Lexicographical questions and revealing quotations

New clues on *Pi shishi zhuwang*

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The article presents and analyses new materials and perspectives on *Pi shishi zhuwang* 闢釋氏諸妄 ("Confutation of all the absurdities of the Buddha"), frequently abbreviated as *Pi wang*. *Pi wang* is usually attributed to the Chinese scholar Xu Guangqi 徐光啟(1562–1633), but recent studies have questioned this hypothesis. However, while there is a variety of studies on the translations and prefaces composed by Xu Guangqi in cooperation with Western missionaries and scholars, such as Matteo Ricci (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610) and Sabatino De Ursis (Xiong Sanba 熊三拔, 1575–1620), secondary literature on *Pi wang* is surprisingly limited. Among these precious and rare works of secondary literature, the focus has been correctly placed on the structure and different versions of *Pi wang* to determine attribution. Less attention has been devoted to the contents of the text, especially concerning some linguistic peculiarities in terms of possible attribution and relevant cross-cultural interactions. In order to provide new clues and different points of view for research on the attribution, this article illustrates some topics that should be further investigated and new possible keys in historical texts. It also indirectly provides new insights into the cultural interactions that took place between Chinese converts and Western missionaries.

Keywords: *Pi wang*; Xu Guangqi; Buddhism; attribution; Jesuits; *Tianzhu shilu*.

1. Introduction[1]

Pi shishi zhuwang 闢釋氏諸妄 ("Confutation of all the absurdities of the Buddha"), frequently abbreviated as *Pi wang*,[2] is usually attributed to the Chinese scholar and convert Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), but recent studies have questioned this hypothesis.[3] However, while there is a variety of studies on the translations and prefaces composed by Xu Guangqi in cooperation with Western missionaries and scholars, such as Matteo Ricci (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610) and Sabatino De Ursis

[1] I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their precious suggestions.

[2] From here on shortened as *Pi wang*.

[3] Refer to section 2 of this article for detailed explanations.

(Xiong Sanba 熊三拔, 1575–1620), secondary literature on *Pi wang* is surprisingly limited. Among these precious and rare works of secondary literature,[4] the focus has been correctly placed on the structure and different versions of *Pi wang* to determine attribution. Less attention has been devoted to the contents of the text, especially concerning some linguistic peculiarities in terms of possible attribution and relevant cross-cultural interactions.

2. *Pi wang*: title, contents, and structure

Pi wang derives its name from a longstanding history of confuting Buddhism, Taoism, and other popular religions, starting from the sixteenth century by Christian "missionaries and converted Chinese literati" who began "a tradition of 'awakening the misled' or 'rebutting absurdity' (*pi wang* 闢妄)" (Chu 2008: 25).

The text is divided into eight sections, plus another that was added by a different author, due to linguistic differences with the previous eight (Dudink 2001a: 115): *poyu zhi wang* 破獄之妄 ("the absurdity of the destruction of hell"), *shishi zhi wang* 施食之妄 ("the absurdity of feeding hungry spirits"), *wuzhu guhun xiehu zhi wang* 無主孤魂血湖之妄 ("the absurdity of neglected spirits and of the lake of blood"), *shao zhi zhi wang* 燒紙之妄 ("the absurdity of burning joss paper"], *chizhou zhi wang* 持咒之妄 ("the absurdity of reading mantras"], *lunhui zhi wang* 輪廻之妄 ("the absurdity of *saṃsāra"), nianfo zhi wang* 念佛之妄 ("the absurdity of reading the name of Buddha"), *chan zong zhi wang* 禪宗之妄 ("the absurdity of Chan Buddhism"), and finally *bian bu feng zuxian shuo* 辨不奉祖先説 ("confuting the theory of ancestors who are not venerated").[5]

In the first chapter, the author tries to demonstrate that if hell existed, it would be created by the Grand Lord (*dazhu* "大主") and it would be impossible for humble humans to destroy it by the recitation of sacred formulas. In fact, this would imply that the power of men would be greater than the Grand Lord, which would also create discrimination between rich and poor. The first would be able to summon monks to make religious offerings and ceremonies, helping to liberate the souls from hell, while the poor would not have those means.

In the second section, the author tries to confute the existence of "hungry spirits," known in Sanskrit as Preta, one of the six realms of rebirth. The idea of feeding the hungry spirits, in order to

[4] See in particular Dudink (2001a: 115–124).

[5] For the first integral translation into a European language of the text, see Tola (2020: 235–270).

appease them, would make the creation of hell by the Grand Lord useless; hungry spirits, in turn, served by people, would be unwilling to leave hell, deemed logically absurd by the writer.

