

Article

The Catholic *Yijing*: Lü Liben's Passion Narratives in the Context of the Qing Prohibition of Christianity

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Abstract: *Yijing benzhi* 易經本旨 (original meaning of the *Yijing*, 1774) constitutes a unique piece of Christian literature produced by the Chinese Catholic believer Lü Liben 呂立本 in the Qing period. Following in the footsteps of Jesuit missionaries such as Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730), Lü represents a rare Chinese voice of the Figurist interpretation of the *Yijing* by claiming that ancient Chinese sages had received and recorded God's divine revelation in this venerated Chinese classic. Focusing on his narratives of Christ's Passion, this paper examines the ways in which Lü interprets the symbolic meanings of the trigrams/hexagrams and deduces their theological connotations in light of Catholic thought. The interweaving of religious devotion, tradition and experience underpinned a creative re-interpretation of the Passion narratives, which strives to sustain the faith of Chinese Catholic communities in the context of the Qing prohibition and persecution of Christianity.

Keywords: The *Yijing* (The Book of Changes); Lü Liben; Figurism; Passion narratives; Prohibition of Christianity; Qing dynasty

1. Introduction: The *Yijing*-Figurism

In her latest monograph, Chen Xinyu 陳欣雨 examines the influence of the rising intellectual phenomenon during the Qing period known as Jesuit Figurism, with a focus on the *Yijing* (The Book of Changes) thoughts of the French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet (1656–1741). In concluding, she remarked that “The *Yijing*-Figurism being largely suppressed by the missionary headquarters in Europe, the Figurists were unable to publish their works in Europe and their thoughts were merely known by a few. In the meantime, their works had neither been issued in China, and hence we have hitherto yet found any assessment or studies on the subject matter by ancient Chinese literati.”¹ However, the recent discovery of the *Yijing benzhi* 易經本旨 (original meaning of the *Yijing*) by the Qing Catholic believer Lü Liben 呂立本 may suggest otherwise.

Like Chen, most scholars in the field agree that the Chinese Figurist movement was short-lived and far from influential. It commenced with the sinological studies of Joachim Bouvet, followed by those of Jean-François Foucquet (1665–1741) and Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736). These French Jesuits were convinced that the *Yijing*, one of the oldest Chinese classics, was not in the ownership of the Chinese, but a prophetic work belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition, speaking not only of the true God, but also about the Messiah. To validate this provocative claim, they applied to the *Yijing* the *Figurisme*, a typological exegesis which has always been applied to the Old Testament in the Catholic tradition.² The biblical typology aims to find, in certain persons or events in the Old

¹ 易學索隱思想因在歐洲總體上受到教廷傳教總部的壓制，著作無法在歐洲出版發行，其思想也只能為少數人知曉，且在中國關於索隱派的易學著作亦從未刊行發表，故尚未發現有古代中國文人對其進行評價和研究。(Chen 2017, p. 333).

² (Mangenot 1924, pp. 1912–13)

Testament, some prefiguration of the New Testament and thus convince the Jews of the Christian message. By the same token, the Jesuit Figurists believed that if the most profound mysteries of Christianity could be revealed by the *Yijing*, they might convince the Chinese people that Catholicism was deeply rooted in their own culture, which would facilitate the Catholic missionary movement in China.³ This is considered an evolution of the cultural accommodation approach established by their predecessor Matteo Ricci (1552–1610).⁴

Having the privilege to reside in the Forbidden City, these elitist Jesuit missionaries cultivated contacts with the Qing Emperor and scholar-officials in Peking (Beijing) and attempted to find receptive minds for their Figurist interpretation of the *Yijing*. The Kangxi Emperor (1654–1722), in particular, showed his interest in Bouvet's *Yijing* study. Not only did he monitor Bouvet's learning progress, the emperor also discussed Bouvet's work in depth with some of his ministers.⁵ Unfortunately, the Figurists' views soon became entangled with the controversy over the Chinese rites in 1700.⁶ While restrictions were imposed on their discussions about the *Yijing* with the Kangxi Emperor,⁷ these missionaries were hereafter forbidden to write on Figurism in Chinese⁸ and to get their treatises published during their lifetime. Taking these contexts into account, it is justifiable to extrapolate that *Yijing*-Figurism had blossomed but failed to bear fruit in the Qing society.⁹

The discovery of the *Yijing benzhi*, however, may point to the "afterlife" of Jesuit *Yijing*-Figurism. Deposited in Zikawei Library (Xujiahui Library, Shanghai), the manuscript was composed in the eighteenth century by Chinese Catholic believer Lü Liben, who took a similar hermeneutic approach as the Jesuit Figurists. Making a pioneering analysis of Lü's manuscript, this paper attempts to locate the missing piece in the puzzle of the Chinese Figurist movement. On the basis of a succinct introduction of the manuscript, the paper will focus on Lü's narratives of Christ's Passion by elucidating the theological connotations hidden in the symbolic trigrams/hexagrams, and by examining the dynamic interplay between Christian faith and Chinese identity against the backdrop of the prohibition of Catholicism in early Qing China.

2. The Figurist Remnant: Lü Liben and the *Yijing benzhi*

Yijing benzhi (also named as *Yijing lüzhu* 易經呂註) was originally written in the thirty-ninth year (1774) of the reign of Qianlong Emperor by Lü Liben, a Chinese Catholic from Hedong Jinyi 河東晉邑, Shanxi province.¹⁰ With no proof that the text got published, at least eight copies of the manuscript are found in the Zikawei Library (see Appendix A). Unfortunately, most of the copies are fragments and have been deposited in the Library for centuries without attracting much scholarly attention. Thanks to the efforts of Nicolas Standaert, Adrian Dudink, and Wang Renfang, one of the most complete copies of the forgotten text has recently been documented and reprinted in *Xujiahui cangshulou Ming Qing Tianzhujiào wénxián xubian* 徐家匯藏書樓明清天主教文獻續編 (The Sequel to the Chinese Christian Texts from the Zikawei Library).¹¹ Bound in four volumes, the manuscript consists of a substantial prologue and commentaries on forty hexagrams. It is also the only copy in which the transcribers' names, the places and years of transcription are stipulated. According to the epilogues of each volume,¹² the text was subsequently copied around the tenth to eleventh year (1871–1872) of the

³ Previous studies have examined such issues as the intellectual background of Figurism, the life and works of Figurists. See (von Collani 1985; Witek 1982; Rule 1986; Lundbæk 1991; Zhang 1978, pp. 514–98).

⁴ (Mungello [1985] 1989, pp. 300–7)

⁵ For the relationship between the Kangxi Emperor and Bouvet's study of the *Yijing*, see (Fang 1943; Luo 1997; Zhang 2005).

⁶ (Mungello [1985] 1989, p. 311)

⁷ (Witek 1982, p. 176)

⁸ Ibid., 237.

⁹ (von Collani 1985, p. 207; Lundbæk 1991, p. 15; Witek 1982, p. 331)

¹⁰ (Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 5)

¹¹ (Lü 2013, vol. 1, pp. 3–198; vol. 1, pp. 199–396; vol. 1, pp. 397–586; vol. 2, pp. 3–206).

¹² (Lü 2013, vol. 1, pp. 3–198; vol. 1, p. 396; vol. 1, p. 586; vol. 2, p. 206).

reign of the Tongzhi Emperor by three Catholic believers, namely Francis 方濟各, Cheng Xiaolou 程小樓 and Borgia 玻爾日亞 in Yunjian 雲間 (Shanghai).

