


## Article

# A New Portrait of a Daoist Sage: Jean-François Foucquet's Interpretation of the *Dao*

Sophie Ling-chia Wei 

Department of Translation, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China;  
sophielcwei@cuhk.edu.hk

**Abstract:** In the translation history of late imperial China, the Jesuit enterprise played a significant role in translating Western scientific knowledge, a role they performed in tandem with proselytization. The Jesuit Figurists' re-interpreting and re-writing of the ancient Chinese classics pivoted on symbols, figures, and Chinese characters. The father at the helm of this journey, Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730), embarked on his own Figurist path, navigating by the symbols, figures, and Chinese characters from the *Yijing*. His followers Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736) and Jean François Foucquet (1665–1741) continued on this track, each further developing his own interpretation of the *Dao*. Here I will present and explore Foucquet's journey of the *Dao* and his presentation of the Christian God and Jesus Christ as Daoist sages by investigating his Chinese, French, and Latin manuscripts that discuss his reinterpretation of the *Dao* in the Chinese classics, especially the *Yijing* and *Daodejing*. In these manuscripts, Foucquet adopted typological exegesis and exhibited his inheritance of the Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis from his senior Bouvet; he also identified the *Dao* as Deus and the Oneness of the *Dao* as the unity of the Holy Trinity. This micro-historical case study of Foucquet's interpretation of the *Dao* shows how his navigating the strait between the Scylla and Charybdis of the emperor and the Holy See factored into his trajectory of interpreting the *Dao*; it also demonstrates that in response to being challenged by his own brothers in the Catholic Church, he cleaved to typological exegesis and Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis. The significance of this paper lies in that the early understanding of the *Dao* was manipulated, especially among the Figurists, both as a tool for proselytization and as a bridge to link the East with the West.



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## 1. Introduction

In the translation history of late imperial China, the Jesuit enterprise played a significant role in translating Western scientific knowledge, a role they performed in tandem with proselytization. In the performance of such roles, and being dressed like Xi Ru 西儒 (Western Confucianists), the Jesuits justified their accommodation strategy by identifying *Tian* 天 (Heaven) and *Di* 帝 (Lord), as well as other similar appellations from the ancient Chinese classics, with their Christian God. Early Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci had objected to the use of the *Dao* and *Taiji* as equivalents for God and instead centered on relating *Tian* and *Di* from the *Four Books* 四書 with the Christian God. Later, another group of mavericks, the Jesuit Figurists of the early Qing dynasty, embarked on their own path of interpreting the *Dao* and the *Yijing* 易經 (the Book of Changes).

The Jesuit Figurists' re-interpreting and re-writing of the ancient Chinese classics pivoted on symbols, figures, and Chinese characters. The father at the helm of this journey, Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730), embarked on his own Figurist path, navigating by the symbols, figures, and Chinese characters from the *Yijing*. His followers Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736) and Jean François Foucquet (1665–1741) continued on this track, each further developing his own interpretation of the *Dao*.

Past scholarship has consistently treated Chinese Figurism, especially that of the Jesuit Figurists, as a misstep in the translations of the early Sinologists. It may not be fair to judge their translations solely on the metrics of faithfulness or accuracy. A more charitable approach in assessing their reinterpretation of the *Dao* is to also take into account the tradition of hermetic thinking they inherited from the West and the patronage they received from the emperor and the Holy See. Their translations of the *Yijing* connected the Judeo-Christian tradition with the antediluvian patriarchs in ancient Chinese legends and mythologies and were for that considered far-fetched assumptions. Ancient mystic figures, such as Yao 堯, became for them the pre-figuration of the coming Jesus Christ; and Fuxi was none other than the holy patriarch and prophet Enoch (Bouvet Manuscript no. NAL 1173, stored in Bibliothèque nationale de France, ff. 66 and 86). The Jesuit Figurists, especially the leading father Joachim Bouvet, inherited neo-platonic, cabalistic, and hermetic philosophy from the Western tradition of Hermeticism. Their hermetic learning manifested in their translation of Chinese classics, translations which formed the backdrop for the early development of Sinology in the 16th and 17th centuries; their exhaustive studies on the Chinese classics and their meticulous forming of links between figures from Chinese legend and history and biblical figures in their Latin and French manuscripts aimed to reduce the gap between Christianity and Chinese philosophy and history as a proselytization tool.

The manuscript translations and rewritings the Figurists made of the *Yijing* and the *Dao* were later disseminated in Europe. Their Sinological studies and translations not only reflected the Figurist theological perspective that all pagan beliefs refer to the same one God, they also ignited debates in Europe as to whether Chinese mythology and the biblical stories did indeed share the same origin; their new interpretations of the concepts in the Chinese classics, such as the *Dao* in the *Daodejing*, also opened the sluice gates for the Enlightenment<sup>1</sup> (Rowbotham 1932, pp. 1051–52).

Following in the footsteps of Bouvet, his protégés Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare and Jean François Foucquet inherited Bouvet's mystic Hermeticism, but each with his own theological and philosophical interpretation of the *Dao*. In "In the Light and Shadow of the *Dao*—Two Figurists, Two Intellectual Webs" (Wei 2018), Sophie Ling-chia Wei probes the networks and patronage impacting two Figurists in two different locations, Joseph Henri-Marie de Prémare in Canton and Jean François Foucquet in Peking, and their reinterpretation of the *Dao*. While Prémare received more influence from the local literati, such as Liu Ning 劉凝 (1620–1715), and was mostly interested in dissecting Chinese characters, such as *dao* 道, Foucquet obtained more imperial support, being assigned by the Kangxi Emperor to work on astronomical treatises. One genealogy of the *Dao* from Prémare to the early French Sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832) has been explored in Wei's paper "The Genesis of *Dao* Knowledge at the Beginning of Orientalism," published in *History Retold: Premodern Chinese Texts in Western Translation* (Wei 2022). Here, the other end of that genealogy of the *Dao* will be assembled, while crucial pieces will be added to the puzzle. Past scholarship has drawn only rough silhouettes of Foucquet's life and translations. From John W. Witek's biography of Foucquet (Witek 1982), readers may not be able to discern the important events of Foucquet's life, nor is it easy for readers to derive an overview of Foucquet's translations out of the book's mass of assembled facts. Claudia von Collani's catalogue-like fact sheet describes the Jesuits who had discussed the *Dao* (Collani 2015). However, Collani does not enquire further into the origins of their views or whether they had interacted with and influenced each other; nor does she investigate deeper into Foucquet's reinterpretation of the *Dao*. To paint a more detailed portrait of Foucquet's interpretation of the *Dao*, not only will I elaborate on the comparison between Prémare and Foucquet, I will further investigate Foucquet's Chinese, French, and Latin manuscripts discussing his reinterpretation of the *Dao* of the Chinese classics, especially the *Yijing* and the *Daodejing*.

After setting foot in China and being assigned by the Kangxi Emperor to assist Bouvet in 1711, Foucquet followed his passion for spreading Christianity in China, and studied the Daoist classics and commentaries exhaustively. Working with Bouvet, he reinterpreted

hexagrams from the *Yijing* and completed the manuscript of the *Yi Gao* 易稿 (the Drafts of the *Yijing*), all the while continuing to elaborate on his French and Latin manuscripts that equated the *Dao* and *Taiji* with the Christian God. In these manuscripts, he adopted typological exegesis and exhibited his inheritance of the Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis from Bouvet; he also identified the *Dao* as Deus and the Oneness of the *Dao* as the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Of these Figurists, Foucquet was the only one to return to Rome and try to convince the Popes, that Chinese Figurism and the Figurists' works and translation were not far-fetched assumptions, by use of his manuscripts and theories. Facing refutation from the Roman Catholic Church about the Rites Controversy, especially concerning the terminological choices of *Tian*, *Di*, and even *Dao*, Foucquet stood fast by his interpretation of the *Dao* in his Chinese manuscripts that he submitted to the emperor and in Latin and French manuscripts he later submitted to the Pope. These rewritings and interpretations of the *Dao* are scattered across archives in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana—these are the precious cache of materials through which this paper will investigate Foucquet's very first attempts at translating the *Dao* into Latin and French.

