

James D. Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name: Liu Zhi's Confucian Translation of Monotheism and Islamic Law*. Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2011
xxi + 250 pp. Preface, Introduction, notes, bibliography, English index

An excellently researched study of Islam in China, Frankel's work treats of Islamic-Confucian scholar Liu Zhi, his intellectual and familial surroundings, Muslim rituals, Sufi thought, with Judaism, Christianity, as well as contemporary Confucian writings kept in focus.

One of the best scholarly books published this year, which I personally could not put down until finished reading, is James D. Frankel's *Rectifying God's Name*.

The extraordinary person described, studied and honored in this book is the noted Chinese Islamic scholar 劉智 Liu Zhi (1660-1730), and his classic works comparing Confucian and Islamic ritual, 《天方典理》 *Tianfang Dianli*.

A contemporary of the great Jesuit missionaries in China, Liu was a master of classical Chinese, with a deep understanding of Confucian, as well as Daoist, Judaic, and Christian sources. Though the Jesuits found favor with the 乾隆 Qian Long emperor (reigned 1736-1796), none of their scientific treatises were included in the great Treasury of court and Confucian recognized classics, the 四庫全書 *Si Ku Quanshu* (Complete classic collection in 4 treasuries). Liu Zhi's most famous work, the 天方典禮 *Tianfang Dianli* (Ritual from Heaven) was chosen to be included. James Frankel explains why.

Liu Zhi was trained in the Confucian classics from childhood, in his native Nanjing. Like so many Chinese Islamic scholars, he knew the Daoist as well as the Confucian classics, and could read and write Arabic and Persian as well. He saw clearly the similarities between Daoism and Sufism, a spiritual way still popular in China today. Further, he used the term 道 *Dao*, as did Judaic and Christian scholars, as having analogous Confucian, Daoist and Islamic meaning. For these reasons, Chinese scholars felt comfortable reading his clear and precise literary works, insisting that they be included in the official treasury of literary masterpieces.

Christian and Judaic writings in Chinese never received such official approval. The great Jesuit scholars, including Ricci, Schall and Verbiest, were given official approval, not as literati or Confucian scholars, but for bringing western scientific discoveries to the notice of court astronomers, correcting lunar and solar calendar calculations. The Chinese converts to Christianity were not given the respect shown to these foreign scientists, who came to China in the role of "missionaries".

It is ironic that today's Christians – Protestant and Catholic alike – are seen as native to Chinese soil, because the priests and nuns ministering to the parishes and churches of China are now Chinese. Islam, on the other hand, has always been a part of Chinese life, since the Tang dynasty (619-905). The Mongol rulers (1281-1365) used Islamic scholars to fill civil as well as military offices. The Ming dynasty (1365-1640) used Islamic citizens only as military officials. The Qing dynasty rulers, who were in fact seen by the majority Han people as foreigners (i.e., ethnically Manchu), felt a need to put super emphasis on being truly *Confucian*, keeping all other minority people and non-Confucian thinkers out of higher office, to strengthen their own position as heaven appointed rulers of China. The writings of Liu Zhi, on the other hand, fitted in well with the emphasis on Confucian thinking.

Significantly, Frankel explains, the Arabic Islamic word for 禮 *li* (ritual) is translated by two different words, *adab* for liturgy or prescribed forms of worship, and *idabat* for the social meaning assigned to *li*, i.e., a respect which honors and assists the other, without using words, sensitive to innermost, heartfelt feelings. The virtue of *li* is common to all Asian cultures, but unfortunately was often lacking in colonial invaders, merchants from Europe and America, and foreign missionaries.

Frankel's work stands as a monument to good scholarship, based on participatory observation, coupled with a perfect grasp of the language needed for field as well as text based research. This review only touches briefly on the many deep insights found in its pages. We highly recommend reading the book in its entirety, from cover-to-cover, for its spiritual as well as historic content.

Michael Saso