The third chapter is devoted to demolishing the idea that neglected spirits, i.e., those for which nobody prepares religious offerings, become "lonely spirits:" since what heaven decides is called nature, all spirits are governed by the High Sovereign (皆上帝為主), while hell is ruled by Lucifer (路祭弗爾). In this section, the writer of *Pi wang* also confutes the idea that blood and other liquids secreted during childbirth are gathered in hell to create a lake of blood. The author here, as well as in other passages of *Pi wang*, abundantly makes references to Confucian texts and relevant quotations to better achieve his purposes, which were generally directed at Chinese literati and educated scholars. For example, "what heaven decides is called nature" derives from the *Zhongyong* 中庸 "Doctrine of the mean," one of the "Four Books" of the Confucian canon: 天命之謂性 ("What is established by heaven is called nature").

The fourth absurdity shattered in the text is the burning of joss paper: either the gods see real money in the paper or only burnt ashes—men would lack respect for them either way. The same logical reasoning is applied to other similar ceremonial habits, such as burning images of gods or pieces of tinfoil shaped as sycees, together with the usual adoption of quotations from Confucian classics. The latter is exemplified by the rhetorical question, "Who am I deceiving? Maybe heaven?"—echoing the "Dialogues," or *Lunyu* 論語, section *Zi han* 子罕: "吾誰欺，欺天乎?"

The fifth section demystifies the habit of reading the name of Buddha multiple times to obtain desired things. Other than the usual logic and quotations of Confucian texts, this chapter also exemplifies popular folklore and legends referenced in *Pi wang*, such as the melody *lianhua luo* 蓮花落 ("the falling lotus") used by beggars for requesting alms and an example of "money fever in sixteenth-century China" (Guo 2005: 134), and the two gods Qianliyan 千里眼 and Shunfeng'er 順風耳, servants of the goddess Mazu 媽祖, known respectively for their exceptional hearing and eyesight.

The sixth part in turn addresses one of the most renowned Buddhist concepts: *saṃsāra,* or the cycle of death and rebirth. The theory proposed by the author is that if *saṃsāra* really existed, it would be impossible for humanity to prosper and grow in number, since the amount of souls would be predetermined. Given that the High Lord represents the great origin of *qian* and the highest origin of *kun* (而上主為「大哉乾元」，「至哉坤元」), how would it be possible for him to create new souls? Also, the logical reasoning adopted in this case is reinforced by passages from the *Yijing* 易經, respectively hexagram *qian* 乾 and hexagram *kun* 坤: 大哉乾元 , 至哉坤元. In this chapter, the author also resorts to the Confucian canonical tradition to reinforce his logical statements. For example, to prove the illogicality of the idea of rebirth, he directly quotes *Mencius* 孟子, section *Gao zi* 告子, asking

rhetorically whether a dog's nature is the same as an ox's, and whether the nature of an ox is the same as a man's (然則犬之性猶牛之性，牛之性猶人之性與?).

The seventh section rebuts the idea of Mahāyāna, a branch of Buddhism, that the recitation of the name of Amitābha can help humans be reborn in the Pure Land. As in other sections of *Pi wang*, the author confutes this idea with logical reasoning, adding quotations from a variety of Chinese historical and philosophical traditional texts, such as *Yijing*, *Lunyu*, *Daodejing* 道德經, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Shiji* 史記 ("Historical records") and *Shijing* 詩經 ("Book of odes"), but also from more purely literary works, such as *Ai lian shuo* 愛蓮說 ("On the love for lotus").

The eighth section tries to confute different Buddhist theories, particularly referencing the most doctrinal and specific aspects of the religion; other than the usual mention of classical Chinese texts, this part of *Pi wang* is full of references to stories, characters, and legends of Buddhism, as well as the well-known paradoxes *koan* 公案, typical of Chan 禪 tradition.

The ninth and last chapter is devoted instead to the veneration of ancestors, which is one of the tenets of the adaptation of the Confucian tradition to Christian teachings. As stated by the author, according to rumour, the orthodox teaching of the Lord of Heaven does not venerate ancestors; since this has a close connection with the adhesion to the way (i.e., the doctrine of Christianity) such a topic needed to be discussed with urgency (天主正教，不奉祖先。此事關係入道極大，亟宜辨明).