Therefore, contrary to the rather narrow past scholarship on the Figurists, I will present a more panoramic view of Foucquet's *Dao*. Regrettably, Foucquet has so far been ignored in scholarship of the Figurists' *Dao* in favor of Bouvet's and Prémare's re-interpretation of the *Yijing* and the *Dao*. Looking to add valuable scholarship to this overlooked area, I will elucidate Foucquet's footprints on his path of interpreting the *Dao*, noting also where his path diverges from that of his colleague Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare.

## 2. Jesuit Figurist Rewriting in Translations

According to Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, Jesuit translations are not always strictly translations (Hsia 2007, pp. 39–40). In their translations of European texts into Chinese, while they did sometimes apply exact word-for-word translation, Jesuit translators also compiled translated or paraphrased passages from European texts into a single Chinese work. Matteo Ricci's (1552–1610) *Ji Ren Shi Pian* 畸人十篇 (Ten Treatises by an Abnormal Person) in 1608 is one such example of compilation. Another form of Jesuit translation is synopsis (ibid.). One such example, the *Tianzhu Jiangsheng Yanxing Jilue* 天主降生言行紀略 (The Birth, Life and Sayings of the Lord of Heaven) by Giulio Aleni (1582–1649), represented a synoptic presentation of the Gospels.

The Jesuit mission in the early Qing dynasty placed the Jesuit Figurists center stage. The strategy of rewriting and compilation had been adopted as a rule of thumb by the Jesuit Figurists in their translations in the early Qing dynasty. In their rewritings, the Jesuit Figurists also assumed authoritative roles as assertive commentators, employing past literati's commentaries and linking them with the biblical stories, in order to demonstrate that the Chinese classics shared the same origin as Christianity. In his Latin manuscript *Selecta quaedam Vestigia praecipuorum Christianae religionis dogmatum ex antiquis Sinarum Libris Eruta* (Certain Selected Vestiges of Principal Christian Religious Teachings Extracted from Ancient Chinese Books) and his Chinese manuscript *San Yi San* 三一三 (Three One Three [Triune God]), Prémare quoted from the commentaries of *Laozi Yi* 老子翼 (Interpretation of *Laozi*), especially from Li Rong's 李榮 (circa 650–683) "One is not One alone; it is One because of Three. Three is not Three alone; Three comes from One. (一不自一，由三故一；三不自三，由一故三。)" (Prémare, Brotier 120, p. 135). Prémare then drew on this quotation as further proof that "Therefore, we know that we have one God (Lord) existing in three persons, not three lords" (ibid.). Prémare linked the *Dao* with the Holy Trinity and his theory of Trinitarianism. While Prémare focused on the number One Three 三一 and its connection with the Holy Trinity, Foucquet, who continued the tradition of rewriting in Figurist translations, focused on the *Dao* as One and also quoted several Neo-Confucianist and Daoist scholars' commentaries to link with his astronomical expertise and his theological perspective: "*Dao* is Deus," a perspective that will be further elaborated upon in the following sections.

This paper thus reviews and investigates several works of Foucquet's Latin, French, and Chinese manuscripts and translations to flesh out the portrait of Foucquet. These works include Foucquet's re-translations of the *Yijing*, in which some concepts related to the *Dao* were reinterpreted, his translations of astronomical treatises and celestial maps that are buttressed by his deliberate picks of commentaries from Neo-Confucianist and Daoist scholars, as well as his original work, the *Problèmes théologiques*, his reinterpretation of the *Dao*, and its link with Deus.

Foucquet's manuscript translations disclose his striving for the vindication of his new interpretation of the *Dao* on both sides—the Qing emperor and the Holy See. On the Eastern side, Foucquet tried to win the patronage of the Kangxi Emperor by presenting translations of the *Yijing* and the *Dao*, which were compilations of original texts, past literati's commentaries, as well as his own intra-lingual translations and additions of especially selected passages from the Chinese classics. On the Western side, he also conducted translations into Latin and French, supplemented with his own commentary, to justify to the Holy See the cause of the Figurists' proselytization in China. Seen through the lens of André Lefevere's concept of rewriting, a translation is not simply a static text, but a cultural and even a political act exercised by players at both the individual and institutional levels of the translation process. Patronage, he says, is "any power (person, institution) that can further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature" (Lefevere 1992, p. 15; see also Wei 2018, p. 2). In the history of Jesuit translation activities, it is known that Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits migrated from coastal ports to inland cities, interacting with local literati along the way; later Jesuit Figurists in the early Qing dynasty, in contrast, stayed in the imperial court, close to the emperor whom they wanted to convert. Foucquet was one of the Jesuits who had the trust of the Kangxi Emperor. These Jesuits in the imperial circle enjoyed the privilege of, and were sheltered by, the imperial power of the High Qing dynasty. Other Jesuits, such as Prémare, were confined to local areas such as Canton, their mission restricted. The ideologies of patrons such as the Holy See and the emperor and the commentaries supported by the imperial circle factored into the Jesuits' translations of the major concepts in the Chinese classics, such as the *Dao*. The change of locality and difference of patronage thus influenced which direction and commentaries the Figurists, especially Foucquet, chose for their intralingual translations and European-language translations of the *Dao* from the *Yijing* and the *Daodejing*.

### 3. The Ineffability of *Daoxin* 道心 in *Shengren* 聖人 (Sage)

In the context of Chinese culture and the Confucian classics, Bouvet and Foucquet re-interpreted hexagrams and numbers from the *Yijing* as prefiguring the advent of Jesus Christ. Looking to convert the Kangxi Emperor to Catholicism, Bouvet and Foucquet worked on the reinterpretations of the first twelve hexagrams and transformed Jesus Christ into a Confucian sage king, knowing that the Confucian sage king was a moral ideal for the Kangxi Emperor. In the two manuscripts *Da Yi Yuan Yi Nei Pian* 大易原義內篇 (The Inner Chapter of the Great Yi's Original Meaning) and *Yi Gao* 易稿 that long went unseen in the Vatican Library, Bouvet and Foucquet re-interpreted the first twelve hexagrams, *Qian* 乾 (the Creative), *Kun* 坤 (the Receptive), *Tun* 屯 (Difficulty at the Beginning), *Meng* 蒙 (Youthful Folly), *Xu* 需 (Waiting), *Song* 訟 (Conflict), *Shi* 師 (the Army), *Bi* 比 (Holding Together), *Xiao Xu* 小畜 (The Taming Power of the Small), *Lü* 履 (Treading), *Tai* 泰 (Peace), and *Pi* 否 (Standstill)<sup>2</sup>. Bouvet and Foucquet retold the stories of Christianity and depicted God and the Holy Son as having the appearance and personality of the *junzi* 君子 (the superior man) from the *Yijing*. Each hexagram that was interpreted by Bouvet and Foucquet depicts one facet of the virtuous Confucian sage; taken together, they form a gestalt image of Jesus for presentation to the emperor and Chinese readers (Wei 2020, p. 65).

