

Bridging Confucianism and Islam: A Systematic Literature Review of Ethical Synthesis in the Han Kitab Tradition

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ABSTRACT

The historical interaction between Islam and Confucianism in China represents a significant example of intercultural intellectual dialogue. This relationship developed prominently through the Han Kitab tradition, a Chinese-language Islamic intellectual movement that interpreted Islamic teachings using Confucian philosophical vocabulary. This study aims to systematically examine the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics by identifying major themes, ethical convergences, philosophical differences, and contemporary implications. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA framework was employed. Literature was collected from the Scopus database without publication year restrictions. From 134 identified documents, 29 publications consisting of journal articles, book chapters, and academic books were selected for qualitative synthesis. The findings indicate that Han Kitab functions as a central intellectual bridge where Islamic concepts such as akhlak and maqashid syariah interact with Confucian concepts of ren, li, and yi. Both traditions share similar orientations toward virtue cultivation, moral education, social harmony, and human responsibility. However, fundamental differences remain regarding moral authority, ontology, and the relationship between ethics and law. This study contributes by providing a systematic mapping of Confucian–Islamic ethical studies and highlighting the relevance of intercultural ethical dialogue for contemporary issues in education, governance, technology, and environmental responsibility.

Keywords: Akhlak; Confucian Ethics; Han Kitab; Intercultural Ethics; Islamic Ethics; Ren; Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The historical relationship between Islam and Confucianism in China represents a long process of intellectual and cultural interaction that has developed for more than a millennium.

This encounter became particularly significant during the Ming and Qing dynasties through the emergence of the Han Kitab tradition, a Chinese-language Islamic intellectual corpus that interpreted Islamic teachings through Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist vocabularies. The development of Han Kitab was not merely a translation of religious texts but a process of intellectual adaptation, where Muslim Chinese scholars attempted to make Islamic concepts understandable within the Chinese philosophical environment. (Benite, 2020; Petersen, 2017). The tradition demonstrates how religious ideas can be reconstructed through local intellectual frameworks while maintaining their original ethical identity.

The emergence of Han Kitab was closely connected with the educational and institutional development of Chinese Muslim communities. The jingtang jiaoyu (scripture hall education) system provided a structured environment where Arabic, Persian, and Chinese materials were combined into a pedagogical curriculum. Through this educational system, Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and moral teachings were explained using concepts familiar to Chinese intellectual communities. Consequently, Han Kitab became an important medium for establishing a Sino-Islamic intellectual discourse that connected Islamic knowledge with Confucian ethical reasoning. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020).

Despite its historical importance, the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics remains a complex academic issue. Previous studies on this topic are distributed across various fields, including religious studies, philosophy, sinology, education, and intercultural studies. Many studies have focused on particular figures, especially Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Dexin, or examined individual texts within the Han Kitab tradition. However, existing research has not sufficiently provided a systematic mapping of how Confucian and Islamic ethical systems interact, converge, and differ across broader academic discussions.

A central problem in studying Confucian–Islamic ethics concerns the relationship between shared moral values and different philosophical foundations. Confucian ethics is traditionally associated with the concepts of *ren* (humaneness), *li* (ritual propriety), and *yi* (righteousness), which emphasize moral cultivation, social harmony, and responsible human relationships. Islamic ethics, meanwhile, is grounded in the concept of *akhlak* and developed through frameworks such as *maqashid syariah*, emphasizing moral responsibility, divine guidance, and human welfare. Although both traditions share an interest in character formation and ethical conduct, they differ in their sources of moral authority. (Ivanhoe, 2021; Murata, Chittick, & Weiming, 2020).

Previous studies have examined different dimensions of this relationship. Petersen (2017) highlights Han Kitab as an important intellectual tradition that explains Islam within Chinese cultural and philosophical contexts, particularly through the works of Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Dexin. Petersén (2013) further explains that Wang Daiyu utilized Chinese philosophical vocabularies from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism to articulate Islamic spiritual concepts. Similarly, Liu Zhi developed a more systematic synthesis by employing

Neo-Confucian concepts such as li and qi to explain Islamic metaphysical ideas. (Petersen, 2017; Murata, Chittick, & Weiming, 2020).

Other studies have expanded the discussion beyond historical texts by examining the contemporary relevance of Confucian–Islamic ethical dialogue. Research on education indicates that both traditions share humanistic orientations, particularly in developing moral individuals through continuous learning and character formation. Tan and Ibrahim (2017) argue that Confucian ethics and Islamic education emphasize similar concerns regarding moral cultivation, while Yunpeng and Zulkifli (2024) identify similarities between Confucian Analects and the Qur'an in educational objectives, teaching methods, and moral development.

Furthermore, recent literature demonstrates that Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis has relevance in contemporary issues such as governance, technology, business ethics, and environmental responsibility. The concepts of *zhongyong* in Confucianism and *wasathiyah* in Islam have been discussed as ethical frameworks emphasizing balance, moderation, and social harmony. These values have been applied in discussions of environmental cooperation, while principles of harmony and responsibility have also been explored in relation to value-based artificial intelligence governance. (Hidayat, Ikhsan Tanggok, & Ho, 2024; Ghamari & Deja, 2025).