3. The attribution of *Pi wang*: between Xu Guangqi and other hypotheses

As mentioned in the introduction of the article, *Pi wang* is usually attributed to Xu Guangqi, but recent studies have questioned this hypothesis with grounded theories. To provide a brief overview, the first theory is that the work appeared for the first time around 1670; the second is that there are at least three versions of it; the third is the problem of the writing collaboration between Jesuits and Chinese converts (Dudink 2001a: 115). However, particularly pertaining to the first and most important point, other studies place the appearance of Pi wang before 1615,[6] therefore confirming the attribution to Xu Guangqi.

When analysing the question of *Pi wang*'s author, the historical and religious context should not be forgotten, especially with regard to the involvement of the religious themes drawn in *Pi wang* in the later Chinese Rites Controversy; the latter certainly influenced the attribution of the work in the

[6] Zürcher (2001: 159). Consult this reference for more detailed discussions about questioning the attribution of *Pi wang* to Xu Guangqi.

decades and centuries following its composition. In fact, Xu Guangqi's religious writings were extensively used after his death by Jesuits, as well as in disputes with Buddhists, and there were also contradictory accounts of his attitude towards the use of religious terms, with their consistent implications on the Jesuit strategies of cultural accommodation (Blue 2001: 45–48).

In this section, the author would like to instead focus on sources that deal more closely with *Pi wang*, briefly analysing four that directly attribute the text to Xu Guangqi, two that directly or indirectly question this hypothesis, and some relevant linguistic elements that should also be considered. With reference to the six sources, all were composed after the supposed compilation date of *Pi wang* (Dudink 2001a: 115–116); four explicitly or indirectly refer to Xu Guangqi as its author, and two omit his name. Their importance is twofold: on the one hand, such sources were previously ignored in disentangling the various issues of the attribution of *Pi wang*; on the other, the great majority have been composed by "insiders," that is, missionaries and scholars who, to different degrees, directly experienced or were at least familiar with the history of contact between Chinese converts and Western religious fellows.

From a chronological perspective, the first reference considered can be read in a text composed by the Belgian Jesuit François Noël (Wei Fangji 衛方濟, 1651–1729) and the German Jesuit Caspar Castner (Pang Jiabin 龐嘉賓, 1655–1709). The work gathers different documents of testimonies on the approval decree of the Jesuit Mission in China by Pope Alexander VII (1599–1667) and the later decision by Pope Clement XI (1649–1721) on the Chinese Rites Controversy. Under the section *Testimonia Litteratorum Sinensium Christianorum* ("Testimonies of Chinese Christian literati"), it is possible to read one by *Doctor, & primus Imperiii Minister* Siu quam Ki *in suo Libello impresso* Pie wam*, idest errorum refutationes* [...] ("Doctor and first minister of the empire, Xu Guangqi, in his published booklet, *Pi wang*, i.e., confutation of errors [...];" Noël and Castner 1703: 83). Therefore, the short treatise on the refutation of errors, *Pie wam*, is explicitly attributed to "Siu quam Ki" and considered by the two Jesuits among the testimonies of faith by Chinese Christian literati.

The second text presented, illustrating the Chinese philosophical system in three parts, was also written by François Noël. In a chapter devoted to the dispute between the use of the terms *Shangdi* 上帝 and *Tianzhu* 天主 to refer to the Christian god, Noël quotes the adoption of the first in the text by Xu Guangqi: *Doctor & Imperatoris primus Minister, seu Colaus* Siu *Christianus in suo parvo celebri libro* Pie Vam*, sic:* XamTi*, inquit, est hominum vivorum, & mortuorum Dominus [...]* ("Doctor and first minister of the emperor, i.e. the Christian *gelao* Xu in his short and famous book *Pi wang*, says as follows: *Shangdi* is the lord of the living and dead men [...];" Noël 1711: 153). The booklet, also quoted later in the work by Noël (Noël 1711: 156–157), is indicated as *Pie Vam*, another romanisation of *Pi wang*; Xu Guangqi is referred

to by his surname, *Siu*, and the epithet *Colaus.* The latter is a romanisation to indicate *gelao* 閣老, a semi-official title (Golvers 1995: 337) referring to the Grand Secretary; Xu was indeed appointed with this position in 1632. As for the terminological controversy referred to by Noël, it is worth noting that the contrary is true: the term *Shangdi* is used only once in *Pi wang*, while *Tianzhu* can be found six times.