While Foucquet assisted Bouvet by digging deeper into *Yi* studies, he also embarked on his own studies, linking the hexagrams with the *Dao* and building the profile of a *Shengren* 聖人 (sage) by using *Daoxin* 道心 (the heart of the nature; the heart of the Way) so as to identify *Shengren* 聖人 with the Christian God. Within his literary space interwoven

with translations, notes, and compilations of the *Daodejing* commentaries, the *Dao* or *Daoxin* 道心, *Shengren* 聖人, and Christian God usually co-existed to suggest parallels among them. With Foucquet's *Yi* studies as the foundation of building his Confucian sage, he continued to employ Bouvet's Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis, drawing parallels among the *Daoxin* 道心 from the *Shangshu* 尚書 (the Book of Documents), the ineffability of the *Dao*, and the formless Christian God. For example, the 51st hexagram *Zhen* 震 was employed by Foucquet to indicate that myriads of things come from *Di* 帝 (帝出於震), referring to *Tianzhu* 天主; the 29th hexagram, *Kan* 坎 (the Abysmal), was employed to illustrate the *Daoxin* 道心 (the heart of the nature; the heart of the Way), which could be traced back to the *Shangshu*'s 尚書 人心惟危, 道心惟微 (the heart of man is unstable; the heart of the Way is ineffable) (Kong 2000, p. 93);<sup>3</sup> this just-quoted sentence in fact became a signature phrase Foucquet frequently used in his translations of the *Yijing* to link the *Dao* with Deus. In his re-interpretation of a sage, it is noticeable that Foucquet first borrowed the concept of *Daoxin* 道心 from the *Shangshu* 尚書, which was called by the later Confucianists a Confucian classic, and extended his interpretation of *Daoxin* 道心 to the *Daodejing*.

In Chinese culture, *Daoxin* 道心 indicates the way of nature, or the way of Heaven. From a Daoist perspective, the way of Heaven is natural law; it demonstrates the heart of the universe, which benefits all things without harm or preference. Eliminating social gaps while preserving order and stability, it is perceived as a force that maintains harmony and equilibrium in nature. In the sentence quoted above from the *Shangshu* 尚書, *Daoxin* 道心 is ineffable 微, of the essence 精, and of the One 一. One of these three features of *Daoxin* 道心, ineffability may also be found in the *Daodejing*. From Chapter 14 of that work,

We look for it but do not see it; we name it "invisible."

We listen for it but do not hear it; we name it "inaudible."

We grope for it but do not grasp it; we name it "ineffable."

(視之不見名曰夷，聽之不聞名曰希，搏之不得名曰微。Author's translation). (Laozi 2002, p. 5)

The existence of the *Dao* transcends all the sensory experiences and is imperceptible by the senses. What cannot be seen, heard, or grasped is the way of Heaven, the *Dao*. The invisible, inaudible, and ineffable *Dao*, in Foucquet's interpretation, corresponds with the imperceptible Christian God, and thus the ineffability of the *Dao* and *Daoxin* 道心 were linked with the heart of the Christian God in Foucquet's translations of the hexagrams. In the *Yi Gao* 易稿, Foucquet further associated *Daoxin* 道心 with the heart of Christian God, as is shown in many hexagrams, such as *Song* 訟.

The human ancestor, Adam, began with (the virtue of) primal goodness in Former Heaven, and followed the order of the Lord, the Father, the Creator, which is the right principle of *Daoxin*. However, the heart of man is unstable; the heart of the Way is ineffable, of the essence, and of the One. The human ancestor, in the very beginning, did not pay respect to or stand in awe of God. He did not exercise caution for the ineffable heart of the *Dao*; nor was he alert to the unstable human heart. Above, he deviated from the righteousness of the natural law of Former Heaven. Below, he became conceited and left lasting impact of calamities on his offspring.

(人祖先天元良之始，以造物君父之命，為道心之正理。然人心惟危，道心惟微，惟精惟一。人祖厥初不敬不畏，不謹道心之微，不惕人心之危，上悖先天理自然之正，下忘己並後世子孫之害。). (Bouvet & Foucquet Borg. Cin. 317 No. 7, p. 14)

Foucquet emphasized in his translation "the order of the Lord, the Father, the Creator, which is the right principle of *Daoxin* 道心" (ibid.). Comparing the human ancestor's heart to weakness and fickleness, in the following paragraph in manuscript Borg. Cin. 317, No.7, Foucquet further elaborated on the righteousness of *Daoxin*, the heart of the Way, which was what Jesus had inherited from God (ibid). *Daoxin* 道心 was thus transformed by Foucquet into the *heart* (心) of the Christian God. The term was usually employed by Foucquet

to indicate that the ancestor of humanity Adam was created in the image of God, i.e., with the same *heart* as God. The betrayal of Adam was further drawn upon to indicate that he betrayed the heart of God and instead followed his own unstable heart. The sentence 人心惟危，道心惟微 (the heart of man is unstable; the heart of the Way is ineffable) is repeated in the translations of several hexagrams, including *Qian* 乾, *Song* 訟, *Xiaoxu* 小畜 and *Pi* 否.

In addition to the translations on the ineffability of *Daoxin* from the hexagrams, this paper also examines Foucquet's notes and the commentaries he consulted as another source of his hermeneutical method for the ineffable *Dao*. Foucquet's association of the ineffable *Dao* with *Shengren* and the Christian God may be located in his notes and translations of the commentaries of the *Daodejing*. Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109 stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (the Vatican Library) (the source of the image in Figure 1), which contain commentaries written by Chen Yidian 陳懿典 (1554–1638), is likely one of the commentaries on the *Daodejing* that Foucquet brought back to Europe. Many of the sheets have writing on both sides, with printed Chinese commentaries on one side of the sheet (either the recto or verso side) and Foucquet's French notes and translations on the other. The present study is the very first attempt, among all past scholarship on Foucquet's works and translations, to examine the source of his translations of the *Daodejing* commentaries, which is Borg. Cin. 109. It is very interesting to note that not only were Chen Yidian's commentaries quoted, but those of Su Che 蘇轍<sup>4</sup> (1039–1112), Li Rong<sup>5</sup>, and Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿<sup>6</sup> (1032–1111), all of which were compiled in Chen Yidian's work, were also commentaries that Foucquet frequently employed to link the *Dao* with the Christian God in his translations. Surprisingly, Foucquet and Prémare both employed these Daoist and Confucian scholars' commentaries on the *Daodejing* to explain each his own theological interpretation of the *Dao*, but Foucquet deliberately picked certain segments of these commentaries to fit his own hermeneutical view on how *Daoxin* 道心 reflects the heart of God as an image of *Shengren*.