With limited biographical information about Lü Liben, the prologue sheds light on his interpretative approach of the *Yijing*. Lü proclaims that the *Yijing* “is an ancient scripture with hidden mysteries, and the very first holy scripture since the beginning of history.”¹³ In the subsequent section of *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳 (The Great Treaties), which states that “Thus the *Yijing* consists of the images; the images are reproductions (是故易者象也，象也者像也),”¹⁴ Lü maintains that the *Yi* images originated from divine inspiration to reveal the mysteries of Christian salvation. Unfortunately, owing to later generations’ misinterpretations, the truth has been concealed. Lü did not hesitate to make his severe critique:

The original meaning of the *Yijing* consists of images, depicting the Logos, the true Lord coming down to Earth to save humankind. But because of Wang Bi’s approach of “sweeping away the images,” the truth has been lost. [. . .] Furthermore, there are fools who only bluff about false images without entity, deceiving people through divination to make money. Alas, they are so deluded! They have been committing cardinal sins, all because of their failure to understand the original meaning of the *Yijing*, and hence their descent into heresy and evil.¹⁵

This suggests that Lü may likely be walking in the footsteps of Jesuit Figurists. Producing a Catholic commentary to the *Yijing*, the “Figurist remnant” Lü attempts to interpret the symbols of all the sixty-four hexagrams and expounds their connotations in light of the salvation story and Catholic thought. Despite the fact that some portions of his commentaries are missing in the four-volume manuscript,¹⁶ Lü’s work is still more complete and systematic than the Jesuit missionaries’ fragmented Chinese writings.¹⁷

Taking advantage of the multifarious symbolic dimensions of the trigrams and hexagrams, Lü strives to unearth the “original meaning” of the *Yijing*. According to Lü, each trigram, the basic *Yijing* sign consisting of three lines, is associated with a specific image from different figures of Christianity and stages of the salvation history (see Figure A1). *Qian* 乾 (1) ☰, *Dui* 兌 (2) ☱, and *Li* 離 (3) ☲ denote the three divine persons—respectively, the Holy Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Son. *Zhen* 震 (4) ☳ indicates God’s indignation upon sin, pouring water down on earth for forty days to destroy human civilization as an act of retribution. *Xun* 巽 (5) ☴, the Eldest Daughter, represents Virgin Mary, who turns over a new leaf by giving birth to Jesus Christ, the savior of all humankind. *Kan* 坎 (6) ☵ then denotes the toil and sufferings of Christ and the subsequent *Gen* 艮 (7) ☶ the Seven Last Words of Christ on the cross on Mount Calvary. Last but not least, *Kun* 坤 (8) ☷, the Earth ☷, signifies the redemption of *bafang zhi ren* 八方之人 (People from the eight directions).¹⁸ On the basis of these images of the component trigrams, Lü offers further theological interpretation on individual hexagrams. In this fashion, the trigrams and hexagrams are regarded as the archetypal keys to unlock biblical revelations.

While the Crucifixion occupies a pivotal position in Catholic theology, the Passion narratives naturally captivate the attention of Lü Liben in his *Yijing* commentary. Theological reasons aside,

¹³ 《易》乃古經隱義而為開闢以來第一聖經也。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 3). The English translations of the *Yijing Benzhi* 易經本旨 (original meaning of the *Yijing*) are by the authors.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all English translations of the *Yijing* are from the Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes’s version. See (Wilhelm 1967).

¹⁵ 《易經》本旨有像，乃真道真主降世救人之像也，乃因王弼攝象而失其本來之像也[. . .]且有一種愚者只論其無實形之虛像，而以卜算命為事，以騙愚民錢財，迷甚哀哉！乃犯罪之大者也，皆因不明《易經》之本旨，而歸入異端邪妄之中矣。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 34–5).

¹⁶ In the discovered copies of *Yijing benzhi*, a total of 44 hexagrams are reinterpreted. See Appendix A.

¹⁷ Several Jesuit Figurists’ Chinese manuscripts of the *Yijing* have been discovered, including *Gu jin jing tian jian* 古今敬天鑒 [The Mirror of Paying Homage to God in the Ancient Times and at Present], *Yi yin* 易引 [Introduction of Yi], *Zhouyi yuan zhi tan* 周易原旨探 [The Exploration of the Original Essence of Zhouyi], *Yi yao* 易鑰 [The Keys to the Yijing], *Yi jing zong shuo gao* 易經總說稿 [The Collection of All the Talks on Yijing], *Da yi yuan yi nei pian* 大易原義內篇 [Inner Chapter of the Original Meaning of the Great Yi], and *Yi Gao* 易稿 [Drafts of Yi]. In total, only 12 hexagrams, from *Qian* 乾 (The Creative) to *Pi* 否 (Standstill), were interpreted and elaborated.

¹⁸ (Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 23).

there might be another vital factor underlying his emphasis on the Passion narratives. The *Yijing benzhi* was written in 1774, when Catholicism was strictly prohibited by the Qing court. In 1724, the Yongzheng Emperor (reigned 1722–1735) issued a formal prohibition against the propagation of the Catholic faith in the provinces.¹⁹ All churches were closed and followers were ordered to renounce their faith.²⁰ Adopting a policy similar to that of his predecessor, the Qianlong Emperor (reigned 1735–1796) continued to ban the missionaries from entering China. In 1746, foreign missionaries were found ministering to Chinese Catholics in Fuan, Fujian province. The emperor went so far as to order all local officials to expel or execute anyone preaching or embracing Catholicism.²¹ This was followed by the persecution of the Chinese Catholics, the population of which was steadily increasing during his entire reign.²² In 1757, the Qianlong Emperor confined all foreign maritime trade to Canton (Guangzhou) and required each and every arriving Western vessel to be supervised by a Chinese mercantile house.²³ Under these circumstances, it became more difficult for foreign missionaries to preach or perform priesthood duties in local communities. Many church activities were forced to cease or be driven underground. In *Yijing benzhi*, there are signs indicating that Lü composes his work during this time of religious persecution. Notably, in his exegesis of hexagram *Feng* 豐 (Abundance [Fullness]), where he interprets it as a symbol for the golden age of Chinese Catholicism, Lü heaves a deep sigh that “unfortunately I was not born in those golden years.”²⁴ He even makes his accusation rhetorically: “For those who turn to encumber our holy religion, is it the proper way of people aspiring benevolence?”²⁵ Against this historical milieu, the themes of suffering and martyrdom embodied in the Passion narratives become particularly pertinent and significant.

Among the eight trigrams, the images of *Kan*, *Gen*, *Li*, and *Xun* are intimately connected with Christ and his Passion in Lü’s commentary. These four trigrams, in conjunction with several related hexagrams, will be critically examined with a view to analyzing the ways in which Lü takes advantage of the trigrams’ symbolic potentials to construct his unique Passion narratives. The sections of *Kan* and *Gen* will focus on how Lü integrates and transforms Chinese and Catholic textual traditions in his own narratives, while the sections of *Li* and *Xun* will highlight his representation of Christ and Virgin Mary in response to the Qing contexts of Christian prohibition and persecution.

3. ☵ *Kan*: The Toiling Savior of Modesty and Merit

In Lü’s exegesis, the trigram *Kan* ☵ (The Abysmal, Water) functions as one of the key symbols of the Passion. From the perspective of *Yijing* symbolism, Jesus Christ endured great sufferings in the Passion, just like the one yang (unbroken) line being trapped between the two yin (broken) lines in *Kan*. Lü expounds this idea by quoting “*lao hu Kan* 勞乎坎 (He toils in the sign of the Abysmal)” from the *Shuogua zhuan* 說卦傳 (Discussion of the Trigrams) where *Kan* is illustrated as “the trigram of toil, to which all creatures are subject (勞卦也，萬物之所歸也).” He argues that this statement refers to the Holy Son who “was trapped in the midst of human transgressions, and suffered death for all peoples of all times, paying the debts for their sins.”²⁶ From his reading, the yang line represents a Christ with incomparable power and virtue while the yin lines signify the void attributable to human sin and persecution.