However, existing studies still reveal several gaps. First, previous research tends to emphasize historical figures, textual interpretation, or specific philosophical concepts rather than providing a comprehensive synthesis of Confucian and Islamic ethical studies. Second, there remains limited understanding of how similarities in moral values can coexist with fundamental differences in ontology, authority, and the relationship between morality and law. Islamic ethics generally derives moral authority from revelation, while Confucian ethics relies more heavily on classical texts, moral exemplars, and ritual practices. (Nashef, 2026a; Drechsler, 2013).

Therefore, this study aims to systematically examine the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The novelty of this research lies in providing a structured mapping of academic literature regarding ethical synthesis, identifying major themes, examining points of convergence and divergence, and exploring its contemporary implications. Using Scopus-indexed literature and the PRISMA framework, this study analyzes 29 selected documents from an initial dataset of 134 records to develop a comprehensive understanding of Confucian–Islamic ethical dialogue.

Based on this background, the research questions (RQs) are formulated as follows: RQ1: What are the main themes and trends identified in academic literature regarding Confucian and Islamic ethical relations? RQ2: How does the Han Kitab tradition function as a bridge between Confucian philosophical concepts and Islamic ethical principles? RQ3: What similarities and differences exist between Confucian ethics and Islamic ethics regarding

virtue, moral authority, and social responsibility? RQ4: How have previous studies explained the contemporary relevance of Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis in education, governance, technology, business ethics, and environmental issues? RQ5: What methodological approaches are appropriate for analyzing cross-cultural ethical synthesis between Confucianism and Islam? RQ6: How can the synthesis of Confucian and Islamic ethics contribute to broader discussions of intercultural ethics and contemporary moral challenges?

Through answering these questions, this study contributes to the growing field of intercultural ethics by demonstrating how historical intellectual exchanges can provide perspectives for contemporary ethical discussions. The research highlights Han Kitab not only as a historical phenomenon but also as a valuable example of how different moral traditions can engage in dialogue while preserving their distinct philosophical foundations.

Confucian Ethics: Ren, Li, and Yi; Confucian ethics is fundamentally based on the cultivation of moral character through the development of virtues and appropriate social relationships. Three central concepts in Confucian ethical thought are ren (仁), li (礼), and yi (义). These concepts provide the foundation for understanding how Confucianism constructs moral individuals and establishes social harmony.

The concept of ren refers to humaneness, benevolence, or moral compassion toward others. In Confucian philosophy, ren represents the highest ethical ideal that guides interpersonal relationships and the cultivation of virtuous character. It emphasizes that moral development begins with self-cultivation and extends to relationships within family, society, and government. Through ren, individuals are expected to develop empathy, responsibility, and concern for the well-being of others. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020; Tusicisny, 2004).

The second concept, li, refers to ritual propriety, social norms, and appropriate conduct. Unlike law-based approaches to social regulation, Confucian ethics views li as an internalized practice that shapes human behavior through education, tradition, and social roles. Li functions as a mechanism for maintaining social order by guiding individuals to act according to ethical expectations within their communities. In the Han Kitab tradition, Confucian concepts of ritual and propriety also became a framework through which Islamic teachings were interpreted and communicated within Chinese society. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020; Petersén, 2013).

The third concept, yi, represents righteousness and moral judgment. Yi concerns the ability to determine and perform actions that are morally appropriate according to ethical principles. Together with ren and li, yi forms an integrated ethical framework where virtue, social responsibility, and moral decision-making are interconnected. In the context of Sino-Islamic intellectual exchange, these concepts provided a vocabulary for interpreting Islamic

moral teachings through Chinese philosophical categories. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020; Petersén, 2013).

Confucian ethics also emphasizes the process of moral cultivation or self-development. Moral excellence is achieved through continuous refinement of the heart-mind (*xin*) and the integration of internal virtue with external ethical behavior. Studies of Han Kitab texts demonstrate that Chinese concepts of heart-mind cultivation were used to explain Islamic spiritual psychology, creating a shared language of moral refinement between Confucian and Islamic traditions. (Petersén, 2013; Tusicisny, 2004).

Islamic Ethics: Akhlak and Maqashid Syariah; Islamic ethics is centered on the concept of akhlak, which refers to moral character, ethical disposition, and human conduct based on Islamic teachings. Akhlak emphasizes that morality is not limited to external actions but involves the transformation of the inner self, including intention, spirituality, and responsibility toward others. Within the Han Kitab tradition, Islamic moral psychology was expressed through Chinese philosophical language, allowing Islamic ethical concepts to be understood within the intellectual context of China. (Petersén, 2017; Tusicisny, 2004).

Another important concept is maqashid syariah, referring to the higher objectives of Islamic law. Maqashid provides an ethical framework for evaluating laws and human actions based on their contribution to human welfare and the protection of essential interests, including religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. In Sino-Islamic discourse, maqashid demonstrates how Islamic ethical reasoning can interact with social norms while maintaining its theological foundation. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020; Tusicisny, 2004).

The interaction between akhlak and maqashid with Confucian ethical concepts illustrates the process of intellectual translation within Han Kitab. Islamic concepts were expressed through Chinese ethical vocabulary related to duty, ritual propriety, social harmony, and moral cultivation. This process allowed Islamic ethical teachings to participate in Chinese intellectual discourse without abandoning their religious foundations. (Petersen, 2017; Petersén, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020).