The third reference is included in the librarian collection of the German sinologist Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer (also known as Theophilus Siegfried Bayer, Ba Yier 巴伊爾, 1694–1738); the reference should be dated after 1734, given the mention of this date in the passage quoted below, and before 1738, the year he passed away. In one of the volumes of the collection, after the "contemporary romanisation" of the title, on the cover a note handwritten by Bayer reads:

> *De hoc libro sic. RR.PP. Kögler et Pereira A.1734 vii Kal. Sextiles. Liber contra sectas idolatricas singillatim disputans, typus expressus non habetur, manuscripta autem eius exampla perrara exstant: provide aliud eiusdem fere? Argumenti volume substituimas titulo pie vam a sin Paulo, qui sub dynasta Mim [Ming] inter supremos Imperii Ministres claruit, sublimi stylo scriptam et ab literatis magnii aestimatum. Ly Pauli imaginem vide in Kircheri China Illustrata ad. Pag. 114'. 3.* Signed at foot: "T.S Bayeri" (Weston 2018: 201–202)

> About this book, the reverend fathers Kögler and Pereira seven days before the Kalends of Sextilis [stated] as follows. The book argues against the idolatrous sects, one by one. It does not have the publishing house printed; other examples of manuscripts of this are very rare; therefore, we propose another volume of the same argument, with the title *Pi wang*, by Paulus Xu, who was famous among the supreme ministers of the Empire under the Ming dynasty, written in a sublime style and estimated by great scholars. You can see a picture of him in *China Illustrata* by Kircher, p. 114 [...]

In this case, *sin Paulo* is probably a mistaken interpretation of Bayer's handwritten note; it should read as *Siu Paulo,* a reference to *Paul Xu,* the baptismal name of Xu Guangqi. The *pie vam* is indicated as composed by him and was appreciated by the officials of the time. Other than attributing the text explicitly to Xu Guangqi, the mention of the Ming dynasty would put the compilation of *Pi wang* before its end date, in 1644.

The following and final reference ascribing *Pi wang* to Xu Guangqi is the *Miscellanea Berolinensia*, a text totalling seven volumes, published by the Prussian Academy of Sciences between 1710 and 1744. In volume five, we read a letter from *R. P. Ignatii Kögler & R. P. Andræ Pereyræ,* namely the German Jesuit Ignatius Kegler (also spelled as Ignaz Kögler, Dai Jinxian 戴進賢, 1680–1746) and the Portuguese Jesuit André Pereira (Xu Maode 徐懋德, 1689–1743), sent from Beijing in 1734 to Bayer; the three are the same people mentioned in the work before. The letter reads:

> *Liber contra sectas idololatricas sigillatim disputans, typis expressus non habetur: manuscripta autem eius exempla perrara exstant. Proinde aliud eiusdem fere argumenti volumen substituimus, titulo* Pie vam *a Doctore* Siu Paulo, *qui sub dynastia* Mim *inter Supremos Imperii Ministros claruit, sublimi stylo conscriptum; & ab literatis magni æstimatum* (Bayer 1737: 192)

> This book argues against the idolatrous sects, one by one; it does not have the publishing house printed; other examples of manuscripts of this are very rare. Therefore, we propose another volume of the same argument, with the title *Pi wang*, by Paulus Xu, who was famous among the supreme ministers of the Empire under the Ming dynasty, written in a sublime style and estimated by great scholars [...]

As evidenced in a comparison of the last two passages, they include almost the same comment, apart from a further reference in the former to a lithography of Xu Guangqi depicted together with Matteo Ricci, included in *China Illustrata* (Kircher 1667: 114).

Finally, it should be added that the same attribution to Xu Guangqi can clearly also be found in many works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, epitomised in "Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period." In the entry composed by J. C. Yang (Yang Rujin 楊汝金, exact dates unknown), it is reported that Xu Guangqi retired to Tianjin due to illness and "wrote a number of articles, such as 闢釋氏諸妄 *P'i Shih-shih chu-wang* (commonly known as *P'i-wang*), 1 *chüan*, a short treatise denouncing Buddhism" (Hummel 1943: 317).

