica (https://www.britannica.com/topic/tian; accessed 1 September 2022). The concepts of *tian* and *shangdi* are introduced in sub-section 2.2.2.

566 The concept of union of heavenly principle with humanity is briefly introduced in sub-section 2.2.3.

567 Moeller, *Daodejing*, 33.

568 Confucius said, 'If a man in the morning hear the right way, he may die in the evening without regret.' Cf *Analects* Book 4 Chapter 8.

569 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 86.

and moral power 'that possesses intelligence and will and impartially directs the fate of all human beings'.[570]

In the Daoism classic *Laozi*, there are six chapters explaining the meaning of *dao*.[571] Ru Jun Wu opines that *dao* is a metaphysical principle which establishes everything in the world.[572] Moeller refers to chapter 42 of *Laozi* and perceives that *dao* is the unity and the beginning of cosmic process.[573] That said, *dao* follows nature as a rule in accordance with chapter 25 in *Laozi*. Both Pei-rong Fu and Moller interpret that *dao* follows its 'own course' as a rule.[574] The Chinese term for 'nature' is *ziran*, which literally means 'self-so'. Thus, *dao*:

> does not have an external cause and does not impose itself on the 'lower' dimensions. The only 'rule' of the Dao is to let things happen as they happen by themselves. It is not a 'cosmic' law or principle that precedes the world like a plan precedes an action or a blueprint precedes a building. It is the immanent order in the course of things.[575]

Ching's interpretation of *dao* is close to that of Daoism. It is worth noting that 'the Word' (λόγος) in chapter 1 of John's Gospel is translated as *dao* in Chinese. Clearly there is intention in the translation to harmonise Chinese culture with the biblical message. This translation transforms the concept of *dao* from an impersonal cosmic principle and moral power to the Christian God's principle and power. Nonetheless, this thesis sticks to Ching's interpretation of *dao,* which reflects the interpretation of this term in the PRC.

The above review of *tian* and *dao* reveals the cosmic view of Chinese people, which is important for the contextualization of Christianity and Islam in China. Since heaven (sky), the Earth, and human beings are equal in status and supplement one another, Chinese people build up their society in accordance with the principles of sky in order to cultivate a better world (the Earth). These metaphysical and supernatural concepts define the identity and values of Chinese people.[576] Thus, Chinese culture

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570 Ching, *Chinese Religions*, 100.
571 Pei Rong Fu (傅佩榮), *The Original Sayings of Laozi* (*Laozi Yuanlai Zheyang Shuo*) (Taipei: Chiu Ko Publishing Co., Ltd., 2011) 157.
572 Ru Jun Wu (吳汝鈞), *The Contemporary Analysis of Lao-zhuang's Philosophy* (*Laozhuang zhexue de Xiandai Xilun*) (Taipei: Wen Chin Publishing Co., Ltd., 1998) 6-7.
573 Moeller, *Daodejing*, 40.
574 Cf Fu, *Original Sayings*, 156; Moller, *Daodejing*, 48.
575 Moeller, *Daodejing*, 48.
576 See discussion in sub-section 2.4.2.

does not project a religiously transcendent notion of eternity for people but advocates that the human spirit to work hard and pursue the well-being of the present world. The pragmatic attitude of Chinese culture creates a difficulty in manifesting the transcendental concept on the union of *tian* and humanity. This difficulty is further expanded in section 4.4.

4.1.2 Transcendental Function of Ancestral Worship

Filial piety has been assigned transcendental values through the notion of *tian* (sky) so that it became a kind of *dao* for Chinese people. Confucius explained the importance of filial piety that resembles the unchanged principle of the sky (heaven) and the functions of the Earth. Filial piety therefore is the basic virtue for people to practise.[577] Consequently, Neo-Confucianism regards filial piety as a mystical combination of sky, the Earth, and human beings. Thus, ancestral worship and filial piety form a cosmic and spiritual value system.[578] However, missionaries rejected this traditional ritual in the nineteenth century.

At the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held on 7-20 May 1890, Rev. C. W. Mateer affirmed that 'idolatry [is] an essential constituent of ancestral worship'.[579] Although Chinese believers affirmed the value of ancient rites for ancestral worship, they followed the stance of the missionaries and proclaimed that the rites of ancestral worship at their time had become the tools of idolatry.[580] In 1922, the National Christian Council of China (hereafter NCCC) was established. It understood that Chinese people cared about their families and that it was necessary to face the challenge of ancestral worship, which caused many problems to Chinese believers.[581]

To address the problem of ancestral worship, the NCCC circulated a draft to collect Christian leaders' ideas about 'honouring ancestors' for discussion at the NCCC eighth annual meeting in April 1931. However, there was no trace of discussion of this draft at the meeting. The Chinese historian Fuk Tsang Ying questions whether the effort

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577 Cf 'Filial Piety in Relation to the Three Powers' in *Xiaojing* (*Classic of Filial Piety*).

578 Khiok Khng Yeo (楊克勤), *Ancestor Worship: Rhetorical and Cross-Cultural Hermeneutical Response* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd., 1998) 45-6.

579 W. J. Lewis (ed.) et al., *Records of General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, Held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1899* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Press, 1890) 701.

580 Fuk Tsang Ying, 'Christianity and Chinese Ancestral Worship: Historical Review' in Ying and Leung, *Chinese Ancestor Worship* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1997) 26.

581 Ying, 'Ancestor Worship: Historical Review', 84.

to harmonise the Chinese customs of ancestral worship with Christianity in the 1920s was in vain.[582] The ethical and transcendental functions of ancestral worship have bothered both Chinese Catholic and Protestant churches for a long time. This problem is still found in Chinese churches today.

That said, the key issue of ancestral worship is not simply about idolatry. The philosopher Fu Guan Xu perceives that filial piety is the iconic sign of Chinese culture.[583] The Chinese anthropologist Xiao Bai Chu finds that filial piety is one of the basic moral requirements of traditional China. The filial piety issue is about the self-identity of an individual in the cultural context. The missionaries' rejection of ancestral worship violates the core existential value in Chinese culture.[584]

Ancestral worship, a practice of filial piety, is part of communication between the living world and the other world.[585] The anthropologists Stephan Feuchtwang and Francis L. K. Hsu conducted their fieldworks on ancestral worship in Taiwan and Yunnan respectively. Feuchtwang worked in a town he called Mountainstreet in 1966,[586] while Hsu studied in West Town in the period 1941-43.[587] Feuchtwang found that the local people visualised gods, ghosts, and ancestors, etc., as former human beings. These beings are conceived as an extension of life. For the living persons, they 'look upon the living world as an extension of the work of the beings of the other world, as well as looking upon the other world as one into which living subjects enter on death'.[588] Hsu reported that living people and the ancestral spirits are mutually dependent. The ancestral spirits will help their own descendants, while the behaviours of descendants will influence the fate of their ancestral spirits.[589] In the study of local religion found in north China, Daniel L. Overmyer also observes that the believers assumed 'the living and the dead, gods, humans and ghosts are all connected by bonds

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582 Ibid, 87-90.

583 Fu Guan Xu, *Essays of the History of Chinese Thoughts* (Taipei: Student Book Co., Ltd., 1995) 156.

584 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 226-7.

585 Stephan Feuchtwang, 'Domestic and Communal Worship in Taiwan', in Arthur P. Wolf (ed.), *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) 117.

586 Feuchtwang, 'Domestic and Communal Worship in Taiwan', 116.

587 Francis L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestor's Shadow* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949) vii. There is argument that the ethnicity of the inhabitants of West Town was minority *Bai*. Thus, Hsu's finding is not representative of Chinese culture. Yong Jia Liang contends that West Towners had explicitly defined themselves as Han. 'Hsu respected the West Towners' self-identification, consistent with the actual circumstances at that time.' Cf Yong Jia Liang, 'The "Ethnic Error" in *Under the Ancestors' Shadow* and Dali Society in the Period of the Nationalist Government', *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 42(4) (2010) 78, 89-90.

588 Feuchtwang, 'Domestic and Communal Worship in Taiwan', 116-7. The concept of extension of life implies the concept of collective transcendence, which is discussed in section 2.5.

589 Hsu, *Under the Ancestor's Shadow*, 241.

of mutual influence and response'.[590] This belief of mutual influence transforms the transcendental function of ancestral worship to the desire of well-being in the living world.

Both Yeo and Chu affirm the existential and spiritual values of ancestral worship. Yeo believes that this spiritual value system covers social values, father-son relationship, familial values, memorial values, and death and life.[591] Hsu also asserts the important social functions of ancestral worship. He identifies five elements of this practice, which are father-son relationship, estrangement between the sexes, big-family deal, pattern of education, and the attitudes toward dead and living.[592] Both Yeo and Hsu find the importance of ancestral worship in social and familial values. The religious scholar C. K. Yang also visualises ancestral worship from a sociological point of view. He finds that death is a social tragedy because of the loss of a group member. To overcome this tragic situation, it is necessary 'to assume the continued existence of the deceased and use this assumption to mitigate emotional grief. … One expression of this assumption was the belief in the existence of the soul, and another was the perpetuation of the memory of the departed.'[593]

Therefore, ancestral worship will cause family members to gather at some dedicated festivals to worship their ancestors. However, the members themselves may not really care whether the ancestor would provide protection for them. The participation in ancestral worship is simply a means of identity recognition[594] where personal identity is tied to an individual family and his or her local community.

This sub-section reviews both the transcendental and social functions of ancestral worship. This ritual reflects the pragmatic approach of Chinese culture that it mainly serves for the purpose of pursuing well-being in the present world. The pursuit of well-being in the living world will undermine the transcendental function of this ritual. Therefore, Chinese people need to find another means to satisfy their transcendental desire, which prepares the soil for the emergence of popular religion and the conversion to Christianity.

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590 Daniel L. Overmyer, *Local Religion in North China in the Twentieth Century: The Structure and Organization of Community Rituals and Beliefs* (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2009) 2.
591 Yeo, *Ancestor Worship*, 46-62.
592 Hsu, *Under the Ancestor's Shadow*, 236-42.
593 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 30.
594 Leung, 'Christianity and Chinese Ancestral Worship', 143.

4.2 Dialogue with Popular Religious Sects

In imperial China, there was 'civil strife, economic deterioration, social disintegration, and personal suffering' in the times of changing dynasties. The orthodox ideology was far from sufficient for grass-root people to overcome such difficulties. As a result, the principles of Daoist millenarian tradition and indigenous Buddhism of saving humanity formed the so-called diffused religion, i.e., popular religion, in China.[595]

Both R. G. Tiedemann and Chu find that a lot of sectarians converted to Christianity in the lower half of the nineteenth century, the late Qing dynasty.[596] One example, reported by the missionary Henry D. Porter, was that the leader of the Pakua sect in the north-west Shandong Province urged his followers to accept Christ in 1866.[597] The term 'pakua' means eight trigrams, which originates from the Chinese classic *Yi Jing* or *Book of Changes*.[598] Rev. J. Edkins proposed in 1886 that the religious sects found in north China were greatly influenced by the classic *Yi Jing*, the union of Confucianism and Daoism by Yong Shao (邵雍), and the mystical philosophy introduced by Shou Ren Wang (王守仁).[599] These religious sects also absorbed the thoughts of Buddhism, and such religious ideas constitute part of the Chinese culture.[600] That said, these religious sects are regarded as heterodoxy of Chinese culture.

Therefore, many of the popular religious sects were dismissed after 1949. Nonetheless, Overmyer finds that a few such groups were revived in the 1980s. Moreover, their influence extended to non-sectarian communities, particularly the belief in the 'Eternal Venerable Mother' (*wusheng laomu*) or simply the Eternal Mother.[601] This religious belief is about salvation through the boarding of a Dharma boat after a series of catastrophes. Coincidentally, members of the Jesus Family

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595 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 236.

596 Cf R. G. Tiedemann, 'Christianity and Chinese "Heterodox Sects": Mass Conversion and Syncretism in Shandong Province in the Early Eighteenth Century', *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996) 343; and Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 4. Sectarians are the believers of religious sects in popular religion. See discussion in 2.1.2.

597 Henry D. Porter, 'A Modern Shantung Prophet', *Chinese Recorder* 17(1) (1886) 18.

598 *Yi Jing* (Book of Change) was the classics of Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD), which contains complex numerology for constructing a unified cosmology. Cf Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 33.

599 J. Edkins, 'Religious Sects in North China', *Chinese Recorder* 17(7) (1886) 247.

600 Song Qing Yu (喻松青), 'A few Questions about Secret Sects in the Period of Ming and Qing dynasties' (*Guanyu Mingqing shiqi Minjian Mimi Zongjiao Yanjiu Zhong De Jige Wenti*) in Chuan Ming Rui (芮傳明) (ed.), *Reading of Modern Academic Writings: Chinese Popular Religion Scriptures* (*Xiandai Xueshu Jingpin Jing Du: Zhongguo Minjian Zongjiao Juan*) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2014) 215.

601 Overmyer, *Local Religion in North China*, 15.

regarded the church as an Ark of salvation. Lian believes that the Jesus Family shares the concept of the Dharma boat in the Eternal Mother myth.[602]

The above findings indicate that cultural transcendence will not be sufficient for grass-root people to overcome personal sufferings in difficult times. Popular religion then provides transcendence alternative for these people that it brought forward comfort and a religious community for them. If Christianity also provided the same to these grass-root people, they might bear the marks of popular religion in joining the Christian churches. Therefore, the following sub-sections discuss the sectarian imagination of salvation, the cause of sectarian conversion, and the inheritance of such imagination in popular Christianity.

4.2.1 Religious Sects: Imagination of Salvation

The immediate question concerning popular religion is about its penetration in contemporary China. Chuni Zhang et al. observe that only a small percentage of Chinese people adhere to popular religious beliefs, in a survey conducted in the period 2006 to 2017. The problem is with the term 'folk religion' used in the questionnaire. Zhang et al. believe that this is an academic term not easily understood by ordinary people.[603] Therefore, Zhang et al. changed the denomination-based scheme to a deity-based scheme in their survey conducted in 2018.[604] The changes involved were: a) the question 'What is your religion?' became 'What do you believe in?'; and b) stating the deities/god, which are Buddha/bodhisattva, Daoist deities, Allah, Catholic God, Jesus Christ, ancestors, and 'none of the above', instead of denomination.[605] The survey result in 2018 reveals that more than 70% of the respondents are popular religion practitioners.[606] Thus, it is worthwhile having dialogue with popular religion.

Wing Tsit Chan believes that religious Daoism is the foundation of popular religion. However, it is declining in contemporary China. As a result, no seat was reserved for the delegate of religious Daoism at the People's Consultative Conference

602 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 73. Lian regards the Jesus Family as a branch of popular Christianity.
603 Zhang et al., 'Exploring Chinese Folk Religion', 577. The term 'folk religion' is replaced by popular religion in this thesis for consistency.
604 There were 29,996 respondents (aged 16 and above) who completed the religion-related questions in the 2018 survey. Cf Zhang et al., 'Exploring Chinese Folk Religion', 579.
605 Zhang et al., 'Exploring Chinese Folk Religion', 580.
606 Ibid, 582.

held in 1949.[607] Nevertheless, the ideas of religious Daoism have evolved to various local religious societies.[608] The historian Daniel L. Overmyer identifies two branches of popular religion, which are general popular religion and popular religious sects.[609] Stephan Feuchtwang supplements Chan's view on the foundation of popular religious sects, which is that popular religious sects are also influenced by Buddhist ideas:

> Buddhist-influenced learning of the Song dynasty, the so-called Neo-Confucian cosmology of the eleventh and twelfth century and its Ming dynasty succession of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, is still influential now. … It had drawn directly on the thought of the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD) classics, as an act of reforming commentary.[610]

Overmyer reports that some of these religious sects had participated in rebellion against the government at that time, but their most fundamental contributions were about the establishment of local communities and satisfying personal needs. The functions of local communities are:

> for group security and advancement, beyond the nuclear family: clan organizations, sworn-brotherhoods, village associations for crop-watching and local defense, secret societies, merchants' and artisans' guilds, academies for scholars, and so on. … Participation in one or more of these groups provided an alternative means for identification, status, and mutual aid.[611]

In this connection, the sense of collective transcendence was detached from the state ideology, the orthodoxy of Chinese culture, and evolved to a specific form as popular religious belief. These religious sects survived because of their fulfilment of forming self-help or self-contained communities in the present world. As evidence of their survival, one of these religious sects, which rebelled against both Nationalism and Communism from the 1920s to the 1950s, was found active in 1993.[612]

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607 Wing Tsit Chan (陳榮捷), *Religious Trends in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953) 146.

608 Ibid, 156. In fact, sub-section 2.1.2 has mentioned that Chinese popular religion is comprised of a host of local cults.

609 Daniel L. Overmyer, 'Alternatives', 157.

610 Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 33.

611 Overmyer, 'Alternatives', 153-4.

612 David Ownby, 'Chinese Millenarian Traditions: The Formative Age', *American Historical Review* 104(5) (1999) 1513. Ownby has not named the religious sect, believed to be because he tried to protect it.

What is the major belief of these religious sects? In general, they are labelled with millenarianism and Salvationism. Lian reports that indigenous millenarianism was founded in ancient China. In the year 2 BC, 'an eschatological paroxysm centered on the mythic Queen Mother of the West (Xi Wangmu) took hold of many in the midst of a severe drought'. Xi Wangmu was a female deity in Daoism, which merged with the beliefs of grass-root Buddhism and produced popular religious sects.[613] Therefore most of these sects were syncretic and included both religious Daoism and Buddhism. In Buddhism is an idea of *kalpa*, which is a very long period of time. At the end of a *kalpa*, there will be cosmic catastrophe and then another *kalpa* will begin.[614] The common belief of these sects is the supreme female deity known as the Eternal Mother.[615] Lian believes that the Eternal Mother 'represented a crystallization of folk messianism that had begun in ancient China with the Queen Mother of the West'.[616] Richard Shek and Tetsuro Noguchi trace the origin of the concept of the Eternal Mother to Qing Luo (羅清), who was a religious teacher and 'born in 1443 in the Shandong province in North China'.[617]

Shek and Noguchi believe that the concept of Eternal Mother originated from Pure Land Buddhism. The Pure Land believers described the relationship between Amitabha Buddha and humans as being like a parent–child relationship. As such, Qing Luo described the Buddha as the Eternal Parent. Moreover, Luo believed that there was true emptiness, which was the source of all beings, before the creation of heaven and earth. For Luo, Mother is another term for true emptiness. Thus, the Eternal Parent was also known as the Eternal Mother.[618] Shek and Noguchi briefly describe the religious thought of Luo as follows:

a) all beings originate from one single source;
b) the single source is called true emptiness (*zhengkong*) or native place (*jiaxiang*). It is eternal and unbegotten;
c) this single source thus behaves like a parent or mother of the universe;

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613 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 235-6.
614 Tiedemann, 'Heterodox Sects', 362.
615 Stevan Harrell and Elizabeth J. Perry, 'Syncretic Sects in Chinese Society: An Introduction', *Modern China* 8(3) (1982) 287.
616 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 237.
617 Richard Shek and Tetsuro Noguchi, 'Eternal Mother Religion: Its History and Ethics' in Kwang-Ching Liu and Richard Shek (eds.), *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) 242-3.
618 Ibid, 244-5.

d) human beings suffered because of the separation from this single source; and
e) finally, salvation is the return to this single source.[619]

The Eternal Mother myth developed further after Luo. Shek and Noguchi believe that this myth reached its mature form with the publication of the *Gufo Tianzhen Kaozheng Longhua Baojing* (*The Heavenly Perfect Venerable Buddha's Authenticated Dragon-flower Previous Sutra*), or simply *Longhua Baojing*, in the 1650s. *Longhua Baojing* describes the states of salvation and the Eternal Mother's preparation for her children's return, etc. In particular, it articulates the imminent arrival of *kalpa* disasters.[620]

According to Chu, these religious sects are mostly found in north China, the Yangzi River region and Fujian Province.[621] In regard to belief in the Eternal Mother, this deity 'stands outside both history and the legitimizing or authenticating idiom of bureaucracy-nested hierarchy. She represents in a very literal sense the subversion of both political legitimacy and hierarchical cultural order' in imperial China.[622] Stevan Harrell and Elizabeth J. Perry perceive that these religious sects have characteristics of various degrees of syncretism, secrecy, concept of salvation, millenarianism, subversion, and heterodoxy.[623] Kwang Ching Liu and Richard Shek describe this heterodox tradition: 'With its origins going back to [religious] Daoism, Buddhism, and even Persian sources, this tradition was messianic and eschatological in nature, in the sense that it subscribed to the [believe in a] saviorlike figure who would bring an end to the present age and usher in a new one.'[624]

It is worth noting that these religious sects believed that the present world would come to an end, in the future. This belief challenged the state ideology that people should work for well-being of this present world. If this present will be ended one-day, people need to pursue the so-called end-time salvation instead of cultural transcendence, which is based on the assumption that this present world will survive over time. That

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619 Ibid, 246.
620 Ibid, 254-5. The idea of *kalpa* originates from India. 'In Chinese millenarianism, the *kalpas* were shortened to historic scale, and in times of trouble the change of the *kalpa* was often believed imminent.' Cf Harrell and Perry, 'Syncretic Sects in Chinese Society', 290.
621 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 71.
622 P. Steven Sangren, 'Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and the Structure of Value in Chinese Rituals', *Modern China* 13(1) (1987) 81.
623 Harrell and Perry, 'Syncretic Sects in Chinese Society', 285.
624 Kwang Ching Liu and Richard Shek (eds.), *Heterodoxy in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) 465.

said, many sectarians were still concerned with healing,[625] which is the benefit of this present world.

The formation of these sects reflected the collectivistic characteristics of Chinese people and the failure of the transcendental function of Chinese culture. The influx of religious sect members to Christian churches is also observed in the early twentieth century. As a foreign religion, Christianity might also provide 'alternative means for identification, status, and mutual aid' for sectarians and caught the opportunity for mission in China.[626]

4.2.2 Conversion of Sect Members: Sharing the Hope of Salvation

Millenarianism is a characteristic of popular religious sects. Although not all converted were sect members, the indigenous church movement in the early twentieth century was 'energized by Pentecostalism and millenarian convictions'.[627] This movement was usually accomplished with revival meetings. Hunter and Chan describe typical revival meetings in the 1930s:

> In the 1930s it appears that revival meetings, a Pentecostal style of worship, healing and emotional forms of religious expression were important factors in conversions and the spread of Christianity. People were attracted to this new religion which preached good conduct, promised fellowship with divinity, afforded healing and exorcism and offered forms of worship that could be corporate or individual according to circumstances.[628]

Religious revivals, including Christianity, were also found in the 1980s when the reformation period commenced. Hunter and Chan perceive that the need for good conduct, healing, and exorcisms, etc., are still deeply needed by Chinese people in today's China.[629] In fact, there was drought and famine in 1920-21[630] and social unrest in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). The two revivals shared similar social backgrounds. Hunter's and Chan's view hints that adverse social conditions can trigger religious revival and thus conversion to Christianity.

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625 Overmyer, 'Alternatives', 157.
626 Overmyer regards popular religious sects provided alternative means for identification, status, and mutual aid. Cf Overmyer, 'Alternatives', 154. Christianity might provide the same for the sectarians.
627 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 41.
628 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 140.
629 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 140.
630 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 51.

However, Chu is not satisfied with a simple explanation of the conversion of sect members. She explores different possible causes to explain the phenomenon of sectarian conversion. Some of the causes are listed below:

a) in term of social capital. The sect members might seek to escape from the government's persecution and convert to Christianity to seek legal protection. However, Chu considers that both popular religious sects and Christianity are heterodox to Chinese culture. In fact, Christians were subject to attack in rural areas at that time.[631] Social capital in this case is not a substantial cause of conversion.
b) in term of religious compensation. Christianity was thought to be more efficacious than the sects. However, there is no guarantee of miracles and well-being in any religion. Conversion becomes risky if it is merely based on the supposed efficacy.[632] Religious compensation appears not to be a sound reason for sectarian conversion; and
c) in term of similarity. It appears that praying, fasting, and meditation through icons in Catholic congregations are similar to the chanting sutra, fasting, and idol worship in religious sects. Protestant missionaries pointed out that these similar rituals in popular sects were owing to idolatry. Chu believes that the competition between Protestants and Catholics in the missionary field urged Protestantism's articulation of these similarities. She understands that these similarities in rituals can be explained from different angles.[633]

Many missionaries believed that the conversion of sect members in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a result of the attraction of Christian literature, among others.[634]

Traditionally, sectarians freely circulated virtue books to people for explanation of their beliefs. Some examples of these virtue books are *Treatise On Response and Retribution* (Daoism), *The Education Foundation of Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* (mainly Confucianism), *The Jade Guidebook* (Buddhism) and *The Ledger of Good and Evil of Wenchang Emperor* (Daoism).[635] For the classics of popular religion, the *Dragon-*

631 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 34-6.
632 Ibid, 37-9.
633 Ibid, 62-6. Concerning the similarity of chanting in Catholics and in religious sects, the concepts of sin and retribution, confrontation with the Evil, and hope for eternity etc. in Protestantism are also found in religious sects. There is room for interpretation of these similarity in Catholics and in Protestantism.
634 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 132.
635 Ying, 'The Conflicts between the Redemption Doctrine of Christianity and Chinese Culture', 87.

flower Sutra of the Real Ancient Buddha (*Longhua Baojing*) is regarded as the classic that consolidated various popular religious thoughts in a logical order.[636] In the nineteenth century, the imperial government prohibited missionary travel in China in. However, religious books could penetrate regions that missionaries could not visit.[637] Therefore, missionaries conducted evangelical works through the distribution of tracts and held revival meetings, etc.[638] As such, they translated a lot of literature from various sectors in the nineteenth century. The works included natural science, medicine, geography, astronomy, politics, law, and literature. Xiao Zhang finds that about seven novels were translated by missionaries, one of which was *The Pilgrim's Progress*.[639] The gospel tracts were also freely distributed to the multitudes. Chu regards that the circulation of these gospel tracts in late Qing dynasty played an important role in the conversion of tract members.[640]

Therefore, Chu compares the translated Christian literature to the scripture of sectarians. She selected *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Longhua Baojing* because the two were widely distributed and circulated during the late Qing dynasty.[641] The two literatures have a similar story line: leaving home, fall, catastrophe, salvation, and returning home.[642] The stories shape community membership for the believers in a specific place and time, as summarised below:

	The Pilgrim's Progress	*Longhua Baojing*
Places[643]	From City of Destruction to Celestial City	From wandering world to Eternal Mother's Palace
Time[644]	Salvation occurs at the ultimate end-time	Salvations will occur in a multiple time-space structure
Path/Vehicle	Narrow gate[645]	Dharma boat[646]

636 Wen Qi Pu (濮文起), 'The History and Thought Analysis of the Succession of the Folk Religious Master Muren as the Leader of His School in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties', *Zongjiaoxue Yanjiu* (*Religious Studies*) 1 (2022) 253.

637 John T. P. Lai, *The Chronicles of Christian Publishing Enterprise in China (1860-1911)* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Council Ltd., 2015) xiii.

638 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 114.

639 Xiao Zhang (張嘯), 'Protestant Missionaries' Translation and Publishing Activities and Subsequent Influences in China in the 19th Century', *Academics* 169(6) (2012) 209, 212.

640 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 77.

641 Ibid, 106.

642 Ibid, 133.

643 Ibid, 97-106.

644 Ibid, 119-22.

645 Ibid, 106-8. The narrow gate is one of the symbols of Jesus Christ. The narrow gate leads to life. Cf Gospel of Matthew, 7:13.

646 Ibid, 118-32. See discussion in sub-section 4.2.1.

Regarding the so-called multiple time-space of the salvations described in *Longhua Baojing*, Lian explains that: 'According to the teachings of the Eight Trigrams, a popular millenarian sect that emerged from the White Lotus tradition and arose in southwestern Shandong (not far from Mazhuang) during the Qing dynasty, humanity had to pass through three kalpa periods of great changes (*san jie*).'[647] Thus, there is a three-state scheme for salvation. The sect members believe that there will be a messianic figure to save the believers.[648] It is worth noting eschatological belief in Christianity. In the second coming of Jesus Christ, both living and dead Christians will ascend into heaven to meet Jesus Christ.[649] However, there is no third coming or fourth coming of Jesus Christ in Christianity. Christian salvation does not have the so-called 'multiple time-space' characteristic.

Zhu notes that missionaries made use of Buddhist terms in the translation and writing of gospel literature. Although there are fine differences in the terms used in Christian literature and those of the scriptures of popular sects, ordinary people would have the impression that they resemble one another. Thus, Zhu proposes that the conversion of sect members would be similar to re-affiliation, i.e., changing from one sect to another in a religious tradition.[650] Regarding the contributions of popular sects, Overmyer opines that these sects provided Chinese people with 'a renewed sense of their own worth and continuity'.[651] Similarly, Christianity also offers religious identity and hope to Chinese people. It becomes an alternative for people who cannot find eternal hope from Chinese culture.

In sum, the main factors explaining the conversion of sect members are: a) adverse social conditions that resulted in the failure of the transcendental function in Chinese culture; and b) eschatological belief in Christianity fulfil the hope for salvation of sectarians. Concerning the dialogue with popular religious sects, this thesis proposes that Christian salvation shall be clearly explained in the encounter with popular religious sects. It is not in a 'multiple-space-time' structure but brings eternal life for the believers. In addition, Jesus Christ is the 'way' to salvation. Believers do not need to find a 'vehicle' to carry them to paradise, but they have to follow Jesus' way and commit themselves to God.

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647 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 73-4. See sub-section 4.2.1 for the explanation of the *kalpa* periods.
648 Shek and Noguchi, 'Eternal Mother Religion', 263.
649 Cf First Thessalonians 4:16-14; Mark 13:26.
650 Chu, *The Encounters of Folk Religions and Christianity in Modern China*, 133-4.
651 Overmyer, 'Alternatives', 155.

The next target of dialogue is popular Christianity. It originated from the indigenisation movement in the early twentieth century and shared a similar context with popular religious sects where Chinese culture was found to have failed to provide transcendental function.

4.3 Dialogue with Popular Christianity

The historian Xi Lian identifies different streams of grass-root class Christian congregations which are managed by local leaders. The named local church leaders are Ming Dao Wang, John Song, and Watchman Nee, among others. He describes these congregations as popular Christianity, which are the True Jesus Church, Jesus Family, and Little Flock Church, among others. A common feature of these groups is their understanding of end-time salvation.[652] Hing Kau Yeung also perceives that the major concern in Chinese theological discourse is about salvation. Some examples are the thoughts of Xiu Quan Hong, Ming Dao Wang, John Song, Watchman Nee, and Zi Chen Zhao.[653] Zi Chen Zhao is not a grass-root class leader but a trained theologian.

Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan state that these local congregations represent 'a deeper level of integration with Chinese customs and religiosity.'[654] They identify that those local church leaders, Ming Dao Wang, John Sung, Watchman Nee and others, had been involved in the revival movements in the early twentieth century.[655] In fact, there were at least three Christian revivals and they occurred in 1908, the 1930s, and the 1980s. Hunter and Chan believe that these revival movements are an emotional form of religious trend in Chinese Christianity. Sin confessions, shrieks and groans, ecstasies, and visions were observed in some of the participants in these revival meetings.[656] That is, the pursuit of end-time salvation in popular Christianity represents such an emotional religious trend in China.

To illustrate the influence of the concept of collective transcendence, the Jesus Family is discussed in sub-section 4.3.1 because it exhibits the characteristics of the pursuit of end-time salvation as well as Confucian utopia, the 'Great Harmony'. The legacy of popular religion on popular Christianity is discussed in sub-section 4.3.2.

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652 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 21, 26 and 9-15. End-time salvation in general referred to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
653 Yeung, *The New Horizon of Chinese Culture*, 85-6.
654 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 120.
655 Ibid, 129.
656 Ibid, 126-7.

4.3.1 The Jesus Family: Kingdom of Heaven in Chinese Utopia

Dian Ying Jing (1890-1957) was the founder of the Jesus Family.[657] He composed a song called 'Jesus Family', which expressed his idea of the Kingdom of Heaven and the establishment of a great harmonious society on earth. Part of the lyrics are extracted below:

> Jesus Family is … the settlement for shelter at end-time. … [We] oppose violent and love peace; save people suffered from persecution and lead the society into great harmony. … Jesus Family is organised in Lord's love. … [It] resembles father, son, and brother in God's grace and in Spirit. … [It] really is the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven and God's will be done on Earth. …[658]

How was the Kingdom of Heaven implemented on earth through the Jesus Family?

The Jesus Family was founded at Tai An County, Shandong Province, in 1921. Tai An is about 80 kilometres from Qufou, the homeland of Confucius. In addition, Tai Shan, situated in Tai An, was a centre of religious Daoism and Buddhism. Thus, people there were deeply influenced by Confucianism and its religious thoughts.[659] Coincidently, most popular religious sects were also founded in Shandong, north China, around the time of World War I.[660] One of the commonly observed rituals of these religious sects is spirit possession.[661] There were Christian revival movements in China in the twentieth century, the second of which commenced in Shandong in 1927. It was called the Shandong Revival and was influenced by Pentecostalism.[662] Lian traces the root of Christian Pentecostalism back to 1906-1909 when at least a dozen Pentecostal missionaries arrived in China.[663] According to Hunter and Chan, the first Pentecostal church was the True Jesus church, founded in 1917. It 'emphasized faith healing,

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657 Tie Sheng Jiang (蔣鐵生), 'A Special Religious Community in Old China: Exploration of the Jesus Family', *Collected Papers of History Studies* 1 (2001) 41.

658 Chun Hui Zhang (張春慧), 'On Jesus Family in Tai An' (Master's thesis, Shandong Normal University, 2008), Globethics web site (https://www.globethics.net/pdfs/CNKI/CMFD/2008089568.pdf; accessed 15 November 2022) 48.

659 Chun Hui Zhang (張春慧), 'Exploration of the Rise of Jesus Family in Tai An in the Republican Period', *Journal of Dai Zhong* 14(3) (2010) 54.

660 Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, 167.

661 Tie Sheng Jiang (蔣鐵生), 'Heresy, Sexual Abstinence, Communism: Re-exploration of the Jesus Family', *Collected Papers of History Studies* 3 (2003) 28.

662 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 74.

663 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 46.

speaking in tongues and a communal living style'.[664] Why did Shandong people accept the preached Pentecostalism?

Although not all Shandong Christians were sect members, the believers of Pentecostalism were all familiar with popular sectarian rituals. Terms frequently mentioned by these converts were grace, testimony, filled by the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, rebirth, rapture, etc. Fei Ya Tao finds an important message expressed by these terms, which urges believers to pray hard, asking the Holy Spirit to come upon them. These believers will have a series of bodily responses if the Holy Spirit comes upon them.[665] Wing Tsit Chan reports the characteristics of popular religious sects whereby the sect members 'ask spirits [to] descend from Heaven to the world. … Chinese religious thought runs from man to God.'[666] Lian finds that there is 'a striking resemblance between the state of "being filled with the Holy Spirit" experienced by the members of the Jesus Family and traditional spirit possession practiced in Shandong and other parts of North China'.[667] It explains the popularity of Pentecostalism in Shandong.[668]

Against the background of natural calamities and wars, about four million people left Shandong in the 1920s. The remaining people tried to establish local communities to support each other. It is worth noting that Protestant converts in Shandong joined the Jesus Family in the 1920s also. It is not surprising that the Jesus Family was another local community, and it was famous for pursuing end-time salvation.[669] Tao believes that the pursuit of end-time salvation was connected with religious belief, wars, and calamities that occurred in the early twentieth century.[670]

Jing was baptised and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1914. However, after his proclamation of being filled by the Holy Spirit, he was banished from the church. He then established Saints' Credit and Savings Society in 1921 in order to

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664 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 120-1.

665 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in* China, 77.

666 Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, 173.

667 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 72.

668 Chu argues that the wide circulation of Christian tracts is one of the factors for the conversion of sect members. Since both Christian literature and sect scriptures share similar storylines, the acceptance of Christianity by Shandong people is not surprising. Chu's view on the similarity of propaganda between popular religious sects and Christianity agrees with Lian's view of resemblance. See discussion in sub-section 4.2.2.

669 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 65.

670 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 126. Drought and flood happened in Shandong in 1898 and 1921 respectively. Another flood occurred in 1933. Those disasters left millions homeless. Cf Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 64-5 and 78.

proclaim the true light of Jesus Christ through doing honest business to help ordinary people.[671] The Society 'dealt in textiles and grains and at the same time organized the local faithful in regular prayer and evangelism'.[672] Jing converted the Society to the Jesus Family in 1927 when he was called to proclaim the gospel without any property, or in a state of 'bankruptcy'.[673] A family was needed to adopt those believers who sold or lost all their property because of the mission of preaching gospel. Members of the Jesus Family found 'equality and warmth of communitarian life, the assurances of both eternal salvation and two meals a day'.[674]

The Jesus Family expanded partly as a result of calamities and wars. In fact, 'refugees poured into the Jesus Family settlements for shelter' after Japanese invasion in 1937.[675] In 1941, Jing for the first time expressed his goal that the Jesus Family would function as an 'Ark': 'Family is a love organisation. … Jesus Family is founded in time and …. It is a spiritual ark for those who are laboured and suffered. …. Noah rebuilt church as the Ark to save the world ….'.[676] During the difficult time of the second Sino-Japanese War, Jing composed the 'Song of the Ark' to proclaim the function of the Ark: 'The Ark is wonderful and light. [It] travels without [being] driven by wind. [It] ferries across the boundless sea [although] hardships and afflictions fly widely by.'[677]

Ark or boat is a familiar idea in popular religious sects. Both Tao and Lian note that the concept of the Ark resembles the Dharma boat in Buddhism. Both the Ark and the boat work as a vehicle to carry people from darkness to light, from calamities to peace. In fact, Jing joined *Shengxiandao*, a religious sect about sages and worthies, in 1918.[678] Tao recalls that the Dharma boat for salvation was commonly known in popular religion. In a period of calamities and wars, it is natural for people to seek salvation.[679] That said, the Ark did not just function as a vehicle to carry believers to

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671 Jiang, 'A Special Religious Community', 41-2.
672 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 68.
673 Jiang, 'A Special Religious Community', 42.
674 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 80.
675 Ibid, 80.
676 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 128.
677 Zhang, 'On Jesus Family in Tai An', 47.
678 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 74. *Shengxiandao* was founded in 1936 and later expanded to Shandong. Its belief involved the legend of three *kalpa* periods of great changes, i.e., salvation to be offered by the Eternal Mother. The local government of Shandong Province banned *Shengxiandao* in 1951. Cf Linzi Government website (http://www.linzi.gov.cn/art/2004/9/21/art_8365_1492119.html; accessed 15 November 2022).
679 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 128.

heaven. Jing intended to establish a utopia, which manifested the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The Jesus Family was planned to be a model of this utopia.

Lian points out that the Daoist text *The Scripture of Great Peace* had portrayed 'a utopia of peace, quality, and communal sharing of all wealth' in the second century.[680] Tao interprets the idea of Great Harmony from the Confucian classic *Li Ji* (Book of Rites), in which the chapter 'Operation of Etiquette' states that '[w]hen the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky'. Tao believes that the idea of Great Harmony articulates the requirement of 'a public and common spirit' for the pursuit of Great Harmony. For the manifestation of Great Harmony in Daoism, it pursues a small rural society that is self-contained.[681] Thus, the Jesus Family tried to set up a self-contented community which was a shelter for the poor and those suffering from persecution.

According to its name as a 'family', it 'became in some ways a traditional family writ large'.[682] The leaders of the Jesus Family were called parents from the 1930s. Jing said that few parents were being elected, while most of them were called by the Holy Spirit to hold this difficult position. The first parent was Jing, and he was succeeded by Chuan Zhen Xia a year later. Who had the ability to verify the calling of a parent of the Family? It was, of course, Jing himself, since he was the founder and teacher of the movement. Tao perceives that the power structure of the Jesus Family resembled a patriarchal system.[683] In fact, Jing made use of the moral requirement, filial piety, to run the Family. He said, 'Those who are taking care of you, leading you, loving you, or supervising you are your parents. You should respect them according to the filial piety.'[684] This patriarchal system inherited the traditional absolute power of parents and exerted serious control over its members. Disobedient members, such as those who refused an arranged marriage, were subject to corporal punishment.[685] Eventually, the Jesus Family dissolved in 1952 following the disclosure of its unreasonable policy and punishment of its members.[686]

The Jesus Family was not a successful utopia nor a committed Christian community. It was a traditional patriarchal system in which 'parents' took control of

680 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 236.
681 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 6-7.
682 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 80.
683 Tao, *A Christian Utopia in China*, 141-6.
684 Zhang, 'On Jesus Family in Tai An', 63.
685 Ibid, 78-9.
686 Ibid, 42-3.

everything. Although it intended to pursue the ideal of a Kingdom of Heaven on earth, it involved maintaining a way of life of its members and even made arrangements for their private lives. Thus, the Jesus Family became more focused on the business in this living world. This phenomenon echoes the concept that the present world is vital in the pursuit of collective transcendence. The concern of well-being in the present world is also observed in Chinese Christians today.

4.3.2 Legacy of Popular Religion

It is inevitable to make use of local religious terms in the early preaching of a foreign religion. Therefore, Buddhist terms were employed in the translation of Christian literature.[687] The Jesus Family, among others, exhibited the legacy of popular religion, such as the shadow of the Dharma boat. The legacy of popular religions can also be found among contemporary Chinese Christians.

In contemporary China, Protestant churches are broadly classified as three-self churches and house churches. In cities in China, there emerged gatherings of young professional Christians, and Christian groups were formed, which have been distinct from the three-self churches and traditional house churches since the 1990s.[688] Sociologist Jiang Hua Yang and his team conducted surveys on four Christian churches in Wanshi, Hunan, in the period 2008 to 2014. He discovered the characteristics of the village churches as follows:[689]

1) believers are mainly composed of aged people, women and those of low education. Women compose 70% of the members;
2) the gospel is preached through human relationships and the heritage of family faith; and
3) conversion to Christianity is mainly for pragmatic reasons, for example healing by faith, resolving family problems, and so on. Faith healing is usually

687 See discussion in sub-section 4.2.2.

688 Ju Hong Ai (艾菊紅), 'New City Churches: Xi An Church as an Example' in Shi Ning Gao (ed.), *A Kaleidoscope of Fields: The Development of Christianity in Contemporary China* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2018) 150.

689 Village churches are also divided into three-self churches and house churches. Nonetheless, the church members are villagers and their behaviours will exhibit the characteristics of grass-root believers.

encouraged by family members or friends to illustrate the preaching by means of human relationships and family networks.[690]

It is worth noting that the village churches preached the gospel by means of human relationships and family networks, which agrees with Fei's proposed social network. Furthermore, the Christian converts share desires similar to those of popular religion believers and the grass-root Christians of the early nineteenth century, i.e., pursuit of healing and well-being.

Ka Lun Leung studied the characteristics of village churches in the reformation period and opines that all surviving religions in China have a legacy of popular religion.[691] Coincidently, similar rituals are found in popular religious beliefs and popular Christianity, as tabulated below:

	Popular religious sect	**Popular Christianity**
Animism[692]	All illness and misfortunes are owing to ghosts or devils, and religious ceremonies will be needed to exorcise them.	Prayer, hymn, and Bible, etc., are regarded as holy things for exorcising devils.
Taboos[693]	They believe that ghosts or deities will affect daily life and there are lots of taboos in marriage, funerals, festivals, and ancestral worship, etc.	Some popular Christian sects also have taboos on mensuration, and banning leavened food, etc.
Three *kalpic* disasters[694]	Three *kalpic* disasters of the Eternal Mother myth.	The belief of disasters mixed with Christian eschatology.

The village churches have experienced a marked decline since the late 1990s because many young people have joined the labour force of migrant workers in cities.[695] That said, the characteristics of village house churches can be found in the belief of migrant-worker-Christians.

Since the three-self churches and the new young professional churches could not absorb all the migrant-worker-Christians, and because there are geographical and traditional differences between city and country churches, migrant workers formed their

690 Jiang Hua Yang (楊江華), 'Chinese Village Churches in Transformation: Based on field surveys at Wanshi, Henan Province' in Gao, *A Kaleidoscope of Fields*, 145-6. The pragmatic attitude toward Christianity found in the period 2008 to 2014 is the same as that found in the 1980s. See discussion in sub-section 4.2.2.

691 Ka Lun Leung, *Churches in China: Today and Tomorrow* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 2006) 111.

692 Ka Lun Leung, *The Rural Churches of Mainland China since 1978* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1999) 415-6.

693 Ibid, 417-8.

694 Ibid, 418-9.

695 Francis K. G. Lim, 'New Developments in Christianity in China', *Religions* 11(1) (2020) 3.

own churches in cities.[696] The Chinese anthropologist Jian Bo Huang has conducted field work in a migrant worker church in Beijing, which he calls 'Church A'. Church A was planted by a country house church in 2001 and grew to more than one thousand members and twenty-seven gathering points in five years. Huang found that the church members were taking a pragmatic approach in their faith and shared similar backgrounds: a) they sought for exorcism or healing in the church; and b) many had suffered various difficulties, such as serious illness, before their conversion to Christ.[697]

The pragmatic approach of migrant-worker-Christians resembles the attitude toward Chinese popular religions. One of the prayer traditions in popular religions of China is 'the reciprocity between humans and gods: if a person prays in the correct manner, gods are almost constrained to respond'.[698] Hunter and Chan interviewed Christians in Fujian Province and found that the concept of reciprocity was still prevalent in these communities. This is the concept of money offering, similar to the incense offered to Buddha so that believers would receive help from above.[699] The practice of 'reciprocity' between humans and gods resembles the calculation of human relationships in Chinese culture.[700]

In the 1980s, healing was 'one of the most important factors in the spread of Christianity' in China. In fact, 'calling on spiritual beings for healing and exorcism has long been a core feature of Chinese religious life'.[701] This thesis is not going to criticise the faith of the migrant-worker-Christians, but it reveals that Christianity may be an alternative to heterodox belief for needy people. The cultural marks of human relationship and the desires of healing and well-being are inevitably transformed from popular religion to Chinese Protestant churches.

For the elite class Chinese, their pursuit of Great Harmony is a mirror of the 'popular messianic beliefs in Chinese history'.[702] The Great Harmony is pursued by means of human efforts for the setting-up of a more perfect society.[703] Thus, the theme

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696 Jian Bo Huang (黃建波), *Country Churches in Cities* (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma Press, 2012) 64.

697 Huang, *Country Churches in Cities*, 68-70.

698 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 142.

699 Ibid, 144.

700 See the discussion in sub-section 3.3.2.

701 Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, 145-6.

702 Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 237. The Jesus Family's pursuit of Great Harmony has been discussed in sub-section 4.3.1.

703 Lian named the reformer of the late Qing dynasty, You Wei Kang, and the Communist Party founders Ze Dong Mao and Dai Ying Yun to illustrate their pursuit of a Great Harmony society by means of revolutionary actions. Cf Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 237-8.

of ‘saving China’ is dominant in the theological discourses of the early twentieth century. Sino-centrism, one of the characteristics of the concept of collective transcendence, is also found among the elite class Christians.

4.4 Dialogue with Elite Class Christians and New Confucians

There was a demand for indigenous Christianity in the early twentieth century and mainly elite class Christians were involved in the theological discourses. Historically, Christianity started its influence in China in 1851 when mass conversions took place under the banner Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Lian believes that Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was a significant indigenous movement in the nineteenth century. However, the Boxer Uprising broke out in 1900 against Christianity.[704] Therefore, scholars usually study the indigenisation of Christianity or dialogue with Chinese culture from 1900 onward. The Chinese religious scholars Qi Duan and Xin Ping Zhuo have grouped the indigenisation and development of Christian theology in China in different periods, as tabulated below:

	Duan[705]	**Zhuo**[706]
Around 1900 to 1949	Identification with Chinese culture	-
1950s	Characterised by patriotism and three-self movement[707]	-
1980s	Integration with Chinese culture and society	• Chinese theology of three-self churches • Sino-Christian theology • Academic theology
Mid and late 1990s	Duan just mentions that theological thought ‘acquired greater depth’ since the 1990s	

Since Protestantism spread to China in the nineteenth century, Chinese churches have been aware of the need to fit in to Chinese society. The terms indigenisation, localisation, and contextualisation of Christian churches have been used to denote the harmonisation with Chinese culture and fitting in to Chinese society. These terms bear

[704] Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*, 21, 26 and 31.

[705] Qi Duan, (段琦), ‘The Reconstruction of Chinese Christian theology’ in Xin Ping Zhuo (ed.), Zhen Chu and Caroline Mason (trs.), *Christianity* (Boston: BRILL, 2013) 31.

[706] Xin Ping Zhuo (卓新平), ‘The Status of Christian Theology in China Today’ in Xin Ping Zhuo (ed.), Zhen Chu and Caroline Mason (trs.), *Christianity* (Boston: BRILL, 2013) 7.

[707] Chinese churches in the early twentieth century were thought to be connected with the ‘imperialist countries’. Thus, the Chinese government required the churches to be self-governing, self-financing, and self-preaching (the three-self principle) and encouraged the Three-Self movement. Cf Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016) 164.

more or less the same meaning as Sinicization of Christianity.[708] The Officer of the National Ethnic Commission of the People's Republic of China, Wei Qun Zhu (朱維群), said, '[We need] to love the country and abide by the law; support Chinese Communist Party and socialism; follow the regulations; organise religious activities in accordance with the regulations.'[709] In 2007, the then CCP Chairman Jin Tao Hu (胡錦濤) reported that '[w]e will fully implement the Party's basic principle for its work related to religious affairs and bring into play the positive role of religious personages and believers in promoting economic and social development'.[710] Accordingly, the chief academic officer Man Hong Lin (林曼紅) of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary encouraged Chinese churches to bear witness to Christ 'through active engagement in society and in serving people, pouring out its strength in developing welfare work for the betterment of society and as a means to building a harmonious society'.[711] Fuk Tsang Ying summarises the requirements as 'love country and love religion'.[712] This thesis regards that 'love country and love religion' is the goal of Sinicization.

The CCP attempted to achieve the goal of Sinicization through the TSPM.[713] In March 1949, CCP invited Yao Zong Wu (吳耀宗) to discuss Christianity.[714] In 1950, Wu set the objective of the TSPM as to stop the influence of Western society and the bondage of traditional Chinese thoughts on Chinese Christianity.[715] In order to advocate TSPM, the TSPM Committee invited Christian churches to join the movement.

The political movement 'Great Leap Forward' in 1958 was to raise agricultural and industrial productivity. In this exciting atmosphere, CCP moved a step forward to change Christian institutions and to cancel Christian denominations. The reason was that denomination was the legacy or symbol of imperialism. Chinese churches were

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708 Daniel Ling Li (李靈), 'Arguments due to Sinicization of Christianity', *Journal of Research for Christianity in China* 6 (2016) 4.

709 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 203.

710 Jin Tao Hu, 'Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress', China Internet Information Centre web site (http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm#4 accessed 13 September 2024).

711 Man Hong Lin (林曼紅), 'What Is Needed for Church-Run Social Service in China', *Chinese Theological Review* 23 (2011) 37.

712 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 205.

713 See sub-section 3.1.2 for the background of Three-self Patriotic Movement.

714 Ka Lun Leung (梁家麟), *Y. T. Wu's Understandings of Christianity and Its Relation to Chinese Communism* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1996) 25.

715 Fuk Tsang Ying (邢福增), *Christianity's Failure in China?: Essays on the History of Chinese Communist Movement and Christianity* (Hong Kong: The Logos and Pneuma Press, 2008) 131. See sub-section 3.1.3 for the background of TSPM.

then combined and held congregations regionally and were called TSPM churches. As a result, the number of churches in Beijing and Shanghai in 1958 was reduced from 65 to four and 208 to 22 respectively.[716]

In sum, Sinicization of Christianity aims to detach the Chinese church from Western influence and urges believers to love the country and accept government ruling.[717] Given the variety of theological discourses and social situations developed in the twentieth century, sub-section 4.4.1 seeks to identify appropriate elite class Christians for in-depth discussion. Sub-sections 4.4.2 to 4.4.5 will review the historical context for theological discourses in the first half of the twentieth century and the thoughts of Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu.

4.4.1 Theological Discourses and Chinese Culture

Duan comments that Chinese is a 'practical' nation and the theological debates were 'imbued with the spirit of pragmatism, practicability, efficacy and utilitarianism' in the 1950s.[718] Pan Chiu Lai, a religious scholar from Hong Kong, points out that theological discourses took place in the period of the 1920s to the 1930s, intended to defend Christianity against scientism and nationalism, etc. In the latter half of the twentieth century, theological discourse turned to the adaption to socialism.[719]

Theological discourses have changed since the 1980s, and Zhuo distinguishes three kinds of 'theologies' that emerged in China.[720] He briefly introduces these as follows:

a) Chinese theology – the theological framework for the three-self churches or official churches. An example is about a theology of love;[721]
b) Sino-Christian theology – a mother-tongue theology. It 'intends to shift theology from the "ecclesiastical" to the "humanistic"'; and

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716 Ying, 'Christian Church under the Chinese Communist Government', 221-2.
717 See sub-sections 3.1.3 and 4.4.7 regarding the political and cultural views respectively on Sinicization.
718 Duan, 'The Reconstruction of Chinese Christian theology', 40.
719 Pan Chiu Lai, *Transmission and Transformation: Christian Theology and Cultural Traditions* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd., 2006) 149.
720 The reformation period commenced in 1978, and religious activities and various thoughts became active after the suppression in the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, various 'theologies' have developed since the 1980s.
721 Guang Xun Ding proposed the concept of cosmic Christ and theology of love.

c) academic theology – it 'has a neutral attitude towards faith'. The theological inquiry is in the 'context of mainland Chinese society and culture'.[722]

Many of the participants of Sino-Christian theology and academic theology are outsiders of church. They are called cultural Christians. David Jasper believes that the publishing of *Sino-Christian Studies in China* in 2006 launched the development of Sino-Christian theology in contemporary China, in which many cultural Christians were involved.[723] There is overlap in regard to scholars who are involved in Sino-Christian theology and academic theology. Jasper reports: 'Sino-Christian scholars were often academics within philosophy departments, without any church affiliation, frequently remaining unbaptised and as a result viewed with some degree of suspicion by members of Chinese Christian churches.'[724]

Zhuo agrees that Sino-Christian theology is a theology of confession because the people involved are willing to have a 'face to face encounter with the Christ event'. However, this face-to-face encounter is positioned between the confession of Christ and a neutral stance on the issue of faith.[725] Here Sino-Christian theology is close to academic theology in that the scholars involved sought to study Christianity via a rational humanistic approach. Thus, it is not surprising that this humanistic theology lacks a spiritual dimension. Sino-Christian theology may be entirely divorced from a church setting and it is 'as being from Chinese academia for Chinese academia' in China.[726] Jasper is aware of the characteristics of Sino-Christian theology: 'It is significant that there is hardly any discussion of spirituality in the essays in [*Sino-Christian Studies in China*]. There is, on the other hand, a great deal of cultural and socio-political reflection. … Christ-event is often articulated in terms of the Chinese sage within the Confucian tradition.'[727] Coincidently, Zhuo admits that 'Sino-Christian theology has had a complex relationship and an unfinished dialogue with the Confucian tradition'.[728]

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722 Zhuo, 'The Status of Christian Theology in China Today', 7.

723 David Jasper, 'Issues in Sino-Christian theology', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 19(2-3) (2019) 120.

724 Jasper, 'Issues in Sino-Christian theology', 121.

725 Zhuo, 'The Status of Christian Theology in China Today', 15.

726 Chloë Starr, 'Introduction' in Chloë Starr (ed.) *Reading Christian Scriptures in China*, 8 as cited by Jasper, 'Issues in Sino-Christian theology', 121.

727 Jasper, 'Issues in Sino-Christian theology', 121. *Sino-Christian Studies in China* is a volume of essays published in Hong Kong in 2006.

728 Zhuo, 'The Status of Christian Theology in China Today', 17.

It is worth noting that Sino-Christian theology was developed in the reformation period when an atmosphere of nihilism spread over China.[729] Meanwhile, the Chinese government supported the establishment of the International Confucianism Association in 1994. The Confucians involved are called New Confucians in Mainland China. This thesis regards that the scholars involved in Sino-Christian theology sought to have dialogue with Confucianism to seek an ideology suitable for Chinese people. Although cultural Christians and New Confucians are detached from Chinese churches, the thoughts of their representative figures, such as Xaio Feng Liu and Qing Jiang, will be briefly discussed in sub-sections 4.4.6 and 4.4.7 respectively in order to understand the influence of the concept of collective transcendence on Christianity.

Regarding the contribution to the contextualisation of Christianity in the first half of the twentieth century, Zheng Hao Zhang and Fu Chu Zhou share a similar view to Tze Ming Ng in which both grass-root class Christians and elite class Christians have been involved. Zheng and Zhou differentiate two different classes of theologians, namely elite intellectuals and local theologians. Shi Lin Zhao and Qi Duan,[730] as well as Zhang and Zhou,[731] have identified the elite class theologians to be Zi Chen Zhao, Lei Chuan Wu, Fu Ya Xie, Yao Zong Wu, and Guang Xun Ding, among others.

Among the above-named intellectual Christians, Fuk Tsang Ying identifies Yao Zong Wu and Guang Xun Ding as the leaders of patriotism.[732] The theme of patriotism was dedicated by the Chinese government with the political intention of regulating religion.[733] Thus, the Chinese theology of the three-self churches is not directly related to the influence of Chinese culture and will not be further investigated in this thesis. On the other hand, the theological thoughts of elite class Christians in the upper half of the twentieth century are worthy of discussion since they are influenced by the trend of adaptation of Christianity in Chinese culture. In addition, their thoughts reflect the

729 See discussion in sub-section 3.1.1.

730 Shi Lin Zhao (趙士林), 'Introduction' in Shi Lin Zhao (趙士林) and Qi Duan (段琦) (eds.), *Judujiao Zai Zhongguo: Chujing Hua de Zhihui* (Christianity in China: Wisdom of Contextualisation) (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2009) 19-29.

731 Zheng Hao Zhang (張證豪) and Fu Chu Zhou (周復初), 'The Unaccomplished Sinification of Christianity: Establishment of Sects and Theologies', *Journal of Research for Christianity in China* 6 (2016) 28.

732 Fuk Tsang Ying, 'Demarcation of the History of Chinese Christianity since 1949' in Man Kong Wong et al. (eds), *Between Continuity and Change: Studies on the History of Chinese Christianity since 1949* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 2017) 9-10.

733 Chinese churches in the early twentieth century were thought to be connected with the 'imperialist countries'.

theme of saving China, which is the pursuit of a kind of 'salvation' through cultural reformation.

The elite class Christians in the early twentieth century have appropriated the metaphysical concepts of *tian*, *dao*, and union of *tian* and humanity in their interpretation of Christianity. Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu represent two different approaches in the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. Therefore, the following sub-sections will first review the historical context for those Christian intellectuals. Second, some of the thoughts of Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu are discussed through the hermeneutic lens of the notion of 'collective transcendence'.

4.4.2 Historical Context of Theological Discourses in the Twentieth Century

China was defeated in the Opium War (1839-42) and there remained a sentiment of anti-imperialism thereafter. Unfortunately, missionary preaching in China was thought to be associated with imperialism, and Christianity was accused of being used to weaken the Chinese resistive mind to imperialism.[734] Thus, there was an identity crisis for Chinese Christians. Chloë Starr explains this embarrassing situation in the early twentieth century:

> The dual nature of Chinese and Christian proved a weighty proposition at a time when national identity was rocked by political, cultural, and literary revolution, and simultaneously threatened by foreign invasion and the influx of foreign products, yet was also nourished by international currents, new gender understandings, and solidarity movements.[735]

In this connection, most Christian intellectuals of the upper half of the twentieth century called for indigenous Christianity to harmonise with Chinese culture.[736] Wing Hung Lam suggests that there are five modes of indigenous theology in China:

a) Christian faith in classical Chinese culture: Chinese culture should be retained, and Christianity should become a new force to maintain the values of traditional culture. The representative figure is Lei Chuan Wu;[737]

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734 Leung, *Churches in China*, 8.
735 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 42.
736 Li, 'Harmonisation Theology of Wu Lei-chuan', 171.
737 Wing Hung Lam (林榮洪), *Chinese Theology in Construction* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House Ltd., 1980) 102-3.

b) Integration of culture: Intellectuals who loved Chinese culture attempted to find Jesus' words to support Chinese traditions. The representative figure is Zhi Xin Wang;[738]

c) Complementary to Chinese culture: This camp believed that Christianity would improve and supplement Chinese culture. The representative figures are Zhuo Min Wei and Zi Chen Zhao;[739]

d) Dipolar opposition: This is the view of Ming Dao Wang, a fundamentalist and a local church leader. He perceived church and society as two forces pushing the world in opposite directions. Thus, contextualisation in his mind was to introduce Christianity to Chinese people as a religion, which did not have much relation to the culture;[740] and

e) Christianity judging culture: This is the view of Yi Jing Zhang. Zhang did not agree to the Confucian view on the development of human society through human efforts to harmonise with the sky (*tian* or heaven) and the Earth. He believed that God controls the cosmic order. Human achievements were the result of *dao* (heavenly principle) that functioned in human's heart and mind. Thus, he proposed Christian faith to be a yardstick to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese culture.[741]

Coincidently, Zi Chen Zhao, Lei Chuan Wu, and Zhi Xin Wang each wrote a book with the title 'Christianity and Chinese Culture'.[742] It implies their interests and efforts to overcome the heterodoxy of Christianity in order to harmonise it with Chinese culture. Moreover, Zhi Gang Zhang regards these Christian intellectuals as not only doing contextualisation theology for Christianity, but also attempting the development of Christianity with the theme of saving and reviving China.[743] The five modes of theological discourses observed by Lam are about the definition of Christianity, its cultural identity, and the method to combine these two items.[744]

738 Ibid, 108.
739 Ibid, 109.
740 Ibid, 115-7.
741 Ibid, 119-22.
742 Li, 'Harmonisation Theology of Wu Lei-chuan', 172.
743 Zhi Gang Zhang (張志剛), 'T. C. Chao's Thoughts on "Sinicization of Christianity"', *Journal for Research of Christianity in China* 17 (2021) 21.
744 Lam, *Chinese Theology in Construction*, 123.