The Han Kitab tradition represents an important historical example of intellectual dialogue between Islam and Confucianism. It refers to Chinese-language Islamic writings developed mainly during the Ming and Qing dynasties by Muslim scholars who attempted to explain Islamic beliefs and ethics using concepts familiar within Chinese philosophy. The tradition emerged through the process of *Yi-Ru Huitong*, meaning the interpretation and harmonization of Islamic teachings with Confucian thought. (Gengcui, 2024).

Rather than representing a simple translation of religious terminology, Han Kitab reflects a deeper process of cultural adaptation. Muslim scholars employed Confucian philosophical categories to explain Islamic theology, ethics, and spirituality within the Chinese intellectual environment. This process allowed Islamic teachings to become

accessible to Chinese literati while maintaining core Islamic principles. (Petersen, 2017; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020).

Wang Daiyu is considered one of the earliest and most influential Han Kitab scholars. Through his work, *Zhengjiao zhenquan* (The True Explanation of the Orthodox Teaching), Wang Daiyu used Chinese philosophical vocabulary from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism to explain Islamic spiritual concepts. His approach demonstrates how Islamic ideas could be interpreted through Chinese moral psychology while maintaining Islamic theological objectives. (Petersén, 2013).

Liu Zhi further developed this intellectual synthesis by systematically applying Neo-Confucian concepts such as *li* and *qi* to explain Islamic metaphysical ideas. His writings illustrate how Islamic concepts were reformulated through Confucian philosophical structures, creating a distinctive Sino-Islamic ethical discourse. (Murata, Chittick, & Weiming, 2020).

The literature indicates that Confucian and Islamic ethics share several similarities, particularly regarding moral cultivation, character development, and social responsibility. Both traditions view ethical life as a process of forming virtuous individuals who contribute positively to society.

Confucian concepts such as *ren*, *li*, and *yi* emphasize moral self-development and harmonious social relationships. Similarly, Islamic concepts of *akhlak* and *maqashid* emphasize personal virtue, responsibility, and social welfare. The Han Kitab tradition demonstrates that these ethical frameworks could interact through shared concerns regarding human perfection, social harmony, and ethical governance. (Petersén, 2013; Jabbari & Tsai, 2020).

In contemporary discussions, similarities between *zhongyong* (Confucian moderation) and *wasathiyah* (Islamic moderation) illustrate shared ethical orientations toward balance and social harmony. These concepts have been discussed as potential foundations for cooperation in addressing social and environmental challenges. (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017; Yunpeng & Zulkifli, 2024; Hidayat, Ikhsan Tanggok, & Ho, 2024).

Despite shared ethical concerns, Confucianism and Islam differ fundamentally in their philosophical foundations. Islamic ethics derives moral authority from divine revelation, particularly the Qur'an and Sunnah, while Confucian ethics is rooted in classical texts, moral exemplars, social traditions, and ritual practices.

The difference is also reflected in their understanding of ontology. Islam emphasizes a transcendent relationship between humans and God, whereas Neo-Confucianism emphasizes cosmic order and moral cultivation within an immanent framework. (Nashef, 2026a).

Furthermore, the relationship between morality and law differs between the two traditions. Islam integrates morality and law through the framework of *sharia*, while

Confucianism emphasizes ethical internalization through *li* rather than formal legal regulation. (Drechsler, 2013).

The synthesis between Confucian and Islamic ethics provides important insights for character education. Both traditions emphasize that education is not merely knowledge transmission but a process of forming morally responsible individuals. Studies show similarities between Confucian educational philosophy and Islamic education in terms of moral objectives, learning processes, and character formation. (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017; Yunpeng & Zulkifli, 2024).

Recent studies have expanded Confucian–Islamic ethical discussions into contemporary fields such as business ethics, governance, and technology. Values of harmony, responsibility, and balance from both traditions provide alternative perspectives for addressing modern ethical challenges, including value-based artificial intelligence governance and intercultural economic cooperation. (McCann, 2022; Drechsler, 2013; Ghamari & Deja, 2025).

Based on the reviewed literature, previous studies have provided important explanations regarding *Han Kitab*, individual scholars, and philosophical similarities between Confucianism and Islam. However, existing research remains fragmented and lacks a systematic synthesis that maps ethical concepts, methodological approaches, similarities, differences, and contemporary implications across the broader literature.

Therefore, this study positions itself by applying a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to provide a comprehensive mapping of Confucian–Islamic ethical studies. The research aims to bridge the gap between historical textual studies and contemporary ethical discussions by identifying patterns of convergence, divergence, and future research directions in Sino-Islamic ethical dialogue.

METHOD

Research Design

1. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Approach

This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to analyze the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics within the *Han Kitab* tradition and related Sino-Islamic intellectual studies. The SLR method was selected because the research topic involves diverse academic sources, including philosophical studies, historical analyses, religious studies, and intercultural ethics research. Through a systematic review process, previous studies can be identified, classified, and synthesized to reveal patterns, similarities, differences, and research gaps in the existing literature.

Unlike a conventional narrative review, SLR provides a structured procedure for collecting and evaluating relevant studies. This approach allows researchers to establish transparent criteria for literature selection and ensures that the synthesis process is based on

traceable academic evidence. In the context of Confucian–Islamic ethics, SLR is suitable because the discussion covers multiple dimensions, including ethical concepts, textual interpretation, historical development, educational institutions, and contemporary applications.