Seemingly irrelevant and far-fetched, Lü’s interpretation is not without support from *Yijing*’s commentarial tradition. Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) regards *Kan* as signifying *xianxian* 險陷

¹⁹ (Standaert 2001, p. 520).

²⁰ (Gu 2000, pp. 87–9).

²¹ (Clark 2011, p. 78).

²² (Zhang and Liu 1987, pp. 180–6; Xiao 2015).

²³ (Schottenhammer 2007, pp. 33–4).

²⁴ 惜吾不遇其盛時也。(Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 46).

²⁵ 今反閉塞聖教之人，仁人之位當如此乎？(Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 54).

²⁶ 乃一聖子在于上下衆惡之中，乃替普世前古後今為世萬民受難受死，以補贖萬代世人之辜債。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 44).

(trap and danger), in accordance with its image of water in the depths of an abyss.²⁷ Zhang Huang 章潢 (1527–1608) further refers *Kan* to man's heart of nature.²⁸ As Wu Shen 吳慎 remarks, the yang line denotes one's divine nature, being locked within the natural inclinations and tendencies, and thus in danger of being engulfed by carnal desires and passions.²⁹ This echoes with the Bible in which trap and danger are often used to symbolize temptations and lusts. For instance, 1 Timothy 6:9 states that those who desire wealth will fall into "temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."³⁰ Another example is 1 Peter 5:8, where the Devil, the great tempter, is depicted as a dangerous roaring lion prowling around, seeking someone to devour.

While water's destructive power represents danger, trap, and death, its unceasing flow and nourishing nature denote truthfulness, fertility, and life. This results in the double, and apparently contradictory, meanings of the symbol *Kan*. According to Cheng Yi (1033–1193), "the centre of *Kan* is solid and strong, like water flows on without piling up anywhere, and even in dangerous places it does not lose its dependable character."³¹ In *Tao Te Ching* (*Daode jing* 道德經), the placid and contented nature of water is taken as the embodiment of the most lofty virtue, and the magnanimity of a superior man. As Laozi 老子 extols, "Lofty nobility is like water. Water's nobility is to enrich the ten thousand things and yet never strive: it just settles through places people everywhere loathe. Therefore, it's nearly Way."³² In this connection, the idea of *lao* as encapsulated in the trigram *Kan* (water) is a polysemy, with the coexistence of two possible meanings: *laoku* 勞苦 (toil) and *gonglao* 功勞 (merit). By capturing both meanings, Lü views Jesus as the true superior man, symbolized by the only yang line in *Kan* to suffer all the toils and to achieve the merit of benefiting all things.³³ Lü's highlight of the toils of the Savior also echoes with the description in Isaiah 53:11 concerning the Messiah, the "righteous servant," who "shall see of the travail of his soul," "justify many," and "bear their iniquities." 1 John 3:5 also makes it clear that in Jesus there is no sin, while Hebrews 4:15 refers Jesus as the only "high priest" who can overcome the temptation of sin throughout human history.

Lü's viewpoint of the symbol *Kan* and its attribute *lao* forms a solid basis for his further interpretation of the hexagram *Qian* 謙 (Modesty), where he acclaims Jesus Christ as the "superior man of modesty and merit" (*laoqian junzi* 勞謙君子). Known as *jiusan* 九三 (Nine in the third place), line 3 of *Qian* is the ruler of the hexagram, it being the only yang line trapped by five yin lines. Its statement reads, "A superior man of modesty and merit. Carries things to conclusion. Good fortune (勞謙，君子有終，吉)." In Lü's reading, line 3 constitutes the middle line of *Kan*, the "toiling trigram" (*laogua* 勞卦), and thus denotes Christ's Passion. His interpretation bears a strong resemblance to Lai Zhide 來知德 (1525–1604)'s commentary to the same line where the Ming-dynasty *Yijing* scholar adopts the principle of interlocking trigram (*hugua* 互卦)—that is, using three of the central lines of *Qian* ䷀ (lines 2, 3 and 4) to form the nuclear trigram *Kan* ䷜, allowing line 3 to share the trigram's implied meanings. *Lao*, as mentioned above, indicates both the toil and merits of the central line of *Kan*. In Lai's view, the yang line illustrates one who "flees from the dangers and brings forth achievements (出險而有功)."³⁴ Henceforth, according to Lü, line 3 of the hexagram *Qian* hints not only at the trials and tribulations of Christ's Passion, but also at His resurrection and ascension, which are indicated in the

²⁷ (Li 2000, p. 152).

²⁸ (Li 2002, p. 242).

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 242–3.

³⁰ All English translations of the biblical quotations in the book are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise specified. See (*King James Bible* 1996).

³¹ 陽剛中實，居險之中，行險而不失其信者也。(Cheng 2011, p. 163).

³² 上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭，處人之所惡，故幾於道。The English translation of the *Daode jing* is based on David Hinton's version. See (Hinton 2015, p. 40).

³³ 本旨一陽者，乃吾主也。因謙而降，受苦難而救人，是故曰(勞謙)。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 375).

³⁴ (Lai 2013, p. 138).

line statement by the phrase “*youzhong* 有終 (success at the end).” Lü further remarks that whoever submits to Christ and follows His path shall ultimately receive the fortune of *yongzhong* 永終 (eternity).

When interpreting “all the people obey him (萬民服),” from the *Xiaoxiang zhuan* 小象傳 (Commentary on the Line’s Image) attached to line 3, Lü highlights Christ’s humility in the Passion on the grounds that line 3 lies under the upper trigram *Kun* 坤 (lines 4, 5 and 6), which denotes all peoples on Earth. According to Xun Shuang 荀爽 (128–190), line 3, the only yang line in the hexagram, should have occupied the honorable fifth place, typically reserved for the governing rulers and monarchs, just like the “Flying dragon in the heavens (飛龍在天)” for the Nine in the fifth place for the *Qian* 乾 hexagram; but instead it voluntarily humbles itself to descend to the third place and goes right underneath the upper trigram *Kun*. For the *Yijing* scholar Xun, this is a sign of a governing ruler who intends to mingle himself among his people. According to the *Yijing* principle of the yin obeying the yang, the image of one yang surrounded by five yins also denotes the obedience of the masses to their ruler.³⁵ Lü shares this view and further expounds its profound Catholic implication—the transposition of line 3 from the fifth place signifying Christ leaving his heavenly kingdom to descend on Earth to accomplish the work of atonement for sinners. Along this line of thought, he identifies Jesus Christ as the “Real Ruler of All Peoples (*wanmin zhezhu* 萬民真主)” to whom all peoples should submit (*wanmin fu* 萬民服). On the other hand, those who lose their heart and reject Jesus as the savior shall bear eternal punishment for their own sins. Most intriguingly, the multiple inferences of the symbol *Kan* allow Lü to encapsulate the life-in-death paradox of the Passion. In Catholic theology, salvation is inextricably intertwined with suffering, in which the crucified Christ is the archetypal example. In order to save the human soul, the Son of God had to suffer agonizing torture and humiliating death. Crucifixion, on the one hand, is an instrument of death and penalty for sin, but on the other, it is the only path to eternal life and the only solution for sin.³⁶ Taking full advantage of the symbolic potentials of *Kan*, Lü is able to illustrate both the pain and hope in Christ’s suffering on the cross: that *Kan* as trap and danger denotes Christ’s physical, emotional, and spiritual sufferings; while *Kan* as the source of life indicates the power of His resurrection and final victory over sin. And Lü’s Figurist interpretation does not come to a stop there. He proceeds to portray Christ’s path to crucifixion by drawing on the symbolic meanings of the trigram *Gen*.