Sub-sections 4.4.3 to 4.4.5 are not intended to be a comprehensive review of the theological thoughts of Zi Chen Zhao and Lei Chuan Wu. Instead, the discussions will focus on the influence of the notion of collective transcendence on their thoughts.

4.4.3 Zhao's Thought: Difficulty of the Concept of Union of Heaven and Humanity

Starr regards Zi Chen Zhao[745] as a leading academic in Republic China.[746] Sze Kar Wan believes that Zi Chen Zhao 'was unquestionably the best-known Protestant theologian China had ever produced'.[747] In the atmosphere of saving China in the early twentieth century, Zhao knew that there were deficits in Chinese culture which needed improvement. He stated his view about the characteristics of Chinese culture in his article in the *Chinese Recorder*:

a) Dogmatism and conservatism: the Chinese mind 'meets almost everything with a theory inherited from its remote ancestors, it is nevertheless logical and consistent in its deductions'.[748]
b) Utilitarianism and formalism: 'Religion, ethics, philosophy, custom, tradition, politics, and government, must all conserve the values discovered in the experiences of the forefathers in order that their children may enjoy a life of peace, labor, and satisfaction, here on earth.' Utilitarianism was associated with formalism. Confucianism believed that 'forms symbolize the inner qualities of a man's character and represent the workings of the universe. Hence when the forms are properly observed the spirit will be right'. [749]
c) Atheism and animism: Zhao referred to Daoism thought that *dao* is impersonal and religion is not needed.[750] This is one of the causes of the atheism and animism of Chinese people. He observed that the 'Chinese mind thinks in terms of man, not of God; in terms of the human, not of the divine; in terms of cosmic

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745 Zi Chen Zhao is also known as T. C. Chao in Wade-Giles phonetic system. All references to Zhao's writing are cited in the name of Zi Chen Zhao with 'T. C. Chao' in brackets in this thesis for consistency.
746 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 74.
747 Sze Kar Wan (溫司卡), 'Poised between Grace and Moral Responsibility: T. C. Chao's Interrogation of the Ethics of Romans', *Sino-Christian Studies: An International Journal of Bible, Theology & Philosophy* 4 (2007) 41.
748 Zi Chen Zhao, 'The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind', *Chinese Recorder* 49 (1918) 288.
749 Zhao, 'The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind', 290, 292.
750 See the discussion of *dao* in sub-section 4.1.1.

processes, not of the personal. The yearning of the finite for the Infinite, of the limited for the limitless is somewhat satisfied by its ethical attainments.'[751]

Zhao's understanding of atheism and animism is based on the view of human cosmic position in the Chinese mind:

> Heaven and earth have manifested a moral constancy in their uniform ways. The Universe is a system and not Chaos. In all the works of nature is found an exhibition of sincerity which, in turn, ought to be the starting point of a moral life. Consequently the individual begins with bringing to light the manifest virtue (i.e., the open secret of nature) inherent in himself, and ends in assisting Nature to perform its work of nourishing and developing life.[752]

Zhao's understanding of the Chinese cosmic view resembles that of Zong San Mou about morality and life.[753] Zhao's observation reinforces the implication of the concept of collective transcendence that Chinese people are interested in the pursuit of well-being in the present world. Thus, Chinese thinkers deal with 'the affairs of this world, with present prosperity and immediate happiness'.[754]

Zhao endeavoured to save China through the appropriation of Christian doctrines and practices. He understood that God's love is for everyone and that Chinese Christians need to participate in God's love through sharing with others in the world. Alexander Chow believes that there are three phases in Zhao's theology:

a) Purification: to ensure 'the essence of Christianity … [suits] … the modern era'.[755]
b) Sinicization: 'the essence of Christianity could now be clothed with a Chinese garb, sewn largely with the threads of Confucianism';[756] and
c) Catholicisation: although Zhao proposed Sinicization of Christianity, he 'did not envision a Chinese church alienated from Western Christians'. Instead, he hoped that 'Chinese Christianity could become a significant member of a "universal homogenous consciousness."'[757]

However, David Tai contends that these three phases are not isolated from one another and Zhao's thought should be understood in the Chinese context. The purpose of

751 Zhao, 'The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind', 295.
752 Zhao, 'The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind', 294.
753 See discussion of Mou's thought in sub-section 2.4.2.
754 Zhao, 'The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind', 290.
755 Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology*, 69.
756 Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology*, 72.
757 Ibid, 76.

'purification' is to suit the context of Chinese culture while this suitability will become a part of Catholicisation. Sinicization and Catholicisation interact with each other because when Christianity becomes one of China's religions, it demonstrates the adaptability of Christianity. Sinicization and Catholicisation are the methodology and mission of Zhao's theological thought respectively.[758]

In the phase of Sinicization, Zhao struggles with the atonement, and moral requirements for an individual.[759] His struggle is a typical response of Chinese intellectuals because Confucians assume that human nature is sufficient to pursue moral perfection. If an individual endeavours to cultivate oneself and meet the moral obligations, it is questionable whether atonement is necessary.[760] As such, Zhao's theological thought is also known as ethical theology.[761] Shi Lin Zhao gives an overview of Zhao's ethical theology, as follows:

a) Love between God the Father and the Son is close to *ren* (benevolence). God's love can be the source of value in Chinese ethics;
b) Traditional filial piety is governed by ancestors' teachings and moral laws. These principles originated from the reflection of ordinary people and therefore they represent limited truth only. The relationship of the Holy Father and Son is the model for filial piety;
c) The *tian* (sky or heaven) is the source of all values in China. Therefore, there is a concept of 'union of sky (heaven) and humanity' in traditional culture. However, *tian* is assigned an impersonal character that will not be able to communicate with human beings. This is the deficiency of the concept of union of sky and humanity. Thus, *tian* should be regarded as the Christian God so that the concept of union of sky (heaven) and humanity will be manifested in China;
d) Christianity provides additional ethical discourse for Chinese culture on the transcendental dimension, i.e., relationship between God and human beings. It will enrich Chinese art on the presentation of transcendental ideas; and

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758 David Kwun Ho Tai (戴觀豪), 'T. C. Chao's Early Indigenous Theology with Ecumenical Vision', *Jian Dao: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 57 (2022) 66.

759 Wan, 'Poised between Grace and Moral Responsibility', 41. Wan cites Zhao's writing in *Xi Yu Ji* (Imprisonment) to illustrate Zhao's struggle on salvation without moral achievements.

760 Wan, 'Poised between Grace and Moral Responsibility', 42.

761 Xiao Feng Tang (唐曉峰), 'Zi-chen Zhao's Ethical Theology' in Shi Lin Zhao (趙士林) and Qi Duan (段琦) (eds.), *Judujiao Zai Zhongguo: Chujing Hua de Zhihui* (Christianity in China: Wisdom of Contextualisation) (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2009) 33.

e) Since Chinese culture pursues the achievement in the present world, it is instrumental in nature. This instrumental characteristic cannot satisfy the spiritual needs of Chinese people. Christianity fills this void and enriches Chinese ethical teaching.[762]

Zhao hits the point regarding the 'impersonal character' of *tian* and the pragmatic attitude of Chinese culture. This impersonal character causes difficulty in the pursuit of the perfect moral life in Confucianism.

In his article 'Christianity and Confucianism', Zhao points out that there is a 'power of righteousness' felt by people. He does not explicitly state the source of this power. Since he believes that 'the notion of union of sky (*tian* or heaven) and humanity is the fundamental thought of Chinese',[763] this power is from the sky. He elaborates the difficulty of pursuing a perfect moral life as follows:

a) Human nature is assumed to be good and there is a 'power of righteousness' felt and experienced by human beings. 'It is immanent and divine';
b) People can cultivate themselves to pursue growth and a better self or to be a superior man or woman;
c) Thus, salvation from an external source is not necessary; and
d) In reality, however, most people are below the standard of a virtuous superior man/woman.[764]

Zhao adds that the Neo-Confucians in the Song dynasty proposed that people abandon their own self to harmonise and unite with the principles of sky and earth. This proposition is based on a deep experience of pursuing the harmony and unity with the principles of sky and earth. However, no further explanation and procedure have been given to enable the achievement of such harmony and unity.[765] In sum, the problems in Confucianism regarding the pursuit of a perfect moral life are: a) impersonal *tian* (sky or heaven) and doubt as to how it can communicate with people; b) the subject who 'felt' the power of righteousness or heavenly principle (*tian dao*); and c) the Neo-Confucian's experience of unity with the principles of sky and earth has not been explicitly shared with ordinary people.

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762 Shi Lin Zhao, 'Introduction', 19-21.
763 Zi Chen Zhao (趙紫宸), 'Christianity and Chinese Culture' in Xiao Yang Zhao (ed.), *Zhao Zi Chen's Articles* (*Zhao Zichen Juan*) (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015; original work in *Truth and Life* 2 (9-10) (1927)) 168.
764 Zhao, 'Christianity and Confucianism', 593-4.
765 Zhao, 'Christianity and Chinese Culture', 169.

Zhao's contribution is his awareness of the impersonal *tian* (sky or heaven) in Chinese culture.[766] This impersonal *tian* causes difficulty in the pursuit of perfect moral life and the manifestation of Mou's immanent transcendence. Concerning the feasibility of collective transcendence, the presupposition is the survival of the collective society over time. This presupposition implies that Chinese culture is superior to other culture so that Chinese people will have a better chance of survival than others. However, the difficulty of the implementation of Confucian ideal, i.e., the perfect moral life, challenges the assumption of the cultural superiority. To overcome these problems, some Christian teachings may be able to supplement the deficit of Chinese culture.

4.4.4 Zhao's Thought: Expected Contribution of Christianity

In the process of 'purification' of Christianity, Zhao regards the 'essence' of Christianity as God's love.[767] Love is a characteristic of personality. In contrast to the impersonal *tian* (sky) in Chinese culture, the personal Christian God can communicate with human beings through his 'personality'. This ability to communicate with human beings is a kind of union of heaven and humanity. It will compensate for the deficit of the Chinese impersonal *tian* (sky). Thus, Christianity provides people with the foundation of the unity of heaven and humanity.[768]

As Chinese culture focuses on the achievements in this present world, Christianity will 'contribute the needed other-worldliness to the Chinese people'.[769] Zhao perceived that the contribution of Christianity to Confucianism is threefold: a) experience of God; b) sense of sin; and c) other-worldliness. Zhao interprets that the 'experience of God' leads 'human [beings] into the realm of mystery, where there is communion with transcendent Reality'. He regards the experience of God, which 'is revealed in the Word Incarnate, Jesus, the Christ', as the greatest contribution to Confucian culture. What is the subject for communion with the transcendent Reality? Zhao uses the terms 'human soul' and 'individual soul' as a subject which will not be satisfied with the pursuit of Confucian ethics. However, this soul can experience God

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766 Muslim Dai Yu Wang was also aware of the lack of a personal god in Chinese culture. See discussion in 5.2.3.

767 Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology*, 76.

768 Tang, 'Zi-chen Zhao's Ethical Theology', 98.

769 Zhao, 'Christianity and Confucianism', 596.

and needs salvation. Zhao's soul refers to Augustine's saying, 'My soul finds no rest until it rests in Thee.'[770]

It is worth noting that Confucianism in general uses 'heart' or 'mind' to represent the inner person who will pursue perfect morality. This 'heart' or 'mind' will be satisfied when a perfect moral life is achieved.[771] In contrast to the traditional impersonal *tian* (sky or heaven), Zhao introduces 'soul' for communication with the personal God. The communication is the experience of God. Thus, Zhao intends to contrast Confucian *tian* and humanity with the Christian God and the human soul respectively. Zhao believes that Christianity provides Chinese people with a foundation for enabling the union of sky and humanity: 'With this foundation, people will have the pillar of morality and the source of religion. Without [this foundation], … people will not have a united [religious] experience, which is the basis for both physical and spiritual lives.'[772] Zhao tries to address the Confucian problems in the pursuit of a perfect moral life in three steps: a) introduction of a personal Christian God to replace *tian*; b) making use of the Christian notion of 'soul' to replace the Confucian heart or mind in the sensing and understanding of heavenly principle. The heavenly principle is incarnated as Jesus the Christ, and the human soul can commune with Christ. It is experience of God that leads Chinese people to other-worldliness; and c) this experience of God is universal and forms the basis for physical and spiritual lives.

Zhang and Zhou regard that Zhao has endeavoured to do contextualised theology in order to adapt Christianity to satisfy the needs of Chinese people. However, Chinese culture is dominant in his thought and there is insufficient support from biblical study in his proposition.[773] For example, his proposal to apply Holy Father and Son relationship to filial piety is not appropriate. He disregards the very nature of this divine relationship, which is different from a relationship of consanguinity. That said, Zhao has identified the problem of Chinese culture regarding the provision of transcendental function to Chinese people. While he maintains Confucian ethics to be the state ideology for Chinese people, he urges people to know the Christian God and shift their focus to other-worldliness.

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770 Ibid, 595-6.
771 See discussion of Zong San Mou's thought regarding inner moral intuition in sub-section 2.4.2.
772 Zi Chen Zhao (赵紫宸), 'New Wine', *Truth and Life* 4 (9-10) (1929) 13.
773 Zhang and Zhou, 'The Unaccomplished Sinification of Christianity', 29.

Although his position is to 'use' Christianity to save China, he introduces this religion for the pursuit of the transcendental reality. In comparison to the utopia pursued by the Jesus Family, Zhao's utopia is the pursuit of other worldliness, not this present world. His contemporary, Lei Chuan Wu, stands at a different position in the contextualisation of Christianity.

4.4.5 Lei Chuan Wu's Christology: Jesus as a Sage

Lei Chuan Wu was one of the best educated of all converts since he obtained a high degree in the imperial examination.[774] Thus, he was a native Confucian before his conversion to Christ. Although he could not speak a foreign language, he was appointed as the principle of Yanjing University.[775] Wu was an important figure in the contextualisation of Christianity in the early twentieth century.[776] Since his proposed Christology is Sino-centred, it is controversial, and Zi Chen Zhao criticises that there is no God in Wu's Christology because it is based on a humanistic point of view and does not preach traditional Christianity.[777]

In fact, Wu's intention was to save China with help from Christianity. He said that his target of reading the Bible was to save himself and other people.[778] Although there were voices to renew Confucianism, Wu mainly proposed harmonisation of Christianity with Confucianism.[779] For harmonising Christianity with Confucianism, he transformed his understanding of God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit to *tian* (sky), sage, and *ren* (benevolence) respectively.

He first sought to understand what *dao* (principle) is. He believed that there is only one true *dao* in the cosmos. In Confucianism, this *dao* is expressed as the *tian* (sky or heaven), which has its own will. In Christianity, God is another symbol of *dao*, i.e., God is equivalent to *tian* in Confucianism.[780] Thus, the Christian God is impersonal and

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774 Starr, *Chinese Theology*, 129.

775 Hui Liang (梁慧), 'How do Modern Chinese Christians Read Bible?: Principles and Methodologies in Lei-chuan Wu's and Zi-chen Zhao's Bible Reading' in Archie Lee (ed.), *Text and Identity: Chinese Writings of Chinese Christian Intellectuals* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2005) 316.

776 Liwei (李韋), 'Harmonisation Theology', 175.

777 Chan, 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology of Wu Lei-chuan', 263-4.

778 Liang, 'How do Modern Chinese Christians Read Bible?', 314.

779 Liwei, 'Harmonisation Theology', 191. Wu was also aware that traditional rituals and culture had lost their social functions to maintain social progress, and Christianity would be an external driving force to renew Chinese culture. However, Wu did not provide sufficient analysis on the approach to renew Chinese culture through Christianity. Cf Liwei, 'Harmonisation Theology', 200-1.

780 Chan, 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology', 266-8.

naturalistic in his mind.[781] He said, 'Human being is originated from *tian* and ontologically united with *tian*. When human being rebelled from *tian*, human being separated from it.' He believed that this separation could be overcome by means of sincerity, as suggested by *Zhongyong*.[782] Wu's view resembles that of New Confucian Zong San Mou,[783] and it implies that people's efforts, in terms of sincerity, will enable them to understand God's will. This is the Confucian concept of the union of heaven and humanity. Thus, Wu undermined the transcendental nature of the Christian God. His solution for saving China was still following Confucian thought, i.e., pursuit of a perfect moral life, but the Christian God was provided as an alternative of *tian*.

Second, he compared Jesus to a Confucian sage. He argued that both the Book of Isaiah and the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* covered the virtues of sages. In the Book of Isaiah, the Christ is portrayed to be righteous, just, and faithful, while in *Zhongyong*, Chapter 32, people revere, believe, and are pleased with the sage. Wu believed that Christ resembles a sage in Confucianism, yet Confucian sages do not have mysterious characteristics.[784] His elaboration of the 'sageliness' of Jesus is as follows:

a) Jesus' sacrifice on the cross resembles Confucian *Junzi* (superior man) who will 'sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete';
b) The foundation of Jesus' great personality is owing to 'his knowing of the God. His God becomes widely known because of Jesus' great personality'; and
c) Jesus manifests God's will on earth.[785]

Jesus then carries the mission of a sage who will lead the society to a brighter future. In Wu's article, he suggests that:

> Although the Kingdom of Heaven is a Jewish term, its hidden meaning is not necessarily the same as that in Jewish wishes. … Therefore, Jesus' proclaimed Kingdom of Heaven is not necessarily the same as that comprehended by John [the Baptist]. Thus, it is appropriate in our time to understand this Kingdom is Jesus' ideal new society.[786]

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781 Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology*, 66.
782 Zhen Chuan Wu (Lei Chuan Wu), 'Christmas Greetings', *Zhenli Zhoukan* (Truth Weekly Journal) 39 (1923) as cited by Chan, 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology', 268.
783 See the argument of Zong San Mou regarding the understanding of heavenly principle in sub-section 2.4.2.
784 Liwei, 'Harmonisation Theology', 193.
785 Chan, 'Exploration of the Confucian Christology', 275.
786 Lei Chuan Wu, 'Jesus' Ideal New Society and the Issue of its Manifestation', *Life* 5(8) (1925) as cited by Liwei, 'Harmonisation Theology', 196.

As such, Wu proposed five characteristics of the Kingdom of Heaven: a) there is no King in the Kingdom; b) the right of private property is abandoned; c) people need to work hard before the award of living materials; d) love is the foundation of the Kingdom; and e) there is no religious liturgy in the Kingdom.[787] Wu's intention is clear. He accepts the humanity of Jesus and expects that the learning of this humanity will help build a new and more perfect society. Thus, Jesus is a model of a sage who can save China. Zi Chen Zhao comments that Wu regarded religion as the driving force of a society. However, Wu did not provide the justification of this claim. The plain fact is that Wu did not have a clear object of faith. His religious belief was used for the pursuit of well-being for people.[788]

Third, Wu conceived that the Holy Spirit is equivalent to Confucian *ren* (benevolence).[789] That said, he was aware of the difficulty in explaining the equivalent of the Holy Spirit to *ren* with respect to John 17:6, which states, 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you.' As *ren* is always present in the human heart, why did Jesus say that the Holy Spirit, *ren* in Wu's mind, would not come to the disciples if he did not go away? Wu argues that when Jesus was sacrificed, the disciples were touched, i.e., the principle of *ren* came to this world.[790] Yet he did not further elaborate on the function of the Holy Spirit if it is equivalent to *ren*. One of the reasons may be that Confucianism has difficulty in defining *ren* and *ren* is impersonal. Wu's understanding of the Holy Spirit deviates from the traditional understanding of the Trinity in Christianity.[791]

Although Wu's thought appears to be strange, Ken Pa Chin thinks that he was doing a form of liberation theology in his time. Wu advocated Christianity to take a revolutionary role to bring the fruits of freedom, equality, and fraternity to China so that China could be saved.[792] In fact, Wu made clear his position in the study of Christianity, which was 'China-centred', i.e., the goal of his study of Christianity or Chinese culture was to benefit China.[793] This 'benefit' is the earthly achievement of building a new society, i.e., Wu's utopia is to be established in this present world.

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787 Ibid, 196.
788 Zhao, 'Jesus as Christ: Comment on Wu Lei-chuan's Christianity and Chinese', 320-1.
789 Wu, *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 39.
790 Wu, *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 59.
791 Cf Nicene Creed.
792 Ken Pa Chin (曾慶豹), 'Wu Leichuan and "Revolutionary Christianity"', *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture* 32 (2014) 177-8.
793 Wu, *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 2.

Wu's position echoes the spirit of the slogan 'Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application' in the May Fourth Movement. This slogan expressed the thinking of Sino-centrism. As discussed in the above sub-sections, Sino-centrism and cultural superiority are the presuppositions of collective transcendence. Wu's appropriation of Christian teachings was to re-build the falling society that China might maintain its cultural superiority. Furthermore, he proclaimed that there was no king in the Kingdom of God. This thesis concludes that Wu pursued cultural transcendence rather than religious transcendence in Christianity.

4.4.6 Cultural Christians: Individual Faith

Xiao Feng Liu can be portrayed as 'the leading figure and a symbol of the "cultural Christian"'.[794] Since he studied German and French literature,[795] his knowledge of Christianity is not primarily from biblical study but more from literature. As he puts it: 'What first drove me to know more about Christianity were the novels of Dostoevsky and of Hugo, Shestov's penetrating "swansong," and Scheler's phenomenology of values.' Liu subsequently read the Bible through the lens of his understanding from literature. Although there was critique of his 'unorthodox' biblical reading, he insists that existential or intellectual preconceptions are unavoidable in biblical interpretation.[796]

Unlike Christians in the early twentieth century, Liu's stance is not to save China by the Christian faith.[797] He explains that his reading of Dostoevsky's novels raised philosophical questions of 'absolute kinds, and not of a nationalist kind'.[798] The term 'absolute' here refers to absolute *value* or *spirit* which substantiates humanity and social order. Liu considers that the choice of a spirit is a free action, which is something personal. Therefore, an individual does not necessarily have to follow any historical legacy and national tradition in the choice of a spirit.[799] In turn, having considered the

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794 Fredrik Fällman. 'Faith, Hope, Love and Modernity Reflections on "Cultural Christians" in Contemporary China', *Monumenta Serica* 54 (2006) 407.

795 Fällman. 'Faith, Hope, Love', 407.

796 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 141.

797 Jin Sun (孫津), 'Does Liu Xiao-feng have a Concealed Agenda? On *Towards the Truth on the Cross*', *Twenty-First Century* 9 (1992) 43.

798 Xiao Feng Liu (劉小楓), 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*' in Xiao Feng Liu, *Sino-theology and the philosophy of history: A collection of essays by liu xiaofeng* (Leopold Leeb (tr.); Leiden: BRILL, 2015) 140.

799 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 142. Based on the original Chinese writing, this thesis has changed some of the English translation for clarity.

personal nature of spirit, he then left 'the road of an intellectual liberation of the nation … to return to the question of conviction in one's personal life' after completion of his work *Lyricized Philosophy*.[800] While Liu's major work *Delivering and Dallying* maintains that 'suffering people are saved through Jesus' love',[801] his major concern is the deficit found in Chinese culture:

> His criticism centres around the Confucian focus on man and the importance to merge personal character and social order into one, subjectively and objectively becoming one. Individual character was to be realised in the will to behave according to filial piety, to serve as righteous ministers, and to adapt to the limited means of a *junzi* [superior man].[802]

Liu has studied the beliefs of Confucianism and Daoism and found that they share similar views regarding *tian* (sky): '*Tian*, human beings, and all things have their life and will. In fact, the whole universe is flooded with life.'[803] According to Liu, this life represents the wills found in the universe (*tian*). He understands that Confucians 'trust in their moral sense and knowledge when applying their rationality to implement social ethics, i.e. personal cultivation, regulation of family, governance of the state, and eventually the kingdom was made tranquil and happy. Therefore, a perfect world can be realised.'[804] On the other hand, Daoists believe that 'people should return to nature in order to release them from [the bondage of] the unfortunate situation of world history. Daoism approaches transcendent status and the state of expecting nothing through the attitudes of anti-history and anti-morality.'[805] In this sense, it releases people from the Confucian rigid value system, but at the same time it ignores the concern of pursuing values in life.[806] Thus, Liu regards that Daoism helps people 'survive in a cool, illusive and unjust world'.[807] Liu's view is based on his interpretation of Zhuangzi's thought.

Actually, the Daoist Zhuangzi proposed the concept of 'dallying'. Zhuangzi is the author of the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*. The first chapter of *Zhuangzi* is 'Dallying

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800 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 141.
801 Xiao Feng Liu (劉小楓), *Delivering and Dallying* (2nd edn.; Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2007) 31.
802 Fällman. 'Faith, Hope, Love', 409.
803 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 105.
804 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 79.
805 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 80.
806 Chong Guang Zhai (翟崇光) and Zi Meng Wang (王梓萌), '*Delivering and Dallying* as Civilization Monitoring', *Cultural China* 117 (2023) 53.
807 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 182.

Wandering' which also translates as 'Free and Easy Wandering'.[808] Thus, dallying refers to a state of being free and easy. This is a mental stage to liberate oneself from the difficulties in reality. How can one achieve this mental stage? The secret of success is to reassess the value of life such that one will be free from the pursuit of fame, well-being, power, social status, etc.[809] Liu may well be correct: there is a lack of divine concept in Daoism such that Daoists pursue liberation from life's difficulties by means of changing the value of things in the present world.

Liu further summarises the three teachings in China regarding the suppression of sin: Confucian ethics to maintain social order; Daoism's intoxication to escape from the burden of sin; and Buddhism's cancellation of human feelings to overcome sin. Regarding Christianity, he realises that God's love saves the falling world.[810] Liu concludes that 'Confucianism and Daoism share the same view about union with everything [in the universe, i.e. following the natural rules]. Yet their destinations are different.'[811] Although the Daoist Zhuangzi advocated the concept of dallying while Confucianism sought a perfect society, Liu believes that they share the same spirit of 'dallying' which pursuing happiness in the present world.[812]Liu understands that the fundamental difference between Western culture and Chinese culture is that Chinese pursue dallying while Western people ask for salvation or deliverance.[813] Liang Jie Zhao summarises Liu's views about the spirits of 'delivering' and 'dallying' as tabulated below:[814]

Spirit of delivering	Spirit of dallying
Asking for God's salvation.	Believing human life is self-sufficient.
Suppressing [nature of desires in] human life.	Developing the potential of human life.
Sympathetic to human sufferings and concerning sin [in the world].	Expecting human achievements and indifferent to human sufferings.

808 Cf Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (tr. Burton Watson; New York: Columbia University Press 1968).

809 Gu Ying Chen (陳鼓應), *Zhuangzi's Open Mind and Re-assessment of Value: New Assessment of Zhuangzi's Theory* (Beijing: Chunghua Book Company, 2015) 5-6.

810 Liang Jie Zhao (趙良杰), 'Lost in Phenomenology: Comments on the Views of Xiao Feng Liu in his Work *Zhengjiu yu Xiao Yao*', *Literature and Art Studies*, 9 (2014) 154.

811 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 114.

812 Zhao, 'Lost in Phenomenology', 151.

813 Liu, *Delivering and Dallying*, 30.

814 Zhao, 'Lost in Phenomenology', 152.

Yue Hong Li understands Liu's 'dallying' to be about value judgment of things of value or happiness. In general, a valuable thing or the sensation of happiness has finitude and will not have eternal or absolute value. However, people assign absolute value to things or sensations of happiness according to their own value judgment. The assumption of absolute value enables them to enjoy happiness found according to their value judgment and finally to escape from human suffering.[815]

Arnold Sprenger believes that Liu 'deplores the fact that in the Confucian ethical system there is little or no concern for suffering, man's weaknesses, temptation, despair, death'.[816] Sprenger may well be correct: Liu explained that his critique 'was directed mainly against the modern Confucians and their understanding of China's spiritual tradition', and 'the purpose of this book [*Delivering and Dallying*] was to approach the absolute spirit, not the spirit of the West or of China'. He criticises the spirit of dallying and says that it will make Chinese people stick to the present life and reject the transcendent world. This tendency encourages Chinese people to rely on human efforts in the pursuit of well-being while it discourages their pursuit of the meaning of life through transcendent means.

Liu did not think that he could introduce Christianity to China because many Chinese intellectuals had already introduced it in the early twentieth century. However, their 'understanding of Christianity was to a great extent determined by consciousness of national competition'.[817] Liu, rather, liberates an individual from the bondage of a nation, a collective society in China, and considers that acceptance of the Christian God's grace is a personal choice. This personal choice will finally enable an individual to become a human being, not a saint as proposed by Confucianism.[818]

This liberation of an individual from Confucian ethical requirements disregards the revival of traditional rituals and Sino-centrism as discussed in sub-section 3.2.2. The reality is that China remains a collective society and people are living in webs of human relationships.[819] Liu's views reveal 'a certain impatience with his own people

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815 Yue Hong Li (李躍紅), *Growing Opinion in the Impact of Western Thoughts: Discussion of the Influence of Sino-Christian Theology on Philosophy of Individualism* (*西學東漸浪潮下的思想脈動: 論漢語神學對中國個體主義哲學的影響*) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2017) 344.

816 Arnold Sprenger, 'A New Vision for China: The Case of Liu Xiao Feng', *Inter-Religio* 19 (1991) 14.

817 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 142-3.

818 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 143.

819 See sub-section 2.4.1.

and traditions'.[820] Nonetheless, according to Liu, God's love 'illuminates our earthly life and reevaluates all our values and value systems'.[821] The reflection of value systems will be a direction for dialogue with Chinese culture.