The methodological framework combines textual interpretation, historical contextualization, and comparative ethical analysis. Textual analysis is used to examine how Islamic concepts such as *akhlak* and *maqashid syariah* are expressed through Chinese philosophical vocabularies, particularly concepts such as *ren*, *li*, *yi*, and heart–mind cultivation. Historical analysis is used to understand the role of institutions such as *jingtang jiaoyu* in transmitting Sino-Islamic ethical ideas.

The research also adopts an interpretive synthesis approach, where the relationship between Confucianism and Islam is understood as a process of intellectual dialogue rather than a one-way cultural transmission. This perspective enables the study to examine how ethical concepts were adapted, negotiated, and reconstructed within the Chinese intellectual environment.

2. PRISMA Framework

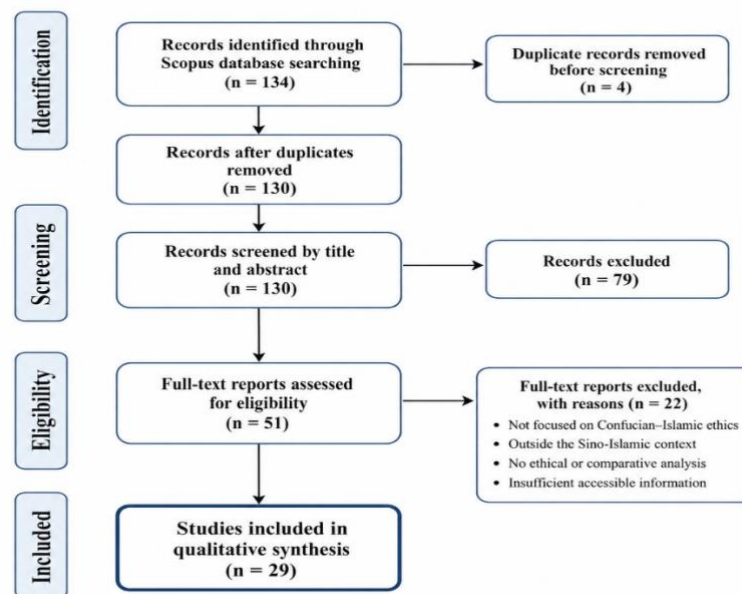
The literature selection process follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. PRISMA is applied to ensure transparency in identifying, screening, evaluating, and selecting documents included in the final synthesis. The process consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and inclusion.

The use of PRISMA is important because the study examines literature from different disciplines with varied research approaches. A systematic selection framework reduces researcher bias and provides a reproducible procedure for future studies examining Confucian–Islamic ethical relations.

The overall research design can be summarized as follows:

Figure 1. Research Framework Based on Systematic Literature Review and PRISMA

The figure illustrates the research process consisting of literature identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of selected studies for qualitative synthesis.



Source: Research literature extraction.

The PRISMA diagram illustrates the systematic literature selection process. A total of 134 records were identified from Scopus, with 4 duplicates removed, leaving 130 records for screening. After title and abstract screening, 79 records were excluded. From 51 full-text articles assessed for eligibility, 22 were excluded based on the inclusion criteria. Finally, 29 studies were included for qualitative synthesis. The process ensures a transparent and systematic selection of relevant literature.

Data Sources and Literature Search Strategy

1. Data Sources

The primary data source in this research is academic literature obtained from the Scopus database. Scopus was selected because it provides broad coverage of international publications in religious studies, philosophy, humanities, and social sciences. The database enables researchers to identify peer-reviewed academic works related to Confucian ethics, Islamic ethics, Han Kitab, and Sino-Islamic intellectual history.

The collected literature consists of journal articles, book chapters, and academic books discussing Confucian-Islamic ethical interaction. The selected sources include studies on Han Kitab texts, Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, Ma Dexin, *jingtang jiaoyu*, Sinicization of Islam, and comparative ethical studies.

The search process does not apply publication year restrictions in order to capture the historical development of academic discussions. Literature published between earlier

foundational studies and recent publications is considered to identify changes in research trends and contemporary developments.

2. Search Strategy and Keywords

The literature search was conducted using combinations of keywords representing three main concepts: the Confucian tradition, including *Confucian*, *Confucianism*, and *Neo-Confucian ethics*; the Islamic tradition, including *Islam*, *Muslim*, and *Islamic ethics*; and ethical synthesis, including *ethic*, *moral*, *virtue*, *synthesis*, *dialogue*, and *intercultural ethics*. Additional context-specific keywords were also applied, such as *Han Kitab*, *Zhengjiao zhenquan*, *Wang Daiyu*, *Liu Zhi*, *Ma Dexin*, *akhlak*, *maqashid*, *ren*, *li*, and *yi*, to capture both philosophical discussions and historical studies related to Sino-Islamic intellectual interactions. Furthermore, citation tracking was conducted from key publications by scholars such as Petersen, Petersén, Jabbari and Tsai, Wang, and other relevant researchers to identify additional studies related to Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis.