4. ䷊ *Gen*: The Gradual Progress to Mount Calvary

Known as the site of Christ’s crucifixion, Mount Calvary (also called Golgotha) has been revered as one of the holiest places in Christianity. It represents the culmination of Christ’s life journal on earth. Among the eight trigrams, *Gen* ䷊ (Keeping Still), consisting of one yang line above two yin lines, denotes the image of a mountain. For the Figurist Lü, there is no better symbol than *Gen* ䷊ to represent Jesus’s final site in his earthly pilgrimage. Lü adopts this analogy in his interpretation of the image of the hexagram *Jian* 漸 ䷴ (Gradual Progress), composed of the upper trigram *Xun* (wood) and the lower trigram *Gen* (mountain). Evoking an image of trees growing with the seasons and making the landscape of the mountain rise gradually, the hexagram hence signifies the concept of gradually progressing. In Lü’s view, hexagram *Jian* denotes how Jesus slowly embarks on his arduous path to Calvary.

Correspondingly, in his exegesis of line 6 of the hexagram *Sui* 隨 ䷐ (Following), Lü focuses on the hexagrammatic image to recount Jesus’ final steps. The line statement attached to line 6 reads, “firmly held and clung to, yea, and bound fast. [We see] the king with it presenting his offerings on the Western Mountain (上六，拘係之，乃從維之，王用亨于西山).”³⁷ According to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), this particular imagery originates in a ritualistic practice of Zhou dynasty. *Xishan* 西山 (Western Mountain)

³⁵ (Li 2016, p. 118).

³⁶ For the paradox of crucifixion, see (Behr 2006; Pius-Raymond 1954).

³⁷ James Legge’s English translation is adopted in this particular paragraph in order to highlight the notion of “presenting offerings”. See (Legge 1963, p. 94).

refers to *Qishan* 岐山 (Mount Qi), where sacrifice to the Mountains and Rivers would be performed.³⁸ In Lai Zhide's understanding, the image is suggested by the nuclear trigram *Gen* 艮 (mountain) (lines 2, 3 and 4 of *Sui* 巽), and the upper trigram *Dui* 兌, which lies in the west.³⁹ Lü weaves together some traditional *Yijing* commentaries to formulate his unique interpretation in the light of biblical accounts and Catholic theology. He connects the Zhou sacrificial practice to Christ's priesthood and sacrifice, and argues that the sacrifice performed on *xishan* refers to Christ the King "offering his body and blood to God the Father on Mount Calvary."⁴⁰ In his reading, Christ in Passion appears as both the priest and sacrifice. This is in perfect harmony with the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Christ is described as the only real, eternal and perfect High Priest whose self-sacrifice brings about redemption (Hebrews 5:5; 7:26; 9:14; 10:10).⁴¹ On top of that, Lü's interpretation coincides with Yu Fan 虞翻 (164–233)'s idea of the lower interlocking trigram *Gen* 艮 (hand) and upper interlocking trigram *Xun* 巽 (rope),⁴² signifying that one is "firmly held and clung to, yea and bound fast."⁴³ Lü explicitly takes this image to refer to Jesus being arrested and bound by the ruffians in Gethsemane.

Drawing upon the allusive potentialities of the image of *Gen*, Lü evokes a series of images of the Passion and even illustrates its theological implication. As he states, "It is said: 'He brings them to perfection in the sign of Keeping Still.' This refers to the Seven Last Words of our Lord on the cross on *Gen* the Mount, where the work of salvation was accomplished."⁴⁴ *Chengyan hu Gen* 成言乎艮 literally means "statements made in *Gen*." With *Gen* being traditionally numbered seventh among the eight trigrams, Lü refers the statements to the Seven Last Words of Christ.⁴⁵ His interpretation is based on the discussion of *Gen* in *Shuogua zhuan*, reading: "Keeping Still is the trigram of the northeast, where beginning and end of all creatures are completed. Therefore it is said: 'He brings them to perfection in the sign of Keeping Still' (艮，東北之卦也，萬物之所成終而所成始也，故曰成言乎艮)." Kong Yingda uses Terrestrial Branches (*Dizhi* 地支), the cyclical counting system, to elucidate that "*Gen* is the trigram of the northeast, which is positioned in between *yin* 寅 and *chou* 丑. *Yin* indicates the end of old year while *chou* the beginning of the new year. Thus the trigram denotes that the beginning and end of all creatures are completed."⁴⁶ Cheng Yi takes another approach by remarking that only in the deep-hidden stillness can the end of everything be joined to a new beginning, and thus *Gen* the trigram of stillness represents the transition from the old to the new.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Lü analogically regards this as Jesus's crucifixion and death, the turning point of the human history. Lü's reading complies with the Catholic doctrine in that the cross is the barrier breaker which fulfils all the moral, ceremonial and juridical precepts of the Old Testament worship and creates a new alliance for the reconciled people of God.⁴⁸

Along this line of Figurist interpretation, Lü retells salvation history by his unique reading of another hexagram *Gu* 蠱 (Work on What Has Been Spoiled [Decay]) from the Catholic lens. The name of the hexagram is derived from its structure and the attributes of its trigrams. The upper trigram *Gen* 艮 refers to the strong, upward-striving force, while the weak, sinking force of *Xun* 巽 takes the lower position. This results first in stagnation and ultimately in decay. Lü goes a step further to refer

³⁸ (Zhu [2009] 2018, p. 92).

³⁹ (Lai 2013, p. 91).

⁴⁰ 在囑瓦山上，用聖體聖血功勞，于天主聖父也。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 411).

⁴¹ For the scriptural proof and theological significance for the priesthood of Christ, see (Cullmann 1963, pp. 83–9; Richardson 1958, pp. 225–9; Durrwell 1969, pp. 136–48).

⁴² According to the interlocking trigram principle, the lower interlocking trigram is formed by lines 2, 3 and 4 and the upper interlocking trigram by lines 3, 4 and 5.

⁴³ Li Dingzuo 李鼎祚, *Zhouyi jijie* 周易集解, 130.

⁴⁴ 成言乎艮，乃吾主成七言，而救世之功在于艮山之上。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 44).

⁴⁵ His interpretation exhibits some characteristics of numerical mysticism which will be discussed in more details in the following section.

⁴⁶ 艮是東北方之卦也，東北在寅丑之間，丑為前歲之末，寅為後歲之初，則是萬物之所成終而所成始也。(Li 2000, p. 386).

⁴⁷ (Cheng and Cheng 2006, p. 87).