4.4.7 New Confucians: Loyal to the Nation

New Confucians in China reactivated in the 1980s when the reformation period began.[822] The goal of New Confucians in Mainland China aimed to develop political Confucianism which would influence the reformation of China. It was influential because there was a need to re-establish the social order and moral standard.[823] One of the leaders of the New Confucians is Qing Jiang (蔣慶).[824] Jiang insists that there is perpetual conflict between Christian faith and Chinese culture, his argument being based on the right of survival of every culture and the collective nature of Chinese society.

Jiang believes that an individual is destined to live in a historical-cultural context.[825] Since human beings cannot survive without attachment to any people group, nations are the most suitable model for collective life.[826] Jiang's view is that the finitude of human beings restricts their activities in specific historical and cultural settings. As such, human faiths and judgments are restrained by their historical-cultural background.[827] In Confucianism, this historical-cultural background consists of five human relationships: between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the interactions between friends. Three of the human relationships are family relationships. Yue Hong Li regards that individual characters and feelings are suppressed in this historical-cultural background.[828] Zhi Ming Ke argues that although historical legacy

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820 Sprenger, 'A New Vision for China', 18.
821 Sprenger, 'A New Vision for China', 20.
822 See sub-section 2.2.1 for the development of New Confucianism.
823 Qiang Xiao (肖強), 'A Critique of Contemporary New Confucians in Mainland China: Taking Jiang Qing, Kang Xiaoguang, Yu Donghai, Chen Ming, and Yao Zhongqiu for Examples', *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 1 (2017) 21. See section sub-section 3.1.1 regarding the spread of nihilism and the re-establishment of moral standard.
824 Xiao, 'A Critique of Contemporary New Confucians in Mainland China', 22.
825 Qing Jiang (蔣慶), *Political Confucianism: Turning, Characteristics, and Developments of Contemporary Confucianism* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2003) 418.
826 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 425.
827 Zhi Ming Ke (柯志明), 'Individual and History: Reflection on Mr Jiang Qing's "Christian Faith and Chinese Culture"', *Legein Monthly* 208 (1992) 36.
828 Li, *Growing Opinion in the Impact of Western Thoughts*, 48.

and cultural heritage influence human behaviours, human beings actively take part in history and develop new culture.[829]

Jiang further argues that if universal truth does exist then people will understand it in the context of a historical-cultural environment through their language, customs, traditions, and ways of thinking. Therefore, universal truth can only be found in a specific historical and cultural context.[830] Thus, while Christian faith is the realisation of the human mind toward universal truth and ultimate value, this realisation can only be manifested in a particular historical and cultural context. Therefore, Christian faith is one of the historical-cultural faiths.[831] Indeed, non-believers will not necessarily perceive the Christian faith to be merely a personal faith but the faith of a particular nation or nations.[832]

In Confucianism, solidarity is important to stabilise a society, and therefore a *junzi* (superior man) has to unite with history, social order, and heavenly principle (*tian dao*).[833] For Jiang, national spirit is the core element of a nation and a strong cohesive force to maintain the solidarity of a nation. Thus, national spirit is a national sign.[834] In his view, the world is classified by means of countries and nations. Since individual faith is developed in a particular historical-cultural context, it is manifested as a national spirit.[835] Furthermore, national spirit is bound by national characteristics which, of course, have the tendency to cause tension in the encounter of two nations with different national characteristics. Accordingly, the Christian faith appears as a national spirit in the encounter with Chinese culture and there will be inevitable cultural conflicts and tensions between them.[836] Thus, Xiao Feng Liu agrees that 'modern encounter between China and the West will unavoidably lead to a spiritual conflict'. And given that this spiritual wrestling is about true humanity and disorder in the world such wrestling in this sense will be 'a purely personal thing.'[837]

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829 Ke, 'Individual and History', 38.
830 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 421.
831 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 422. Jiang has not explicitly stated that he agrees with the claim of universal truth found in Christianity. He may be responding to such a claim in his book *Political Confucianism*.
832 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 423.
833 Zhai and Wang, '*Delivering and Dallying* as Civilization Monitoring', 51.
834 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 426-7.
835 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 424.
836 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 428.
837 Liu, 'Preface to the Revised Version of *Zhengjiu yu Xiaoyao*', 142.

It is helpful, in this context, to consider Ping Cheung Lo's comment that people's attitudes in the encounter of the two cultures are important in avoiding confrontation. Lo finds a counter example of the acceptance of foreign faith, which is the spread of Buddhism in China. In addition, he refers to the view of Yi Jie Tang that Chinese culture can absorb external resources for transformation and improvement. In response to Lo's comments, Jiang states his worry that Chinese culture is at a disadvantage in the encounter with Western culture. It will be absorbed in Western culture if Chinese people do not regard it as the principal position.[838] Jiang then states that a Chinese has dual roles in the pursuit of religious faith. A Chinese can pursue the faith individually while he or she is also a member of Chinese culture and needs to carry on national life which is based on Confucian culture. Therefore, Christian faith in China can only be a personal faith, not a national faith.[839]

As discussed in sub-section 4.4.2, Chinese intellectuals attempted to improve society and to save China in the early twentieth century. For example, Zi Chen Zhao opined that the mission of Christianity was not only to save individuals but also to save the society in which individuals were living.[840] Jiang actually follows this line of thinking, that individuals and their society are not separable. Thus, foreign ideology, such as Christianity, will pose a threat to Chinese culture.

While Jiang considers that an individual needs to be loyal to his/her nation, Ke opines that every individual is an autonomous being. An individual has rationality to decide which valuable things and goals to pursue. Past history is the product of human activities that pursued valuable things and goals. This pursuit of valuable things and goals is not absolute nor ultimate and is subject to variation. It will then produce future history. Therefore, we do not need to strictly follow historical legacy and cultural heritage.[841] And regarding the relationship between nation and individual, Xiao Feng Liu opines that 'the truth and value of this present world should be measured from the

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838 Ping Cheung Lo (羅秉祥), 'Jinag Qing on the Inevitable and Perpetual Conflict between Chinese Culture and Christian Faith: Analysis and Evaluation' in Rui Ping Fan (範瑞平), *Confucian Dao and Modernity: Dialogue with Jiang Qing* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2008) 127-8.

839 Jiang, *Political Confucianism*, 430-1.

840 Li, *Growing Opinion in the Impact of Western Thoughts*, 299.

841 Ke, 'Individual and History', 40-1.

relationship between God and human beings but not from the relationship between nation, territory, history, and human beings'.[842]

Although contemporary China is modernised, Jing's traditional view believed that Chinese culture is a collective culture which is based on the blood lineage system. Li considers that this blood lineage system provides a metaphysical or ultimate function through modelling morals in Chinese culture as 'universal truth'. This universal characteristic implies eternality. For an individual, then, becoming a clan member means overcoming individual finitude to enjoy eternity.[843] This is the concept of collective transcendence. As such, Christianity needs to address the concern of collective transcendence in the dialogue with Chinese culture.

4.4.8 Summary of the Findings

The elite class Christians in the early twentieth century intended to develop Christianity with the intention of saving and reviving China. In order to achieve such purpose, they needed to improve Chinese culture with the religious elements of Christianity. Regarding the Confucian doctrine of the unity of *tian* (sky) with humanity, one of the theologians, Zi Chun Zhao, was aware that the Confucian *tian* was impersonal and would not disclose its will, if any, to human beings. Thus, it is likely that there will be various versions of the unity of heavenly principle (principle from sky). This impersonal *tian* causes difficulty in the pursuit of a perfect moral life and the manifestation of Mou's immanent transcendence.

It is worth noting that Chinese culture is dominant in Zhao's thought, and there is insufficient support from biblical study in his proposition. For example, he disregards the very nature of the divine relationship between Holy Father and Son, and proposes this divine relationship as applying to filial piety. That said, Zhao has identified the problem of Chinese culture regarding the provision of transcendental function to Chinese people. His contemporary, Lei Chuan Wu, stands at a different position in the contextualisation of Christianity.

Wu made clear his position in the study of Christianity, which was 'China-centred', i.e., the goal of his study of Christianity or Chinese culture was to benefit China. This 'benefit' is the earthly achievement of building a new society, i.e., Wu's

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842 Xiao Feng Liu (劉小楓), *Towards the Truth on the Cross: Introduction to Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H.K.), 1990) 295.

843 Li, *Growing Opinion in the Impact of Western Thoughts*, 39.

utopia is to be established in this present world. Wu's position echoed the spirit of the slogan 'Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application' in the May Fourth Movement. This slogan expressed the thinking of Sino-centrism. As discussed in the above sub-sections, Sino-centrism and cultural superiority are the presuppositions of collective transcendence. This thesis concludes that Wu pursued cultural transcendence rather than religious transcendence in Christianity.

China entered the reformation period in 1978, which allowed discussion and development of various philosophical and religious thoughts. Xiao Feng Liu became the leading figure of cultural Christians and his work, *Delivering and Dallying*, was influential. He appears to be impatient with his own people and traditions and criticises the Confucian ethical system in that there is little or no concern for suffering, human weaknesses, temptation, despair, and death. He considers that Christian faith is a personal matter which does not necessarily have a connection to Chinese culture. This thesis regards that Liu is in a stage of alienation from Chinese culture.[844]

The characteristic of cultural Christians is that they, in general, do not have any church affiliation and are viewed with some degree of suspicion by members of Chinese Christian churches.[845] In fact, Liu was criticised for his 'unorthodox' biblical reading and he has not attended church regularly. Liu does not satisfy Chinese culture nor fit in to church life. As a result, he pursues liberation from Chinese collective society and Confucian doctrines as well as keeping distance from traditional Christian church. Accordingly, Christian faith becomes a personal matter. This liberation of an individual from Confucian ethical requirements disregards the revival of traditional rituals and Sino-centrism, as discussed in sub-section 3.2.2. The reality is that China remains a collective society and people are living in webs of human relationships.[846] Nonetheless, according to Liu, God's love 'illuminates our earthly life and reevaluates all our values and value systems'.[847] The reflection of value systems will be a direction for dialogue with Chinese culture.

The New Confucian Qing Jiang considers that an individual needs to be loyal to his/her nation. Christian faith represents a faith of a particular nation and Chinese Christians have dual identity. Nonetheless, a Christian needs to be loyal to his/her

844 Cultural alienation is further elaborated in section 4.5.
845 See sub-section 4.4.1.
846 See sub-section 2.4.1.
847 Sprenger, 'A New Vision for China', 20.

country. Thus, Christian faith can only be a personal matter in that the believers need to regard Chinese culture as the principal position. Coincidently, both Liu and Jiang advocate the idea that Christian faith is a personal matter. Liu's stance is to disregard Chinese culture in the Christian faith, while Jiang requests believers to respect and follow Chinese culture in their personal faith. Jiang's stance reflects Confucian ethics, emphasising the absolute primacy and supremacy of the collective over the individual. This primacy and supremacy extend to the age of Communist China.[848]

Jing's traditional view believes that Chinese culture is a collective culture. Such a culture is based on the blood lineage system which provides a metaphysical or ultimate function through modelling morals in Chinese culture as 'universal truth'. This universal characteristic implies eternality. For an individual, then, becoming a clan member means overcoming individual finitude to enjoy eternity. This is the concept of collective transcendence. As such, Christianity needs to address the concern of collective transcendence in the dialogue with Chinese culture.

4.5 Key Elements in an Appropriate Contextualisation Model

People are brought up with the worldview of their cultural circle, which explains and projects the meaning of life and the picture of eternity respectively. That said, an individual will turn to other ideologies or religions if his or her culture no longer provides existential meaning for him or her. Such a person is in a state of alienation from his or her cultural platform. Thus, there is always competition between local culture and foreign religions. Under the regime of collective transcendence in Chinese culture, the family or local community will lose a member when the member converts to Christianity or Islam. The conflict could not be resolved merely by rational arguments, while the best solution is that all family members convert to the same faith.

Although Niebuhr classifies different relationships between Christianity and culture, there is a mix of different relationships in real situations.[849] This thesis proposes that there is a cycle of conversion for Chinese people. First, an individual alienates from Chinese culture and enters into a foreign belief. Under the emotional tie with the family or community members, a convert will seek to introduce the foreign faith to his family and community members by harmonising the religious doctrines with ethical values

[848] See sub-section 3.1.3.
[849] Cf H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1st ed.; New York: Harper, 1951).

found in Chinese culture.[850] That is, a convert first experiencing a certain degree of alienation from the Chinese culture will tend to accept the notion 'Christ against culture'. However, in trying to explain the gospel to non-believers, Chinese intellectual believers tend to express 'Christ the transformer of culture', that Christianity helps the renewal or progress of Chinese culture.

Accordingly, this thesis proposes some key elements to be included in an appropriate contextualisation model for Chinese people with respect to the previous findings in this chapter. The findings are as follows:

a) Confucian utopia is the pursuit of a perfect ethical life. Ethics are manifested in a collective society whereby achievements of morality will attain well-being in this world. This thesis proposes that Chinese culture implies a concept of collective transcendence and people will pursue the establishment of a community which includes both living and deceased members. This community helps the pursuit of well-being in this world;
b) Heterodox religious sects and local communities were established when the orthodox Confucian utopia collapsed. Christianity, a heterodoxy to the traditional ideology, is regarded as posing a threat to the collective society;[851] and
c) Efforts to harmonise Christianity with Confucianism on the pursuit of a perfect ethical life are not fruitful. The reason is the difference in nature regarding the ideal of a human-constructed ethical utopia and the transcendent characteristic of Christianity.

In accordance with the above findings and the different phase of the cycle of conversion, there are two key elements in an appropriate contextualisation model: a) a distinctive Christian identity; and b) Christianity as a complementary ideology to the mainstream culture.

Christian identity is visualised by means of religious rituals and the proclamation of Christian doctrines. Religious rituals include but are not limited to Sunday worship, Eucharist, and Bible reading. The proclamation of Christian doctrine is not the same as the appropriation of Christian concepts in the traditional ideology.

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850 Our behaviours are restricted by ethical codes. The dialogue between culture and a foreign religion would have to address whether the faith would contradict the ethical codes that reflect the core values of the society.

851 See the discussion in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

The aim of proclamation is to introduce Christian concepts to renew the transcendental dimension of the culture.

One example of a distinctive Christian identity is the involvement in the memorial of ancestors. Christians believe that this ritual is not about worship of deceased family members but remembering the ancestors. Christian refusal to participate in traditional practices such as idol worship and incense burning is not an action against the traditional culture or the concept of filial piety. On the contrary, this action articulates the boundary between this worldliness and other worldliness, i.e., the deceased family members cannot participate the activities of this world while the living members cannot reach the deceased members through 'worship'. Accordingly, a Christian ritual of memorial, such as presenting a bouquet, is performed as a substitutive ritual.

Historically, there was an attempt to appropriate Christian concepts in Confucian ethics in the early twentieth century but it was not successful. The root cause was the different nature of the Confucian notion of utopia and the Christian Kingdom idea of Heaven. Confucian ethics were developed in a stratified society and paved the way for a ruler of high morality. Thus, a perfect moral life is equipped for the building and ruling of a utopia in this world. In Christianity, however, the ruler in the Kingdom of Heaven is not a human being, and the qualification to enter the Kingdom is God's grace – totally different mentalities in Confucian utopia and the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, a distinctive Christian identity helps differentiation of Confucian utopia and the Kingdom of Heaven. This differentiation offers transcendental alternative for Chinese people.

In order to complement the transcendental dimension of Chinese culture, Chinese Christians need to remain as social members of the society. Regarding the findings in chapter 3, a group boundary between Christians and non-Christians is clear but not discriminative, i.e., non-believers find that Christians are warm to them. This implies that non-believers regard Christians as members of society. Based on this finding, Chinese Christians can continue to be social members and actively participate in the development of local communities. Therefore Christian churches should become one of the social institutions, which allow non-believers to cross the boundary of churches for understanding the Christian faith.

According to Fei's social model, Chinese people are in webs of human relationship, which originate from one's own family. Thus, Christian churches can

function as families for believers. In fact, the Jesus Family did try to function as an extended family for its believers but finally it failed. The mistake of the Jesus Family is too dependent on human efforts in the pursuit of utopia on earth. In Christianity, however, the pursuit of salvation is by God's grace indeed.

In contrast to the failure of the Jesus family, house churches proliferate in China although they are not officially registered. This proliferation illustrates the acceptance of the local people of the house churches. House churches resemble the local communities of popular religious sects, in which Christians support and care with each other. House churches are seen as an open-door social institution, which allows people to understand Christian faith.

The focal point of the proposed key elements is to offer a different identity and set of values to Chinese people. This approach has a different focus in comparison to the contextualisation advocated by the elite Christians of the early twentieth century. The latter sought to understand and use Christianity from a Confucian perspective. This approach seeks to express Christianity in the form of an alternative for transcendental life for those people alienated from Chinese culture. That said, this approach also suggests Christians maintain their identity as social members and testify to the alternative lifestyle – with hope for the Kingdom of Heaven.

4.6 Concluding Remarks: This Worldly or Other Worldly

This chapter reviews the interaction between Christianity and Chinese culture through the examination of the effectiveness of transcendental function in Chinese culture. The success or failure of this transcendental function, which is the concept of collective transcendence, creates different attitudes toward Christianity: a) Christianity may pose a threat to Chinese society because the converts are alienated from Chinese culture; and b) Christianity is an alternative for satisfying the transcendent desire of Chinese people. The former represents Sino-centrism and pursues a better society through the renewal of Confucian ethics in Chinese culture. The latter indicates that people have been marginalised from Chinese culture to a certain extent and they pursue transcendence in other-worldliness.

The responses to Christianity with respect to grass-root class Christians and elite class Christians have been reviewed. In general, grass-root class Christians pursue well-being in this world, particularly with regard to healing of sickness and seeking

protection from devils. Elite class Christians conduct theological discourse about Christianity and culture. The theme is to save China through the learning of the spirit of Christianity.

The first observation concerns the failure or insufficient transcendental support from Chinese culture. In times of natural calamities and wars, orthodoxy ideology does not guarantee escape from these adverse situations. Thus, people needed to seek alternative means transcendental support. Those people, who were mainly grass-root class villagers, became alienated from the orthodox ideology and formed heterodox religious sects. According to Chu, sectarian hope for salvation resides in a multiple space-time structure. In general, three cosmic disasters (three *kalpa*s) are expected before the final salvation. This imagination of salvation is shared with popular Christianity.[852] An example is the Jesus Family. Both Lian and Tao regard the concept of the Ark in the Jesus Family as an adaption of this salvation imagination.

The second observation is about the establishment of local communities found in religious sects. The purpose of these local communities is to seek to collaborate and survive in difficult times as well as to wait for their religious salvation. Why did they establish not only temples but also local communities? The heterodox nature of these sects might have difficulty in establishing temples publicly. Another reason is that these local communities were not only for religious purposes but were also gatherings of manpower to help each other to survive in adverse situations. Thus, human efforts are involved in the struggle for survival in the present world while waiting for salvation in the other world. In Tao's idea, the sectarians pursued their own utopia through the establishment of local communities.

The third observation concerns the pursuit of utopia on earth. Chinese culture also failed elite Chinese intellectuals. Their pursuit of the traditional utopia, i.e., a ruler of high morality leading the progress of the country, failed after the collapse of the last imperial dynasty. They needed to rebuild their utopia. On the one hand, they proclaimed the failure of Confucianism in the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century and people needed to learn technology from the West. On the other hand, the New Confucians tried to renew the state ideology to suit the modern world. For example, Zong San Mou proposed immanent transcendence to face the challenge of foreign

[852] The idea of cosmic disasters (*kalpas*) is associated with syncretic Daoist-Buddhist millenarianism. It shares similar concepts with Christian millenarianism, although they are not the same.

religion – Christianity. Christian intellectuals, the elite class Christians, tried to direct Chinese people to seek the Christian utopia: complete salvation through Jesus the Christ.

It is worth noting that the utopias pursued by both grass-root class Christians and elite class Christians are related to their present world. Local communities are parts of the religious utopia of grass-root class Christians. Meanwhile, the elite class Christians tried to defend Christianity by proclaiming the complementary function of this religion to Confucian ethics. Zi Chen Zhao rightly points out the drawback of the impersonal Confucian *tian* (sky or heaven). This leads to the difficulty for Chinese people to understand the full requirements of ethics and communication with the will of *tian*. Thus, it is not possible, if not impossible, for Chinese people to achieve a perfect moral life or immanent transcendence as suggested by Mou. Thus, Zhao urges Chinese people to pursue other-worldliness which Confucianism could not offer. Although Lei Chuan Wu also recognised that Confucianism had lost the ability to regulate society in modern time, he insisted that this state ideology could be renewed by learning about the great personality of Jesus. He regarded Jesus as a sage in Confucianism. His utopia was not about transcendence in other-worldliness but focused on the building of a new, brighter society in this present world. This utopia falls back to Confucian ideals and undermines the transcendental function of Christianity.

In general, Chinese contextualisation of Christianity is confined by the thinking 'Western learning as application', i.e., pursuit of benefit to China. If the 'application' is intended to build an ideal society, it usually fails because it disregards salvation in eternity that will not be seen immediately.[853] Therefore, a contextualisation model should exhibit a distinct transcendental feature for Chinese people.

[853] '[A]s we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.' Cf 2 Corinthians 4:18.

5. Muslim Huis and Collective Transcendence

The situations of Muslims and Christians in China are different. Since Chinese Muslims are ethnically different from Han Chinese, they are treated as out-group social members while Chinese Christians are in-group members of Chinese society. If Sinicization is to be imposed on Christians, it will be concerned with an explanation of the religious matters of Christianity in order to harmonise them with Chinese culture. For Muslims, Sinicization may request not only changing their way of life but also compromising their Islamic faith. Against this background, one of the purposes in the contextualisation of Chinese Islam is to preserve Islamic faith. After preserving Islamic faith in a proper way, Chinese Muslims can then interact with Chinese culture to explain their religious transcendence.

In China, the majority are *Han* and account for about 92% of the population. In contrast, Chinese Muslims, consisting of about ten ethnic groups, contributed a mere 1.74% of the total population in 2010. Huis and Uighurs are the two main Muslim groups in China.[854] Since Hui Muslims speak the Chinese language and are spread throughout China, this chapter discusses their efforts to interact with Chinese culture, with a hermeneutical lens on the notion of collective transcendence.

Although Muslim Huis arrived in China as early as the Tang dynasty (618-906)[855] and became a minority group in China, the first writing on Islamic matters in Chinese, the Records of the Renovation of the Mosque in Jinan, was published in 1495.[856] Subsequently there were piecemeal translations of the Quran in the Chinese writings of Dai Yu Wang (王岱輿), Zhu Ma (馬注), and Zhi Liu (劉智) during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Finally, complete translations of the Quran were published during the period 1927 to 1990.[857]

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[854] Cf National Bureau of Statistics, 'Table 1-6: Population by Ethnic Group, Sex, and Region', Tabulation of the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China Website (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm; accessed 20 February 2023). There is no public information available in the latest population data (2018) regarding the populations of ethnic groups.

[855] James D. Frankel, 'Chinese-Islamic Connections: An Historical and Contemporary Overview', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36(4) (2016) 573.

[856] Xiao Chun Yang (楊曉春), *Study of Early Chinese Islamic Writings* (Shanghai: Shanghai Classic Publishing House, 2011) 136-7.

[857] Qi Cheng Ma (馬啓成) and Hong Ding (丁宏), *The Cultural Type and Group Characteristics of Chinese Islam* (Beijing: China Minzu University Press, 1998) 33-4.

It is worth noting that Chinese people treat Muslim Huis as alien in the survey reported in section 3.4 of this thesis. Frauke Drewes has interviewed eleven non-Muslim Chinese. She finds that most of the interviewees identify the ethnicity of Muslim Huis mainly through their clothing and pork taboo. They do not have any background knowledge of Islam.[858] Drewes' interview results agree with the survey reported in section 3.4. One of the reasons is that the closed nature of the Muslim Hui communities easily leads to misunderstanding. Another reason for misunderstanding is the concept of Sino-centrism,[859] which requests foreign ideology/religion to be Sinicized. Osman Chuah describes the situation of Chinese Muslim as follows:

> The religion of Islam as a complete way of life has a great impact over the lives of Chinese Muslims, which makes them different from the Chinese non-Muslims. Because of these differences, social conflict, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping occur and various degrees of acculturation and assimilation determine the nature of their relationship.[860]

Chuah's view tends to be negative, yet his view is similar to that of Raphael Israeli, who conceives that there is uneasy co-existence between Muslim Huis and the Han Chinese.[861] In addition, Israeli regards that the Sinicization of Muslim Huis was mainly material: 'they had adopted Chinese speech, family names, manner of dressing and eating, and they even became ethnically indistinguishable from the Han. But the core of Islamic beliefs appears to have remained intact.'[862]

James D. Frankel believes that the early Muslims resided in China 'not to win converts among the Chinese, but rather to transact and coexist peacefully with them'.[863]

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858 Frauke Drewes, 'Being Chinese and Being Muslim – Portrayals of the Hui Minority by Muslims, Non-Muslims, and the Media' in Gui Rong, et al. (Eds.), *Hui Muslims in China* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016) 103.

859 Sub-section 3.2.2 has discussed that Sino-centrism is in parallel with the idea of China as centre of the world. As early as the twelfth century, lands other than China were usually referred to as barbarian lands. Isaac Halpern believes that this thinking was owing to the concept of Han cultural superiority. Cf Halpern, 'Comparing the Cultural Roots of Islamophobic Policy', 83.

860 Osman Chuah, 'Muslims in China: The Social and Economic Situation of the Hui Chinese', *Journal of Muslim Affairs* 24(1) (2004) 155.

861 Cf Raphael Israeli, *Muslims in China: A Study in Cultural Confrontation* (London: Curzon Press, 1980). Chuah and Israeli represented a school of thought only. It is noted that Gladney does not agree with Israeli. He criticised that Israeli took the Huntington's absolutist position on 'clash of civilizations'. Yet different cultures interreact with one another in reality. Cf Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities and Other Subaltern Subjects* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2004) 101-2. Nonetheless, Chuah and Israeli reflected the fact that Chinese Muslims are under control and monitoring in the PRC.

862 Raphael Israeli, 'The Cross Battles the Crescent, One Century of Missionary Work among Chinese Muslims (1850-1950)', *Modern Asian Studies* 29(1) (1995) 218.

863 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 20.

However, there is a tendency in Chinese culture that tries to 'assimilate diverse religio-philosophical systems of belief and practice'.[864] This thesis regards this tendency as a result of Sino-centrism. Sino-centrism in turn is a sign of collective transcendence.[865]

Thus, the situations of Muslim Huis and Chinese Christians are not the same. Chinese Christians on one hand defend their faith while on the other hand harmonise Christianity with Chinese culture. The intention of this harmonisation is to seek acceptance of Christianity so that Christianity can spread over China. Muslim Huis, as a minority group in China, need to struggle for survival in the shadow of Confucian ideology. Thus, the contextualisation of Chinese Islam is driven from two perspectives: a) the necessity to strive for survival in China; and b) government policies of Sinicization. Therefore, Muslim Huis needed to explain Islamic faith to Han Chinese for harmonisation with Chinese culture in order to survive in China. This need advocated the production of a host of Chinese writings called *Han Kitab* texts, in which Neo-Confucian concepts were utilised to harmonise Islamic faith with traditional Chinese thoughts. In his discussion of the contribution of De Xin Ma, Kristian Petersen mentions that Ma 'employed a number of terms familiar with preexisting Chinese frameworks, but reassigned their meaning as he constructed a portrait of the Islamic worldview'.[866] This is not only Ma's technique to appropriate Chinese metaphysical terms; in fact, the Muslim literati all applied the same technique to explain their Islamic faith as discussed in section 5.2.

The policies of Sinicization have been implemented since imperial periods of China. This thesis perceives that the cultural sense of Sino-centrism advocates the policies of Sinicization. Since government policies are changing from time to time with respect to the political atmosphere and other factors, this thesis does not study the government policies of Sinicization but treats them as a product of Chinese culture. However, Chinese culture was challenged in the encounter with Western civilisation following the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Therefore, the social and political environment changed, and Muslim Huis took the opportunity to distinguish Islamic faith from Confucianism and establish their distinctive Islamic identity. Accordingly, the discussion in this chapter is organised as follows:

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[864] Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 18.
[865] See the discussion in the opening of chapter 4.
[866] Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 77.

g) section 5.1 reviews the Sinicization of Muslim Huis as well as their efforts to preserve the Islamic faith. Against this background, the writing of *Han Kitab* texts evolved, in which metaphysical concepts of Confucianism were used to explain Islamic faith;
h) section 5.2 examines the dialogue between Muslim literati and Confucians through the appropriations of Chinese metaphysical concepts. These appropriations are deemed to be a kind of harmonisation with Chinese culture. However, Muslim literati assigned their Islamic True Lord as the unique source of these metaphysical concepts and implicitly disclosed the 'godless' nature of Confucian ideology. The result of this dialogue was to achieve an orthodox position of Islamic faith in Chinese society;
i) section 5.3 addresses the change of social and political environment in the interaction between Muslim Huis and Chinese culture;
j) section 5.4 is the discussion of key elements in an appropriate contextualisation model for Islamic faith in China based on the above findings; and
k) section 5.5 is the concluding remarks.

5.1 Sinicization of Muslim Huis and Preservation of Islamic Faith

There are about ten ethnic groups in China who follow the Islamic faith. They can be classified into two language groups: the Turkic languages and the Han Chinese language. The Turkic language group includes Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz who live in Xinjiang and other parts in northwest China. Muslims of the Chinese-speaking group are mixed Persian and Chinese descendants and are commonly known as Muslim Huis.[867] The most important Muslim groups are the Muslim Huis and the Uyghurs of Xinjiang.[868]

Historically, both language groups were involved in the activities of rebellion in the imperial period, and this is one of the reasons for Sinicization of Chinese Muslims. Neither the appearance nor the spoken language of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz are Chinese. In addition, these minority groups are related to 'communities outside China, mainly in the former Soviet Union, but with some branches in Afghanistan'.[869]

867 Michael Dillon, 'Muslims in post-Mao China', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 16(1) (1996) 41.
868 Michael Dillon, 'Muslim Communities in Contemporary China: The Resurgence of Islam after the Cultural Revolution', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5(1) (1994) 72.
869 Dillon, 'Muslim Communities in Contemporary China', 74.

Therefore, the Chinese government has different attitudes toward Muslim Huis and Uyghurs.

Against this background, Chinese Muslims lived in a tension of Sinicization and preservation of the Islamic faith. Thus, the social-political context for Sinicization of Chinese Muslims is discussed in sub-section 5.1.1. On the other hand, the preservation of Islamic faith and the harmonisation with Chinese culture in term of *Han Kitab* texts are discussed in sub-sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 respectively.