On the other hand, other sources did not mention the author or indirectly questioned the attribution to Xu Guangqi. An example of the first case is the catalogue of manuscripts of the French Bibliothèque du Roi. Among the list of *Libri Sinici, ex Missionariorum Extraneorum Bibliotheca in Regiam Bibliothecam illati anno 1720. Cœtu omni volente atque ad voluntatem Regiam sese libenter adjungente* ("Chinese books, brought from the library of external missionaries to the royal library. With the consent of the entire assembly and the pleasure of the King"), number 129 is described as *Pie vam, id est, falsitas contradictionis, seu aperta falsitas. Tractatulus contra infernum Foistarum, quem auctor omnibus modis exagitat, quoad durationem, quoad locum, &c., Volumen 1* ("*Pi wang*, i.e., arguments against falsities, or blatant falsities. A small booklet against the Buddhist hell, that the author attacks in all manners, regarding duration, place, etc. One volume;" *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecæ regiæ: tomus primus* 1739: 410). In this case, *Pi wang* is listed among the books moved to the library in 1720, and is described as a book opposing the Buddhist version of hell, which the author tries to confute with regard to various aspects. In the catalogue, therefore, the book is not explicitly attributed to Xu Guangqi. It is probable that in this case, contrary to the sources consulted above, the compiler of the catalogue was not an expert of missions in China or Chinese studies and did not know the attribution—either to Xu Guangqi or not—simply listing *Pi wang* as one of the texts of the Bibliothèque du Roi.

A source that directly questions the authorship of Xu Guangqi is a letter written by the Jesuit Francisco Gayosso (Hong Duliang 洪度亮, 1647–1702) to his Flemish fellow Ferdinand Verbiest (Nan Huairen 南懷仁, 1623–1688), dated November 23rd, 1683.[7] Addressing the problem of some Chinese rites for Christians, he lists a series of arguments trying to make the position of Jesuits more acceptable from a doctrinal perspective. One of the reasons concerns the offerings to the dead, dealt with in the second and fourth sections of *Pi wang*. As Gayosso states:

> *Sed nec obstat quod in illo libello, a nostris scripto, qui titolo praenotatur P'ie vam refellitur usus cremandi papyros, quia ibi tantum asseritur quod cremare papyros in honorem defunctorum sit ritus vanus et futilis* (Golvers 2017: 512–13)
>
> However, not even the fact that in that booklet titled *Pi wang*, written by one of ours, the practice of burning papers is confuted, represents a hindrance, since in the text it is only stated that burning papers in honour of the dead is a vain and futile rite)

He is therefore trying to demonstrate that, according to a book written *a nostris*, the burning of paper merely does not provide any benefit for the souls, though it is not a despicable practice as to be considered evil. The booklet referred to is exactly *Pi wang*; as affirmed in secondary literature, this letter by Gayosso might imply that its author is a Jesuit (Dudink 2011: 296). However, notwithstanding the question of the reliability of Gayosso's words compared to other primary sources—we can also reasonably suppose that he could have wrongly attributed *Pi wang* to one of his Jesuit fellows, perhaps in good faith—the plural of "nostris" might infer a co-authorship as well (Golvers 2017: 512, fn. 1500), not excluding the participation of Xu Guangqi.

To sum up, all the analysed passages, except two, attribute *Pi wang* exclusively to Xu Guangqi; it should be noted that they were composed by insiders or those with knowledge of relations between Chinese converts and Western missionaries, which represented the background of the *Pi wang*. Only the second to last document neglects all hints to the author's identity; this was instead composed by one or more "generalists." Of course, the attribution by a number of secondary sources to Xu Guangqi's brush is significant, but not a diriment element in this debated topic. If the attribution is incorrect, it is possible that the error was committed without any textual verification by their authors. However, most of these sources had never been highlighted before in the debate about *Pi wang*. To provide further clues, in the next section I consider two terminological aspects that may cast a brighter light on the topic.

[7] Pointed out also in Dudink (2001a: 122–123).

4. Quotation of earlier sources: a new key for the attribution of *Pi wang*?

Even though the above works bring new perspectives on the question of who composed *Pi wang*, they are not sufficient to determine which option is more plausible. Therefore, I would like to focus on two pieces of internal textual information that can provide new keys to clarify the attribution issue of *Pi wang*.

The first can be read in the section on "the absurdity of burning joss paper," *shao zhi zhi wang* 燒紙之妄. The author of *Pi wang* disproves the habit of burning joss paper as offerings to the dead; since the paper was a material traditionally considered to be invented by the official Cai Lun 蔡倫 (ca. 61–121), it could not have been used before Cai Lun was born. Analogously, Tai Gong 太公, a nobleman who lived around the 11th century BCE and was also known as Zhou Gong Dan 周公旦, established a "system for managing money." Therefore, according to the author of *Pi wang*, before him, money did not exist.[8] These historical figures are mentioned to prove that it would be religiously immoral and illogical to consider that burning paper money only started from a certain period of time—this would discriminate against all souls born before that date. As already seen in section 2, the strategy of logical reasoning is indeed one of the main stylistic features of *Pi wang*.