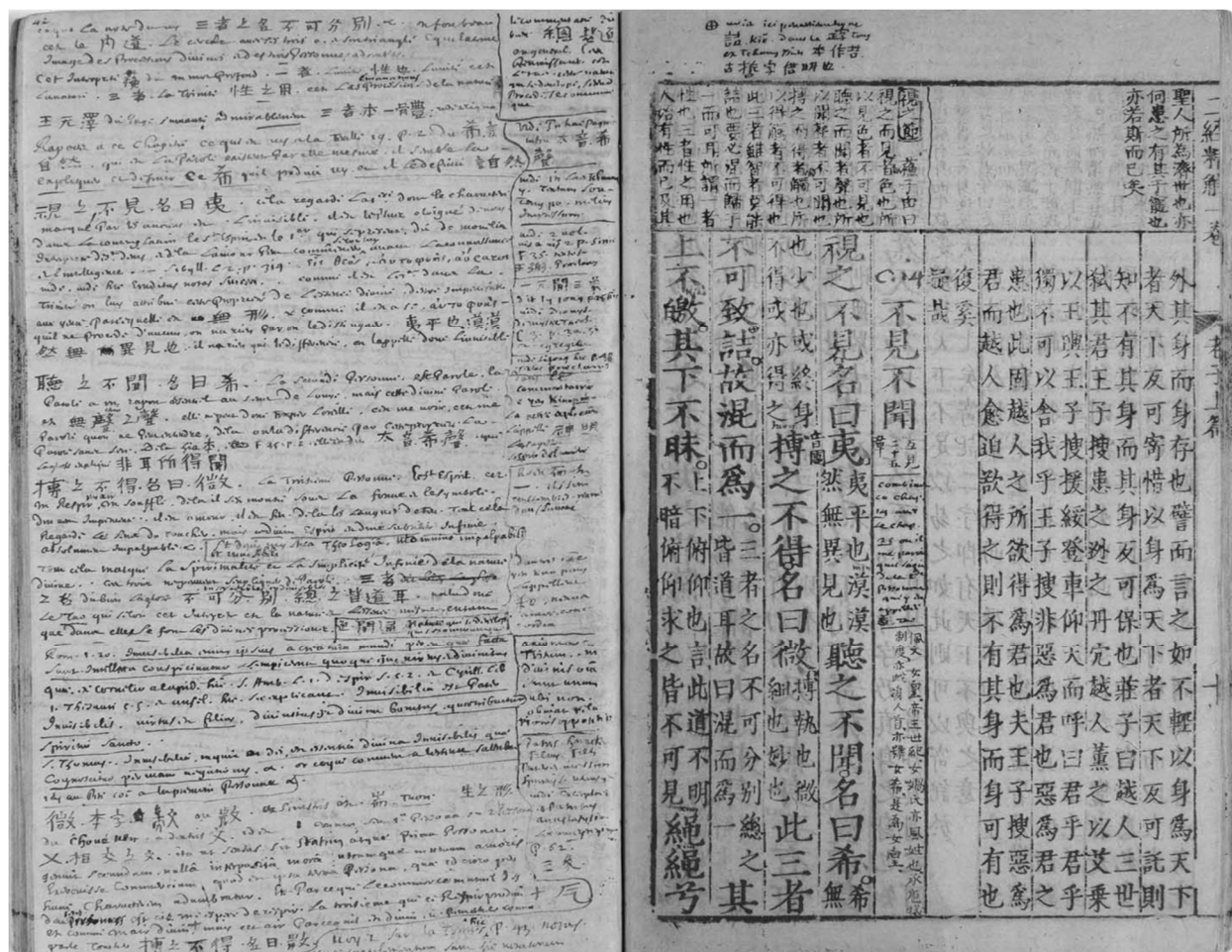
One example is Li Rong's commentaries. As for *Yi* 夷 (invisibility), *Xi* 希 (inaudibility), and *Wei* 微 (ineffability), Li Rong's glossolalia and commentaries perfectly suited Prémare's inclination to link it all with the Holy Trinity (Wei 2022).

One is not One alone; it is One because of Three. Three is not Three alone; Three comes from One. From One to Three, so Three is One Three. From Three to One, so One is Three One. When One is Three One, One is not One anymore; when Three is One Three, Three is not Three any more. When Three is not Three, then there is no Three; when One is not One, then there is no One. When there are no One or Three, words may be forsaken. If one sticks to One or Three, [it] will topple this profound and coherent religion [Daoism].

(一不自一，由三故一；三不自三，由一故三。由一故三，三是一三；由三故一，一是三一。一是三一，一不成一；三是一三，三不成三。三不成三則無三，一不成一則無一。無一無三，自葉忘言之理；執三執一，翻滯玄通之教也。). (Li 2018, vol. 1, pp. 1–76)

"One Three" 一三 in Li Rong's commentaries, according to Prémare, actually refers to the Triune Unity. Leading up to his use of the quotation, Prémare equates the pronunciation of *Yi* 夷, *Xi* 希, and *Wei* 微 with the Hebrew Tetragrammaton of Yahweh (Prémare, Brotier 120, p. 134) and explains that in the antiquity of China, the emperors in the southern suburbs of the capital worshipped the *San Yi* 三一 (Three One), which he holds to refer to the Christian God (Prémare, Brotier 120, p. 135).<sup>7</sup> Then, following the quotation, he further elaborates on the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons in one God (Prémare, Brotier 120, p. 136). In his essay *San yi san*, Prémare notes how the Holy Trinity was a required element to understanding all the Chinese classics. He further added that "Dao generates One, which gives rise to Two, and then Two leads to Three, which gives birth to myriads of things" supports the claim of existence for the three seats/persons, or Sanwei 三位, of the Holy Trinity; since the three share one single nature of God, so "Three

is not Three alone . . . . When Three is not Three, then there is no Three. It is One Three [Triune Unity]”. In the view of Prémare, Li Rong’s commentaries prove that in the period when the *Daodejing* was written, the Chinese people believed not only in one single God (monotheism) but also in the Triune God (Wei 2022, p. 222). The above passage was quoted several times by Prémare in his Chinese and Latin manuscripts owing to the syncretism in Li Rong’s commentaries fitting Prémare’s own links between the *Dao* and the Holy Trinity.



**Figure 1.** Foucquet’s notes and translations of commentaries compiled by Chen Yidian. (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 42).

In Foucquet’s manuscripts, on the other hand, a different section of Li Rong’s commentaries was cited to focus on the similarity between the ineffability of the *Dao* and the mystic wisdom of the Christian God.

We grope for it but do not grasp it; we name it “ineffable.” The great image has no form, which is hard to grasp. The sage’s mystic wisdom achieved emptiness and void. Therefore, it is named “ineffable.” The ineffable is the portent, the void. What is motivated to correspond to the (nature of) things is a portent. What is mysterious and unparalleled, if there is a name, is void.

(搏之不得，名曰微。大象無形，難可搏觸。聖人玄悟，了達虛無。故言微。微者，機也，無也。動而應物，機也。妙絕有名，無也。). (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 109, vol. 1, p. 40)

Foucquet departed from Prémare’s analysis of Chinese characters and his equating the pronunciation of Yi 夷, Xi 希, and Wei 微 with the Hebrew Tetragrammaton of Yahweh to relate it to the *Deus*; instead, Foucquet concentrated on the sage image demonstrated by

*Daoxin* 道心 as well as its emptiness and void. In the above example, Foucquet stresses the features of the sage's (the Christian God's) mystic wisdom, which are paralleled with the characteristics of the *Dao*, itself emptiness and void. In addition, while explaining the concepts of *Yi* 夷, *Xi* 希, and *Wei* 微 from Chapter 14 of the *Daodejing*, Foucquet further elaborated on the *Dao*'s ineffability and equated it with the Christian God (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 42). Then he translated "This is called the form of the formless, the image of nonentity. This is called the amorphous." (無象之象, 謂之恍惚), and described the phrase as mythic theology and the *summus unice* (the highest one), with the form of the formless, as the simple and absolute, which he identified as the Christian God (ibid.).

In these sheets mixing Foucquet's notes and printed commentaries, it is worth noting that he frequently cited and translated *Daodejing* commentaries from Li Rong, Wang Pang 王雱<sup>8</sup> (1044–1076), Li Yue 李約<sup>9</sup> (circa. 778–806), and Li Xizhai 李息齋<sup>10</sup> (1245–1320) that touched on the *Shengren*, to which he added his notes in the margins. These quotations are mostly about the images of the *Shengren* or how the ineffable *Dao* may be paralleled with the Christian God. The commentaries also corresponded with Foucquet's interpretation of the ineffable *Dao*. For example, Wang Pang's commentaries related to the *Dao*'s formlessness and Li Yue's discourse on the void of the *Dao*. These commentaries, for Foucquet, resonated with the ineffable *Dao* and the divine features of God.