Literature Selection Procedure

1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The literature selection process applied predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only relevant studies were included in the final analysis. The inclusion criteria consisted of publications discussing Confucian–Islamic ethical relations within the Chinese or Sino-Islamic context, studies examining ethical mediation, cultural adaptation, or intellectual synthesis between Confucianism and Islam, research focusing on Han Kitab texts, Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, Ma Dexin, or *jingtang jiaoyu*, as well as comparative studies addressing ethical convergence, divergence, or intercultural dialogue. Meanwhile, studies were excluded if they were outside the Confucian–Islamic Chinese context, focused exclusively on one tradition without discussing ethical interaction, presented purely doctrinal discussions without cultural, philosophical, or ethical analysis, or lacked sufficient accessible information for qualitative synthesis.

2. PRISMA Selection Process

The initial search identified 134 documents from the Scopus database. After removing duplicate documents, 130 documents remained for title and abstract screening. During the screening stage, irrelevant documents were removed based on the research focus. A total of 51 documents proceeded to full-text evaluation, and finally 29 documents fulfilled all inclusion criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis.

Table 1. Literature Selection Process Based on PRISMA

Selection Stage	Description	Number of Documents
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Selection Stage	Description	Number of Documents
Identification	Documents identified through Scopus database searching	134
Duplicate Removal	Duplicate documents removed before screening	130
Title and Abstract Screening	Documents evaluated based on relevance to Confucian–Islamic ethics	51
Full-text Evaluation	Documents assessed according to inclusion criteria	29
Included Studies	Literature included in final qualitative synthesis	29

Source: Research literature extraction.

Data Analysis Technique

1. Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis was conducted to identify general characteristics of the selected literature. This analysis includes publication type, publication period, authorship patterns, and thematic distribution.

The bibliometric analysis provides an overview of how research on Confucian–Islamic ethics has developed over time. It also helps identify dominant research areas and emerging themes within the literature.

2. Thematic Analysis

Following bibliometric mapping, thematic analysis was conducted to classify the selected literature into major research themes, including Han Kitab and philosophical synthesis, the historical development of Islam and Confucianism in China, contemporary applied ethics, comparative social theory, and humanistic education and character development. Thematic coding was further performed based on several analytical categories, including the transformation of ethical concepts between *ren*, *li*, *yi* and *akhlak*, *maqashid*, moral psychology and heart–mind concepts, educational institutions such as *jingtang jiaoyu*, regional and historical variations, and contemporary ethical implications in areas such as governance, education, and technology. This approach enabled the identification of recurring patterns, conceptual relationships, and evolving discussions within Confucian–Islamic ethical studies.

Validity and Research Ethics

1. Literature Verification

The validity of this research is maintained through verification of bibliographic information from selected documents. Each included publication is checked based on author identity, publication year, title, source, and DOI information to ensure that citations can be accurately traced.

The study also applies source triangulation by comparing interpretations from different academic works. Discussions regarding the translation of Islamic concepts into Confucian vocabulary are examined using multiple sources, including Han Kitab texts and secondary academic analyses.

2. Transparency and Ethical Considerations

Research transparency is maintained through clear reporting of search procedures, selection criteria, and analytical stages. The PRISMA framework allows readers to understand how documents were selected and why certain studies were included or excluded.

The research also acknowledges differences of interpretation within the literature, particularly debates regarding whether Han Kitab represents integration, adaptation, or assimilation between Confucianism and Islam. Therefore, the analysis presents multiple perspectives rather than reducing the relationship between the two traditions into a single interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process. The analysis was conducted on 29 selected documents that fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The results are presented through bibliometric analysis and thematic analysis to identify publication characteristics, dominant research themes, ethical concepts, patterns of convergence and divergence, and contemporary relevance of Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis.

Characteristics of Selected Literature

1. Distribution of Literature Based on Publication Type

The first finding concerns the characteristics of the selected publications. Among the 29 documents analyzed, 16 documents (55%) were journal articles, while 13 documents (45%) were books or book chapters. This distribution indicates that research on Confucian–Islamic ethics develops through both peer-reviewed journal discussions and broader academic monographs. Journal publications mainly contribute contemporary analytical perspectives, while books and book chapters provide deeper historical and philosophical examinations of Han Kitab texts and Sino-Islamic intellectual traditions.

The balanced proportion between journal articles and books demonstrates that the study of Confucian–Islamic ethics remains interdisciplinary. Historical studies of Han Kitab, philosophical interpretations of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi, and contemporary ethical discussions are often developed through extended academic works rather than journal articles alone.

Table 2. Distribution of Selected Literature Based on Publication Type

Publication Type	Number of Documents	Percentage
Journal articles	16	55%
Books and book chapters	13	45%
Total	29	100%

Source: Literature synthesis based on selected studies.

2. Distribution of Literature Based on Publication Period

The temporal distribution shows an increasing academic interest in Confucian–Islamic ethical studies. The majority of selected publications appeared during the period 2020–2026, accounting for 17 documents (59%). Earlier periods, including 2009–2013 and 2014–2019, each contributed 6 documents (21%). This pattern indicates that research attention toward ethical dialogue between Confucianism and Islam has increased significantly in recent years.

The increase in recent publications suggests that Confucian–Islamic ethical studies have expanded beyond historical discussions toward contemporary applications, including education, governance, technology ethics, and intercultural cooperation.