5.1.1 Social-Political Context for Sinicization of Chinese Muslims

Although the CCP announced that 'various ethnic minorities could keep their own languages, customs and religious freedom', Chinese Muslims suffered persecution during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).[870] The persecution was not limited to Muslims because it was driven by a nationwide political movement. Chinese Muslims bear the labels of national minority and religious minority in China and are subject to the policies for national minority and religious control. The Chinese government treated the two main Muslim groups, Muslim Huis and the Uyghurs, differently. The different degree of control had impact on the contextualisation of Islamic faith in China. The controls on Chinese Muslims can be analysed with regard to cultural and political aspects.

Isaac Halpern regards Sino-centrism as resulting from the thinking of cultural superiority of Han. An example is that lands outside China were marked as 'barbarian' lands as early as the twelfth century. 'Han culture has also exerted extremely powerful influence across Asia, both historically and in more recent years, further increasing the cultural sense of superiority'. This sense of superiority affected 'the relationship between the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese population and government'.[871]

Michael Dillon analyses the political situation of Uyghurs. Turkic-speaking Uyghurs and other minority groups differentiate themselves from the Han people. Moreover, their connections to other members in Central Asia and in Afghanistan 'are likely to encourage ethnic and national consciousness'. Historically, Muslims,

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870 Jian Ping Wang, 'Islam and State Policy in Contemporary China', *Studies in Religion* 45(4) (2016) 567-8.

871 Halpern, 'Comparing the Cultural Roots of Islamophobic Policy', 83.

especially the Uyghurs, 'have a history of secessionist movements'.[872] It is one of the reasons that Chinese government pinpoints Uyghurs.

According to Halpern, the CCP has continuously 'portrayed Islam and Uyghur culture as dangerous, using rhetoric of the war on terror'. Thus, legislation was introduced in 2015 to ban any display of Uyghur culture. It is worth noting that such severe control does not apply to all Muslim groups.[873]

> In contrast with other Muslim peoples (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs), [Muslim Huis] stress their attachment to China and they emphasise their Chinese identity, according to our personal observation and interviews with Hui individuals. This emphasis on difference may be the result of the Uyghur separatist movement which continues to influence much of the current debate on Muslims in China.[874]

In this connection, Uyghurs are deemed as detaching from Han Chinese. Moreover, Turkic speaking Uyghurs have experienced difficulty in learning the state ideology, the Confucianism. In comparison to Hui literati, Uyghurs are less favourable to interact with Chinese culture. Erkan Toğuşlu et al. believe that the acculturation of Muslim Huis to Han culture was due to their wide spreading across China, intermarriage with Han people, and participation in the Han school education system.[875] Politically, Halpern thinks that Muslim Huis are used by the Chinese government to 'act as middlemen between the Han Chinese and other Muslim populations, as well as acting as ambassadors for China in negotiations and trade deals with Muslim states'.[876] Therefore, Muslim Huis are deemed to be more loyal to China in comparison to Uyghurs.[877] The perception of loyalty to Han Chinese is favourable for the interaction between Hui literati and Chinese literati.

Muslim Huis attachment to Han Chinese can be traced back to the Tang dynasty (618-906). During the thirteenth to fourteenth century, Mongols as foreigners ruled China, at the time of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). The freedom of travel in this time

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872 Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community Migration, Settlement and Sects* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999) 179.
873 Halpern, 'Comparing the Cultural Roots of Islamophobic Policy', 80-1.
874 Erkan Toğuşlu et al., 'Being Hui Muslim in China', in Gui Rong et al. (eds.), *Hui Muslims in China* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016) 193.
875 Erkan Toğuşlu et al., 'Being Hui Muslim in China', 193.
876 Halpern, 'Comparing the Cultural Roots of Islamophobic Policy', 81.
877 Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community Migration*, 179.

allowed an influx of Muslims, some of whom rose to high military and civil offices.[878] Muslim Huis thus enjoyed material acculturation in the Yuan dynasty.[879] However, they were pressed into Sinicization under the policy of integration and assimilation in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).[880]

Emperor Zhu of the Ming dynasty 'aimed at integrating the Chinese Muslim into society'.[881] Pillsbury observes that there were four elements of the Sinicization process: 1) adoption of Chinese surnames; 2) gradual adaptation of Chinese dress; 3) adoption of Chinese food habits such as techniques of preparation and use of chopsticks; and 4) local Chinese dialects gradually replacing Arabic and Persian, which were retained only for use as a foreign lexical item among Chinese-speaking Muslim Huis.[882] As a result, 'Muslims have come to a point of forgetting their own native language over time, and have actively experienced the process of Sinicization with the traditional education they received.'[883]

Petersen believes that Islamic literacy in China had been eroded by the imperial Sinicization policies.[884] After years of Sinicization, Muslim Huis were effectively isolated from the Islamic world and connections with external Muslim communities were rare. Chuah finds effects on Muslim Huis: a) there were serious prejudices and persecutions directed against Muslims; and b) the education system was controlled by Han. Muslim Huis needed to learn Confucianism if they wanted opportunities to be officials of the imperial dynasties.[885]

In contemporary China, Muslim Huis usually speak Mandarin and wear clothing similar to Han.[886] Berlie finds that Muslim Huis are close to Han, owing to secularisation in the modernisation process.[887] The analysis of the relation of modernisation and Sinicization for Muslim Huis is stated below:

a) 'The PRC leadership looks at modernization in material terms, with technology as the main index.' Thus, Chinese Muslims can enjoy modern technology and

878 Barbara Linne Kroll Pillsbury, *Cohesion and Cleavage in a Chinese Muslim Minority* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1987) 12.
879 Israeli, *Islam in China*, 119.
880 Israeli, *Muslims in China*, 29.
881 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 41-2.
882 Pillsbury, *Cohesion and Cleavage in a Chinese Muslim Minority*, 13-15.
883 Ceylan, 'A Review on the Huiru Movement', 373.
884 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 34.
885 Chuah, 'Muslims in China', 158.
886 Chuah, 'Muslims in China', 157.
887 Jean A. Berlie, *Islam in China: Hui and Uyghurs between Modernization and Sinicization* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004) 36.

modern life. However, in the struggle to implement modernisation, 'the existing social structure of China is not compatible to the concept of modernisation'.[888]

b) China's focus on learning and using modern technology only in the modernisation process because it sought to keep its own identity and values. Therefore, Sinicization and its complement, 'the unity of all the minorities (*tuanjie*), 'remain national priorities' in the modernisation process.[889]

c) The policy for minority and Sinicization formed a rigid, complex, and legal system, which structured the 'daily life of all Muslim minorities in China'. Muslims were then modernised 'without really knowing that it comes through Sinicization'.[890]

That said, the effect of modernisation on the Islamic faith of Muslim Huis is minimal since modernisation in China is mainly on the side of material civilisation. Thus, Berlie observes that Muslim Huis may feel compelled to secular marriage ceremonies 'but [leave] Islamic rituals unchanged.'[891] Why did Islamic rituals remain unchanged? The means of preservation of Islamic faith is discussed in sub-section 5.1.2.

5.1.2 Preservation of Islamic Faith

On one hand, Sinicization has an effect on the erosion of Islamic faith. On the other hand, Sinicization requests Muslim Huis to practise social relationships in China, i.e., *guanxi* (relationships) and *renqing* (human feelings), which bond Chinese Muslims together. 'Reciprocal and mutual aid ties family, friends, and classmates, sometimes combined with a feeling of Islamic fraternity, which is strong among the Hui.'[892]

In addition to the social cohesion learned from Chinese culture, Islamic communities, or *Jamaat*, also helped to unite Muslim Huis.[893] Mosques are the centre of *Jamaat* in the social structure as well as carriers of Islamic culture. Islamic communities in fact are part of their universal *Umma*.[894] The Muslim literati Zhi Liu

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888 Berlie, *Islam in China*, 35.
889 Ibid, 140.
890 Ibid, 141.
891 Ibid, 144.
892 Ibid, 142. It is another illustration of Fei's social model that an individual forms his/her social network starting from his/her own core family.
893 '*Jamaat* is a transliteration from Arabic, meaning "aggregating, gathering". *Jamaat* shares a similar meaning with "community" and "society" in English.' Cf Ross Holder, 'Bridging Worlds: A Comparative Study on the Effects of Ethno-Religious Policies on China's Muslims' in Gui Rong et al. (eds.), *Hui Muslims in China* (Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press, 2016) 64.
894 *Umma* set Muslims apart from and protected them against all non-believers. Cf Israeli, *Muslims in China*, 39.

explained that *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, was one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith.[895] Pilgrimage to Mecca helped Chinese Muslims refresh their relationship with the Islamic homeland. Petersen reports the achievements of *hajj* for Chinese Muslims:

> [T]he pilgrimage conveyed a sense of communal identification, which transferred Muslims' collective memory or cultural heritage, brought with it religious and social authority, and united Muslims under the banner of Islam as a unified congregation. Advocacy for the pilgrimage, or participation in it, allowed Muslims at the imagined periphery of the Islamicate world to feel their centrality within the Muslim community.[896]

Berlie finds that the *hajj* was made as early as 1405 in the Ming dynasty.[897] Subsequently there have been numerous pilgrimages, such as by Sufi leaders Lai Chi Ma and Ming Xin Ma in the eighteenth century.[898] Muslim literati, such as Dai Yu Wang, Zhi Liu, and De Xin Ma all highly regarded 'the performance of pilgrimage as a religious duty'.[899] De Xin Ma himself began his pilgrimage in 1841 and returned in 1849.[900] The number of pilgrims continued to increase and more than 1,500 pilgrims were sent annually in 2003 and 2004 from the Linxia District.[901] Muslim Huis and other Muslim minorities in China maintain a connection with the Islamic world. Another means for the preservation of Islamic faith is the scripture-hall system (*jingtang jiaoyu*), which was a product of *hajj*. This education system enabled Muslim Huis to study Islam, and it produced a learned group called Muslim literati. They were well trained in Islam and Confucianism and produced a collection of Chinese writings of Islamic faith, called *Han Kitab*. The writings of *Han Kitab* text helped preservation of the Islamic faith and harmonisation with Chinese culture. For a better understanding of these writings, the historical context for the production of *Han Kitab* text is discussed in the following sub-section.

In 1994, the Chinese anthropologist Wen Jiong Yang studied the cohesion and ethnical boundary of Muslim Huis in Lanzhou. Yang conceives that *Jamaat* would have important functions for Huis in Lanzhou:

a) as a Muslim community: leading and uniting Chinese Muslims;

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895 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 69.
896 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 87.
897 Berlie, *Islam in China*, 23.
898 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 94.
899 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 88.
900 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 112.
901 Berlie, *Islam in China*, 24. Linxia is a city in Gansu Province where Muslim Huis gathered.

b) as a Muslim dating centre: centres for Muslim dating were founded in 1995 and 1998 in two mosques of Lanzhou. Since endogamy is the foundation of ethnic networking, these dating centres were established to maintain the endogamy practice because Muslims were spread apart owing to the urbanisation of Lanzhou;
c) as a social network: the Muslim communities in Lanzhou consisted of 89 mosques, 21 cemeteries complexes forming a social network that connected Huis in villages, towns and the city;
d) as the main carrier of social education and culture for Muslim Huis; and
e) as a medium for communication with the public at large.[902]

Although Yang's observation was made in Lanzhou, his observation revealed the important functions of *Jamaat*, which was established in all Muslim groups and provided both social and religious functions to Chinese Muslims.

This thesis considers that *hajj* and Islamic communities have helped the preservation of the Islamic faith since Muslims have been residing in China. Israeli and Gardner-Rush believe that Muslim Huis have two distinctive features for their survival:

> First, the establishment of communities where Muslims constituted either a local majority or local minority formed the basis for an ongoing and self-sustaining society. Second, the constant reference to and adoption of developments in the wider lands of Islam provided Muslims with a continuous renewal of their faith. New sources of cultural and religious identification focused not on their geographical homeland, but on their spiritual homelands to the West.[903]

In contemporary China, the effects of local Muslim communities are seen in their local villages as well as in migrant Hui communities. Zong Bao Ma has studied a Muslim Hui village in south Ningxia of China. Although Muslim Huis share similar clan characteristics with those of Han, the nature of the clan structure is different, as shown in the following table:[904]

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902 Wen Jiong Yang (楊文炯), *The Particulars of Tradition and Modernity*: *History and Culture of Northwest Minority from Anthropological Point of View* (Beijing: Ethnic Press of China, 2002) 268-74.

903 Raphael Israeli and Adam Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam and Sino-Muslim identity in China', *The Muslim World* 90(3-4) (2000) 455.

904 Zong Bao Ma (馬宗保), *A Research on the Living Village of Hui Ethnic Group: Dan Jia Chapter* (Yin Chuan: Ningxia People's Publishing House, 2008) 74-5.

	Muslim Hui Family	Han Family
Memorial of ancestor	• Yes, but do not have ancestor hall, ancestral tablets, and drawings/pictures, etc. • Mainly remember the closest generation, i.e., deceased parents.	• Yes, with ancestor hall, ancestral tablets and drawings/pictures inside the ancestor hall. • All deceased family members are objects of worship.
Written clan regulations or family instructions	No	Yes
Iconic building	Mosque, which in general built at the centre of a village.	Ancestor hall, generally built at the centre of a village.

Ma further observes that Han people conduct ancestral worship on a family basis while Islamic worship is held on a village basis. He concludes that the collectivism of Muslim Huis is stronger than that of the Han people. Muslim Huis are a religious-centred group while Han Chinese is a consanguinity-centred group.[905]

For the cohesion of migrant Muslim groups, Jian Chun Ma and Ning Chu studied the migrant Muslims in the Pearl River Delta areas[906] in 2013. They found that migrant Muslims became united together through the following means:

a) Languages: the major group of the Muslim migrants was Huis. Although they can speak Chinese, their accents are different from Han and caused difficulties in their social life. The limitation of joining local social activities and the religious faith united migrant Muslims and they formed Muslim communities for protection and sharing.
b) Occupation: the language and village background of migrant Muslims limited their choices of jobs. They usually worked in the service sector, such as in halal restaurants and trading of Muslim food. These jobs were coloured with Muslim culture. The in-group gathering and Muslim culture further strengthened their Islamic faith.
c) Food taboo: the food taboo of Muslims helped the development of halal restaurants and the associated supply chain. The establishment of a halal food chain supported Muslims living in the Pearl River Delta.[907]

905 Ma, *A Research on the Living Village of Hui Ethnic Group*, 75.
906 The Pearl River Delta is an economic development zone in south China. Although most of the local people speak fluent Mandarin, they also maintain their dialects. Language can be a barrier for migrant workers to merge into local life.
907 Jian Chun Ma (馬建春) and Ning Chu (褚寧), 'Muslim Population in Mainland and Islam's New Development in Pearl River Delta', *Qinghai Journal of Ethnology* 24(4) (2013) 66-7.

The above findings agree with the first observation point made by Israeli and Gardner-Rush, which is about self-sustaining society. For the second observation point of Israeli and Gardner-Rush, which is about continuous renewal of their faith, the development of different sects or branches of Islam in China is the result of connection with the Islamic world outside China.

Michael Dillon reports that the oldest Muslim sect in China is the *Gedimu*. Muslim Brotherhood spread to China and was named *Yihewani*. In regard to Sufism, it entered China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sufi orders or brotherhoods in China evolved another sect, called *menhuan*.[908] Israeli and Gardner-Rush have summarised the Muslim sects comprehensively into five categories, namely traditional Islam, Sufism, Revivalist Islam, Modernist Islam, and Sinicized traditional Islam. The nature of these sects and their areas of influence are listed in the following table:[909]

	Representative sect(s)	**Dominant areas**
Traditional Islam	*Gedimu*	Coastal areas and northeast China
Sufism	Sufi orders and *menhuan*	–
Revivalist Islam	the *Ikhwan* and the *Salafiyyah*	Areas close to central China
Modernist Islam	Some communities of *Gedimu and menhuan*	Coastal areas
Sinicized traditional Islam	*Xidaotang*	Lintan County, Gansu Province[910]

Although there is no concrete measurement or survey of the affiliation of Muslim Huis, it is generally assumed that the majority follow traditional Islamic faith, i.e. *Gedimu*.[911] Another branch of Sinicized traditional Islam, *Xidaotang*, 'is a blending of the forms of Chinese Sufism with modernist Islamic concepts and indigenous Chinese philosophies'.[912] It was first named as *Jinxingtang* in 1903 and finally called *Xidaotang* in 1909. The founder is Qi Xi Ma and he preached Islamic faith in accordance with the doctrines given in the Chinese writings of Dai Yu Wang, Zhu Ma,

908 Dillon, 'Muslim Communities in Contemporary China', 87. The literal meaning of *menhuan* is 'door of officers'. It is so named because the early believers of the sect *menhuan* were mainly imperial officials.

909 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 444-6.

910 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 444. Israeli and Gardner-Rush state that the dominant place is 'Lintao' in Gansu. In fact, Xidaotang was founded in Lintan, Gansu Province. Thus, this thesis corrects 'Lintao' to Lintan.

911 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 447.

912 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 446.

and Zhi Liu. The sect members of *Xidaotang* participated in agricultural and commercial activities to earn a living for the whole *Xidaotang* community.[913] This thesis regards that the Sinicization of *Xidaotang* concerns not only its appropriation of Chinese philosophies but also the collective religious life. This closed religious community resembles the Jesus Family, which was discussed in chapter 4. It is worth noting that the influence of *Xidaotang* outside its homeland, Lintan County, is very limited.[914] In the survey of migrant Muslim workers in Guangzhou in 2009, *Xidaotang* believers made up only 0.85% of the community.[915]

5.1.3 Han Kitab: A Means of Harmonisation with Chinese Culture

Benite finds that most Chinese Muslim writings were produced in the period 1630 to 1730.[916] These *Han Kitab* texts defined the interaction between Muslim and Chinese culture. After the production of *Han Kitab* texts, Chinese Muslims faced significant suppression in the Qing dynasty. Qing military forces suppressed Muslim rebels in Xinjiang in 1758. The imperial court of the Qing dynasty remained in tension in the nineteenth century. It suppressed Muslim rebels in Yunnan, Dongan, and Xinjiang during the period 1855 to 1865.[917] This tension did not foster Muslims' efforts to harmonise with Chinese culture. Nonetheless, section 5.3 reviews Muslims' efforts in interactions with Chinese culture in late Qing dynasty and in the Republican period.

According to Ertuğrul Ceylan, the beginning of the Islamic faith's intellectual interaction with Confucianism was around the end of the Ming dynasty.[918] Jian Fang Zhang reports that the Muslim literati who actively participated in the Chinese writings were Dai Yu Wang (1570-1660), Zhong Zhang (1581-1670), Zun Qi Wu (1598-1698),

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913 Cf Lintan Government website (http://www.lintan.gov.cn/info/1049/2471.htm#:~:text=1903%E5%B9%B4%EF%BC%8C%E7%94%B1%E9%A9%AC%E5%90%AF%E8%A5%BF%E8%84%B1%E7%A6%BB,%E6%AD%A3%E5%BC%8F%E5%AE%9A%E5%90%8D%E8%A5%BF%E9%81%93%E5%A0%82%E3%80%82; accessed 4 February 2023).

914 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 446.

915 Xiao Yi Chen (陳曉毅), 'On the Present Situation, Existing Problems and Policy Recommendations about Floating Muslims' Cultural Adaptation in Urban Area: A Case Study of Guangzhou Based on the Questionnaire Survey', *Qinghai Journal of Ethnology* 21(3) (2010) 10.

916 Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 2005) 118.

917 Melanie Jones-Leaning and Douglas Pratt, 'Islam in China: From Silk Road to Separatism', *The Muslim World* 102 (2012) 315-6.

918 Ertuğrul Ceylan, 'A Review on the Huiru Movement', 371.

Zhi Liu (1660-1730), Zhu Ma (1640-1711), De Xin Ma (1794-1874), and Lian Yuan Ma (1841-1895), among others.[919]

The Islamic scholars Xiao Qin Ma,[920] Chang Qing Li,[921] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite,[922] Hua Yang,[923] Gui Rong,[924] Kristian Petersen,[925] and others regard Dai Yu Wang, Zhu Ma, Zhi Liu, and De Xin Ma as influential Muslim literati. Thus, a few of their Chinese writings will be referred to in this thesis for the understanding of the efforts of Muslim Huis to harmonise their faith with Chinese culture. Part of the works of these literati is listed below, in chronological order:[926]

Author	Work (year)
Dai Yu Wang (王岱與)	*Zhengjiao Zhenquan* (正教真詮), (1642)
	Xizheng Zhenda (希正真答) (1658)
Zhu Ma (馬注)	*Qingzhen Zhinan* (清真指南) (1683)
Zhi Liu (劉智)	*Tianfang Xing Li* (天方性理) (1704)
	Tianfang Dianli Ze Yao Jie (天方典禮擇要解) (1708)
	Wu Gong Shiyi (五功釋義) (1710)
	Tianfang Zimu Jie Yi (天方字母解義) (1710)
	Tianfang Zhi Sheng Shilu (天方至聖實錄) (1721)
De Xin Ma (馬德新)	*Si Dian Yao Hui* (四典要會) (1859)

Petersen argues that the scripture-hall system provided a suitable environment for the development of *Han Kitab* texts.[927] It was established to counteract the assimilation into Chinese culture and society.[928] After his return from *hajj*, Deng Zhou Hu (胡登洲) (1522-1597) established the scripture-hall system. This system was successful because it provided Arabic and Persian texts as primary resources, a

919 Jian Fang Zhang (張建芳), 'The Establishment of Theory and Approaches for the Integration of Islamic Faith and Traditional Chinese Culture', *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu* 3 (2015) 159.
920 Cf Ma, 'Interpretation of Islamic Faith through the concepts of Confucianism', 5-9.
921 Cf Chang Qing Li (李長慶), 'Union of Islamic Culture and Chinese Traditional Culture: Brief Introduction to the Chinese Writings of the Four Muslim Literati of Ming and Qing Dynasties', in Editorial Board of Chinese Literature and History et al. (eds.), *Sino-Islamic Culture* (Beijing: Zhong Hua Book Co., 1996).
922 Cf Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*.
923 Cf Hua Yang (楊華), 'The Origin and Evolution of Hui Ethics', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies* 1(2007) 45-8.
924 Cf Gui Rong, 'Collective Feature, Identity Construction and Cultural Adaptation: Interaction between Hui Muslim Society and the State' in Gui Rong et al. (eds.), *Hui Muslims in China* (Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press, 2016).
925 Cf Kristian Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*.
926 Ceylan, 'A Review on the Huiru Movement', 378.
927 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 34.
928 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 43.

formalised curriculum, and learning materials for students. In addition, Chinese was one of the teaching languages. Therefore, Hu's students continued his mission and the scripture-hall education system was proliferated in Muslim groups. The use of the Chinese language enabled the production of *Han Kitab* literature, which began in the seventeenth century.[929] Xiao Chun Yang has analysed the purposes of writing *Han Kitab* texts. One of the reasons is to help Muslim Huis, who could not speak Arabic or Persian languages, to learn Islamic faith.[930] 'Han Kitab evolved eventually to encompass commentaries and comprehensive treatises, including the original works of scholars like Wang Daiyu, Ma Zhu, and Liu Zhi.'[931]

Benite finds that Chinese Muslim writings are owing not only to individual interest but also to a collective intention. They were a group belonged to scripture-hall system. 'The group consisted of authors, translators, editors, and publishers, as well as contributors of prefaces, greetings, and postscripts, not to mention those who supplied financial assistance.'[932] Israeli and Gardner-Rush opine that, 'under tremendous Chinese pressure for acculturation', these Muslim literati 'sought renewal of their communal identity' through their Chinese writings.[933] The academic achievements and influence of Dai Yu Wang, Zhu Ma, Zhi Liu, and De Xin Ma are briefly reported below as background information for understanding their Chinese writings.

Yuan Lin Tsai considers Dai Yu Wang to be the first Muslim literatus 'to provide a systematic criticism of Chinese intellectual traditions'. Wang's writings had a significant impact on Zhu Ma and Zhi Liu.[934] Although Wang criticised Chinese traditions, Petersen believes he 'was influential in developing an initial Sino-Islamic discourse, which offered a direct presentation of Islam that could be understood by educated Chinese-speaking Muslims of the time'.[935] Wang suggested that there were significant similarities between Islam and Confucianism in his work *Qingzhen Daxue*

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929 Kristian Petersen, 'Understanding the Sources of the Sino-Islamic Intellectual Tradition: A Review Essay on *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms*, by Sachiko Murata, William C. Chittick, and Tu Weiming, and Recent Chinese Literary Treasuries', *Philosophy East & West* 61(3) (2011) 547.

930 Yang, *Study of Early Chinese Islamic Writings*, 167.

931 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 25.

932 Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 118.

933 Israeli and Gardner-Rush, 'Sectarian Islam', 453.

934 Yuan Lin Tsai (蔡源林), 'Confucian Orthodoxy vs. Muslim Resistance in late imperial China: The Ideological Origin and the Development of Hui Rebellion in Yunnan under Qing Dynasty (1661-1911)' (PhD thesis, Temple University, 1997), Digital Dissertation Consortium website (http://pqdd.sinica.edu.tw/doc/9813560; accessed 5 February 2023) 109.

935 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 62.

(Great Learning of Islam).[936] Therefore he conceives Confucian ethics to have been embodied in the practice of the five pillars.[937]

According to Frankel, Zhi Liu may be 'the most prolific, systematic, and famous of the Han Kitab writers' based on his breadth and volume of works.[938] His academic achievement is recognised in the collection of his work *Tianfang Dianli* (Rituals of Islam) to *The General Catalogue of Siku Quanshu* (Complete Library of the Four Treasures).[939] His significant work was *Tianfang Xingli* (Metaphysics of Islam), which discussed issues such as the unity of God, prophecy, and the end times.[940] He offered effective arguments to harmonise 'Confucian and Islamic ideas of morality and ethics, hinging upon the concept of ritual'.[941]

Zhu Ma was a contemporary of Zhi Liu. 'In contrast to [Zhi Liu], [Zhu Ma] stood for an uncompromising position against Chinese traditions.'[942] Ma found that Confucianism did not consider the creation or the end of life. In Islam there was true knowledge of God and it was thus considered to be superior to Confucianism. Therefore, he urged the Hui people to lay out clearly the right way to be a true Muslim.[943]

'Ma Dexin was the last major Sino-Muslim scholar of premodern China.'[944] In his important work *Sidian Yaohui* (Essence of the Four Canons), he introduced the central Islamic doctrines to Chinese readers who held misunderstandings of how to be a Muslim.[945] His method was to find common achievements of Confucianism and Islam. An example was the concept of standing in awe of the sky (*tian*). Confucian's respect of *tian* resembled Islamic worship of Allah.[946]

A few writings of these famous Muslim literati will be discussed in section 5.2 for the understanding of their contribution to the orthodox position of Islamic faith in China. The discussion will focus on the appropriation of some Chinese metaphysical

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936 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 66.
937 Tsai, 'Confucian Orthodoxy vs. Muslim Resistance in late imperial China', 108.
938 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 3.
939 Hui Ma (馬輝), 'Theoretical Contribution of Liu Zhi on Sinification of Islamic Faith', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies* 2(2018) 73. The Qianlong Emperor of Qing dynasty initiated the *Siku Quanshu* project in 1772. It collected, collated, corrected, and copied ten thousand titles and had a far-reaching impact. Cf Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 156.
940 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 68.
941 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 180.
942 Tsai, 'Confucian Orthodoxy vs. Muslim Resistance in late imperial China', 112.
943 Tsai, 'Confucian Orthodoxy vs. Muslim Resistance in late imperial China', 113-4.
944 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 10.
945 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 76.
946 Gui Ping Yang (楊桂萍), *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought* (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2004), 84.

terms, which will reveal the intention and techniques of Muslim literati in the effort of preserving Islamic faith under the pressure of acculturation.

5.2 Appropriation of Chinese Traditional Thoughts

Section 4.1 discussed some Chinese metaphysical terms which have been appropriated by Chinese Christians. In the study of Chinese Islam, James D. Frankel is also aware of the need for Chinese Muslims to encounter Chinese culture. He finds that '[a]ny faith or philosophy that would establish itself in China … would have to … adapt, accommodate, and/or harmonize itself with native beliefs, practices, and institutions, particularly those of Confucianism'.[947]

There are different views on Muslim literati's appropriation of Chinese supernatural terms. For example, the Chinese scholar Chang Qing Li opines that Muslim literati's Chinese writings had integrated Islamic faith and Confucianism.[948] However, Benite believes that these Muslims' Chinese writings were 'exploitative uses and abuses of Confucianism'.[949] Concerning the understanding of some of the Chinese metaphysical terms such as *tian* and *dao*, they are commonly used in different branches of Chinese philosophy and ideology while their meanings have been evolving.[950] Muslim literati writings tried to address the impersonal *tian* (sky) and *dao* (principle or way) in Chinese culture. Since these metaphysical terms do not have an absolute definition, there is room for them to promote the idea of a True Lord behind *tian* and *dao*. Their appropriations are discussed in sub-sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.4. Sub-section 5.2.5 is the summary of findings.

5.2.1 Islamic Cosmic View: The Oneness

Daoism believes that *dao* (way or principle) creates everything: 'The Dao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things.'[951] Although *dao* is the Originator of the sky and the earth,[952] Daoism conceives that it has no name, i.e., *dao* does not have a personality.

Since Muslims deeply believe that there is only one True Lord (Allah), who

947 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 21.
948 Li, 'Union of Islamic Culture and Chinese Traditional Culture', 30.
949 Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 117.
950 See discussion in sub-section 4.1.1.
951 Cf Chapter 42, *Daodejing*.
952 Cf Chapter 1, *Daodejing*.

creates everything on earth,[953] Muslim literati introduced their cosmic view to Chinese people based on Daoism's understanding of the Oneness. Since Dai Yu Wang was 'concerned with projecting a certain cosmological perspective on reality', [954] he introduced Islamic faith through the concept of oneness in his writing *The Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching* (*Zhengjiao Zhenquan*):

> Our religion … worships only one Lord, not two. … There is only one ruler in a country. … There is only one Lord in the cosmos. … [Therefore,] Islam worships one Lord. For the 'One', it has three meanings, [namely] Only One (*du yi*), Enumerated One (*shu yi*) and Embodied One (*ti yi*). The Only One is the True Lord; the Enumerated One is the seed; [and] the Embodied One is the True Person.[955]

Wang assigned three meanings to the Oneness. The first is Only One (*du yi*), the True Lord; the second is Enumerated One (*shu yi*), that the True Lord is the highest and the source of creating everything. The third meaning of Oneness is the Embodied One (*ti yi*), which is to be a real person. Fang Tong Ji interprets that a real person is a true Islamic believer who worships the True Lord and refuses the temptation of the material world.[956] Wang used the term *yi* (one) to explain the essence and beginning of everything, whereby *yi* represented the True Lord who brought everything into existence.[957]

Wang's appropriation of the concept of One in Islamic faith is not the same as the Daoist definition. In Daoism, *dao* is the Originator of the sky and the Earth and then it produced One. In Wang's notion of One, the One is the Originator and it demands human beings to be united with it and become real persons. Thus, Wang assigned supernatural or divine property to the Oneness.