However, what is important to note here is that the "system for managing money" in the passage above is a translation of *jiufu yuan fa* 九府圜法, which in the original text is instead reported as *jiufu quan fa* 九府泉法. Based on manual textual research and the use of *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 ("Database of Chinese classic ancient books"), the latter variant of the expression appears exclusively—regardless of before or after the presumed date of compilation of *Pi wang*—in the *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Compendium of materia medica), written by Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–1593) in 1578.

This factor can represent an important temporal indication that could be applied to other expressions and terms as well. In fact, Xu Guangqi was the author of an encyclopaedic treatise known as *Nongzheng quanshu* 農政全書 ("A compendium on the administration of agriculture"). The latter was revised and to some extent rearranged after Xu's death by a group of scholars, to be published only in 1639; it can be therefore considered "in a sense, a group enterprise" (Bray and Métailié 2001: 323). Nonetheless, it was based on a draft by Xu, and many historians consider *Nongzheng quanshu* as Xu's greatest achievement (Bray and Métailié 2001: 322–323). In any case, secondary literature has already demonstrated that almost half of the *Nongzheng quanshu* "contains up-to-date knowledge from Ming times such as *Bencao Gangmu* [...]" (Deng 1993: 86) and other texts as well. It is plausible, therefore, to

[8] The original passage reads: "太公造九府泉法，則周以前並無錢矣."

suppose that if Xu Guangqi is the author of *Pi wang*, he might have used the expression *jiufu quan fa* 九府泉法 in the latter, also thanks to his lengthy experience in arranging materials from the *Bencao gangmu* for his *Nongzheng quanshu*. In case he was not, it is still possible to advance the hypothesis that the other compilers of *Nongzheng quanshu* adopted this term based on Xu Guangqi's draft. Of course, we can also speculate that it was one of the editors of *Nongzheng quanshu* who used these characters autonomously, but that is a rather low probability, considering that the only other occurrence is in *Pi wang*.

A second term considered here is the Chinese phonemic loan in *Pi wang* indicating Lucifer, *lujifuer* 路祭弗爾.[9] The latter is a peculiar heterograph of *lujifuer* 路濟弗爾, and can be found in only one work in the time frame considered in this article:[10] *Tianzhu shengjiao shilu* 天主聖教實錄 ("Veritable record of the holy doctrine of the Lord of Heaven"), composed by the Italian Jesuit missionary Michele Ruggieri (Luo Mingjian 羅明堅, 1543–1607) in 1584. The latter reads: [...]有一位總管天神，名曰：『路祭弗爾』，甚是聰明美絕，尤異於眾天神 ("[...] there was an angel who supervised, named 'Lucifer.' He was extremely clever and handsome, and particularly different from all the other angels").[11] It should be noted that this is a later version, published around 1640[12] and stored in the Archive of The Society of Jesus, Jap. Sin. I-54, f. 13A, of the original text. The latter, titled *Xinbian Xizhuguo tianzhu shilu* 新編西竺國天主實錄, Jap. Sin. I-189, f. 16A, analogously stored in ARSI, reports instead: [...]有一位楞管天人，名曰：『嚕只咈囉』，甚是聰明美貌，尤異於眾天人. The phonemic loan to indicate Lucifer here, therefore, is *luzhifuluo* 嚕只咈囉. which is different and appears to be based on a 'Cantonese' pronunciation, more so than *lujifuer* 路祭弗爾; *Xinbian Xizhuguo tianzhu shilu* was indeed published for the first time in Guangzhou. *Lujifuer* 路祭弗爾, therefore, was added in place of *luzhifuluo* 嚕只咈囉 at a later stage by the Portuguese revisers Emmanuel Diaz, Gaspard Ferreira (Fei Qiguan 費奇觀, 1571–1649), João Monteiro (Meng Ruwang 孟儒望, 1602–1648) and Francisco Furtado (Fu Fanji 傅泛際, 1589–1653).

[9] This transcription is particularly rare and is not listed in Ke (2017: 67–76).

[10] Other than *Pi wang* and the text analysed in this paragraph, it can be later found only in juan 24 of *Chun Changzi zhi yu* 純常子枝語 ("Notes by Chun Changzi"), by the Qing Chinese scholar Wen Tingshi 文廷式 (1856–1904); see the reprint Wen (1969: 1383).