The holy man in Christianity differs from the sage in Confucianism and Daoism, though both could be seen in the concept of *Shengren*. Here, in order to shorten the gap between Chinese philosophy and culture and Christianity, Foucquet applied the image of the Confucian and Daoist sage to that of God and Jesus Christ, who enjoy a supreme status due to their possessing virtues and existing without flaw. The use of *Daoxin* 道心 in Foucquet's translations and notes echoes the image of God and *Shengren* to which he attempted to draw links.

In his translations and rewritings, Foucquet not only explained the *Dao* and *Daoxin* 道心 from the standpoint of a commentator of the *Daodejing*, but he also continued to employ the Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis from Bouvet to present a panoramic view of *Shengren*, encompassing the image of the Christian God as a Confucian and Daoist sage. This all-embracing approach resonates with Chinese Figurism, which holds that all pagan beliefs share the same origin. To Foucquet, *Dao* is another alias for the Christian God; and *Daoxin* 道心 is the weft of the woven image of the Christian God as a *Shengren*.

#### 4. Prémare's Daoist Sage

In order to present a more panoramic view of Foucquet's interpretation of the *Dao* and the Daoist sage, it is imperative to compare it with the interpretation of his counterpart, Prémare. In his work *Vestiges des principaux dogmes chrétiens tirés des anciens livres chinois*, Prémare first stated that *Shengren* 聖人 (sage) is the Holy Man, who is the *Messiah*, "known in advance to the patriarchs by divine revelation, and announced by the prophets, was not only awaited and heard by the Jews to come, but was, under the law of nature itself, in almost all parts of the world, worshiped under different images, figures and puzzles" (Prémare 1878, p. 185). Following the principle of Chinese Figurism, Prémare quotes and translates passages from the Chinese classics, including the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (The Annals of Spring and Autumn), *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), *Mengzi* 孟子 (Book of Mencius), the *Analects*, and especially the Daoist classics, such as the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Works of Master Zhuang), and *Liezi* 列子 (Book of Master Lie), in order to parallel the image of the sage with the Holy Son. While discussing different names for the *Shengren*, Prémare especially built the image of Daoist sage by quoting from the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*. For example, while equating *Chin-gin* 神人 (Divine Man, Prémare's Romanization) with *Shengren*, Prémare indicated that the Laozi has several mentions of *Chin-gin* 神人, which refers to God, "because the divinity was hidden in the Sage; he is called *Chin-gin* 神人 or Divine Man" (Prémare 1878, p. 187). In addition, *Zhuangzi* 莊子 was also quoted to interpret *Tien-gin* 天人 (Heaven-man, Prémare's Romanization), *Tchi-gin* 至人 (Ultimate

Man, Prémare's Romanization), who is without concupiscence, and *Ki-gin* 畸人 (the Separated Man, Prémare's Romanization), who is separated from men and of the same dignity and rank as Heaven (Prémare 1878, pp. 187–93). In Prémare's translation, different appellations of the Holy Man and the Daoist sage corresponded to the overall Jesuit accommodation policy, which meant advocating the same Christian God under the different aliases. He was given in various Chinese classics. In addition, his extensive quotations from the Daoist classics also demonstrated his exhaustive studies in the Daoist classics, especially the *Daodejing* and *Zhungzi* 莊子.

Prémare was extremely well-versed in the Chinese language, Chinese grammar, and Chinese classics. His vast learning in Chinese characters was acquired especially out of his interaction with a local literatus and Catholic, Liu Ning 劉凝. Liu was quoted in Prémare's manuscripts as saying that the three characters 一 (One), 二 (Two) and 三 (Three) are employed under the principle of *zhishi* 指事 (indication), not *xiangxing* 象形 (pictograph) (Prémare Borg. Cin. 317. No. 5, p. 8).

Liu Ning said: the Chinese characters 一 [one], 二 [two], and 三 [three] are based on the principle of indication. Two and three are not simply composed of piling separate 一 [ones] all together. This is because 一 [one] works as *Dao*, and there is nothing it cannot penetrate. 二 [two] is actually 一 [one] and 三 [three] is actually 一 [one]. The *Dao* of *Tian* 天 [heaven], *Di* 地 [earth], and *Ren* 人 [mankind] is equal to 一 [one], though there are discrepancies between *Yin* and *Yang*, between the firm and the yielding, and between benevolence and righteousness. It is actually 一 [one] . . . . That is the reason why Laozi did not say that 三 [three] gives birth to 四 [four] but said that 三 [three] gives birth to myriads of things [萬物]. This is because the visible is procreated by the invisible while the numbers originate from 三一 [three one]. 一三 [One three] is not a number.

劉凝曰：一二三皆指事，非疊一而為二三，... 蓋一之為道，無所不貫，二即一也，三即一也。... 天地人之道，雖有陰陽剛柔仁義之異。其實一而已。... 是以老子不曰三生四，而曰三生萬物，蓋言形生於無形，數生於三一。一三非數也。(Prémare Borg. Cin. 317. No. 5, p. 8)

三一 (three one) and 一三 (One three) are identified by Prémare with the Holy Trinity, once again demonstrating Prémare's special interest in Chinese characters. While Prémare received more individual support and interaction from local literati for his re-interpretation of the *Dao* and grafting his analysis of Chinese characters onto his image-building of the Daoist sage and the Holy Son, Foucquet, remaining in the imperial court, received institutional support from the emperor and also inherited the hermeneutic method of typological exegesis from Bouvet.

Foucquet arrived in Amoy, China, in 1699, and began his decade-long proselytization in the province of Jiangxi. In 1711, Foucquet was summoned to the imperial court to work with Bouvet on the re-interpretation of the *Yijing*. According to Joseph Dehergne, "not only did Bouvet think of Foucquet as the only person who understands him, but also Prémare regarded Foucquet as Bouvet's favorite student" (Dehergne 1995, p. 80). After his arrival in Beijing, Foucquet embraced the theory of Chinese Figurism and found that he shared with Bouvet the same interest in locating traces of God and biblical figures in Chinese legends and classics. Their rewritings of Chinese history planted the ancient sage kings from the antiquity of China into the genealogies of biblical figures (Chan 2002, p. 518). The rulers and sages in the ancient Chinese legends were not real historical figures, they believed, though they did manifest the imminent coming of the Savior (Collani 1985, p. 118). This same approach of typological exegesis had been prevalent in Bouvet's translations of hexagrams, with which he was assisted by Foucquet, as well as in Foucquet's own astronomical treatises.

From the view of European intellectual history, the figures and symbols used in Jesuit Figurism had been considered an essential feature of European intellectual culture since early Christianity. Lackner indicates that "Figurism is mainly a hermeneutical method

of Biblical exegesis. . . . The coming and significance of Christ is prefigured in the Old Testament by means of letters, words, persons and events” (Lackner 1991, p. 130).

This approach of typological exegesis was also prevalent in Foucquet’s translated astronomical treatises. In addition to the study of the *Yijing*, Foucquet was assigned to instruct the Kangxi Emperor on the most up-to-date European astronomical studies, including those of Philippe de La Hire, Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, Christian Huygens, René Descartes, Giovanni Battista Riccioli, and Giovanni Cassini (Li 2020b, p. 206), in order to replace the old calendrical studies in the imperial astronomical bureau. While bearing the brunt of transmitting then cutting-edge astronomical knowledge, Foucquet adhered to this approach of typological exegesis in his translations of astronomical treatises and the *Dao* in Latin and in Chinese, in his attempt to convert the Kangxi Emperor and also to dispel the doubts of the Holy See.