Table 3. Distribution of Literature Based on Publication Period

Publication Period	Number of Documents	Percentage
2009–2013	6	21%
2014–2019	6	21%
2020–2026	17	59%
Total	29	100%

Source: Bibliometric analysis of selected literature.

Thematic Distribution of Literature

The thematic analysis identified several major research clusters within the selected literature. These themes represent the main directions of academic discussions regarding Confucian and Islamic ethical relations.

1. Han Kitab Tradition and Philosophical Synthesis

The largest thematic category was Han Kitab and philosophical synthesis, consisting of 13 documents. Studies within this theme mainly discuss the intellectual efforts of Chinese Muslim scholars, particularly Wang Daiyu, Liu Zhi, and Ma Dexin, in translating Islamic concepts into Chinese philosophical language.

The findings indicate that Han Kitab functions as the primary intellectual space where Islamic and Confucian ethical concepts interact. Rather than simply translating religious terminology, Han Kitab scholars reconstructed Islamic ideas through Chinese philosophical categories, especially Neo-Confucian concepts such as *li* and *qi*.

2. Historical and Anthropological Studies of Islam–Confucian Relations in China

The second thematic category consists of 5 documents focusing on the historical development of Muslim communities in China, cultural interaction, and identity formation within Chinese intellectual environments.

These studies examine how Muslim communities negotiated religious identity while engaging with Chinese cultural traditions. The findings demonstrate that Sino-Islamic interaction developed not only through theological discussion but also through educational institutions, social practices, and cultural adaptation.

3. Contemporary Applied Ethics

The third major theme consists of 6 documents discussing the contemporary application of Confucian and Islamic values. These studies examine ethical issues related to business, governance, technology, environment, and bioethics.

The findings show that concepts such as harmony, balance, responsibility, and moderation are increasingly discussed as ethical resources for addressing modern challenges.

Table 4. Thematic Distribution of Selected Literature

Research Theme	Number of Documents	Representative Sources
Han Kitab and philosophical synthesis	13	Petersen; Murata, Chittick & Weiming; Nashef
Historical and anthropological studies of Islam–Confucianism	5	Rossabi; Benite; Wang

Research Theme	Number of Documents	Representative Sources
Contemporary applied ethics	6	McCann; Drechsler; Ghamari & Deja
Social theory and comparative traditions	3	Turner; Chittick & Murata
Comparative education and humanism	2	Tan & Ibrahim; Yunpeng & Zulkifli

Source: Thematic synthesis of selected literature.

Ethical Foundations: Ren, Li, Yi, and Islamic Akhlak

1. Confucian Concepts of Virtue

The results indicate that Confucian ethics is primarily structured around the concepts of ren, li, and yi. These concepts emphasize moral cultivation, appropriate social relationships, and ethical decision-making.

The concept of ren represents humaneness and moral virtue, emphasizing empathy and concern for others. Meanwhile, li refers to ritual propriety and social norms that regulate relationships within society. The concept of yi represents righteousness and the ability to act according to moral principles.

The literature demonstrates that these concepts form an ethical framework focused on character development rather than external legal enforcement. Moral individuals are produced through continuous education, self-cultivation, and participation in social relationships.

2. Islamic Ethics: Akhlak and Maqashid Syariah

The results also show that Islamic ethics is centered on akhlak as the foundation of moral behavior. Akhlak emphasizes the development of good character based on Islamic teachings and moral responsibility.

Furthermore, maqashid syariah expands the ethical discussion by emphasizing human welfare and social benefit. This framework highlights the protection of essential human interests, including religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.

The findings indicate that both traditions share concerns regarding human moral development, although they differ in philosophical foundations and sources of moral authority.

Convergence between Confucian and Islamic Ethics

1. Han Kitab as a Space of Ethical Synthesis

The results identify Han Kitab as the most significant meeting point between Confucian and Islamic ethical traditions. Chinese Muslim scholars utilized Confucian concepts to explain Islamic teachings within the Chinese intellectual environment.

Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi represent important examples of this intellectual process. Wang Daiyu used Chinese philosophical terminology to explain Islamic spirituality, while Liu Zhi developed a systematic synthesis using Neo-Confucian concepts such as *li* and *qi*.

2. Similarities in Moral Values

The findings show that Confucianism and Islam share several ethical orientations, including virtue cultivation, social harmony, moral responsibility, and character education.

The concept of *zhongyong* in Confucianism and *wasathiyah* in Islam illustrate similar approaches toward moderation, balance, and avoidance of extremes. These shared values demonstrate potential areas for ethical dialogue between the two traditions.

Fundamental Differences between Confucian and Islamic Ethics

1. Ontology and Moral Authority

Although both traditions emphasize morality and human development, the findings identify significant philosophical differences.

Islamic ethics is based on the relationship between humans and God through revelation and the concept of divine authority. In contrast, Neo-Confucian ethics emphasizes cosmic order, moral cultivation, and harmony within an immanent framework.

Therefore, the synthesis between Confucianism and Islam does not represent a complete unification of both systems but rather an intellectual negotiation between different philosophical foundations.

2. Relationship between Morality and Law

The results indicate differences in the relationship between ethics and legal systems.