[11] The punctuation is added by the author of this article. The same transcription is found in the fourth juan, f. 1A, of *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 ("Direct explanation of the Bible") by the Portuguese Jesuit Emmanuel Diaz (Yang Manuo 陽瑪諾, 1574–1659), stored in Fonds Chinois of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, 6722, published in 1739 by Lingbao tang 領報堂: "魔首謂之路祭弗爾。譯言待光" (The head of demons is Lucifer, whose meaning is "bearer of light"). However, since *Shengjing zhijie* was first printed in 1642 and its preface is dated 1636, it could not be consulted by Xu Guangqi.

[12] As indicated in Wang (2016: 81–90). See also Gernet (1979: 407–416).

Therefore, analogously to the first lexicological example presented in this section, the author may have consulted *Tianzhu shengjiao shilu*, adopting its peculiar transcription of Lucifer. If we assume that the author of *Pi wang* was Xu Guangqi, such a hypothesis might be encouraged by Xu Guangqi's personal connection with Matteo Ricci and other missionaries, who may have provided a copy of the text. In fact, Xu met a Jesuit for the first time in 1595 (Dudink 2001b: 401), so he would not have been able to converse in person with Ruggieri, who left China for good in 1588 (Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1149). This factor alone means we cannot infer with certainty that *Pi wang* was composed by Xu Guangqi; if we contemplate the theory that a Jesuit missionary wrote it, it is analogously possible that the latter consulted the work by Ruggieri. However, considering all the factors analysed thus far, the phonemic loan can be viewed as an additional factor to take into account for further consideration in this dispute on the attribution of *Pi wang* to Xu Guangqi.

5. Indirect references and possible connections

In order to get a better outlook on the attribution of *Pi wang*, I finally examine other general references to Xu Guangqi, which might help better put his work in the historical and cultural context presented, and advance some hypotheses.

The first reference to Xu Guangqi consulted comes from the work by the Italian Jesuit Daniello Bartoli (Ba Duli 巴笃里, 1608–1685). Discussing the moral works printed by Matteo Ricci, a mention of Xu Guangqi can be read, but not of *Pi wang*. Other than the *Libro dell'amicitia* ("Book on Friendship;" Bartoli 1663: 522) or *Jiaoyou lun* 交友論, Bartoli mentions *Le Venticinque parole* ("Twenty-five words") (Bartoli 1663: 522), namely the text translated in Chinese by Ricci as *Ershiwu yan* 二十五言, to which "Fummocam" added a preface. The latter is a reference to Feng Yingjing 馮應京 (1555–1606), a famous scholar and official of the province of Huguang 湖廣. "Fummocam" is a romanisation of his surname, Feng, and of his courtesy name, Mugang 慕岡; he was a very close friend of Ricci (Hsia 2010: 260) and *Governava la Provincia d'Huquan in ufficio di supremo Giudice criminale* ("he governed the province of Huguang as a judge;" Bartoli 1663: 380). Xu Guangqi is mentioned in this respect as he added a postface to the *Ershiwu yan*, a *maraviglioso discorso, in commendation della legge nostra* ("very brilliant praise of our doctrine;" Bartoli 1663: 522–523). It is therefore not surprising that Xu Guangqi, irrespective of the doubt of the authorship of *Pi wang*, was considered to be a champion of Christianity, not necessarily against the Buddhist religion, as there is almost no trace of anti-Buddhism in this postface. Being renowned among Western Christian missionaries for this might have also reinforced the attribution of *Pi wang* to his brush, if we accept the theory that he was not the composer.

Such conviction could also be reinforced by another statement attributed to him, reported by the Italian Jesuit missionary Prospero Intorcetta (Yin Duoze 殷鐸澤, 1625–1696) as *Pu ju; çive fe.*[13] The latter is a transcription of *bu ru jue fo* 補儒絕佛 , "supplement Confucianism and refuse Buddhism;" its creation is attributed precisely to Xu Guangqi.[14] In Torcetta's text, it is indicated in the *proemialis declaratio* as a *Laconismo [...] & voce & scripto* ("laconism [...] both in written and oral form"). In the famous *Confucius sinarum philosophus*, therefore, Intorcetta affirms that Xu Guangqi stated his refusal of Buddhism and the integration of Confucian values both orally and in writing.

Whether *Pu ju; çive fe* is a reference to *Pi wang* cannot be stated with certainty, but it is clear that the theory expressed in these four Chinese characters is promoted in the entire *Pi wang*. Other than the quotations from various Confucian classics throughout the first eight sections, it is particularly in the last and ninth one, *bian bu feng zuxian shuo* ("confuting the theory of ancestors who are not venerated") that more stress is put on the purest Confucian values, particularly filial piety: 故父母生則養，盡志盡物；死則事，如生如存。斯為孝敬 ("For this reason, while the father and mother are still alive, they should be raised, with all the will and means.[15] Serve them also once they are gone, as though they are alive and living: this is a demonstration of filial piety").