⁴⁸ For the sacramental significance of the cross, see Richardson 1958, pp. 229–32; Durrwell 1969, pp. 186–201).

the hexagram to the fall and decay of mankind. According to him, the upper trigram *Gen* ䷂ and the upper interlocking trigram *Zhen* ䷲ form the new hexagram *Yi* 頤 ䷚ (The Corners of the Mouth), which represents the consumption of food and thus denotes the first man Adam and the first woman Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The world was thus spoiled and needed to be reset. In Lü's view, the nuclear trigram *Xun* ䷺ (Eldest Daughter) represents Virgin Mary who gave birth to Christ. Like "crossing the great water (*li she da chuan* 利涉大川)," stated in the *Tuan zhuan* 象傳 (Commentary on the Decision), Christ entered the spoiled world and exposed himself to the multitudinous dangers. His pilgrimage came to the end as the yang line of *Gen* reaches the top—to the cross on Calvary where he made his seven last statements. Lü proceeds to elucidate that *Gen* denotes the turning point of the ages: it ends the Age of Commandment (*shujiao* 書教) and begins the Age of Grace (*chongjiao* 寵教). In this manner, Lü highlights the unique significance of the Passion of Christ in the whole salvation history. Strikingly, his narrative echoes with Giulio Aleni (艾儒略, 1582–1649)'s *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (Diary of Oral Admonitions, 1630–1640), where the Italian Jesuit missionary has mapped God's salvation work into three different stages: the Age of Nature Law (*xingjiao* 性教), the Age of Commandment (*shujiao* 書教), and the Age of Grace (*chongjiao* 寵教). According to Alenio, the announcement of the Ten Commandments signals the end of the Age of Nature Law while the birth of Jesus Christ inaugurates the Age of Grace.⁴⁹ The use of identical theological terms suggests that Lü's work is consistent with, and probably makes direct reference to, the Jesuit narrative and interpretation of the salvation history, as expounded in some contemporary Chinese Catholic texts.

5. ䷂ *Li*: The Yin-yang King on the Cross

Concerning the protagonist of the Passion, the trigram *Li* ䷂ was taken by Lü to represent Jesus Christ himself. In Lü's view, *Li*, traditionally numbered third among the eight trigrams, implies the three attributes of Christ—*zhuti yi* 主體一 (one subject [one God]), *lingti er* 靈體二 (two natures [divinity and humanity]), and *xingtǐ sān* 形體三 (three forms [the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit]).⁵⁰ On the dual nature of Christ, Lü acclaims Him as the "Yin-yang King" (*yin yang wang* 陰陽王) who masters the "yin-yang opposites" (*yin yang* 陰陽), "spirits and gods" (*gui shen* 鬼神), "dark and light" (*you ming* 幽明), "life and afterlife" (*shengqian sihou* 生前死後), and "judgement and punishment" (*shangshan fa'e* 賞善罰惡).⁵¹ In most instances in his *Yijing benzhi*, Lü makes reference to *Li* as the sign of Christ, the *Li* King (*Li wang* 離王), and develops his theological interpretations on the basis of such an analogy.

A case in point is his reading of *Lü* 旅 ䷷ (The Wanderer). Utilizing his own system of symbolism, Lü explicates the hexagrammatic image as follows: *Li* King is above *Gen* the Mountain, where the trigrams visualize the image of Jesus on the Calvary. To substantiate his line of thought, Lü adopts several interpreting strategies to reconstruct the imagery of Jesus's crucifixion. One of them is using the trigram numbers to produce symbolic images. According to Lü, the sum of the nuclear trigram *Gen* (7) and the upper trigram *Li* ䷂ (3) is ten (*shi* 十), which implies the cross; the sum of the upper trigram *Li* ䷂ (3) and the upper interlocking trigram *Dui* ䷇ (2) is five, which represents the Five Holy Wounds; and, the sum of the lower interlocking trigram *Xun* ䷺ (5) and the upper interlocking trigram *Dui* ䷇ (2) is seven, which denotes the Seven Last Words. Then Lü attempts to supply more details of the crucifixion by examining the trigrammatic images. As he proclaims, the upper trigram *Li* ䷂ (burning sun) implies that the crucifixion began at noon; that the upper interlocking trigram *Dui* ䷇ (rain) illustrates the darkening sky; and that the nuclear trigram *Gen* ䷂ (death of Christ), which is reversed to become *Zhen* ䷲ (quake), denotes the earthquake at the moment of Jesus's death. Last but not least, he creatively remarks that the sum of the nuclear trigram *Gen* ䷂ (7) and the lower interlocking trigram *Xun* ䷺ (5) is twelve, which indicates the crucifixion event lasts for a total of twelve quarters of an hour (*ke* 刻),

⁴⁹ (Aleni 2002, vol. 7, 108–9).

⁵⁰ (Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 22).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the equivalent of three hours.⁵² He proceeds to elucidate the implication of the imagery. The *Daxiang zhuan* 大象傳 (Commentary on the Image) attached to the hexagram reads, “Fire on the mountain: the image of the Wanderer. Thus the superior man is clear-minded and cautious in imposing penalties, and protracts no lawsuit (山上有火，旅。君子以明慎用刑而不留獄).” Not surprisingly, Lü refers Jesus as the superior man who “paid the penalty of sin for humankind, freeing souls from Hell.”⁵³

At first glance, Lü’s numerical interpretative approach may seem unorthodox, if not heretical. The underlying assumption behind the development of his ideas, however, echoes largely with Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077)’s Image-Number study. The famed *Yijing* scholar believed that numbers in the *Yijing* were far from meaningless. Thus, to discover some possible hidden meaning of the text, we must take into account the numerical representations. As he stated in *Huangji jingshi shu* 皇極經世書 (Supreme Principles for Governing the World):

If there are ideas, there must be words. If there are words, there must be images. If there are images, there must be numbers. After the numbers were established, then the images were produced. After the images were produced, then the words were clear. After the words were clear, then the ideas were manifest.⁵⁴

Lü first utilizes numbers as a unique starting point for an imaginary reconstruction of the entire scene of Christ’s Passion. Then, step by step, he reproduces the biblical accounts with the use of trigrammatic images, and further expounds the text in the light of Catholic doctrine. Here in his exegesis of *Li*, Christ in the Passion is featured as the Savior who brings justice to the world. Instead of underscoring His suffering, Lü highlights the divine power Christ, who came to liberate man from the shackles of sin and death.⁵⁵ It is worth mentioning that his interpretation resembles the distinctive symbol of the Jesuit Order: a flaming sun with the monogram IHS—the first three letters of Jesus’s name in Greek (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ)—which is surmounted by a cross and subtended by three nails. In both cases, Christ in the Passion is symbolized as the sun that brings light to the world.

Lü’s interpretation of *Shi He* 噬嗑 ䷔ (Biting through), on the other hand, narrates the Passion story from a different perspective. The name of the hexagram is explained in the light of its structure. The top and bottom yang lines symbolize the upper and lower jaws. The yang line 4 standing between the two yin lines signifies some hard foodstuff (signifying an obstacle) to be tackled by biting through it. In the social context, line 4 refers to some criminals who constitute an obstacle to the harmonious social life. As Kong Yingda remarks, the image of biting denotes judgement and punishment.⁵⁶ Lü infers that line 4 symbolizes Jesus who accepts and undergoes punishment voluntarily in lieu of all human beings to remove sin from the world. Lü notes that the line is positioned in between the upper interlocking trigram *Kan* (water, danger) and the upper trigram *Li* (fire, glory). Like fire being put out by water, Lü perceives, the glory of Christ the *Li* King was extinguished in the Passion when He was insulted and executed as a criminal. Along this line of interpretation, the phrase *shi ganzi* 噬乾肺 (Bites on dried gristly meat) attached to line 4, is interpreted as Christ having shed all His blood in the excruciating Passion till all his flesh had dried. Lü goes on to explain the statement of line 5, which reads “Bites on dried lean meat. Receives yellow gold. Perseveringly aware of danger. No blame (噬乾肉，得黃金，貞厲，無咎).” To Lü, the phrase *de huangjin* 得黃金 (Receives yellow gold) constitutes an analogy of the divine judicial authority being bestowed upon Christ as a reward of his Passion, while *zhen li* 貞厲 (Perseveringly aware of danger) refers to *zhen lie* 貞烈 (virtues of integrity) as manifest by his selfless

⁵² (Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 61)

⁵³ 代世人受補罪之刑，而不留人靈于地獄也。(Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 64)

⁵⁴ 有意必有言，有言必有象，有象必有數。數立則象生，象生則言彰，言彰則意顯。The English translation of the text is based on Birdwhistell version. (Birdwhistell 1989, p. 76).