Islam integrates morality and law through *sharia*, where legal principles are connected with moral obligations derived from revelation. Meanwhile, Confucianism emphasizes ethical internalization through *li* (ritual propriety) rather than dependence on formal legal mechanisms.

These differences demonstrate that while both traditions seek social order, they employ different approaches to achieving moral behavior.

Contemporary Relevance of Confucian–Islamic Ethical Synthesis

1. Character Education

The findings demonstrate that Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis has relevance for character education. Both traditions consider moral formation as a central purpose of education.

Confucian education emphasizes self-cultivation and social responsibility, while Islamic education emphasizes akhlak formation and moral accountability. Their similarities provide opportunities for developing intercultural approaches to moral education.

2. Ethics, Technology, Business, and Environment

The reviewed literature also highlights the application of Confucian and Islamic values in contemporary ethical issues.

Values such as harmony, responsibility, and balance have been discussed in relation to ethical business practices, public governance, artificial intelligence, and environmental cooperation. These findings indicate that historical ethical traditions continue to provide resources for addressing modern social challenges.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that the Han Kitab tradition represents the central area of interaction between Confucian and Islamic ethics. The literature reveals three main findings: (1) increasing academic attention toward Confucian–Islamic ethical studies, particularly after 2020; (2) Han Kitab as the primary mechanism of ethical and philosophical translation; and (3) the coexistence of shared ethical values and fundamental philosophical differences between the two traditions.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings obtained from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) by interpreting the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics in the Han Kitab tradition. The discussion focuses on how the findings relate to previous studies, the significance of ethical synthesis between the two traditions, its theoretical and practical implications, and the limitations of the current research. The discussion positions Han Kitab not merely as a historical collection of Islamic texts in Chinese but as an intellectual space where ethical concepts were translated, negotiated, and reconstructed within a different cultural framework.

Interpretation of Confucian–Islamic Ethical Synthesis in the Han Kitab Tradition

1. Han Kitab as a Process of Cross-Cultural Ethical Translation

The findings demonstrate that Han Kitab represents more than a linguistic translation process; it reflects a broader process of ethical and conceptual translation. Chinese Muslim scholars did not simply transfer Islamic terminology into Chinese language but interpreted Islamic moral concepts through philosophical categories familiar within Chinese intellectual traditions. This approach allowed Islamic teachings to become understandable within a Confucian-oriented intellectual environment while maintaining their fundamental religious identity.

This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the role of Wang Daiyu and Liu Zhi as central figures in Sino-Islamic intellectual history. Wang Daiyu employed Chinese

philosophical vocabulary to explain Islamic spirituality, while Liu Zhi developed a more systematic synthesis by applying Neo-Confucian concepts such as *li* and *qi* to explain Islamic metaphysical ideas. Therefore, *Han Kitab* can be interpreted as a form of intellectual negotiation where concepts from two traditions interact through reinterpretation rather than simple assimilation. (Petersen, 2013; Murata, Chittick, & Weiming, 2020).

The process of translation also occurred at the level of moral psychology. *Han Kitab* scholars connected Islamic spiritual concepts with Chinese understandings of inner cultivation and heart–mind development. This demonstrates that ethical dialogue between Islam and Confucianism occurred not only through external social values but also through shared concerns regarding human inner transformation and moral refinement.

Furthermore, the institutional context of *jingtang jiaoyu* strengthened this ethical translation process. Through scripture-hall education, Islamic teachings were transmitted using educational methods and intellectual frameworks familiar to Chinese Muslim communities. As a result, *Han Kitab* ethics became embedded within social and educational practices rather than remaining limited to scholarly texts.

2. Shared Orientation toward Virtue Ethics

The findings reveal that Confucianism and Islam share a strong orientation toward virtue ethics, particularly in the formation of morally responsible individuals. Although both traditions originate from different philosophical foundations, they emphasize that ethical life requires continuous self-development, discipline, and responsibility toward others.

The concept of *ren* in Confucianism and *akhlak* in Islam illustrates this shared concern. *Ren* emphasizes humaneness, compassion, and appropriate relationships between individuals, while *akhlak* emphasizes moral character shaped by religious principles. Both concepts indicate that morality is not limited to external actions but involves the transformation of personal character.

This interpretation is consistent with studies on comparative education, which demonstrate similarities between Confucian educational philosophy and Islamic education. Both traditions consider education as a process of moral formation rather than merely intellectual development. Moral learning is understood as a lifelong process that shapes individuals capable of contributing positively to society. (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017; Yunpeng & Zulkifli, 2024).

Comparison with Previous Literature

1. Similar Values: Social Harmony and Ethical Moderation

One of the strongest findings of this study is the convergence between Confucian concepts of harmony and Islamic principles of moderation. The analysis shows that *zhongyong* in Confucianism and *wasathiyah* in Islam represent similar ethical orientations emphasizing balance, self-control, and avoidance of extremes.

This finding strengthens previous research arguing that cross-religious ethical dialogue can provide shared foundations for addressing contemporary social challenges. Both concepts emphasize maintaining equilibrium between individual interests and collective welfare. Therefore, ethical similarities between Confucianism and Islam are not limited to historical discussions but remain relevant for modern issues involving social cooperation and sustainability. (Hidayat, Ikhsan Tanggok, & Ho, 2024).