### 5. *Dao* in Foucquet’s Typological Interpretation

Foucquet’s typological exegesis approach was ubiquitous throughout his works, not only in the translations of the hexagrams related to the *Dao* discussed above, but also in the following celestial map and in his astronomical translation the *Ju Gu Jingzhuan Kao Tianxiang Bu Jun Qi* 據古經傳攷天象不均齊 (The Examination of the Irregularities in the Sky Based on the Ancient Classics). Before discussing any further the *Dao* in his astronomical treatises and translations in Chinese, it is worth looking at one celestial map of the Northern Hemisphere with Foucquet’s notes and translations of Chinese mythology in Latin to appreciate the attention of his typological exegetic approach. Around 1722, having then returned to Europe, he completed his *Hémisphère céleste boréal avec légende en chinois et annotations manuscrites en latin* (The Northern celestial hemisphere with legends in Chinese and handwritten annotations in Latin) (Li 2020a, p. 57) with translations and rewritings on the margins. This map is another manuscript I found in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Figure 2). It is tangible evidence of Foucquet’s efforts to draw parallels between the Chinese constellations and the astrological signs in the West and with the Biblical stories. To do this, he used the same approach of typological exegesis to treat the figures in Chinese legends as pre-figurations or prophecies of the figures in the Bible. For example, the fall of Lucifer was compared to Gonggong 共工 from ancient Chinese mythical legends. “Cum cum (共工, Foucquet’s Romanization) has tipped the axis of Heaven to become the first founder (bringer) of the disorder of arms and wars, and to bring out the first flood in the world to the universal destruction of humans” (Foucquet Manuscript no. FRBNF40704851, stored in Bibliothèque nationale de France). Lucifer and Gonggong 共工 both became symbols of Satan. Foucquet’s typological exegesis could also be shown in his translation of the Koën (鯀), which was transformed into a fish (Pisces) because it had violated the mandate of God, and Xuanwu 玄武<sup>11</sup> (the Black Tortoise). In his translation of this celestial map, there is also another type<sup>12</sup> linking the constellation Virgo with Holy Mary; and the twins in the constellation Gemini are a type to the hypostatic nature of Jesus (i.e., twins as the soul and body of Jesus). The backbone of their steadfast beliefs was from the *prisca theologia* (ancient theology) narrative: all pagan theists are actually monotheists, and all of the world’s religious traditions share one single origin, from which all esoteric and exoteric knowledge and doctrine derive. It was a powerful narrative in the Renaissance that deeply influenced the Jesuit Figurists. This method of typological exegesis derived from the *prisca theologia* was also manifested in Foucquet’s rewritings and re-interpretations of the celestial map of the Northern Hemisphere.



**Figure 2.** Hémisphère céleste boréal avec légende en chinois et annotations manuscrites en latin (The Northern celestial hemisphere with legends in Chinese and handwritten annotations in Latin) (Foucquet Manuscript no. FRBNF40704851, stored in Bibliothèque nationale de France).

Another of Foucquet's works on astronomy, the *Ju Gu Jingzhuan Kao Tianxiang Bu Jun Qi* 據古經傳攷天象不均齊 (Foucquet Borg. Cin.317. No. 13),<sup>13</sup> was completed during the period 1712–1715 (Witek 1982, p. 454). This is also another work of his that demonstrates his inheritance of the Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis as well as of the typological exegesis approach from Bouvet and that he treated the *Dao* as an agent to build the image of Jesus Christ as a Confucian and Daoist sage. Making good use of his excellent astronomical knowledge and his exhaustive studies on the *Yijing* as well as other Daoist classics, including Chapter 18 of the *Daodejing* (Laozi 2002, p. 6), Chapter 3, *Tianwen xun* 天文訓 (Celestial Phenomena), of *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Master[s] from Huainan) (Liu 2009, pp. 44–62), and the Outer Chapters, Chapter 16, *Shan Xing* 繕性 (Correcting the Nature) of *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Master Zhuang) (Guo 2011), Foucquet explained that the chaos and the irregularity in the universe and the five stars 五緯 (*Chenxing* [辰星], *Taibai* [太白], *Yinghuo* [熒惑], *Suixing* [歲星] and *Zhenxing* [鎮星]) were actually the delicate arrangement of God (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 317. No. 13, p. 1). Adam, the ancestor of humanity, “offended against Heaven” 獲罪於天 (ibid., pp. 16, 24), which led to the difference between *Xian Tian* 先天 (The Former Heaven) and *Hou Tian* 後天 (The Latter Heaven) and the irregularities of the universe.

Several hexagrams, including *Bi* 賁 (Grace), *Yi* 頤 (Corners of the Mouth), and *Gu* 蠱 (Decay), were employed to illustrate the fact that the faults of Adam led to the disasters brought down on his own offspring. In the second half of this work, Foucquet especially focused on Yan Zun's 嚴遵 commentaries on the *Daodejing* and reasoned that it was the fault of *xian zu* 先祖 (the ancestor of human beings). He also indicated that such terms as *sheng* 聖 (saint), *shen* 神 (spirit), *hou* 后 (empress), *jun* 君 (lord), and *shi* 師 (master) are names referring to Jesus Christ; and in the end he quotes from Chapter 18 of the *Daodejing*<sup>14</sup> (Laozi 2002, p. 6) to explain why the *da sheng* 大聖 (the great sage) was born (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 317. No. 13, p. 25). When the *da sheng* descended, the *Dao* saved all under Heaven (ibid., p. 28).<sup>15</sup> In Foucquet's reinterpretation, Jesus Christ's sagely image was built from

the virtues of the *Dao*. With the inherited Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis, Foucquet also planted Jesus Christ as a Daoist sage into ancient Chinese history. Shortening the gap between Chinese history and biblical stories, the use of the *Dao* and the Daoist sage helped Foucquet to build a communal space for compatibility between Catholicism and Chinese civilization.

## 6. *Dao* as Deus

Foucquet's *Dao* was fully illustrated in another French manuscript, *Problèmes théologiques*, in the manuscript numbered Borg. Cin. 371, stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. This work was completed between August and October of 1718 (Müller 2005, p. 184). In it, Foucquet states that the *Dao* is the Christian God—a blunt statement to draw the attention of converted Chinese as well as of the Catholic missionaries who were interested in the mission in China. This work may be divided into two parts. First, Foucquet focuses on his argument. The *Dao* in the Chinese classics is Deus, so he could infer that the *Shengren* would then be the Savior in the Holy Scripture. In the second part, he tries to prove it in reverse. Since the Messiah is the *Shengren* celebrated in many passages of the Chinese classics, the character *Dao* also designates the Supreme Being venerated by Christians (Witek 1982, p. 210).

In order to testify that the *Dao* is Deus, he first explains the five main articles that Christian piety teaches about the Christian God (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 371, Manuscripts stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pp. 4–7):

1. In Divine Nature, being infinitely simple, spiritual, without composition and absolutely unique, there is contained an infinity of perfection. The unity, with a fertility, surpassing understanding, produces the Trinity, and the Trinity does no harm to the unity.
2. This Supreme Nature, which is one and three, full of itself and in need of nothing, has freely chosen to go out of itself through the production of the universe.
3. This Supreme Being, which has manifested itself to the outside through the production of the world, is not only the principle of all corporal being; it also has created intelligent beings.
4. This light, this wisdom, this truth, and this Supreme Nature has finally taken a body in the Incarnation and has shown itself among men in the person of the Holy of Holies.
5. This Supreme Nature which we call God has many other names in our scriptures and in the theological language. Sometimes it is the Most High, the Father of his creation, the Master of the world, the universal Lord, or the Almighty. On other occasions, it is Substantial Reason, the Word, the life-giving Spirit, Wisdom, Truth, etc.