⁵⁵ For Christ’s victory over death, see (Richardson 1958, pp. 190–214).

⁵⁶ (Li 2000, p. 118).

sacrifice. In this way, Lü constructs an exemplary model out of a suffering Christ, who has endured internal and external agonizing pain for his faith.⁵⁷

Lü Liben strives to guide his readers to view Jesus as the archetypal martyr and the perfect example for all Catholic believers. He elaborates this point by explicating “His loud cries are as dissolving as sweat. Dissolution! A king abides without blame (渙汗其大號，渙王居，無咎)” and “‘A king abides without blame.’ He is in his proper place (王居無咎，正位也),” the statement and *Xiaoxiang zhuan* attached to line 5 of *Huan* 渙 ☵ (Dispersion):

‘Dissolving [his] sweat’ originally indicates our Lord shedding His sweat and blood on behalf of sinners. This sets an example for all missionaries that one shall shed its sweat and blood as our Lord did. [...] Our Lord’s body is the holy temple for the Trinity; yet he reconciled to give it up for us. I shall die in His name as if I was in my proper place. Jesus is my teacher while I am His disciple. How could I call myself His disciple if I did not follow His example?⁵⁸

It is important to inquire the reason behind Lü’s strong declaration. Viewing the text through the lens of its context may offer some insight into Lü’s intentions. After the 1724 decree, only a few foreign missionaries had managed to stay or enter the Shanxi province.⁵⁹ Since their distinctive appearance made them easy to be tracked down by local officials, they usually hid in the houses of their native converts in daytime and went out to perform their ministerial duties until very late at night. As a result, many of the pastoral responsibilities were shifted to the local Chinese Catholics.⁶⁰ Putting their own lives at risk, they protected the foreign missionaries and found ways to preserve and preach on the doctrines. Some of them were arrested or even banished to die in exile.⁶¹ Evidently, it is not an exaggeration to claim that one shall shed his sweat and blood for the sake of Christ. Under the imminent threat of religious persecution, Lü utilizes the *Yijing*—the most practical and disguising instrument for Chinese Catholic communities to remember the sacred event of crucifixion that lays the Catholic foundation—to reaffirm their religious identity by bearing witness to the wounds of Christ who reveals his vulnerability, his inner being, and his incarnation.⁶² More importantly, in Lü’s exegesis, Christ in the Passion serves as a powerful symbol of unflinching faith and steadfast hope. By means of the example of Christ, Lü may inspire the faith communities that the affliction they were experiencing is merely transient, that the honor and glory would be eternal.

6. ☵ *Xun*: The Tree of Life and the Queen of Martyrs

As the mother of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary played a prominent role in Lü Liben’s Passion narratives. Notably, in the *Jian* hexagram, Lü positions Mary at the very center of the crucifixion event and narrates the story from her point of view. As discussed earlier, Lü interprets that the hexagram evokes an image of Jesus on his way to Mount Calvary. In Lü’s depiction of the scene, Mary was single-heartedly accompanying her son along the Via Dolorosa, manifesting the depths of her sorrow and suffering:

Our Lord encountered His Mother on his way, and in His will he said, “Why do you follow me to this squalid place to deepen my pain? You shall return home.” [...] Ascending the Mount Calvary, all the bitter sufferings were at hand, her heart torn as if a knife had plunged

⁵⁷ For Christ’s bodily suffering, see (Guardini 1964, pp. 37–41; Chardon 1957).

⁵⁸ 本旨渙汗者，乃吾主為罪人，而出流血汗也。以示傳教者，當效吾主需出其血汗也 [...] 吾主之聖身乃為聖三之居，而忍為吾輩捨之。吾當以死還死，乃正位也。耶穌為師，我為其徒，不效耶穌，何以為之徒也？(Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 115).

⁵⁹ (Ricci 1929, p. 10).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶¹ (Liu 2017, p. 75).

⁶² For the symbolic significance of Christ’s wounds, see (Glotin 1979; Sava 1954).

and wrenched in it. Had it not been for the Lord's grace, her life would not have been preserved. Our Lady was in great distress—all because of mankind's sin.⁶³

The imagery, in Lü's view, is encapsulated by the upper trigram *Xun* ䷊, with the judgement to the hexagram *Jian* saying, "Development. The maiden is given in marriage. Good fortune. Perseverance further (漸，女歸吉，利貞)." In Lü's own symbolism, *Xun*, the Eldest Daughter, is used to signify Virgin Mary in her relations with the trigram *Li* ䷄. According to Lü, when line 1 of *Xun* exchanges its position with line 2, the trigram *Li* (signifying Christ) is formed. Lü claims that line 1 (yin) and line 2 (yang) of *Xun* represent respectively the human nature and the divinity of the Holy Son; and therefore, the transposition of these two lines symbolizes the unity of Christ's humanity and divinity in the womb of the Virgin. Furthermore, Lü literally interprets *gui* 歸 as *guijia* 歸家 (return home), which captures two meanings: "the return of Mary" and "the repentance of sinners." For the former, Lü argues that Mary could have chosen to return home and not to witness her son's suffering; but instead, she opted to endure the pain for the sake of all humankind. Mary has further been portrayed not as a spectator, but as an indispensable participant in Christ's Passion.

More remarkably, the Figurist Lü goes further to put Mary on the Cross. Discussing the hexagrammatic image, he applies the image of "tree on the mountain (山上有木)" to the Cross and the Virgin. In his reading, the Cross is denoted as the tree on Calvary while the Virgin is portrayed as the "Tree of Life (常生之樹)," which bears the "Fruit of Life (常生之)," Jesus Christ. The multi-layered symbolic meanings of *Xun* allow Lü to reiterate the obedience of the Cross (necessary for Christ's death) in an attempt to recall the obedience of the Virgin (necessary for Christ's birth). It is noteworthy that Lü's portrayal of Mary bears a strong resemblance to Sirach 24:22–25, part of the Hebrew wisdom text that is applied to the Virgin in the traditional Roman Breviary.⁶⁴ In the scripture the personified wisdom says:

I have stretched out my branches as the turpentine tree, and my branches are of honour and grace. As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue.⁶⁵

(我如得肋賓多樹展枝，我枝是榮寵的。我如葡萄樹開奇香花，此花使人得榮富。我是正愛、敬畏、大通、誠望之母。惟我能賞人行正路，明正道，盼加神力得常生。)⁶⁶

Here in the biblical metaphor, Mary has been depicted as a tree of honor and grace, and as a mother given to all believers to bring forth virtue in them, and to lead them in the path to truth and life. Lü presents similar Marian images in his commentary. In his exegesis of *Kun* 坤 ䷁, Mary is titled as "the Queen Mother of Heaven and Earth" (*Tiandi zhi Muhuang* 天地之母皇) and "the Patron of the whole World" (*Pushi zhi zhubao* 普世之主保), who "takes charge of everything important on Earth and was taken up into Heaven by grace."⁶⁷ The honorific titles are almost identical as those found in the early-Qing Daoist text *Lidai shenxian tongjian* 歷代神仙通鑑 (Comprehensive Accounts on the Immortals through the Dynasties, 1700), in which Mary (*Maliya* 瑪利亞) is presented as "Queen Mother of Heaven and Earth" (*Tiandi zhi Muhuang* 天地之母皇) and "Patron of All Peoples in the World" (*Shiren zhi zhubao* 世人之主保). While *Lidai shenxian tongjian* positions Mary as one of the Daoist immortals in the supernatural world,⁶⁸ Lü reinterprets Mary as an ideal model of Confucian morality from the

⁶³ 吾主路遇聖母，乃吾主聖意曰：「何為踵此污穢之，以甚吾之苦乎？惟有旋歸而已。」[...] 進上瓦略山，重苦在眼前，五內如刀攪崩裂母心肝。若非主恩佑，其命不保全。皆因世人罪，主母多艱。(Lü 2013, vol. 2, p. 5).