The relevance of these shared values is also visible in contemporary applications. Previous studies indicate that principles of harmony, responsibility, and balance have been explored in environmental cooperation, business ethics, and value-based technology governance. These findings suggest that historical ethical traditions continue to provide conceptual resources for addressing current global concerns. (McCann, 2022; Ghamari & Deja, 2025).

2. Fundamental Philosophical Differences: Revelation and Cosmology

Despite significant similarities, this study confirms that Confucianism and Islam maintain fundamental differences regarding moral authority and philosophical foundations.

Islamic ethics is rooted in revelation and the relationship between humans and God. Moral principles derive from divine guidance, particularly through Islamic religious sources. In contrast, Neo-Confucian ethics emphasizes cosmic order, moral cultivation, and harmony between humans and the universe through concepts such as *li*. These differences create distinct understandings of why humans should behave morally and how moral obligations are justified.

Therefore, the synthesis between Confucianism and Islam should not be interpreted as a complete integration of two ethical systems. Instead, it represents a dialogical process where concepts are translated and negotiated while preserving differences in metaphysical assumptions. This interpretation avoids reducing both traditions into a single universal framework and recognizes the complexity of intercultural ethical exchange.

Research Implications

1. Implications for Character Education

The findings have implications for the development of intercultural character education. Confucian and Islamic traditions both emphasize moral cultivation, self-control, and social responsibility as essential elements of human development.

The integration of these perspectives does not require removing the distinctive identity of each tradition. Instead, it provides a framework for understanding how different ethical systems can contribute shared values, such as respect, responsibility, compassion, and social harmony. This approach may support educational models that promote dialogue between cultural and religious traditions.

2. Implications for Contemporary Ethics

Beyond education, the findings indicate that Confucian–Islamic ethical dialogue has relevance for broader contemporary fields. Values such as harmony, moderation, and responsibility may contribute to discussions on ethical governance, business practices, technological development, and environmental cooperation.

For example, previous studies show that Confucian concepts of harmony and Islamic ethical principles can provide alternative perspectives in developing responsible artificial intelligence governance. Similarly, shared moral values can support cooperation between communities with different cultural backgrounds. (Ghamari & Deja, 2025; Hidayat, Ikhsan Tanggok, & Ho, 2024).

Research Contribution

This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic synthesis of Confucian–Islamic ethical studies through an SLR approach. Previous research often examined individual scholars, specific texts, or historical contexts, whereas this study maps broader patterns of ethical concepts, similarities, differences, and contemporary applications.

The research also contributes by positioning Han Kitab as a model of intercultural ethical dialogue. Rather than viewing cultural interaction as a process of replacement or assimilation, the findings demonstrate that intellectual exchange can occur through translation, adaptation, and mutual interpretation. The contribution of this perspective is particularly relevant for studies of comparative philosophy and intercultural ethics.

Research Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study relies on literature available through Scopus-indexed publications. Although Scopus provides broad academic coverage, some important historical texts, Chinese-language publications, or regional studies may not be fully represented.

Second, the study focuses primarily on ethical and philosophical dimensions of Confucian–Islamic interaction. Other dimensions, such as political history, economic relations, or everyday religious practices among Chinese Muslim communities, require further investigation.

Third, because this research applies qualitative synthesis, interpretation remains influenced by the analytical perspective used in organizing themes and comparing traditions. Future research may expand this study by incorporating additional databases, multilingual sources, or empirical investigations involving contemporary Muslim and Confucian communities.

Transition toward Conclusion

The discussion demonstrates that the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics in the Han Kitab tradition represents a complex process of dialogue between two distinct moral systems. The findings reveal both shared ethical orientations and enduring

philosophical differences. These insights provide a foundation for understanding how historical intellectual exchanges may contribute to contemporary discussions of intercultural ethics. The following conclusion section will summarize the main findings, theoretical contributions, and directions for future research.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined the relationship between Confucian and Islamic ethics through a Systematic Literature Review approach using the PRISMA framework. By analyzing 29 selected documents from Scopus, the research identified major themes, patterns of ethical interaction, philosophical similarities, differences, and contemporary relevance of Confucian–Islamic ethical synthesis.

The findings demonstrate that the Han Kitab tradition represents a significant intellectual space where Islamic ethical concepts were translated and interpreted through Chinese philosophical frameworks. Concepts such as *ren*, *li*, and *yi* provided a cultural vocabulary for explaining Islamic ideas related to *akhlak*, spirituality, and moral responsibility. This process shows that intercultural interaction does not necessarily require the elimination of differences but can occur through adaptation, negotiation, and mutual understanding.

The study also reveals that Confucianism and Islam share important ethical concerns, particularly regarding virtue cultivation, character development, social harmony, and human responsibility. Nevertheless, fundamental distinctions remain in their philosophical foundations. Islamic ethics is primarily based on revelation and divine authority, whereas Confucian ethics emphasizes moral cultivation, classical traditions, and social harmony.

The contribution of this research lies in providing a systematic overview of fragmented literature on Confucian–Islamic ethical relations. By positioning Han Kitab as a model of ethical dialogue, this study expands discussions in comparative philosophy and intercultural ethics. Future research may explore multilingual sources, empirical studies of contemporary communities, and broader applications of Confucian–Islamic values in global ethical challenges.

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