Zhi Liu elaborated Wang's *du yi* (Only One) as the *zhen yi* (Real One). Liu's elaboration is based on the first pillar of Islam, which states, 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'[958] God is translated as the True Lord in

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953 Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 99.

954 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 65.

955 Dai Yu Wang, *The Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching* (Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe, 1997) 89, as cited by Fang Tong Ji (季芳桐), 'Communication between Huis and Confucians: Wang Dai Yu's Theory of Royalty and Filial Piety', *Shijie Zongjiao Yanjiu* 2 (2013) 150.

956 Ji, 'Communication between Huis and Confucians', 150.

957 Ceylan, 'A Review on the Huiru Movement', 382.

958 Yuan Lin Tsai (蔡源林), 'The Construction of the Religious "Other" in Liu Zhi's *Tianfang Xingli*', *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 4(2) (2007) 68.

Chinese. He then explained that 'the One in Real One means only one and no other [entity]'.[959] De Xin Ma also explained the meaning of oneness of the True Lord in term of *zhen yi*: 'The certain and real lack falsehood, it is called True. The singular and separate stands alone, it is called One.'[960] This Islamic Oneness upsets Daoism's concept of the One, which is produced from *dao*. What is the cosmic position of *dao* if One is the Originator as suggested by Muslim literati?

Therefore, De Xin Ma extended the approach of Dai Yu Wang to assign to *dao* supernatural or divine property. Ma referred to *Daodejing* to explain the nature of the Enumerated One. The opening of *Daodejing* states, 'The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.'[961] Ma assigned the role of Originator to 'the enduring and unchanging name':

> [It] said, 'The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth. The named is the mother of the myriad things.' This is also the oneness of enumeration. The Enumerated One is the seed of heaven, earth, and the myriad things. The Real One then is the Lord of the world and myriad things.[962]

Ma did not object to the Daoist concept that *dao* or the 'nameless' is the Originator. However, he associated *dao* with the Enumerated One. For Ma, *dao* was a revelation of the True Lord, although Chinese people did not recognise it and called it 'nameless'. In contrast to the concept of *dao* in Daoism, Ma describes the Real One similar to that in the *Daodejing*:

> Therefore, as for the singular Reality, it is Reality unique without partner, it is venerable unique without partner, it is great unique without partner, it is substance unique without partner, and it is function unique without partner. That which is called separately and exclusively One is unique and exceeds heaven, earth, and the myriad things.[963]

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959 Zhi Liu, *Metaphysics of Islam* (*Tianfang Xingli*) *Volume 5* as cited by Tsai, 'The Construction of the Religious "Other"', xv.

960 Fu Chu Ma (De Xin Ma) (馬復初), *Si Dian Yao Hui Volume 1* (Beijing: *Qingzhen Shubao She*, 1923) 1. Translated by Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 77.

961 Cf *Daodejing*, Chinese Text Project website (https://ctext.org/dao-de-jing/zh?en=on; accessed 12 March 2023).

962 De Xin Ma, *Si Dian Yao Hui Volume 1* (Beijing: *Qingzhen Shubao She*, 1923) 1 as cited by Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 79.

963 Ma, *Si Dian Yao Hui Volume 1*, 1. Translated by Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 79.

Obviously, Ma's description of the Real One in this passage is intended to associate Daoist *dao* with the True Lord. Petersen contends that *dao* in Ma's view is close to the True Lord's essence.[964] Ma's approach was to preserve the meanings of Chinese supernatural terms, such as *tian* and *dao*, used in classical Chinese philosophy. These terms, however, were regarded as human observations about the natural world. These observations were also the True Lord's revelation from Islamic view. Thus, Ma introduced the True Lord as the Originator of the world and myriad things.

Regarding the relationship of the Real One and the Enumerated One, Ma said, 'The *shu yi* [Enumerated One] is the seed of heaven, earth, and the myriad things. The *zhen yi* [Real One] then is the Lord of the world and myriad things.'[965] Petersen interprets that Ma portrayed the True Lord in term of its essence and attributes: '[t]he Real One [*zhen yi*] is God in His Essence, while He manifests reality through His attributes, which is understood as the Enumerated One [*shu yi*]'.[966] According to Petersen, the Real One became *dao* in the Daoist worldview.

In order to clarify the nature of the Real One, Ma introduced the concept of illusory being. He classified all things, including social phenomena, into four categories:

a) Pure and real without illusion: the Real One who is without form and appearance;
b) Illusion in the real: Kingdom of Heaven since there will be no death in the Kingdom;
c) Real in illusion: the present world since no eternal life in the present world; and
d) Pure illusion without real: dreams since they do not exist.[967]

Yang regards illusion in Ma's saying as limited existence, i.e., not eternal existence. Therefore, the present world is not untrue but will be ended in future.[968] Ma had clear understanding about Confucian focus on the survival in the present world. Therefore, he reminded Chinese people of transcendence in other-worldliness.

This sub-section has briefly reviewed Muslim literati's understanding of the Chinese cosmic view. Muslim literati introduced their Islamic faith with respect to the essence of the True Lord and the illusory nature of the present world. Although they had not explicitly indicated that Chinese people transcended themselves culturally, they understood that the implicit cultural transcendence of Chinese people is not sustainable

964 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 79.
965 Ma, *Si Dian Yao Hui* 7 as cited by Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 77.
966 Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 77.
967 Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 101.
968 Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 101.

to eternality. It is true that the concept of collective transcendence hinges on the survival of a people group in the present world. This cultural transcendence will be in vain if such a people group cannot survive over time.

After clarification of the Islamic cosmic view in term of *dao*, which was placed under the True Lord by Muslim literati, the other associated metaphysical concepts such as *tian* (sky), *dao* (principle or way), and the union of heavenly principles and human beings needed to be addressed in the Chinese writings in order to illustrate their Islamic faith in Chinese context.

5.2.2 Nature Sky or Creator

In ancient China, *tian* (sky) was equal to *Shangdi* (god).[969] There are still different views about the meaning of *tian* (sky) in contemporary China.[970] The Chinese philosopher Jiang Hu He, a Christian, opines that *tian* 'is not a natural sky, … [which represents] the Lord of all things and a god with personal will'.[971] However, the Hui scholar Gui Ping Yang does not agree with He's view.[972] The Muslim scholar De Xin Ma in the eighteenth century concurred with He's belief that *tian* (sky) has two different meanings, which were physical sky and the creator.[973] Yet this creator is not the Christian God but the Islamic True Lord. Both Christian and Islamic scholars appropriated this Chinese term, and there was room for Muslim literati to appropriate this term in telling their Islamic faith.

It is worth noting that Confucian *tian* does not speak. In answering the question whether *tian* had specific injunctions to confer its appointment on the ancient Emperor Yao, Mengzi replies, 'No. Sky does not speak. It simply showed its will by [the appointed person's] conduct and his conduct of affairs.'[974] This non-speaking character implies that there is no explicit revelation from *tian*. People can learn *tian*'s will by means of sincerity.[975] In fact, the Confucian concept of *tian* does not have a personality,[976] and therefore it cannot speak. It is difficult to identify who will be the

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969 Courtney Liu (劉延妮) 'Chinese Christians and Muslims Understanding of the Creator', *Qinghai Journal of Ethnology* 26(4) (2015) 210.

970 See discussion in sub-section 4.1.1.

971 Guang Hu He (何光滬), *Pluralized Ideas of God: A Survey of Western Philosophy of Religion in the 20th Century* (Gui Yang: Guizhou People's Publishing House Co. Ltd., 1991) 5.

972 Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 197.

973 De Xin Ma, *Xing Ming Zongzhi* as cited by Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 90.

974 Cf *Mengzi*, Wan Zhang Shang I, Chapter 5.

975 See discussions of Mou's immanent transcendence in sub-section 2.4.2.

976 See discussions in sub-sections 4.1.1 and 4.4.2.

highest god or deity. Therefore, various deities, including ancestors, can co-exist with the unspoken highest one and they are objects of Chinese worship.[977] Unlike revelation found in the Quran, the silent *tian* will not offer explicit revelation. This is the fundamental difference between an impersonal *tian* and the personal Islamic Lord.

Another Confucian classic, *Zhongyong*, was published after *Mengzi*.[978] In *Mengzi*, sky (*tian*) did not speak but a mandate (*ming*) was given from sky (tian) in *Zhongyong*.[979] Frankel believes that *Zhongyong* dealt with the 'method for self-cultivation in order to achieve moral, psychological, and metaphysical concord between the individual and the cosmos.' Therefore *Zhongyong* provided resources for 'the speculative philosophy of Neo-Confucianism [and became] one of its central texts'.[980] Thus, it is understandable that Muslim literati were inclined to make more use of Neo-Confucian concepts in their Chinese writings.

The beginning of the Confucian *Zhongyong* states, 'What Heaven [*tian*] has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path [*dao*] of duty; the regulation of this path is called Instruction [*jiao*].'[981] Furthermore, the principles of *tian* and the Earth are not changeable and so they produce things in a manner that is unfathomable.[982] The Neo-Confucian Zhuzi in the twelfth century perceived that the concept of *tian* has included three meanings: '*Tian* is surely the [metaphysical] principle while natural sky is also *tian*. The one above who decides the fate of people is also *tian*.'[983] The *tian* in *Zhongyong* refers to the metaphysical principle in Zhuzi's idea.

How did Zhu Ma translate the meaning of *tian* in his *Compass of Islam*? Ma's appropriation of the term *tian* in his narration of Islamic faith may be owing to the concept of Neo-Confucianism. Zhu Ma regarded the above concepts of *tian* in *Zhongyong* as signifying the Lord of Islam:

> As [*Zhongyong*] said, Mandate is from the *tian*; human nature is based on the Mandate; and [the principles of tian and the Earth] are not changeable. Readers of this book are advised to understand religion and then to seek *dao* [way or truth]; from understanding *dao* to knowing human nature;

977 Feng, 'A Study of Communication between Islam and Confucianism in Halal Guidelines', 31.
978 Chun Yen Dong (董俊彦), 'Chung-yung Antedation Mentze an Ideological Approach', *Journal of National Taiwan Normal University* 29 (1984) 377.
979 Cf *Zhongyong*, Chapter 1.
980 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 67.
981 Cf *Zhongyong*, Chapter 1.
982 Cf *Zhongyong*, Chapter 27.
983 Cf *Zhuzi, Zhuzi Yulei Volume 79*, Chapter Tai Shi. This thesis translates the citation.

> from knowing human nature to following the Mandate; from following the Mandate to knowing *tian*; from knowing *tian* to be aware of the Lord. Therefore, Islam and Confucianism are different in doctrines but share the same principles.[984]

Ma did not suggest people know Mandate for understanding human nature. Rather, he asked people to understand religion and to seek *dao*, i.e., to learn *dao* through religion first and then to understand Mandate. Ma just cited the first phrase of *Zhongyong* without *dao*. In the following phrase of *Zhongyong*, *dao* is the practice of this human nature. Therefore, *dao* can be seen if people behave in accordance with their nature conferred by *tian*. This Confucian concept of human nature concurs with that of Daoism, which requests people to follow the rule of nature. Confucian ethical requirements then become the practice of heavenly mandate or of human nature. This belief of human nature helps the promotion of Confucian ethics to become part of the state ideology.

Zhu Ma interpreted these concepts in an alternative way. He associated *dao* with religion and assigned religious properties to *dao* which represented supernatural principles that conferred human nature. Thus, *dao* departed from Confucian concepts, which regarded *dao* as an object because *dao* was found and observed through human behaviours. It then became a subject in Ma's view and interacted with people in order to confer human nature. Next, Mandate came from *tian* (sky). What is *tian*? *Tian* represented the True Lord. Zhu Ma assigned subjectivity to *tian* and *dao*. This subjectivity hinted that a personal True Lord was behind this subjectivity.

In the Confucian classic *Analects*, Confucius said, 'He who offends against *tian* has none to whom he can pray.'[985] De Xin Ma commented, in relation to this saying, that Confucians had committed to following the rules of *tian*, to serve *tian*, to respect *tian*, and to fear *tian*. Confucian concepts about *tian* resembled the rituals of other countries.[986] Here, De Xin Ma stood in the same line as Zhu Ma to equate *tian* to the Islamic True Lord. Regarding the relation between *tian* and human beings, Neo-Confucianism absorbed the Daoist cosmic view and promoted the concept of union of sky (*tian*) and human beings.[987]

Yang is aware of the difference between Confucian *tian*–human beings

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984 Zhu Ma, *Compass of Islam* (*Qing Zhen Zhi Nan*), Chapter Qiong Li as cited by Feng, 'A Study of Communication between Islam and Confucianism in Halal Guidelines', 31. This thesis translates the citation.

985 Cf Chapter 13, *Ba Yi* in *Analects*.

986 De Xin Ma, *Si Dian Yao Hui* as cited by Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 91.

987 See the discussion in sub-section 2.2.3.

relationship and Islamic Lord–human beings relationship. In Confucianism, human relationships are based on *tian* or heavenly principle (*tian dao*). In Confucianism, human principle and heavenly principle are not in opposition but in union. The appropriation of these terms, *tian*, *dao*, etc. by Muslim literati such as De Xin Ma is to proclaim the same 'goal' of Islamic faith and Confucian ethics: that they will both lead people to a perfect moral life. This common point will help Islamic religious ideas enter to the main (Han) Chinese culture.[988] Jian Fang Zhang also finds that Muslim literati considered that Confucian ethics and Islamic doctrines were in agreement.[989] Zhu Ma's concept is similar to De Xin Ma and other Muslim literati because they aimed at promoting Islamic faith.

However, it is important to note the difference between a religion and an ideology. Even if the common point in Islam and Confucianism is the pursuit of perfect moral life, the targets of this religion and ideology can be different. Islam is a religion in which a personal god, the True Lord, reveals itself to the believers and asks them to pursue an ethical life. The reward for an ethical life is eternal life in paradise. For Confucianism, an ideology, the reward for an ethical life is the achievement of a perfect society, i.e., well-being in the present world. Islam provides religious transcendence in other-worldliness, which is guaranteed by the revelation of the True Lord (*dao*). For Confucianism, collective transcendence for an individual is based on the hope that the attached people group in this worldliness will continue to survive over time. A perfect ethical life will lead to different outcomes in Islam and in Confucianism. Moreover, 'ethical life' in Islam and in Confucianism may not be the same. In this context, the notion of a common 'target' for Islam and Confucianism is not an exact expression. It is actually a common 'achievement' of moral life in Islam and Confucianism.

Tian and *dao* are usually combined to denote the principle from heaven. Since Confucians assume that sky (*tian*) confers human nature, it logically leads to the concept of union of heavenly principle and humanity. After the assignment of the True Lord behind *tian* and *dao*, Muslim literati faced the problem of the union of heavenly principle and humanity.

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988 Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 91-2.

989 Zhang, 'The Establishment of Theory and Approaches for the Integration of Islamic Faith and Traditional Chinese Culture', 159.

5.2.3 Tian Dao (Heavenly Principle) and the Unity with Humanity

Tian (sky or heaven) and *dao* (principle) are frequently mentioned together in Confucian classics, such as that mentioned in *Zhongyong* in sub-section 5.2.2 above. As there are principles from the sky or heaven, which confers human nature, it naturally leads to the thought of the union of heavenly principle with humanity.[990]

Although Muslim literati appropriated Confucian metaphysical concepts to introduce Islamic faith, they insisted on stating the differences between Confucianism and Islam. One example is Dai Yu Wang's criticism of the Confucian concepts about human nature, heavenly principle, and the union of heavenly principle and humanity:

a) there is an unclear relationship between human nature (*xing*) and the heavenly principle (*tian dao*);
b) there is a lack of study about human nature, heavenly principle, and the True Lord's principle; and
c) the proposal of a union of heavenly principle and humanity is difficult to implement owing to the deficits stated in a) and b) above.[991]

Regarding the unclear relationship between human nature and the heavenly principle, Wang found that Confucius seldom spoke of them.[992] Although Confucius' grandson Zisi stated, 'What Heaven (*tian*) has conferred is called The Nature (*xing*); an accordance with (*shuai*) this nature is called the principle (*dao*) of discharging duty',[993] Wang regarded that Zisi's saying was not comprehensive enough and led to various Confucian ideas about human nature.[994] Wang's thinking is that Confucianism missed the True Lord's principle in the relationship between heavenly principle and human nature. He opined that human nature, heavenly principle, and the True Lord's principle are interrelated.[995]

Wang further commented that there was insufficient study of human nature, heavenly principle, and the True Lord's principle in Confucianism. He challenged

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990 See discussion of Mou's immanent transcendence in sub-section 2.4.2.
991 Gui Jin (金貴), 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism and Cultural Identity for Mind, Human Nature and "Tiandao" of Confucian Culture', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies* 1 (2013) 47-8.
992 Cf *Analects*, 5.13.
993 Cf *Zhongyong*, Chapter 1.
994 Dai Yu Wang, *The Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching* (Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe, 1988) 54-5 as cited by Jin, 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism', 47. Wang listed different Confucian views about human nature, namely kind (*san*), evil (*e*), as well as kind and evil mixed together.
995 Jin, 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism', 47.

Zisi's saying about human nature and heavenly principle: 'What is *tian* (sky or heaven)? What is [heavenly] mandate? What is human nature? … Where did the God come from? Who will accept the [heavenly] mandate? … Confucians cannot answer these questions.'[996] Wang understood that Confucians believed that *tian* has conferred something good on people and therefore human nature should be good. Why must *tian* confer good things to people? Therefore, Wang questioned the origin of *tian* if there is no god behind. Wang's observation is correct that there is no personal god in Confucian doctrines. He regarded the lack of a personal god as a deficit of Confucian ideology.

This deficit in Confucian ideology caused difficulty in the manifestation of the union of heavenly principle and humanity. Wang revisited human nature to consider if there is a union between heavenly principle and humanity:

> Since human nature varies from people to people, the method of cultivation of oneself should also be different from other people. … If an individual is born of kind, an accordance with his or her nature will have correct behaviours. If an individual is born of evil, an accordance with his or her nature will have wrong behaviours. … Muslims obey the True Lord's mandate and cultivate themselves. … [Consequently,] Muslims will not be in lost.[997]

Wang did not assume that human nature is kind, i.e., *tian* is not a transcendent entity that can confer kindness to people. Rather, he then turned to the True Lord, stating that when people follow the True Lord's teachings they will not be lost.

Jin regards Wang's criticism of Confucianism as inevitable because Islamic understanding of human nature and heavenly principle is different from Confucianism's. As an Islamic intellectual, Wang insisted on the Islamic cosmic view that the True Lord created human beings and their nature. Jin further points out the relationships of heaven (*tian*), heavenly mandate (*tian dao*), and human nature (*xing*) in Islamic faith: the True Lord confers human nature to human beings while *tian* in fact refers to natural sky.[998] According to Wang, the union of heavenly principle and humanity is not possible unless human beings recognise the True Lord and are willing to follow its teachings. Mou's immanent transcendence relies on individual sincerity to understand heavenly principle (*tian dao*), and various understandings of heavenly principle may result. As there is no

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996 Wang, *The Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching*, 55 as cited by Jin, 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism', 47.

997 Wang, *The Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching*, 59 as cited by Jin, 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism', 47-8.

998 Jin, 'On Wang Dai-yu's Criticism', 48.

personal god in Mou's proposal, it is not possible to understand *dao* in Wang's interpretation. Mou's immanent transcendence is completely ruled out by Wang.

That said, Muslim literati continued to appropriate Confucian concepts to explain their Islamic faith. On the concept of *dao*, there was a gradual change of meaning from representing a kind of personal god in ancient China to pointing to an impersonal cosmic and moral power that 'impartially directs the fate of all human beings'.[999] Frankel is also aware of the dual meanings of *dao*:

> The term *dao* is … generally understood in two distinct yet interrelated senses: first, as the transcendent force that undergirds all phenomenal reality; and second, as a principle, which when followed harmonizes worldly affairs. This dual sense has afforded the term *dao* a special place in Chinese religio-philosophical thought.[1000]

Although Frankel does not explicitly point out the meaning of a personal god behind 'the transcendent force', he admits that *dao* was commonly used to express the 'absolute' in the development of Neo-Confucianism. He notes 'classical Chinese metaphysical terms as Principle (*li*), Nature (*xing*), the Supreme Ultimate *(taiji),* or sometimes, metaphorically, Heaven *(tian),* all of which express a similar conception and may be interchangeable with *dao* in certain contexts'.[1001] This non-rigid definition of *dao* allowed Muslim literati to assign religious meaning to it.

Although Dai Yu Wang challenged the applicability of the union of heavenly principle with humanity, he also continued to affirm the values of Confucian ethics. In his work *Zhengjiao Zhenquan*, he tried to harmonise Islamic faith and Confucian ethics:

> Islam is the only religion which doctrines are based on *tian* and which principles originate from the Oneness. Islam and Confucianism share similar sources of origin. [In addition,] Islamic faith respects the five relations: between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, those belonging to the intercourse of friends. … [Islamic faith and Confucianism] are more or less the same.[1002]

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999 See discussion in sub-section 4.1.1.
1000 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 58.
1001 Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 58.
1002 Wang, *Zhengjiao Zhenquan*, 5 as cited by Zhang, 'The Establishment of Theory and Approaches for the Integration of Islamic Faith and Traditional Chinese Culture', 159.

Wang further explained heavenly principle from Islam's point of view: 'Our faith emphasizes *tian dao* (heavenly principle) that the faithful believers commit to practise the virtues of loyalty, trustworthy, filial piety, and friendliness. Our commitment on these virtues resemble that of Confucian.'[1003] Wang's writing tried to persuade Chinese people that both Muslims and Han people had a common aim for the pursuit of perfect moral life.

In fact, early Qing Chinese Muslim scholars regarded themselves as Chinese literati who study *dao*, i.e., Islam.[1004] Zhi Liu harmonised the concept of *dao* with Islamic belief that it is the greatest *dao*. 'Therefore, Islam was not in competition with a Confucian system; rather, it could be viewed as a supplement to it.'[1005] The last major Sino-Muslim scholar of the imperial period, De Xin Ma, translated Quran 2:256 as, 'The way (*dao*) lacks compulsion. Wrong and right are self-evident, do not believe in evil demons, only those who obey the True Lord, firmly hold the secure rope, which lacks breaking off. The True Lord is the original hearer, the original knower.'[1006] Ma simply equated *dao* with 'religion'.[1007] This religion is Islam.

In Islam, Muslims worship and follow the Lord's *dao* in the present world. After death, they will be resurrected and enter into heaven, the other-worldliness. In Confucianism, people still pay attention to the present world. Although Neo-Confucians introduced the concept of 'dominated *tian*', people accept the concept of dominated *tian* on the condition that this *tian* is a blessing to people. The ultimate goal of Chinese people is to pursue benevolence with their sincerity and manifest benevolence as a sage particularly as a sage can become a ruler in the present world.[1008] Given this is the case, it is helpful, then, to compare the Chinese concept of sage with the position of the prophet Muhammad in Chinese society.

[1003] Dai Yu Wang, *Zhengjiao Zhenquan* (Ningxia: Ningxia People's Publishing House, 1988) 7 as cited in Zhang, 'The Establishment of Theory and Approaches for the Integration of Islamic Faith and Traditional Chinese Culture', 159.

[1004] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 120.

[1005] Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 10.

[1006] De Xin Ma, *Baoming Zhenjing* 33 as cited by Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 148.

[1007] The contemporary Chinese translation of the first phrase is, 'Regarding religion, [there is] no compilation since right and wrong has been distinguished.' Cf Jian Ma (馬堅) (tr.), *Quran* (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1981) 20. This thesis translates this phrase to English.

[1008] Feng, 'A Study of Communication between Islam and Confucianism in Halal Guidelines', 31-2.

5.2.4 Sage Muhammad

The Muslim literati of the Ming and Qing dynasties generally regarded Muhammad as a Chinese sage.[1009] Frankel believes that the portrayal of Muhammad as a Chinese sage is a result of unconscious assimilation or conscious appropriation of the concept of 'sage' in Chinese culture. The dominant values of the contemporary Chinese intellectual environment assimilated the Muslim literati. Yet they may also have believed that the portrayal of sage would be easily accepted by Chinese (Han) people.[1010]

Dai Yu Wang cited the passage 'Zhongnei' in the Chinese class *Liezi* with minor modification. The original passage is, 'There was a sage in the West, who …? Confucius suspected the person [of the West] was a sage.' However, Wang cited this sentence as, 'Confucius learned that the person was a sage', in his work *The True Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching*. Wang further argued that the sage of the West was Muhammad.[1011] Although Confucius was highly respected in ancient China, he did not think of himself as a sage.[1012] With the high status of Confucius, Wang affirmed the status of sage Muhammad through an amendment of Confucius' words.

After proclamation of the sage status of Muhammad, Muslim literati tried to narrow down the cultural difference between the West and the East. Zhu Ma proclaimed, 'Confucius said, "Sages appear in the East, their hearts and principles are the same; Sages appear in the West, their hearts and principles are the same."'[1013] Ma regarded Muhammad as a Chinese sage. Subsequently, a number of Chinese Muslim poets composed poems for the 'sage Muhammad' with reference to Ma's writing.[1014] Again, it is not Confucian saying this. Ma's citation actually originated from *Collection of Lu Jiu Yuan Volume 22,* a Neo-Confucian classic. The original message is, 'My heart is the cosmos. … Sages had and will appear from all places and they had and will share

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[1009] Wang Jun Qiu (仇王軍), 'From the Respect of Confucius to the Present Perfect Person: The Muslim Intellectuals' View on Confucius in the Ming and Qing Dynasties', *Studies in World Religions* 5 (2016) 147.

[1010] Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name,* 89.

[1011] Dai Yu Wang, *The True Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching* (*Zhengjiao Zhenquan*) 17 as cited by Wang, 'From the Respect of Confucius to the Present Perfect Person', 146.

[1012] Confucius said that a superior man stands in awe of the words of sages. Cf *Analects,* Book 16, Chapter 8. Confucius further said that he was not equal to the superior man. Cf *Analects,* Book 14, Chapter 28. Therefore, he humbly declined the status of being a sage.

[1013] Zhu Ma, *Guides to Islam* (*Qingzhen Zhinan*) *Volume 9* as cited by Yu Bing Hu (胡玉冰), 'The New Textual Research on the Life Career of Ma Zhu in Yunnan of Qing Dynasty', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies* 1(2016) 8.

[1014] Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad,* 173.

the same heart and same principle.'[1015] Zhu Ma again continued to make use of the status of Confucius to assign Muhammad the status of sage in China.

Muslims themselves regarded Muhammad as having the position of Chinese sage, but this might overstate the social position of Islam in China. The last major Sino-Muslim scholar of imperial China, De Xin Ma, exhorted Muslims regarding the acceptance of sages of other religions: 'There were many *dao* [ideologies, philosophies, or religions] since ancient time and each religion would have its own sage at a respectful position. If there is a sage in our religion only while the sage in other religion is not regarded as a sage, it is not sensible.'[1016] Ma understood that Confucian culture had been deeply rooted in Muslim Huis. He requested Muslim Huis to respect both the Western sage Muhammad and the Eastern sage Confucius.[1017]

Frankel surmised that the motivation of Muslim literati to place Muhammad in the position of a Chinese sage was to place emphasis on 'his moral and ethical qualities and on his social roles as teacher and leader'. The social position of sages is more important than prophets in Chinese society.[1018] Nonetheless, the portrayal of Muhammad as a sage serves two purposes: a) 'it made Muhammad a part of Chinese tradition'; and b) this portrayal 'rendered [Muhammad] not merely an acceptable object of study but a necessary one'.[1019]

5.2.5 Summary of Findings

This section reviews the Muslim literati appropriation of Chinese supernatural terms in *Han Kitab* texts. On one hand, their writings were to present 'a similar traditional interpretation of Islam [and] they differed in varying degrees of emphasis'. They intended to address the 'core principles of the nature of God, the world, and humankind's position within this relationship'.[1020] On the other hand, they assigned Islamic religious ideas to Chinese traditional concepts such as *tian* (sky or heaven), *dao* (way or principle), and the union of heavenly principle with humanity.

There are, of course, other Chinese traditional concepts, such as *yin* and

[1015] Cf *Collection of Lu Jiu Yuan Volume 22*, Chapter 16.
[1016] De Xin Ma, *Dahua Zonggui* (Nourishing, Transformation, and Return) as cited by Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 94.
[1017] Yang, *Study of Ma De Xin's Thought*, 94.
[1018] Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 89-90.
[1019] Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad*, 171.
[1020] Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China*, 85.

yang,[1021] and *taiji* (supreme ultimate), used by Muslim literati. The discussion of the supernatural terms *tian* and *dao* in this thesis is because they are the core concepts of the proposal of union of heavenly principle and humanity. These concepts are related to Mou's immanent transcendence, which reflects the central theme of Chinese culture.

The meanings of *tian* and *dao* may vary in different contexts. The Neo-Confucian Zhuzi understood that there are three meanings of *tian*, namely natural sky, representing a metaphysical principle, and the one who decides the fate of people. The term *dao* is mainly used by Daoists and Confucians. It can be used to denote principle, way, and knowledge, etc. Although Confucius said that people should not offend *tian*, Mengzi said *tian* did not speak. The non-speaking character implies that *tian* is impersonal. Thus, Confucian *tian* loses its subjectivity and becomes an object to be understood by people. For Daoists, the heavenly principle is just a host of natural rules. They believe, 'Heaven and earth do not act from (the impulse of) any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with.'[1022] *Tian* in Daoism will not be benevolent and therefore is also impersonal. The ethical requirements originating from *tian dao* (heavenly principle) are to be understood with human sincerity in Confucianism.

The Confucian cosmic view is that human beings of great sincerity can participate in the nourishing and transformation of this world.[1023] The Chinese cultural view is human-centred. Muslim literati needed to present their Islamic faith with a tactical approach that Islam is True-Lord-centred. They were clever enough to make use of the impersonal character of *tian* to treat *tian* and *dao* as kinds of attributes of the Islamic True Lord, i.e., they assigned a subjectivity, the True Lord, behind *tian* and *dao*. This assignment did not upset Chinese concepts on these terms since the terms were already treated as items to be learned by Chinese people. Therefore, if *tian* and *dao* are attributes of the True Lord, Chinese people should first know the True Lord in order to have a throughout understanding of the heavenly principle. The Muslim literati approach established the orthodoxy of the Islamic faith with the appropriation of traditional Chinese concepts.