⁶⁴ A note omitted in the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) recalls this tradition: "In the liturgy this chapter is applied to the Blessed Virgin because of her constant and intimate association with Christ, the incarnate Wisdom." For the Marian interpretation of Sirach 24 in Catholic tradition, see (Catta 1961, vol. 6, pp. 828–31, 860–1; Ratzinger 1983, pp. 25–7).

⁶⁵ The English translation is based on Douay-Rheims' version.

⁶⁶ The Chinese translation is based on Poirot's Guxin version. See (de Poirot 2014, vol. 6, p. 2150).

⁶⁷ 主保人世間欽事實，放效蒙恩引升天。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 125).

⁶⁸ (Song 2018).

perspective of the *Yijing* discourse. Illustrating “Thus the superior man who has breadth of character carries the outer world (君子以厚德載物),” the commentary of the image attached to the hexagram *Kun*, Lü characterizes the Virgin as the “superior woman” (*nüzhong junzi* 女中君子) who takes up a heavy responsibility of the guardian of morality for all humankind. Furthermore, he foregrounds modesty as the exemplary virtue of Mary. In the section of line 3, Lü, by adopting the principle of changing lines (*bianyao* 變爻), points out that *Kun* would become *Qian* ䷀ when line 3 changes from yin to yang. In that event, the solid line 3 conveys the meaning of *laoqian* 勞謙. Lü acclaims Mary as the “*laoqian junzi* 勞謙君子” who gave virgin birth to Christ while retaining her modesty and humility. As discussed in the previous section regarding Lü’s exegesis of the *Qian* hexagram, Jesus Christ has similarly been venerated as the *laoqian junzi* for his toil and merit in completing the salvation work through the Passion. Apparently the Figurist intends to demonstrate the extent to which Mary may parallel Christ in her contribution to the accomplishment of the salvation.

Mary’s unparalleled merit has further been augmented by Lü’s subsequent interpretation of hexagram *Da Guo* 大過 ䷛ (Preponderance of the Great), where he depicts Mary as the “Queen of Martyrs (*wei yi zhiming zhi mu* 為義致命之母)”. The commentary on the hexagram image reads, “The lake rises above the trees: The image of Preponderance of the Great. Thus, the superior man, when he stands alone, is unconcerned; And if he has to renounce the world, he is undaunted (澤滅木，大過。君子以獨立不懼，遯世無悶).” According to Lü, *Dui* represents the Holy Spirit. This association is based on “He gives them joy in the sign of *Dui* (說言乎悅)” from the *Shuogua zhuan*, which he literally interprets as speaking in joy. Therefore, to him *Dui* is “the Holy spirit, the Holy love, whose words I [he] love to share.”⁶⁹ Since *Dui* ䷹ is above *Xun* ䷮, the hexagrammatic image depicts symbolically the Holy Spirit impregnating Mary. Making this analogy, Lü once again refers the “superior man” to Mary whose own passion has set an example for all martyrs. The unwed mother was not concerned about her unique and unexpected pregnancy even when rumors of a scandal emerged. On top of that, she was undaunted when having to hide in Egypt to flee from the persecution of King Herod. In Lü’s words, Mary “seeks not to be known by man, but by God. Though she may be all unknown, unregarded by the world, she feels no regret (不求人知而求神知，與世不見知而不悔).” Lü’s phrase “*yushi bujianzhi er buhui* (與世不見知而不悔)” in praise of Mary’s noble virtues is slightly modified from the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (The Doctrine of the Mean), where it is further stated that “only the sage who is able for this (唯聖者能之).”⁷⁰ In this connection, Mary has vividly been portrayed not only as an obedient and modest handmaid but as a venerable sage able to overcome the religious persecution with unwavering courage and perseverance. By means of manifesting Mary’s exemplary deeds, martyrdom is perceived not only as an act of Catholic faith but also as an expression of the Confucian ideals.

Lü’s narratives could be viewed as a direct response to the Qing contexts. Since the Chinese Rites Controversy, Shanxi Catholics had often been estranged from their fellow Chinese because they refused any adaptation to local customs they deemed to go against their faith.⁷¹ One of the most common disputes was the paying of village or communal taxes for the purpose of celebrations or festivals considered idolatrous by church authorities. This causes conflicts between the Catholics and non-Catholics. In some local communities, the practice of Catholicism was ridiculed or even berated as a betrayal of Chinese traditions.⁷² Catholics were forced to leave and form their own communities in some deserted regions. This kind of isolated faith communities became even more common during the time of religious persecution. In a bid to avoid being taken captive by the officials, many Catholics

⁶⁹ 兌為聖神，為聖愛，是吾喜言聖神之語。(Lü 2013, vol. 1, p. 43).

⁷⁰ The original line from *Zhongyong* reads, 君子依乎中庸，遯世不見知而不悔，唯聖者能之。[The superior man accords with the course of the Mean. Though he may be all unknown, unregarded by the world, he feels no regret. It is only the sage who is able for this.] The English translation of *The Doctrine of the Mean* is based on James Legge’s version. See (Legge 1861, vol. 1, pp. 56–128).

⁷¹ (Zhao et al. 1993, p. 283).

⁷² (Xiao 2015, p. 65).

escaped into mountainous areas to conceal themselves.⁷³ Against this background, the story of the holy family fleeing to Egypt to escape from King Herod's persecution becomes particularly relevant and encouraging. Mary's example encourages the fleeing Catholics to take a firm stance regardless of the social stigma and secular values. Moreover, by positioning Mary as a Confucian sage, Lü demonstrates that the practice of Christianity is not a betrayal, but a return to their own cultural tradition.

7. Concluding Remarks

Viewed as a whole, *Yijing benzhi* demonstrates Lü Liben's mastery of exegesis, figura, and typology. Weaving together some traditional *Yijing* commentaries, he captures the multi-layered embodiments of *Kan* to encapsulate the life-in-death paradox of the Passion, and of the image of *Gen* to evoke the picture of Christ's Passion and illustrate its theological implication. In the exegesis of *Li*, he makes good use of the trigrammatic number and image to produce his Christology. In conjunction with several related hexagrams, he proceeds to feature Christ in the Passion as not only the powerful Savior but also a devoted, persevering martyr. By transposing the trigram lines with those of *Li*, he associates *Xun* with the Virgin Mary. More remarkably, he takes advantage of *Xun*'s multifarious symbolic potentials to demonstrate Mary's indispensable role in Christ's Passion. By commenting on several related hexagrams, he further represents Mary as a noble sage and the Queen of Martyrs. The image of Christ and the Virgin, in accord with both Christian spirituality and Confucian morality, provides a firm basis for consolidating the faith of Chinese Catholic believers before the persecution in the context of the Qing prohibition of Christianity. Lü's *Yijing* commentary manifests a unique and remarkable blend of the Chinese and Catholic traditions. The trigrammatic number and image and their symbolic implications have been enriched with a new Christian reading. Lü's creative contribution to both the *Yijing* studies and Christian theology has also facilitated the formulation of an inculturated Chinese theology.