Among these five articles, one may note that Foucquet especially emphasizes unity and lists it as the foremost principle of the Christian God, which is related to how Foucquet later interpreted the *Dao*. In addition, the last article also resonates with the Jesuits' accommodation policy—to locate certain terms, such as *Tian*, *Di*, *Shangdi* and especially the *Dao*, from the Chinese classics, and explain that they were different appellations of the same Christian God in the antiquity of China. What is more, in another of his Chinese works, namely the *Jing Yi Jing Yao* 經義精要 (The Gist of the Meaning of the Classics), Foucquet focused on 64 concepts, among which, he indicated that *Tianzhu* 天主 (Heavenly Master), *Tiandi* 天帝 (Heavenly Lord), *Tian* 天 (Heaven), *Zhuzai* 主宰 (the Ruler), *Dao* 道 (the Way), *Li* 理 (Reason), *Shen* 神 (Deity), and *Taiji* 太極 (Supreme Ultimate) are aliases of the Christian God (Chen 2017, p. 249). His use of these concepts aimed to reconcile biblical interpretation with philosophical accounts from the Chinese classics, and to graft the Christian God onto Chinese philosophical terms, including the *Dao*.

Foucquet further listed the features of the *Dao* to prove that the *Dao* is actually Deus (ibid., p. 7–8):

1. The *Tao* (Foucquet's Romanization) seen in itself and in its essence.
2. The *Tao* as creator and conservator of the universe, making shine its infinite perfections which fill it, in its creatures.

3. The *Tao* as sun of the spirits, which rules the heart of man by a ray of its ineffable light.
4. The *Tao* in its most intimate, substantial, and indissoluble union with the Chief, the King, the Master of the universe.
5. The *Tao*, celebrated in the ancient monuments under the most glorious names.
6. The weakness and invalidity of all arguments which skepticism might raise against this doctrine which is equally ancient, sublime, and solid.

In the above articles, there are undeniable similarities between the *Dao* and Christian God identified by Foucquet. Identified with the Christian God, the *Dao* is consequently the creator of the universe and celebrated under the most glorious of names. Once again Foucquet uses “the most intimate, substantial and indissoluble union” (ibid.) to lay the foundation for his argument about the compatibility between the Oneness of the *Dao* and the unity in the Holy Trinity. In addition to drawing parallels between the *Dao* and Christian God, Foucquet also dwelt on the analysis of the *Dao* and quoted from Yu Desheng’s 虞德升 *Xie Sheng Pin Zi Jian* 諧聲品字箋 (Notes on the Harmonic Sounds and the Appreciation of Characters) (Yu 1997) while, for similar purposes, Prémare cited from the *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters) (Xu 2002) for his dissection of the character *Dao* 道.

Furthermore, the French manuscript *Problèmes théologiques* also showed that Foucquet’s translation and interpretation of the *Dao* was actually mingled with the Western tradition of Hermeticism and the commentaries of Daoist and Neo-Confucian scholars. Pythagoras, Orpheus, Archimedes, Hermes, Trismegistus, the Chaldeans, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Eudoxus, Damascius, Cyrillus, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius, Plotinus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Fenélon were quoted to reinforce that Christian theology had always insisted on the Oneness of the Christian God. In addition, corresponding to the Oneness of the Christian God, Foucquet also consulted other past commentaries, including those of Su Che, Li Rong, Lü Huiqing and Chen Yidian. Compared to Prémare, who focused on Li Rong’s commentaries and worked on linking with the theory of trinitarianism, Foucquet extensively quoted commentaries from Neo-Confucianists who also discussed the *Dao* to explain the linkage between the Oneness of the *Dao* and the Oneness of the Christian God. For example, speaking of the *Dao* as One, Foucquet quoted and translated from the *Wei Zhai Ji* 畏齋集 (the Collection of Fear of Fasting) (Cheng 1975) of Cheng Duanli 程端禮 (1271–1345), a famous Yuan-dynasty scholar who was in the same tradition of philosophical thought of the Neo-Confucianism advocated by Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). The following quote was titled *San Yi Tang Ji* 三一堂記 (The Record of the Three One Hall); it seemed that Foucquet deliberately picked this passage for his interpretation, which was a further link between the One and Three One (the Holy Trinity). In this article, Cheng Duanli elaborated on different meanings of the One.

One is the sublime purity of the essence of the *Dao* and the ultimate pinnacle of sacred efforts. It is pristine without impurities. It is from the beginning to the end without being interrupted. It is (one) that contains myriads of things. It is (one) that communicates with the past and the present and reaches the top and the bottom (of the universe). It is the origin and the backbone of myriads of things. (一者，道體之純全，聖功之極致也。精粹無雜者也。始終無間者也。該括萬物者也。通古今達上下、萬物之原、萬事之幹也。) (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 371, Manuscripts stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 49–50)

Along with this quote, Foucquet also added his own commentary in which he equated the Oneness of the *Dao* with the Christian God.

In addition, Foucquet seemed to be the advocate of the interpretations of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1093) and Shao Kangjie 邵康節 (1012–1077), while Prémare rejected both Neo-Confucian philosophies. Foucquet also quoted the Neo-Confucianists’ commentaries to explain the *Dao*. For example,

Heaven is produced by the *Dao* or by Reason; the earth derives from this same Reason in a state of perfection. It is also by Reason that all the things of the world have received their forms and their figures, and it is by Reason that man can and does act. Heaven, earth, men, the myriads of things in the world—all the beings differ from each other, but there is no difference in whence they originate; they all depend upon it (the Oneness in the *Dao*).<sup>16</sup>

(天由道而生，地由道而成，物由道而形，人由道而行。天地人物則異也，其于由道一也。) (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 371, Manuscripts stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 312. Authors' translation of Foucquet's French translation. Differences between the original Chinese and my English translation are from Foucquet's French translation)

His deliberate selection of commentaries from the Western tradition and from Neo-Confucian scholars exhibited his trajectory in interpreting the *Dao*: Foucquet equated the Oneness in the *Dao* with the unity in the Holy Trinity. What is more, Foucquet continued to translate sentences and passages related to 道一 Oneness in the *Dao* and related it to the unity of the Holy Trinity. For example, on page 56, he explains by quoting from Volume 5, *Dayue* 大樂 (Great Music) of the *Lü Shi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Spring and Autumn of Master Lü), translating thusly: "the *Dao* is the ultimate essence, formless and without name, so it is called the Ultimate One" (ibid).<sup>17</sup> On page 58, he continues to quote and translate the connection between the One and *Shen* 神 (God) from Wang Pang's commentary of Chapter 39 of the *Daodejing*: "The meaning of the One is the essence under Heaven, so it is called *Shen* 神 ... The virtue of *Shen* always lies in One" (ibid).<sup>18</sup> Another example is one sentence he quoted and translated on page 63: "One is the foundation of myriads of things, which is the invincible *Dao*" (ibid), which is from the *Huainanzi*.<sup>19</sup> Corresponding to the above commentaries between the *Dao* and One, Foucquet assessed the *Dao* in the following five manners:

1. The *Tao* is one because it cannot be divided.
2. The *Tao* is one because of the preeminence of its being of an incomprehensible perfection and beauty.
3. The *Tao* is one because it is effectively and really the fertile fountain of the innumerable multitude of the beings existing in the universe.
4. The *Tao* is one because it is the one who puts order into the beings.
5. Finally, the *Tao* is one because it is the principle of movements which follow an invariable rule, which they [the movements] could not preserve by itself.