Muslim literati stood firm on their Islamic faith and affirmed the presence of the True Lord. In this way, Dai Yu Wang challenged the applicability of the notion of union

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[1021] See explanation of *yin* and *yang* in sub-section 2.2.3.
[1022] Cf Laozi, *Daodejing*, Chapter 5.
[1023] See discussion in sub-section 2.4.2.

of heavenly principle and humanity. That said, he and other Muslim literati continued to affirm Confucian ethics that both Islamic faith and Confucianism pursued a perfect ethical life, which was the common goal for Muslims and Chinese people. However, this common goal leads to different destinations. Muslims' good deeds will lead to eternal life in the other-worldliness while the fulfilment of Confucian ethics will help the establishment of a perfect society and the achievement of well-being in the present world. This thesis further proposes that the pursuit of well-being in the present world is the basis of the concept of collective transcendence.

Based on the common achievement of a perfect ethical life, Muslim literati made Muhammad a sage in the West. The identity of Muhammad was then changed from a prophet to a sage in Chinese society. This assignment was based on the notion that both Confucian sages and Islamic sages were practising and completing the requirement of *dao*. The requirement of *dao*, from a Chinese perspective, is to pursue benevolence and behave properly in accordance with the social norms. For Muslims, *dao* comes from the True Lord. The achievement of Islamic *dao* is to obey the True Lord's command. Thus, the pursuit of a perfect moral life is a common behaviour of Muslims and Han Chinese, but this common behaviour leads to different destinations.

Although this thesis considers that Muslim literati had twisted the traditional thoughts of Chinese culture, their appropriation of traditional Chinese supernatural terms is indeed successful. For example, Ri Zhen Jing, an imperial censor of the Shaanxi Circuit in 1707, praised Zhi Liu's excellent discourse about the concept of 'union of heavenly principle with humanity' in Liu's work *Tianfang dianli*.[1024] In contemporary China, C. Q. Li and some other Chinese scholars believe that Muslim literati's Chinese writings have integrated Islamic faith and Confucianism.[1025] Based on the successful appropriation of traditional Chinese thoughts, the next section will seek the key elements in an appropriate contextualisation model for Chinese Muslims.

5.3 Distinguishing Islam from Confucianism

The political and social environment changed following the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Chinese Muslims were set free because the Republican government announced

[1024] Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 46.
[1025] Cf Li, 'Union of Islamic Culture and Chinese Traditional Culture', 30; and Ma, 'Interpretation of Islamic Faith through the concepts of Confucianism, 5, etc.

religious freedom for everyone.[1026] However, they faced another problem due to the tension between Muslims and Han Chinese. Ci Bo Ma analysed that Chinese Muslims lived in an isolated style and way of thinking. This separation from Han Chinese reflected their firm belief in the Islamic faith, but it caused difficulties in communicating with Chinese culture. As a result, they experienced loss in political and social influence and misunderstanding of Islamic faith.[1027] Therefore, Muslim intellectuals needed to interact with Chinese culture but at the same time distinguish the Islamic faith from the state ideology: Confucianism.

5.3.1 New Era and New Political and Social Context

The Muslim editor of *Xin Jian Ri Bao* (*Xinjian Daily*), Ci Bo Ma (馬次伯), reviewed the policy of the Qing government and blamed it for arousing the emotions of Hui and Han Chinese in order to dissolve the solidarity among different nations in China.[1028] In fact, during the *Tongzhi* period (1862-1874) of the Qing dynasty, there were Muslim rebellions and a hundred thousand Muslims were killed. The tension between Hui and Han Chinese remained in the early Republican period (1912-1949); Muslim Huis refused to learn Chinese culture in order to preserve their cultural heritage.[1029] Therefore, it is not surprising that the famous imam Jing Zhai Wang (王靜齋) said that they had not studied the Daoist's classic *Daodejing* in the dialogue with the Christian Ze Jiu Song (宋則久) in 1924.[1030]

Against the background of poor education among Chinese Muslims, the elder of the Chinese Nationalist Party and Muslim scholar Fu Xiang Ma (馬福祥) donated five thousand dollars to establish a college in Ningxia in 1913. Ma further attempted to illustrate the concept of etiquette through a combination of traditional Chinese ethical thoughts and Islamic doctrines. He said, 'The essence of etiquette is to cultivate oneself and allow people to live happily. Our Islamic expressions regarding etiquette are

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[1026] Jing Ma, (馬景), *Chinese Islamic Literature in Republican China (1912-1949)* (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press (China), 2014) 62.

[1027] Ci Bo Ma (馬次伯), 'The Hui's Spirit and Confucianism', *Qing Zhen Duo Bao* (清真鐸報) 33 (1947) 3.

[1028] Ci Bo Ma (馬次伯), 'Chinese Muslim and Qing Government', *Qing Zhen Duo Bao* (清真鐸報) 30 (1947) 7.

[1029] Ming Jun Ding (丁明俊), 'Ma Fuxiang and Today's Dialogue between the Hui Scholars and Confucians', *Research on the Hui* 4 (2022) 26.

[1030] Jing Ma (馬景), 'Wang Jing Zhai and Contemporary Dialogue between Christianity and Islam', *Studies in World Religion* 4 (2015) 143.

different from Confucianism but the essence of etiquette is common to Confucianism in many aspects.'[1031] During the period 1922 to 1931, Ma edited and reprinted *Han Kitab* in order to introduce the Islamic faith to Han Chinese. The reprinted writings were from Fu Chu Ma (馬復初), Zhi Liu (劉智), Zhong Zhang (張中), Dai Yu Wang (王岱輿), etc.

Since Ma was an official of the Republican government, it is understandable that he was attached to Chinese culture and supported Muslim–Confucian dialogue. The attachment to Chinese culture was not the norm among Muslim Huis, however. The Qing government's persecution ceased and the status of Confucianism changed in the early twentieth century.

The classics of Confucianism were written in ancient Chinese, which was not a spoken language at that time. During the May Fourth Movement, Chinese scholars advocated the use of the vernacular or spoken language. Therefore, the orthodox status of Confucianism was declined. That said, Confucianism was still the core of Chinese culture and continued to be an important learning resource for Muslims.[1032] Another effect of the May Fourth Movement was the advocation the values of science and democracy. Judging from these values, Chinese intellectuals criticised Confucianism, which protected traditional political and social systems as well as religions.[1033]

Accordingly, the Anti-Christian Alliance and Anti-religion Alliance were established in 1922. While major activities of the Anti-Christian Movement ended in 1927, the defamation of Muslims continued.[1034] The Islamic scholar Meng Yang Wang (王夢揚) identified the causes of the defamation: a) Chinese Islamic literature was rare and caused misunderstanding of the Islamic faith; b) Chinese Muslims were of low education level and lacked the ability to defend their faith; and c) their strong Islamic beliefs and revival movement disturbed others.[1035] In order to alleviate the situation, Muslim intellectuals attempted to explain their faith through radio broadcasting and Chinese writing to avoid misunderstanding of their faith. These activities led to the dialogue between Muslims and Confucians in the Republican period.[1036]

[1031] *Genealogy of Ma Family* as cited in Ding, 'Ma Fuxiang and Today's Dialogue between the Hui Scholars and Confucians', 27.
[1032] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 362.
[1033] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 80.
[1034] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 81.
[1035] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 84-5.
[1036] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 88.

5.3.2 Establishment of Islamic Identity

With the declining status of Confucianism in the Republican period and the religious freedom given by the government, there was no strong need for Chinese Muslims to address Confucianism. However, there were voices that regarded Confucianism as a kind of religion and defamed the Islamic faith found in Beijing and Shanghai. In the late Qing dynasty, the scholar Fu Yan (嚴復) considered that Confucianism was a kind of religion: 'The sophistication of Confucian religion is that it does not involve god and ghost … but focuses on human matter.'[1037] You Wei Kang (康有為) and other intellectuals also promoted Confucianism as a national religion.[1038] Although their proposal was eventually turned down, it alerted Chinese Muslims to distinguish Islam from Confucianism. The thoughts of Zhong Ming Yang (楊仲明) in the late Qing dynasty, Zong Zheng Tang (唐宗正) in the Republican period, and the contemporary scholar Shi Ren Ding (丁士仁) are briefly introduced in the following paragraphs.

The Iman Zhong Ming Yang considered that Confucianism provided religious functions to Chinese people. These religious functions were similar to Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.[1039] Therefore, he completed his work *Si Jiao Yao Kuo* (*Essence of the Four Religions*) in 1898, which was printed in 1909, to distinguish Islam from the other three religions. In this book, Yang found that Muslim was a minority in the world:[1040]

Religions	**Population**
Confucianism	Four billion
Buddhism	Six billion seventy million
Christianity and Judaism	Four billion seven million
Islam	One billion eighty million

[1037] Fu Yan (嚴復), *Bao Jiao Yu Yi* (*Defending our Doctrines and Belief*) as cited in Su Ping Li (李素萍), 'Study of Yang Zhong Ming's *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*', *Journal of Hunan University of Science and Engineering* 26(9) (2005) 77

[1038] Li, 'Study of Yang Zhong Ming's *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*', 77.

[1039] Ibid.

[1040] Zhong Ming Yang (楊仲明), *Si Jiao Yao Kuo* (*Essence of the Four Religions*) in Xie Fan Zhou (周燮藩) (ed.), *Qingzhen Da Dian* (*Collection of Islamic Literature*) (Hefei: Huangshan Publishing House, 2005) 165.

Yang was aware of their minority status in the world and particular in China. The worse was that Islam was declining in his time. He identified the reasons of the declining in late Qing dynasty:

> [Chinee Muslims lived] in a closed community and considered themselves self-content. In fact, they did not understand the outside world. Although they discussed the outside world occasionally, it was superficial without deep understanding. Imans' teachings were also superficial and then the believers did not strictly follow the Islamic commandments. … As a result, people who liked Confucianism had inferior comments on Muslims.[1041]

Against this background, Yang needed to explain Islamic faith to Chinese people. As such, his writing attempted to disclose the themes of the four religions so that people could choose their beliefs accordingly.[1042]

Yang found that 'Confucians regarded Christianity, Buddhism and Islam as non-native religion'. Although Confucianism functioned as religious belief to Chinese people, there was no rigid commandment in it. In addition, it avoided discussion of supernatural matters.[1043] As such, he classified Confucianism as the study of principles about humanity which attempted to achieve the goal of unity with heavenly principle through cultivation of oneself. This would be achieved by practising Confucian ethics in daily life. In this sense, Yang criticised that Confucianism had not addressed people's concern of ultimacy.[1044] In the *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*, he said:

> The 'beginning' and 'end' in Confucianism is not the truly beginning and end … Confucian beginning cannot deduce the end [in our religious thought]. Who is the beginning? It is the True Lord. What is the end? Karma is the end. If there is no True Lord, everything in the world will not have beginning and they will not exist [in the world]. If there is no karma, everything and the world will not have their ends … Confucian [changed] True Lord to the sky and earth and [changed] karma to some uncertain sayings.[1045]

Yang understood that Confucianism attempted to achieve union with the *tian dao* (heavenly principle), such that the inner heart of people could achieve the statue of a saint. Upon achievement of the stage of a saint, a person could become a leader of a

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[1041] Yang, *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*, 158.
[1042] Ibid.
[1043] Ibid.
[1044] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 361.
[1045] Yang, *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*, 159. This thesis translates the scripts.

country. The *tian* (sky) may be the cause of the beginning of the world, but it was just a natural sky. Confucianism assigned metaphysical meaning to sky and attempted to understand heavenly principle with sincerity in order to pursue perfect life. Yang did not agree with the concept of sky creating all things because the True Lord had created everything. In addition, everyone finally would have his/her own retribution in accordance with his/her behaviours. In reality, such retribution might not be found in the present world. It was not possible to deduce retribution from *tian dao*. Therefore, Confucianism did not match the Islamic faith because it had not explained the beginning and end of the world.[1046]

Although his approach was 'to make use of Confucian expressions to explain Islamic doctrines',[1047] he has not followed his predecessors such as De Xin Ma and Zhu Ma to equate *tian* to the Islamic True Lord.[1048] Yang simply stated the deficit of Confucian thought which only explored the principles for human survival and did not provide answers for ultimacy. His stance was to distinguish Islam from Confucianism and sought the acknowledgement of their religious status.

In the Republican period, Zi Yi Chen (陳子怡) opined that Neo-Confucianism was transformed from Islamic doctrines but his argument was not convincing.[1049] Ci Bo Ma wrote 'Islamic Spirit and Confucianism' in 1947 to advocate cultural exchange between the Islamic faith and Chinese culture. He opined that Han Chinese did not understand the Islamic faith, while Muslims lived in a closed community that did not foster an atmosphere of interaction between Muslims and Chinese people.[1050] A more comprehensive explanation of the Islamic faith to Chinese people was provided by the Muslim representative of Beijing, Zong Zheng Tang.

In 1937, the Japanese established the *Xin Min Hui* (Association of New Citizens) after occupying Beijing. Some of the members proposed a movement called 'Respecting Confucius and Reading Scripture' under the slogan 'Revival of Oriental Culture'. The proposed activities included a salutation to Confucius' picture in schools and worshiping Confucius at Confucius' temple.[1051]

[1046] Ibid.
[1047] Yang, *Si Jiao Yao Kuo*, 158.
[1048] See sub-section 5.2.2.
[1049] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 365-6.
[1050] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 366.
[1051] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 362.

Against this background, the Muslim representative of Beijing, Zong Zheng Tang, spoke against this proposed movement. His speech was published as *Islam and Respecting Confucius* in which six topics were discussed: Islamic doctrines, the five Islamic pillars, characteristics of Muslims, academic thoughts of Islam and Confucianism, the Islamic and Confucian goals of relationship with the state, and ethical teachings of Islam and Confucianism.[1052] Tang's stance was clear: Muslims respected Confucius but would not worship him. Worship was a religious ritual on which Muslims would not compromise.[1053] In the section on the characteristics of Muslims, he argued that religious belief was their virtue:

> Religious belief solidarized Hui people. The traditions of Hui were their religious rituals and formation of Islamic communities that made their unique spiritual and environmental characteristic. This characteristic was pure without fault and different from other nations and religions. Therefore this characteristic was called virtue. Non-Hui people might sometimes behave virtually but they would not be as good as Hui … Therefore Islam and Muslims survived over time. Those concerned about moral thought and national problems should not ignore [Islam].[1054]

Tang's expressions pledged respect for Islamic rituals and stated that Hui would not perform Chinese rituals if these contradicted their faith.

In the section on academic thoughts on Islam and Confucianism, Tang understood that knowledge was accumulated from generation to generation and was the yardstick to guide people. While Islamic faith included both heavenly principle and human principle, Confucianism emphasised human principle only. Nonetheless, the Confucian spirit of diligence and pursuit of knowledge with sincerity was the same as that found in the Islamic faith.[1055] With this affirmation of pursuing knowledge in both Islam and Confucianism, he discussed the Islamic and Confucian goals of relationship with the state.

His discussions were mainly about the Islamic ideas of ruling. The principle of ruling was that the governor should 'not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah

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[1052] Zong Zheng Tang (唐宗正), *Islam and Respecting Confucius* (Beijing: World Islamic Book Store, 1941).
[1053] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 29-30.
[1054] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 48.
[1055] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 60.

does not like corrupters' (Quran 28:77).[1056] He understood Confucianism advocating benevolence as the theme of ruling.[1057] Tang's observation revealed that Islamic ruling was Allah-centred while Confucian ruling was benevolence-centred.

Tang then compared Islamic teachings and Confucianism from different perspectives: preaching and ruling, civil rights and obedience, self-defence, peaceful co-existence with neighbours, and solidarity. The conclusion was that Islamic teachings and Confucianism shared similar concepts and responsibilities.[1058] Finally, Tang recapped his theme, that the government should promote the Islamic faith in order to re-establish moral life and social order.[1059] His last request was to allow Hui not to follow Chinese rituals to bow down or worship ancestors or deities.[1060]

The contemporary Muslim scholar Shi Ren Ding (丁士仁), a professor at Lanzhou University and the chief editor of *Islamic Culture*,[1061] compares benevolence found in the Islamic faith and in Confucianism. He understands that the foundation of Confucian ethics is blood lineage and filial affection because parents give birth to individuals. In Islam, the source of life is not from parents but from the True Lord. In Confucianism, benevolence starts from loving parents and spreads to loving brothers and sisters and then other people.[1062] In contrast, Muslims treat believers as brothers and sisters of different races, ages, etc. and as a big family. This kind of relationship crosses the boundary of blood linage.[1063] Therefore, there are different expressions of benevolence in Islam and Confucianism.

Ding compares human relationships between Confucianism and Islam. According to the doctrine 'worshipping the unique Lord', the True Lord, Muslims place the True Lord in the first place and develop the God–human relationship. In Confucian ethics there is no God–human relationship, but it articulates the subjectivity of an individual in human relationships, i.e., an individual is the centre of his/her social

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[1056] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 77.
[1057] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 80.
[1058] Ma, *Chinese Islamic Literature*, 364.
[1059] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 127.
[1060] Tang, *Islam and Respecting Confucius*, 129.
[1061] *Islamic Culture* is a half-yearly journal which introduces Islamic literature, religious dialogue and Islamic education etc., in China. Cf Lanzhou University website (https://zheshexi.lzu.edu.cn/shiziduiwu/laoshiminglu/zhexuexi/jiaoshou/2021/0610/175777.html; accessed 20 September 2024).
[1062] Shi Ren Ding (丁士仁), 'Islamic Benevolence: in comparison to Confucian Ethics' in Tao Hua (華濤) and Ji De Yao (姚繼德) (eds.), *Collection of Civilisation Dialogue between Muslim Hui and Confucian* (Kun Ming: Yunnan University Press, 2017) 61-2.
[1063] Ding, 'Islamic Benevolence', 67.

network.[1064] Ding does not make inferior comments on Confucian benevolence but points out that Islamic ethics is True-Lord centred while Confucian ethics is human centred.

In addition to comparing Islamic benevolence to that of Confucianism, Ding further expresses his views on localisation of Islamic faith. Ding regards that localisation of language, clothing, housing is not a problem because such localisation is on the material layer which in turn enriches Islamic civilisation. Since Islamic doctrines are universal, it is not possible to be localised. He cited the example of Quran translation. The Chinese translation can only be used as a reference because any translation involves human interpretation. Ding prefers to read the Quran in Arabic during worship, even though the believers may not understand it.[1065] Ding makes clear that Islamic faith is distinctive from Chinese culture.

5.3.3 Summary of the Findings

When the last empire collapsed, China entered the modern age and freedom of religion was awarded to everyone. Muslim Huis were then free from persecution, and explanation of the Islamic faith to Han Chinese was of less importance. However, their problems during the early Republican period were: a) loss in political and social influence and misunderstanding of the Islamic faith; b) the suggestion of setting Confucianism as state religion; and c) pressure to bow before the Confucius figure. Against this background they needed to engage with Chinese culture again. Unlike the Muslim literati in the seventeenth century, the Muslim scholars attempted to distinguish Islamic faith from the local culture and sought respect for their religion.

In the late Qing dynasty, Zhong Ming Yang sharply pointed out that Confucianism did not address people's ultimate concern. Its focus was on survival in the present world through the study of principles about humanity. In the Republican period, Zong Zheng Tang was under Japanese pressure to worship Confucius and sought respect for Islam. His argument was in line with Yang that Confucianism emphasised human principles only, which did not have a supernatural status. The Lanzhou University professor Shi Ren Ding identifies that the sources of benevolence are different in Islam and in Confucianism. Islamic benevolence is due to the love of

[1064] Ding, 'Islamic Benevolence', 63. See Fei's social model in sub-section 2.3.3 regarding the subjectivity of human relationships.
[1065] Ding, 'Discourse on the Localization of Islam', 22-5.

the True Lord while Confucian benevolence originates filial affection. Ding also makes it clear that there is no compromise of Islamic doctrines in Chinese culture.

The status of Muslims improved in the new era. The collapse of the Qing dynasty signified a radical change in China, and Chinese Muslims took the opportunity to regain their distinctive religious identity.

5.4 Key Elements in an Appropriate Contextualisation Model

Chapter 4 discussed the key elements for an appropriate contextualisation of Chinese Christianity. Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam, however, are situated differently. Chinese Christian churches need Chinese converts while Muslim Huis are mainly the offspring of the mixed marriages of Persian merchants or sailors with local Chinese women. They live in a strong cultural environment and are subjected to acculturation. Muslim Huis are sinicised in terms of their language, clothing, and use of modern facilities etc. This Sinicization should not be mixed up with contextualisation. As discussed in the opening paragraph of chapter 4, the goal of contextualisation is to 'find fuller expression in the whole life of people in every culture'. Expression here is the expression of Islamic faith, which may be in Chinese language.

In fact, everyone is subject to certain degree of acculturation when encountering the outside world. Christianity, for example, has met the challenge of modernisation and evolved to today's churches.[1066] As discussed above, modernisation in China is focusing on material civilisation while the state ideology that evolved during the imperial period has been revived and is called New Confucianism.[1067] The sense of cultural superiority and Sino-centrism is still prevalent in today's China. If Muslim Huis are to be acculturated with regard to ideology, they will have to accept Confucian concepts. Thus, preservation of their Islamic faith becomes the chief objective in the contextualisation.

What is the outside world for Muslim Huis? Geographically, the Islamic homeland is outside China. Ideologically, secular Chinese society is the outside world for Muslim Huis. The pilgrimage to Mecca will be an acculturation process for Muslim Huis on a religious basis. Sinicization in daily life and government policies are another acculturation process on a Sino-centrism basis. There is tension between these two

[1066] The challenges have included, but are not limited to, re-examination of the truthfulness of the Bible, and the ordination of women.

[1067] See discussion in the second paragraph of chapter 2.

directions of acculturation. On one hand, the relatively closed Muslim communities allow the preservation of Islamic faith and serve as protection from secularisation. On the other hand, this will easily lead to misunderstandings and trigger severe control on this minority group. The production of *Han Kitab* is seen to be a tactic to achieve orthodoxy of the Islamic religion and the maintenance of their communities.

Frankel suggests that Muslim Huis did not intend to win Han Chinese converts in the imperial period.[1068] This thesis believes that Muslim Huis still do not need to win Chinese converts in today's China. That said, the opening of the Islamic faith to Chinese people would help to minimise misunderstanding of Muslim Huis. Accordingly, this thesis proposes some key elements to be included in an appropriate contextualisation model for Muslim Huis with respect to the previous findings in this chapter, as follows:

d) Islamic faith, a heterodoxy to the traditional ideology, is regarded as a threat to the collective society.[1069] Thus, Muslims need to indicate a certain degree of acculturation in order to acquire the orthodox position of Islamic faith.

e) Muslim literati in the Ming and Qing dynasties understood that their worldviews were different from that of Han Chinese. One of the characteristics of Chinese culture was its pragmatic approach, which focused on the pursuit of well-being in the present world.[1070] Dai Yu Wang, for example, challenged the applicability of the notion of union of heavenly principle and humanity without a personal god. Against this understanding of Chinese culture, the distinct feature of Islam, the True Lord and its blessings, should be emphasised to allow Chinese people to choose transcendence in the other-worldliness. This can be regarded as another form of union of heavenly principle with humanity.

f) There was proposal that both Islam and Confucianism shared the same goal for the pursuit of a perfect moral life. This thesis considers that the destinations of this common achievement are not the same. This proposal may try to help Islamic religious ideas enter into main Chinese culture. As the destinations of this common achievement are not the same, however, this thesis does not recommend Muslims to articulate this common achievement. Instead, they need

[1068] Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name*, 20.
[1069] See discussion in section 4.2.
[1070] Zi Chen Zhao, a Chinese Christian of the early twentieth century, observed the same. See discussions in sub-section 4.4.2.

to cross the group boundary between Muslims and Han Chinese to overcome misunderstanding.

Although there are still voices of Sinicization regarding Chinese Islam, the Chinese government has regarded Islam as a religion of a minority group and accredits it as a legal religion. Religious education, in the form of the hall system and mosques, can continue to operate in today's China. Therefore, the orthodoxy of Islam in China is established even if it is subject to control through government regulations.

Regarding the findings in section 3.4, non-believers (Han Chinese) rated Muslims the lowest among the other religious groups on Item of Status. They are marginalised in Chinese society, i.e., the group boundary between Chinese Muslims and Han Chinese is discriminative. Based on this finding, Muslim Huis need to establish social networks with Han Chinese. In a study of religious rituals in North China, Tian Ji Xu regards that human relationships and reciprocity dominate popular religious life in China. Thus, Chang's LSWL model, a revised form of Fei's social model, is a reference for establishing human relationships in China and crossing the group boundary.[1071] In general, human relationships between Muslims and Han Chinese are built on economic activities.

The Chinese scholar Xiao Hu Chen regards Chinese Muslims as positive within the present world and actively carrying out good deeds. He believes that Chinese Muslims have absorbed Confucian ethical thoughts, which focus on the pursuit of well-being in the present world.[1072] In Chen's view, Muslims have accepted Confucian concepts, which is worthy of appreciation. Chen's view is on the side of acculturation of Muslims. Economic activities can be regarded as a part of modernisation. As discussed before, the effect of modernisation on Chinese Muslims is minimal as it is mainly focused on material civilisation. This thesis regards that communications through business relationships are also a part of opening Islamic faith to Chinese people, although this is a secular process. Nevertheless, Chinese Muslims should try to open their communities to allow Han Chinese to understand their faith.

The focal point of the proposed key elements is to maintain Islamic faith within the tension of acculturation of Chinese culture. That said, this thesis proposes that Chinese Muslims should seek proactively to cross the group boundary between Muslim

[1071] See discussions in sub-section 3.3.2.

[1072] Xiao Hu Chen (陳曉虎), 'A Brief Analysis on the Theory of the Present Life and the Life after Death', *Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies* 4(1997) 29.

Huis and Han Chinese and explain their Islamic faith to Chinese people. The target is for the Islamic faith to complement Chinese culture on the transcendence dimension.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

Following the dialogue concerning Chinese Christians and Chinese culture in chapter 4, this chapter attempts to conduct dialogue with Muslim Huis and Han Chinese. Chinese culture and Muslim Huis belong to different people groups. Chinese Christians are mainly Han Chinese and live in their local communities. In contrast, Chinese Muslims are ethnically different from Chinese Christians and they flock together in their own communities, called *Jamaat*. Therefore, Chinese people treat Chinese Christians as in-group social members while Muslim Huis as out-group social members.

As an out-group social member and a minority group in China, Muslim Huis have much experience of interaction with Chinese culture. Acculturation is found in Muslim Huis in that they speak Mandarin and dress in similar ways to Han Chinese, etc. However, they have attempted to preserve their religious faith through different means. They have established religious institutions, such as mosques and madrasa, to maintain their religious rituals and to preserve the Islamic faith. With the education brought by Confucianism, Muslim literati harmonised the Islamic faith with Chinese culture through a) an assignment of a subjectivity, the True Lord, behind the concept of *tian* and *dao*; b) assuming the pursuit of perfect moral life as the common achievement of both Islam and Chinese culture. This setting leads to the conclusion that both Islam and Chinese culture share a similar set of values and the orthodoxy of the Islamic faith in China; and c) challenging the applicability of the notion of union of heavenly principle with humanity. This challenge will lead to rethinking of cultural transcendence in Chinese culture. Since Chinese Muslims do not aim to win Chinese converts, they have adopted different means to achieve the orthodoxy of Islam and to preserve their Islamic faith.

Thus, Muslim Huis have a mature degree of contextualisation within Chinese culture. That said, this thesis suggests Muslim Huis should attempt to cross the group boundary between Muslims and Han Chinese so that ordinary Chinese people will have a better understanding of the Islamic faith. The question, however, is how they might cross this discriminative group boundary. Since Confucianism is a pragmatic culture and pursues well-being in the present world, Muslim participation in economic

activities is regarded as a contribution to society. Since this contribution can be counted as a benefit for the Chinese collective society, it helps to reduce the estrangement between the two groups. Although the human relationships developed in economic activities is usually an instrumental relationship, it also provides the opportunity to discuss religious beliefs.[1073]

The acculturation of Chinese Muslims is based on the concept of cultural superiority of Han Chinese. This sense of cultural superiority is the soil of the concept of collective transcendence because cultural superiority will enable the survival of the Chinese over time in the present world. Therefore, transcendence in other-worldliness is not a prime objective in Chinese culture. In the encounter with Christianity and the Islamic faith, both Christians and Muslim Huis observe the deficit of Chinese culture, which does not have a personal god to guide the pursuit of well-being in the present world. This deficit will shake the concept of collective transcendence because well-being in the present is not guaranteed. Therefore, Chinese people need to seek alternate means of transcendence than collective transcendence.

[1073] See discussions in sub-section 3.3.2.

6. Conclusion

In general, whilst the great majority of religious believers overcome the finitude of life through religious transcendence, this is not the case in China. The nation does not have a national religion with which to overcome the finitude of life. How, then, do Chinese people perceive ultimate reality and eternity without religious beliefs? It might be argued that popular religion may fill the gap of a national religion to provide a means for transcending Chinese people. However, Richard Madsen and other scholars observe that popular religion in China is syncretic in nature, being a mix of religious Daoism, Buddhism, and some Confucian teachings. This syncretic character does not provide a unified picture for afterlife. In addition, Madsen's observation, as well as other social surveys, has shown that Chinese people who take part in the rituals of a popular religion do so mainly out of a sense of belonging to the local community that performs such rituals. Of importance here is the recognition that most of the participants do not truly believe in the religion.

This 'belonging but not believing' attitude is a sign of the collective nature of society in China. We have seen how Fei's social model articulates the importance of human relationships in such a stratified collective society.[1074] This thesis proposes that the collectivism found in Chinese culture fosters a concept, whilst not explicitly stated, of collective transcendence. This notion of collective transcendence, in turn, can be used as a hermeneutic lens to interpret Chinese attitudes toward eternity.

Collective transcendence, then, is a kind of cultural transcendence. If people are able to transcend their context and themselves through their own culture, it suggests that they conceive their culture as superior to other cultures and religions. What would happen if this culture were to be challenged by the spreading of foreign religions or ideologies? Whilst Christianity and Islam are foreign religions for Chinese people and are not regarded as mainstream religions in China, they are, however, well established in the country and have stable congregations. Therefore, this thesis seeks to promote dialogue for Christianity and Islam with Chinese culture. The findings of this thesis are summarised in seven areas:

a) the overview of findings of each chapter;
b) the sustainability of cultural transcendence;

[1074] Fei's social model has been discussed in sub-section 2.3.3.

c) the dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture;
d) the dialogue between Islam and Chinese culture;
e) the indirect dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam;
f) the key elements for contextualisation of Christianity and Islam in China with respect to the notion of collective transcendence; and
g) Suggested future work.