In comparison with the Jesuit Figurists' scholarly treatises, Lü's *Yijing* exegesis demonstrates higher practicality and simplicity. Their distinctive interpretative approaches may be attributed to the difference of historical contexts. The Jesuit missionaries' *Yijing* study in the imperial court was officially assigned by the Kangxi Emperor.⁷⁴ And they had regular interactions with the renowned literati at the imperial court, such as Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642–1718), the Scholar of Wenyuange 文淵閣大學士 who compiled the official commentary *Zhouyi zhezong* 周易折中 (Balanced Annotations on the *Zhouyi*). Undoubtedly, the emperor and imperial scholars had great impacts on the Figurist's hermeneutical approach and strategy of the *Yijing*.⁷⁵ Lü's *Yijing benzhi*, on the other hand, is apparently a self-initiated project without the presence and supervision of the missionaries. His commentary is structured as a teaching manual for the common masses, rather than the intellectual elites. This allows him to enjoy greater flexibility in interpreting the classic. Compared with the Jesuit missionaries, Lü is more at home with the Chinese commentarial traditions of the *Yijing*. Hence, he is able to utilize traditional reading strategies and develop his own distinctive interpretation. Strikingly, *Yijing* as the *youhuan zhi shu* 憂患之書 (Book of Anxiety and Fear) has satisfied the need for giving prominence to the theme of suffering in response to the imminent religious persecution of his time. The notion of "anxiety and fear" becomes the common ground between the *Yijing* and the struggle of Chinese Catholics and plight under the Qing government. Taking the Figurist approach to the *Yijing*, Lü connects its system of thought with Christian doctrine and constructs a Catholic *Yijing*—a new *shengjing* 聖經 (holy scripture) that enables Chinese Catholic communities to integrate their religious identity with their cultural heritage. As this pioneering study has demonstrated, the analysis of this unique manuscript will open up avenues for further research on the influence of *Yijing*-Figurism in Chinese communities and on the intersections of Christianity with religious and cultural frontiers in the late imperial period.

⁷³ (Liu 2017, p. 86).

⁷⁴ (von Collani 1985, p. 62).

⁷⁵ For the influence of Li Guangdi on Bouvet's *Yijing*-Figurism, see (von Collani 2007).

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Appendix A

Table A1. Copies of *Yijing benzhi* Found in Zikawei Library.

No.	Title	Contents	Transcribers	Reference No.
1	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨	Prologue Volume 1 (<i>Qian</i> 乾 ☰– <i>Meng</i> 蒙 ☶) Volume 2 (<i>Xu</i> 需 ☵– <i>Yu</i> 豫 ☱) Volume 3 (<i>Sui</i> 隨 ☱– <i>Da Guo</i> 大過 ☱) Volume 4 (<i>Jian</i> 漸 ☵– <i>Wei Ji</i> 未濟 ☵)	Francis 方濟各 Cheng Xiaolou 程小樓 Borgia 玻爾日亞	213000 94441-94445B (Reprinted in CCT <i>Zikawei Sequel</i>)
2	<i>Yijing benzhi (huitang shishi cangben)</i> 易經本旨(堂石室藏本)	Prologue Volume 1 (<i>Qian</i> 乾 ☰– <i>Meng</i> 蒙 ☶)	Unknown	213000 94440B
3	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨	Prologue Volume 1 (<i>Qian</i> 乾 ☰– <i>Meng</i> 蒙 ☶)	Unknown	213000 94931-94935B
4	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨	Prologue Volume 1 (<i>Qian</i> 乾 ☰– <i>Meng</i> 蒙 ☶)	Unknown	213000 95644B
5	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨	Prologue Volume 1 (<i>Qian</i> 乾 ☰– <i>Meng</i> 蒙 ☶)	Unknown	213000 94945B
6	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨/ <i>Yijing lüzhu</i> 易經呂註	Volume 2 (<i>Xu</i> 需 ☵– <i>Yu</i> 豫 ☱) Volume 3 (<i>Sui</i> 隨 ☱– <i>Da Guo</i> 大過 ☱) Volume 5 (<i>Sun</i> 損 ☱– <i>Cui</i> 萃 ☱)	Unknown	213000 95679-95680B 213000 95678B
7	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨/ <i>Yijing lüzhu</i> 易經呂註	Volume 6 (<i>Jian</i> 漸 ☵– <i>Wei Ji</i> 未濟 ☵)	Unknown	213000 95681B
8	<i>Yijing benzhi</i> 易經本旨/ <i>Yijing lüzhu</i> 易經呂註	Volume 6 (<i>Jian</i> 漸 ☵– <i>Wei Ji</i> 未濟 ☵)	Unknown	213000 95677B

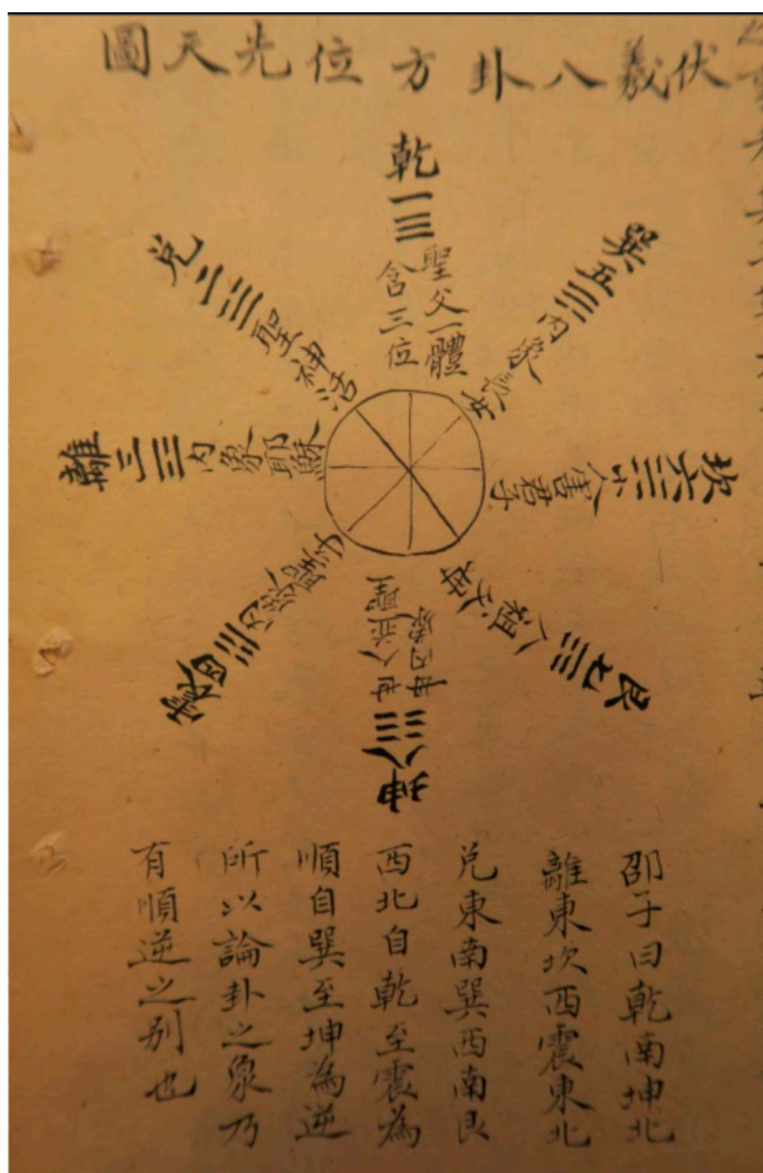


Figure A1. “Fuxi bagua fangwei xiantian tu伏羲八卦方位先天圖,” from the prologue of *Yijing benzhi*.

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