(Foucquet Borg. Cin. 371, Manuscripts stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 32. Authors' translation of Foucquet's French translation.)

These features of the *Dao* are perfectly aligned with the previously mentioned attributes of the Christian God and also resonate with the sentence from the *Shangshu* 尚書 (the Book of Documents), that the *Daoxin* 道心 is ineffable 微, of the essence 精, and of the One 一, as well as with the Neo-Confucianist commentaries Foucquet quoted. Continuing the repeated theme of depicting the Christian God and Jesus Christ as Daoist sages, in *Problèmes théologiques*, Foucquet comprehensively elaborates on his advocacy on the compatibility between the Oneness of the *Dao* and the unity in the Holy Trinity, which is quite a different path from Prémare's interpretation of the *Dao* as One Three 一三.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

After Foucquet rejected a confrere who had been appointed to be his superior, he returned to France and became a bishop at the Propaganda Fide ([Sacred Congregation for the] Propagation of the Faith) in Rome. In Paris he became acquainted with Voltaire and the Duc de Saint-Simon, and in Rome he had several discussions with Montesquieu. His correspondences with Voltaire and Montesquieu were pivotal for later French scholars developing Sinology in France (Witek 1982, pp. 308–13).

Drawing on his astronomical and calendrical knowledge, Foucquet followed in the Figurist footsteps of Bouvet and worked on the reinterpretation of the *Yijing*; he followed Bouvet's approach of typological exegesis and the Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis in his interpretation of the *Dao*. On the other hand, Prémare concentrated on the philology of the *Dao*, including the "anatomy" of the Chinese character 道 and the pronunciation of Yi 夷, Xi 希, and Wei 微; in contrast, Foucquet focused on profiling the Christian God and Jesus Christ as Daoist sages with the virtues of the *Dao*. Foucquet further interpreted that the Oneness of the *Dao* was compatible with the unity in the Holy Trinity. While his method was distinctive, his purpose was similar—to proselytize Chinese readers, and to persuade European readers that the *Dao* is equivalent to Deus. Rendering visible the traces of his search for the *Dao* in his Chinese, French, and Latin manuscripts, this paper portrays a comprehensive portrait of a Figurist, Jean-François Foucquet, at the peak of the Rites Controversy.

Prémare's interpretation of the *Dao* was followed by Abel-Rémusat's own interpretation, and Prémare made a more lasting impact on the early French Sinologists. Though Foucquet's interpretation of the *Dao* had no further impact on the earliest extant Latin manuscript translations of the *Daodejing* stored in the British Library, this micro-historical case study of Foucquet's interpretation of the *Dao* shows how his navigating the strait between the Scylla and Charybdis of the emperor and the Holy See factored into his trajectory of interpreting the *Dao*; it also demonstrates that he cleaved to typological exegesis and Confucian-Christian-*Dao* synthesis in response to being challenged by his own brothers in the Catholic Church. The significance of this paper lies in that the early understanding of the *Dao* was manipulated as a tool for proselytization and as a bridge to link the East with the West, especially among the Figurists. Ironically, for the Figurists, the *Dao* stood for another incarnation of the Christian God based on their hermetic thinking. However, during the 17th century, the *Dao*, after its dissemination to Europe, also opened the sluice gates for the Enlightenment. The *Dao* had not yet been categorized into the separate but related domains of religious Daoism and philosophical Daoism—that demarcation would have to wait until the 18th and 19th century translations of the *Daodejing*.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Voltaire, one of the key Enlightenment thinkers, was deeply inspired by the writings of Bouvet and Foucquet. "His assertion of the 'noachide' source of Chinese religion may well have come from his conversation with Foucquet" (Rowbotham 1932, p. 1052).

- 2 For the English names of hexagrams in the *Yijing*, the author follows the English translation by Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes: The Richard Wilhelm Translation* (Wilhelm 1977).
- 3 《尚書·大禹謨》云：「人心惟危，道心惟微，惟精惟一，允執厥中。」 All translations herein are the author's own unless otherwise noted. See Kong Anguo 孔安國, *Shangshu Zhengyi* 尚書正義. Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2000.
- 4 One of the examples Foucquet quoted from Su Che: "The sage does not forsake learning, but (his learning) is based on the *Dao*." (聖人未嘗不學，而以道為主。) (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol. 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 31).
- 5 See one of the examples Foucquet quoted from Li Rong on page 8 above.
- 6 One example of what Foucquet quoted from Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿: "The sage knows that the chaos of everything under Heaven starts from that people missing their origin and thus losing their nature." (聖人知天下之亂，始於迷本而失性。) (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 32).
- 7 天子祭三一於南郊。
- 8 An example of what Foucquet quoted from Wang Pang: "How could the *Dao*, having no form, be named?" (道無體焉得名。) (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol. 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 7).
- 9 An example of what Foucquet quoted from Li Yue: "*Dao*'s being a thing is dim and fickle, but it detests being sinuous and complicated; instead, *Dao* is entrusted in clearness and void." (道之為物，雖恍惚無常，然惡煩雜而託清虛也。) (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol. 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 27).
- 10 An example of what Foucquet quoted from Li Xizhai: "We look for it but do not see it; then we cannot ask for its form. We listen for it but do not hear it; then we cannot capture its sound. We grope for it but do not grasp it; then we cannot seek its shape." (視之不見，不可以色求也。聽之不聞，不可以聲取也。搏之不得，不可以形索也。) (Foucquet Manuscript no. Borg. Cin. 109, vol. 1, stored in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 41).
- 11 Xuanwu 玄武 is one of the "four symbols" or "four images" of Chinese constellations. The four refer to four Chinese mystical animals and guardian spirits symbolizing and protecting the four directions: the East by Qinglong 青龍 (the Azure Dragon), the West by Baihu 白虎 (the White Tiger); the South by Zhuque 朱雀 (the Vermilion Bird), the North by Xuanwu 玄武 (the Black Tortoise).
- 12 In Biblical studies, a type is a person, place, thing, or event that foreshadows a future person or event. A type usually indicates the similarity between something in the future and in the past in either the physical or the moral order, and is not a matter of chance resemblance. That is the typological exegesis that the Figurists mainly employed to parallel Chinese mythology and history with the stories and history of the Bible. According to the Figurists, there were more symbols and mystic creatures in the Chinese classics used as types of Jesus or used to describe the birth of Jesus (Wei 2020, pp. 50, 56).
- 13 This paper examines manuscript call no. Borg. Cin. 380, a self-translation of Foucquet's manuscript call no. Borg. Cin. 317 (13) into Latin translation for European readers.
- 14 大道廢，有仁義。
- 15 大聖降，而道濟天下焉。
- 16 The French original is as follows: Le ciel a est produit par le Tao ou par la raison, lu terre a este mise par cette mesme raison, dans l'état de perfection ou elle est, c'est encore par la raison que toutes les chose du monde ont reçu leu formes et leurs figures, enfin c'est par la raison que l'homme nit et peut agir, le ciel, la terre, les hommes, les choses du monde tous les estres différent entre eux, mais il n'y a pas de différence dans la dépendance qu'ils ont tous, delà raison comme de leur origine et de leur principe il vent dire qu'ils en dépendent tous également. (Foucquet Borg. Cin. 371, Manuscripts stored in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, p. 312).
- 17 道也者，至精也，不可為形，不可為名，強為之謂之太一。
- 18 一之為義，天下之至精，故能神。... 神之為德，常在一也。
- 19 一也者萬物之本無敵之道。

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