6.1 Overview of the Findings of Each Chapter

Chapter 1 observes that Chinese people transcend themselves according to their collective culture; it also briefly discusses the thesis' methodology and provides a literature review. This thesis seeks to examine the notion of cultural transcendence through dialogue with Chinese Christianity and Islam because: a) they are foreign religions that provide alternative views on transcendence; and b) Chinese Christians are in-group social members while Chinese Muslims are out-group social members. The proposed dialogue will then reflect the collectivistic characteristics of Chinese culture and the nature of the cultural transcendence. The methodological discussion stated an awareness that this thesis was approaching both culture and Islam from the Christian perspective. Therefore, this thesis proposes an indirect dialogue between Christianity and Islam in China with regard to their responses to the transcendental concepts of Chinese culture. This thesis selects Muslim Huis in the dialogue with Chinese culture because they speak Chinese and learned Confucianism.

Chapter 2 reports Richard Madsen's observation of the 'belonging but not believing' phenomenon found in Chinese people who perform the rituals and practices of popular religion. This finding does not support the suggestion that popular religion provides religious transcendence to Chinese people but, rather, reinforces the possibility of transcendence on the basis of the collective culture. Therefore, chapter 2 traces the formation and the social context of state ideology through historical research and Xiao Tong Fei's social model respectively. State ideology and social setting sustain the collectivistic nature of Chinese culture. Chapter 2 also discusses Zong San Mou's concept of immanent transcendence, which seeks to pursue a perfect moral life. Although there are difficulties in manifesting immanent transcendence, Mou's proposal points to the establishment of an ideal society in which people will be of high moral standards, as a result of which the society can survive over time. The findings in chapter

2 imply the concept of collective transcendence, which is based on a collective society and which can survive over time.

Chapter 3 explores the deeply rooted cultural element that sustains and preserves traditional culture. This element is identified as Sino-centrism.[1075] The concept of Sino-centrism has not been changed in the process of modernisation. Although the CCP's reputation of authoritarianism is well known, the government attitudes toward religions are driven by both traditional thoughts and political ideology. Modernisation in China exists predominantly on the material side of civilisation while the state ideology, Confucianism, revived in the Reformation period, has maintained its influence. This Sino-centrism, a sense of cultural superiority, sets the group boundary separating Chinese people from other people groups. The survey results in chapter 3 reveal both that Chinese Muslims are marginalised in China and that Chinese Christians continue to be in-group members of Chinese society. Results of the survey also suggest that Islam in China should seek to overcome this cultural boundary between Muslims and Han Chinese. The same applies also to Chinese Christians in that they need to continue to stand with their local community and its cultural values whilst at the same time maintaining their Christian faith.

Chapter 4 unpacks the dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese culture. The pragmatic attitude of Chinese culture is reflected in the emphasis grass-root-class Christians give to healing, exorcism, and well-being in the present world. The historical background of these Chinese converts, namely wars and calamities in the latter nineteenth century and early twentieth century, reflects the failure of any transcendental function of Chinese culture to offer any real support in difficult times. Such failure is obvious in that the present society may not survive in times of difficulty. The elite-class Christians were also aware of the weakness of Chinese culture and therefore the theme of theological discourses in the early twentieth century was saving China by means of Christian teachings. A typical example was Lei Chuan Wu who had demystified the divine nature of Jesus Christ and suggested that he was an ethical model for Chinese people. Zi Chen Zhao, on the other side, observed that the lack of a personal god in Chinese culture created many problems in the manifestation of a perfect moral

[1075] Guan Tao Jin and Qing Feng Liu proposed that an organisational 'deep' structure existed in imperial China. They called it an ultra-stable structure, which was composed of Confucian ideology and the patriarchal-state social structure system. See discussion in sub-section 2.2.1. Jin later regarded that Sino-centrism, a core element of Confucian culture, remained unchanged over time. See discussion in sub-section 3.1.2.

life or Mou's immanent transcendence. On the other hand, the cultural Christian Xiao Feng Liu does not intend to introduce Christianity to China and considers that acceptance of the Christian God's grace is a personal choice.

Chapter 5 engages dialogue between Muslim Huis and Chinese culture or Confucianism. Muslim Huis were also aware of the lack of a personal god in Chinese culture; the Muslim Hui, Dai Yu Wang, challenged the Confucian assumption concerning human nature, i.e., that the sky (*tian*) confers kindness to human beings. His challenge also disclosed the difficulty in pursuing the goal of a perfect moral life in Confucianism. Wang and other Muslim literati assigned Islamic religious ideas to Chinese traditional concepts such as *tian* and *dao* such that the pursuit of a perfect moral life would become possible. In the Republican period and in PRC, Chinese Muslims enjoy religious freedom and therefore dialogue between Muslim Huis and Chinese culture becomes less frequent. A finding of chapter 5 is that the prime objective of Muslim Hui dialogue with Confucianism was to achieve an orthodox position for Islamic faith in Chinese society.

The following sections conclude the findings of this thesis in various areas and also cover the indirect dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam. The last section concerns suggestions for future work.

6.2 Sustainability of Cultural Transcendence

The historical survey of Confucianism reveals that it was used by the ruling class to support the imperial administration, and that Confucianism was developed in accordance with the social structure of the imperial period, itself a stratified society. Confucians were assigned specific roles and ethical codes for Chinese people in accordance with their positions in the family as well as in society. Social order was then established and maintained. Not surprisingly, Confucianism became the state ideology, which was not only a school of thought but also a tool to maintain social stability.

Although Confucianism was used to stabilise the society in the imperial period, it also provided metaphysical views for the people. Those metaphysical views were not based on religion, but they were resources for the development of transcendental concepts.

6.2.1 Metaphysical Concepts and Transcendence

Confucius said, 'While you do not know life, how can you know about death?'[1076] Therefore, Chinese scholars in general understand that Confucianism is a 'pragmatic' ideology that deals with the means of survival in the present world. Thus, Confucianism explains the meaning of life through the pursuit of a perfect moral life in the present world. However, individual achievements in the present world will be meaningless after death. Therefore, the meaning of life is associated with the perception or understanding of afterlife.

Confucianism and Daoism share similar metaphysical concepts, such as *tian* (sky or heaven), *dao* (way or principle), heavenly principle, and so on. The Neo-Confucian Zhuzi explained that *tian* may mean the natural sky, a metaphysical principle, or the one who decides the fate of people. In an agricultural society, Chinese people relied on the weather conditions to harvest the crops. The sky was deemed to be in control of their life. It was therefore powerful and authoritative. In the Confucian view, Mengzi said, 'Sky does not speak.' In the Daoist view, 'Heaven and earth do not act from (the impulse of) any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with.'[1077] Both Confucianism and Daoism acknowledge the natural power of the sky. However, 'sky' or *tian* does not speak and this natural power does not have a personality or subjectivity to order people following its rules. Nonetheless, people should learn and seek to comply with the natural rules in order to survive in the present world.

As a part of Chinese culture, the ignorance of afterlife in Confucianism becomes a missing cultural element that might explain eternity and the mechanism for achieving transcendence in this life or beyond. Therefore, Confucianism faced the challenge from foreign religions when Buddhism and Christianity entered China during the Song dynasty and in the twentieth century respectively. In order to alleviate the effect of Buddhism, Confucians in the Song dynasty absorbed some of the thoughts of Buddhism and Daoism to enrich Confucianism, which was then called Neo-Confucianism.

Song scholars taught Neo-Confucianism through their education system and practice of Confucian rituals. These rituals covered nearly every sphere of life: weddings, funerals, festivals, and ancestral rites. The practice of these rituals moulded

[1076] Cf *The Analects*, 11.12.
[1077] Cf Laozi, *Daodejing*, Chapter 5.

human relationships and ethical codes in a stratified collective society. It provided a sense of collective belonging to people of the local communities and fostered the concept of collective transcendence, which is proposed in this thesis. This sense of belonging would encourage people to work for collective well-being in the present world.

Concerning the legacy of Confucianism in contemporary China, the PRC, it is sensible to ask whether ideologies of modernisation will change or replace Confucianism. The fact is that China is modernised mainly with regard to material civilisation. Regarding ideological development, the Chinese government supported the establishment of the International Confucianism Association in October 1994 in Beijing. Therefore, there is no replacement for Confucianism, and so its influence has remained through the development of individual social networks as described in Fei's social model. This thesis argues that the concept of collective transcendence, a product of Confucianism, is still prevalent in contemporary China.

6.2.2 State Ideology in Human Relationships

Fei's social model, which is based on his observation of rural areas in the first half of the twentieth century, is about the formation and practice of human relationships. He believed that Confucianism sets the framework for the development of human relationships (*renlun*) in accordance with the stratified society. Kinship is the most important relationship and forms the concentric circles that generate social influence for an individual. These concentric circles become an individual network, which is ego-centred.

A number of scholars since Fei have studied Chinese human relationships. Xiang Quan Chang carried out further studies and with her empirical findings proposed her social model named *lishang-wanglai*. This LSWL model explains that social support resources are transferred in the ego-centred networks proposed in Fei's model when people manipulate their social relationships. Chang believes that this model can be applied to the analysis of the human relationships found in various fields – villages, towns, overseas, etc. This thesis regards that Fei's social model is revised through Chang's understanding of the use of human relationships for achieving social support resources in the PRC. Chang's model extends Fei's social model from the applicability in rural areas to towns and cities. Chang believes that the calculation of human relationships is indeed an essential part of Chinese culture. This thesis regards the

practice of traditional rituals and manipulation of human relationships as a means to preserve Confucianism in the PRC.

Consequently, the PRC remains a stratified collective society. The sense of 'belonging but not believing' illustrates the importance of being a member of this collective society. Based on the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing', this thesis predicts that the majority of Chinese people cannot achieve transcendence through popular religion. One of the reasons for the failure to provide any meaningful notion of transcendence to people is the syncretistic nature of popular religion. It is difficult to identify a personal god in this kind of religion. In fact, a host of deities is to be found in popular religion in China. However, since a personal god is not present in the beliefs of popular religion, there is no unique revelation given to the believers. Thus, the transcendence of life after death will not be guaranteed. Therefore, human effort is needed, such as practising good deeds in this life, to achieve the transcendence of life. People will accept this concept of cultural transcendence subject to certain conditions.

6.2.3 Conditions for Cultural Transcendence

Every culture provides meaning of life to its members. If a national religion is included in a culture, this religion then explains the meaning of life and provides routes to religious transcendence for its cultural members. Individuals, of course, can choose the means of transcendence for themselves if the cultural transcendence does not apply to them. Since there is no national religion for China, Chinese culture needs to provide an explanation for the meaning of life. Since Confucianism steers Chinese culture, it explains the meaning of life with respect to the pursuit of a perfect moral life. If people are willing to pursue a perfect moral life, the society will be in peaceful development and will eventually achieve perfection and well-being.

Neo-Confucianism absorbed the idea of the union of heavenly principle and humanity for its development of cultivation of oneself or spirituality. Mou's immanent transcendence is based on the concept of the union of heavenly principle with humanity. The key to understanding heavenly principle is to study it with great sincerity. After understanding the heavenly principle, individuals can cultivate themselves to achieve perfect moral lives. Such a perfect moral life is essential to build a perfect society in which people can enjoy well-being in this present world. The well-being here is not only limited to material enjoyment but also includes spiritual peacefulness. However,

the foundation of Mou's proposal, the concept of the union of heavenly principle with humanity, has been challenged by Dai Yu Wang, Zi Chen Zhao, and Xiao Tong Fei.

The Muslim scholar Dai Yu Wang has questioned the practicability of this union of heavenly principle and humanity. First, the Confucian view on the relationship between heavenly principle and human nature is not clear; second, there was insufficient study of human nature, heavenly principle, and the True Lord's principle in Confucianism. Wang's main argument is that the role of Confucian *tian* (sky or heaven) has not been clearly defined. Why must *tian* confer kindness on human beings? Wang's view is that *tian* must have its own will or subjectivity in order to confer kindness on human beings. Therefore, he assigned the True Lord as the subjectivity behind *tian*, and believed that people needed to know True Lord before they could understand the heavenly principle.

The Christian scholar Zi Chen Zhao commented on the Neo-Confucians' proposition, which exhorted people to abandon their own self to harmonise and unite with the principles of sky and earth. This proposition is based on a deep experience of pursuing harmony and unity with the principles of sky and earth. However, the Neo-Confucians had not further explained the procedure to achieve such harmony and unity. Zhao's comment implied that the pursuit of this deep experience resembled the study of an object which would not actively reveal itself. It is difficult, if not impossible, for Chinese people to achieve union with the heavenly principle and humanity.

What is clear is this: both Christianity and Islam offer the possibility of religious transcendence to Chinese people. They understand Chinese culture from the perspective of the presence of a personal god. Fei understood Christian faith from a sociological perspective, however. He compared Chinese society to its Western counterpart and recognised that Western society resembled an organisation in which everyone was equal before the Christian God. This equality produced a universal moral standard. If they follow this universal moral standard, which comes from God, they will achieve transcendence. Fei regarded it as a form of organisational transcendence. Meanwhile, China was a stratified society and moral requirements were contextual, i.e., they related to the social position of the individual involved. Therefore, this stratified society would not produce a universal moral standard. As such, then, Chinese people were not able to achieve organisational transcendence. In applying Fei's point to Mou's immanent transcendence, the understanding and manifestation of heavenly principle is contextual,

i.e., an individual will take into account his or her social position and human relationships in practising Chinese ethics.

The views of Wang, Zhao, and Fei, among others, point out the characteristics of the manifestation of union between heavenly principle and humanity. First, the subject behind heavenly principle has not been explicitly stated. If heavenly principle does not have subjectivity, it becomes a host of natural rules which may decide the fates of people. These rules are objects for interpretation and understanding. Second, the understanding of heavenly principle is by means of great sincerity and there is no standard procedure to follow. As the degrees of people's sincerity vary, the interpretation of this principle also varies. In Fei's words, there are no universal moral codes in Chinese ethics. Third, there are no clear boundaries in an individual personal network, according to Fei. Membership of these personal networks will depend on personal developments and benefits. These characteristics of the union of heavenly principle and humanity bring difficulties in the manifestation of Mou's immanent transcendence.

Despite the difficulty of manifesting the union of heavenly principle and humanity, Mou's proposal requires people to seek the heavenly principle with great sincerity. This requirement is quite demanding for the public at large. That said, this thesis proposes that there is a concept of collective transcendence in Chinese culture, which does not demand people's great sincerity to pursue transcendence. The concept of collective transcendence, a product of Confucianism, transcends Chinese people through their attachment to their own family network or a local community after death.

An important condition for collective transcendence is the survival of the collective society. An assumption is that members of this society are superior to other people groups in the competition for survival. The emergence of a sense of cultural superiority, such as Sino-centrism, is a necessary condition for successful collective transcendence. Based on this sense of cultural superiority, there remains a real very tension between the choice of collective transcendence as located in traditional Chinese culture and religious transcendence found in any foreign religion. The concept of collective transcendence is, therefore, used to examine Chinese culture interacting with Christianity as well as with Islam.

6.3 Dialogue between Christianity and Chinese Culture

The development of Christian churches in China today can be traced back to the endeavours of Christian missionaries two hundred years ago. In the early twentieth century, China underwent a period of change and revolution. Chinese scholars were shaken by the defeat of the Opium War (1839-42), among other things. Cultural pride was fading away. In this age of war and calamity, Chinese people were easily alienated from Chinese culture which could no longer guarantee the continuing survival of the collective society.

It appears to be a human trait, that in times of war and calamity, which make life difficult, people would seek transcendence in other-worldliness. Therefore, popular religion developed various local religious rituals, including the common ritual of ancestral worship. In so doing, popular religion has demonstrated the phenomenon of 'belonging but not believing'. This mindset becomes a means of congregating for local people and providing a sense of collective belonging through these religious rituals. As such, the sense of belonging to a collective society is important in China and is the result of the webs woven out of centuries of countless personal relationships. Against this background, there was room for the spreading of Christianity in China, albeit not in any univocal way. The review in chapter 4 reveals that the responses from grass-root-class and elite-class Christians in the early twentieth century were manifested in different ways.

In general, grass-root-class Christian converts were born out of the legacy of popular religion. For example, there were Christian converts from popular religious sects. The Christian congregation the Jesus Family exhibited the properties of a self-contained local community and a Christian congregation. Both Xi Lian and Fei Ya Tao consider that the Jesus Family sought to establish a great harmonious society on earth, which is an ideal of Confucianism. The structure of a family-based, Confucian-stratified society was reproduced in the Jesus Family. In fact, Jesus Family members called their leaders 'parents'.

Although members of popular religious sects might have become alienated from Chinese culture and established their own religious sects, the traditional sense of collectivism remained strong in these sects. One reason for this is that those members were in general facing difficulties, and they joined these sects to help one another. These sects then formed local communities for reasons of survival as well as to seek religious

transcendence. It is the pragmatic nature of Chinese culture that strives for survival in the present world. For Christian converts, this pragmatic attitude is observed in the Chinese church today, and the pursuit of good conduct, healing, and exorcisms, etc., is commonly found in grass-root Christians.

Elite-class Christians in the first half of twentieth century turned their focus to the improvement of Chinese culture because they faced deterioration in national power as well as China being defeated in various confrontations with overseas countries. Could Christianity save China? Their answer was 'Yes', and so they sought to harmonise Christianity and Chinese culture. Targets of harmonisation were twofold: first, to seek people's acceptance of Christianity; second, ultimately to improve Chinese culture. Renowned scholar at the time, Lei Chuan Wu, portrayed Jesus as a sage. Interestingly, his approach resembled Muslim literati who described Muhammad as a Chinese sage. Wu's approach was to improve or supplement Chinese culture with the moral element that Jesus is a model of a perfect person. Wu's thinking was to establish a perfect society on earth through cultivation of oneself in regard to morality. His thought resembled the thinking of the union of heavenly principle with humanity. Unlike Neo-Confucians, who had not offered the procedures for achieving this target, Wu regarded Jesus as a perfect example for people's learning.

Zi Chen Zhao also sought to improve Chinese culture. He did not stop at the level of moral cultivation but went further to identify the lack of a personal god in traditional Chinese thought. This deficit introduced difficulties in the manifestation of the union of heavenly principle with humanity. Therefore, Zhao proposed three steps to resolve this problem: a) the introduction of a personal Christian God to replace *tian*; b) making use of the Christian notion of 'soul' to replace the Confucian heart or mind in the sensing and understanding of heavenly principle. The heavenly principle is incarnated as Jesus the Christ, and the human soul can commune with Christ. This communication leads Chinese people to an awareness of other-worldliness; and c) explaining that this experience of God is universal and that it forms the basis for both physical and spiritual lives.

Zhao creatively assigned the Christian God and Jesus to replace *tian* and *dao* in Chinese traditional thought. Thus, Chinese people will need first to know God and Jesus before they can understand *tian dao* (the heavenly principle). Zhao's approach resembled Muslim literati's appropriation of *tian* and *dao*. Yet Zhao's position was to exhort Chinese people not only to believe in Christianity but also to supplement the

deficit of Chinese culture with Christian faith so that a more perfect society could be established in China.

Through the hermeneutical lens of collective transcendence, it can be shown that Chinese converts are first alienated from Chinese culture and then seek transcendence in Christianity. That said, the collective nature[1078] of Chinese culture will then urge these converts to introduce the notion of Christian transcendence to their family members and close friends so that they will be reunited in their pursuit of other-worldliness and, ultimately, in the other-world itself.

6.4 Dialogue between Islam and Chinese Culture

Chinese Muslims gather together in their own communities, which are called *Jamaat*. As a result, Chinese people treat them as out-group social members. Surveys reported in chapter 3 indicate that there is stereotyping of Chinese Muslims. They are marginalised owing to historical anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the relatively closed nature of the Muslim community. Therefore, the rulers of imperial China and the PRC have imposed various policies on Chinese Muslims for purposes of control.

Against this background, Chinese Muslims sought to maintain their faith against the pressure of acculturation. They formed their local communities, the *Jamaat*, which were considered as parts of the universal *Umma*. The *Jamaat* constituted a geographical separation from their Han Chinese neighbours, since they lived more in a form of sociological separation. The *Jamaat* also provided a spiritual connection with the Islamic community that reminded them of the religious identity of Chinese Muslims. In addition, they sought to practise the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is regarded as one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, even though they lived in a restrictive environment. The Muslim scripture-hall educational system was then established after the connection with the Islamic homeland, the pilgrimage to Mecca. In this manner, therefore, the teaching of Islamic faith continued in a systematic manner.

The scripture-hall educational system also trained Mandarin-speaking Muslims, collectively known as Muslim Huis. They, too, grew up in the educational system of Han Chinese and learned Confucianism. These Muslim literati then produced Chinese writings, namely *Han Kitab*, during the period 1630 to 1730. These Chinese writings

[1078] The collective nature of Chinese culture is manifested in the daily rituals, which involve the use of human relationships in society. Everyone must be familiar with these rituals in order to live appropriately.

promoted the idea that both Islam and Chinese culture pursued a perfect moral life through assignment of a subjectivity, the True Lord, behind the concept of *tian* and *dao*. In addition, they proclaimed Muhammad as a Chinese sage by changing a few of Confucius' words.[1079] Their intention was clear: they needed the authority of Confucius to achieve the orthodoxy of Islam in China in order to preserve their Islamic faith.

The assignment of Muhammad as a Chinese sage and the appropriation of Chinese metaphysical terms resulted in both Islamic and Chinese cultures sharing similar sets of ethical values, as well as confirming the orthodoxy of the Islamic faith in China. However, in the discussion of the heavenly principle, Dai Yu Wang has frankly pointed out that there should be a subject, e.g., the True Lord, to confer goodness on human nature. Since Confucianism did not have sufficient discussion on the subjectivity of the heavenly principle and human nature, Wang has suggested that the Muslim notion of the True Lord was the subject of the heavenly principle. For this reason, Muslim literati actually promoted Islamic ethics instead of Confucian ethics in their discourses.

In addition to the above, there was a stream of Muslims, *Xidaotang*, influenced by *Han Kitab*. The sect members of *Xidaotang* formed their own community, which was supported by the agricultural and commercial activities of the members. Interestingly, it resembled the religious community established by the Jesus Family. The collective nature of Chinese culture is also observed in *Xidaotang*. However, since the members of *Xidaotang* are small in number, they cannot be considered as having any representative influence.

Regarding the hermeneutical lens of collective transcendence, Chinese Muslims formed their own communities for collective religious life. It is worth noting the practice of endogamy among Chinese Muslims. Their communities are consanguineous, linked together through endogamy. In addition to the ethnic identity, they are religiously tied together and become members of the universal *Umma*. This thesis considers that they have their own religious collective transcendence.

[1079] See discussions in sub-section 5.2.4.

6.5 Indirect Dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam

Indirect dialogue between Chinese Christianity and Chinese Islam is through the observation of their interactions with Chinese culture in chapters 4 and 5. Although both Christianity and Islam have revelations from their respective unique gods, while there is no personal god in Chinese culture, their approaches to harmonise Chinese culture are different. Different approaches reflect the different natures of these two religions.

Both Muslim literati and Christian scholars acknowledge the lack of a personal god in Chinese culture. Muslim literati perceived that the Chinese supernatural concept *tian dao* (heavenly principle) was lacking in subjectivity that might confer human nature.[1080] They then identified the True Lord as the subject behind the heavenly principle and requested Chinese people to understand their religion, i.e., Islam, before they could know *dao* (principle or way). However, if Chinese people start to learn about the Islamic faith, it is not related to traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, the intention of Muslim literati is not to supplement Chinese culture but to contend for orthodoxy within Chinese Islam.

The obvious characteristics of Chinese culture are its collectivism and the implicit concept of collective transcendence. Chinese Muslims have their own communities, which in theory can stand alone with minimal interaction with Han Chinese.[1081] These collective characteristics of Chinese culture and Chinese Muslims set clear boundaries between them. Since Muslims do not need Chinese converts to maintain their congregations, there is less motive for Muslims to interact with Chinese culture. In fact, they seek to avoid secularisation caused by acculturation. Collective faith is the characteristic of Islam.

Unlike Chinese Islam, Chinese Christian churches require Chinese converts. Christian parents usually encourage their children to become Christians, and Chinese churches need to retain these young Christians and help them understand the Christian faith. Jesus said, ‘Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by

[1080] See discussion in sub-section 5.2.2.

[1081] In reality, Chinese Muslims, like other village people, need to go to town and interact with Han Chinese in order to earn a living. Although they leave their homeland and become migrant workers, their requirements for halal food and religious worship will bring them together to establish another *Jamaat* in this circumstance. See discussion in sub-section 5.1.2.

itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me' (John 15:4). Thus, the Christian faith calls for an intimate relationship with God. This intimate relationship resembles the deep experience in the cultivation of oneself. Therefore, Christian intellectuals such as Lei Chuan Wu asked Chinese people to learn from Jesus, who is assigned the position of a sage in Chinese society. Another Christian intellectual, Zi Chen Zhao, sought to improve Chinese culture with Christian teachings. Christianity's intention was to supplement Chinese culture because Christians are also members of Chinese society.

While Chinese Christians enjoy their individual intimate relationship with God, they have not forgotten the needs of China. They seek to share Christianity with non-believers because they are also members of the society. This thesis believes that the collective nature of Chinese culture urges Christian elites to harmonise Christianity with Chinese culture.

Historical evidence shows that from its origins onwards, Christianity's missional imperative led it to engage with the outside world and spread Christianity elsewhere. Meanwhile, Islam did not have missionary agents until the early twentieth century.[1082] In addition, the Christian stress on having an individual relationship with God urges Christians to reach out to other people groups to share their faith, while the self-contained and collective nature of Islam keeps Muslims in a stable faith community. Christian mission seeks to plant churches but not necessarily to possess and control them; Muslim converts, usually by marriage, are required to attach themselves to the Islamic faith community. These two different faith characteristics affect their modes of contextualisation in China.

6.6 Key Elements for Contextualisation of Christianity and Islam in China

The concept of cultural superiority of Han Chinese is the soil nurturing the concept of collective transcendence because cultural superiority will enable the survival of the Chinese over time in the present world. Therefore, seeking transcendence, in the sense of other-worldliness, is not a prime objective in Chinese culture. Rather, Confucian utopia is the pursuit of a perfect ethical life. Ethics are then manifested in a collective

[1082] T. W. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1913) 408.

society whereby achievements of morality will attain well-being in this world. This thesis proposes that Chinese culture implies a concept of collective transcendence and that people will pursue the establishment of a community which includes both living and deceased members. This community helps the pursuit of well-being in this world.

In encounters between Chinese culture and both Christianity and the Islamic faith, Christians and Muslim Huis observe the deficit of Chinese culture, which does not have a personal god to guide the pursuit of well-being in the present world. This deficit will negatively impact the concept of collective transcendence because well-being in the present is not guaranteed. Therefore, Chinese people need to seek alternative means of transcendence than collective transcendence.

That said, it is necessary to harmonise Chinese culture before the introduction of religious transcendence to Chinese people. As Confucians pursue a perfect moral life, both Chinese Christians and Muslim Huis have sought to harmonise Chinese culture in regard to ethical aspects. There are sets of values behind ethics. In accordance with the concept of collective transcendence, reference to these ethical values is the means to collective survival in the present world. For Christianity and Islam, reference to the ethical values is the revelation of their unique personal God. There is a gulf between these value systems. Therefore, efforts to improve or complement Chinese culture with Christian or Islamic ethical values will not be fruitful.

Chinese Christianity needs Chinese converts to maintain its congregations, and the promotion of believers' good deeds is necessary to gain the acceptance of Chinese people. Nonetheless, Zi Chen Zhao has identified the lack of a personal god in Chinese culture. His finding urged Chinese people to accept the Christian God. It is difficult, if not impossible, to request Chinese people to give up their national pride and accept foreign religions. Therefore, this thesis proposes two key elements for the contextualisation of Christianity: a) Chinese Christians continuing to be members of the society; and b) introducing Christianity to Chinese people as an alternative means for transcendence.

In order to remain social members of Chinese society, manipulation of human relationships is inevitable. In fact, Christian churches, in particular the village churches, need to maintain good relationships with the local people. According to Chang's LSWL model, Christian churches are gathering social support resources for survival. With regard to traditional rituals, such as ancestral worship, Christians should participate, even if not holding to the notions of ancestor worship itself. The presence of Christians

in this ritual is for the purpose of memorisation and maintaining relationships with family members, i.e., belonging to the family but not believing the idea of worshiping the deceased family members.

Of course, Christians need to find different means to express their relationships with others in the participation of traditional rituals. These other means or adjustments effectively inform others that Christians find transcendence in a source other than Chinese culture.[1083] The participation and explanation of the adjustments of rituals are actions offering Chinese people alternatives for transcendence of life.

Chinese Muslims, in particular Muslim Huis, interacted with Chinese culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the circulation of *Han Kitab* literature. Their intention of securing the orthodox position of Islam has been achieved in the PRC. Although Muslim Huis can speak Mandarin, their ethnic and religious communities are still isolated from Han Chinese. In terms of the notion of collective transcendence, they transcend collectively by Islamic means and disregard the transcendent needs of other people groups.

Therefore, the group boundary between Muslims and Han Chinese is discriminative and Muslims are marginalised to a certain extent in China. This thesis proposes that a key element for the contextualisation of Islam is to alleviate the discriminative boundary between Muslims and Han Chinese. The trick to alleviate the discriminative boundary is the use of human relationships to gather social resources. However, the human relationships here are not in consanguinity but are, rather, instrumental relationships. This thesis believes instrumental relationships can also help mutual understanding, including Islamic transcendence, between the two groups.

6.7 Suggested Future Work

This thesis has proposed the implications of collective transcendence in Chinese culture. The belief behind this cultural transcendental concept is one of cultural superiority, i.e., Chinese culture is superior to other cultures and has a better chance of survival. In order to introduce the notion of, as well as the means of attaining, religious transcendence to Chinese people, research should be conducted to find the key components of this cultural superiority concept that Chinese culture can be changed and turned to the pursuit of religious transcendence.

[1083] Example of the adjustment of ritual in ancestral memorisation is discussed in section 4.5.

The dialogue between Chinese culture and both Christianity and Islam in this thesis is helpful to identify the characteristics embedded in the concepts of cultural transcendence. However, given that observation and analysis in this thesis are from the Christian perspective, there is a risk of evaluating this cultural transcendental function negatively. Future studies may turn to Sino-Christian theology for an understanding of the evaluation of Christianity from the perspective of Chinese culture. A more fruitful result is expected in comparing the views from two camps.

The indirect dialogue between Christianity and Islam in this thesis is around the various forms of group boundary as well as collective characteristics of these two religions. The observation is based on the collective characteristic of Chinese culture and comparing the responses toward Chinese culture from the two religions. Future work may continue to compare the responses of these two religions toward a new reference. The new reference may be responses toward mission for understanding the basis of these two faiths.

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