As already mentioned, however, this last section of *Pi wang* is considered the most controversial and perhaps was added by a missionary (Dudink 2011: 301), not by Xu Guangqi, or the author of the text. It is true that the strategy of embracing Confucianism to better adapt to the need of spreading Christianity was headed exactly by Xu Guangqi (Mungello 2019: 16), who was familiar with many influential Catholic missionaries to China. This method is represented in *Pi wang* by the examples quoted in section 2 of this article, and by the adaptation of Chinese canonical texts to Christian precepts. This is exemplified in the closing line of the section of *Pi wang* devoted to the refutation of *saṃsāra,* where the author states that "[only] invocations of the Lord of Heaven 'Do good and you will be rewarded' and 'Always act properly so that happiness will live after you' should be recited [...]" (「作善降祥」，「積善餘慶」，此天主咒當持 [...]). Both sayings are still used in contemporary Chinese and are adaptations, respectively, from the *Shangshu* 尚書, or "Book of documents" (作善降之百祥，作不善降之百殃: "Do good and you will receive good fortune, do harm and you will get

[13] Intorcetta (1687: xiii); the alleged quotation was taken up in later texts, such as Brancati (1700: 275).

[14] Mungello (2001: 39-40). According to Meynard (2001: 22, fn. 10), the attribution by Intorcetta of this passage to Xu Guangqi was due to a wrong interpretation by the Portuguese missionary João Monteiro in his *Tianxue lüeyi* 天學略義 ("Outline of heavenly studies").

[15] As pointed out in Tola (2020: 269), the passage is adapted from the *Liji* 禮記, *jitong* 祭統 section: "外則盡物，內則盡志" ("From outside all means are exhausted, inside, all the will is employed").

misfortune"), while the second derives from *Zhouyi* 周易, or "Book of changes," also known as *Yijing* 易經, hexagram *kun* 坤 (積善之家，必有餘慶: "in the families that accumulate good deeds, there will inevitably be benefits for posterity"). It is plausible, therefore, that if this last section of *Pi wang* was actually added by missionaries and not Xu Guangqi, the former might have been indirectly inspired by the authoritative heritage of the latter, particularly the practice of "supplementing Confucianism and refusing Buddhism," as well as the adaptation of the first to the dogmas of the Christian religion.

Finally, I would like to put forward a hypothesis that needs further investigation. It is possible that when composing the structure, the author of *Pi wang* was inspired by a work by Matteo Ricci, the *Ji ren shi pian* 畸人十篇 ("Ten chapters of a bizarre man"). The latter is indeed divided into ten paradoxes, one section more than *Pi wang*, or two when considering the addition of the last one at a later phase. Even if the former is supposed to be a dialogue, the structure is closer to a structured reasoning for sustaining the ideas of Christianity (Song 2019: 58–61), similarly to the rhetorical organisation of *Pi wang*. Some of the contents of *Ji ren shi pian* also overlap with those of *Pi wang*, such as the discussion of the concept of *liu dao* 六道 ("six paths or realms of Buddhism"). For example, in chapter eight, Ricci rhetorically asks, "How can one dismiss the true theory of Paradise and Hell for the false theory of *saṃsāra*?" (豈可以輪回六道之虛說，輒廢天堂、地獄之實論乎?), echoing passages from the sixth section of *Pi wang*. Other than this, in *Ji ren shi pian* only six Chinese scholars in total are quoted (Song 2019, 61); among them, Xu Guangqi is mentioned in one dialogue, particularly in paradoxes three and four, even if the subject was not Buddhism. Therefore, it is plausible that Xu Guangqi read the text and was inspired by Matteo Ricci's work for his *Pi wang*; further investigation might cast a brighter light on this aspect as well.

6. Conclusions

The attribution of *Pi wang* is a complicated issue, mixing historical, cultural, textual, and linguistic factors, all of which should be taken into account to better point out research perspectives and hopefully find a concrete solution. Even though it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion, based on the multifaceted factors presented and examined in this article, the attribution of *Pi wang* to Xu Guangqi cannot be considered wrong from a linguistic perspective, with the exception of its last section. On the other hand, if Xu Guangqi did not compose *Pi wang*, as indicated by other research mentioned, it was still intimately inspired by his tradition of "cultural cross-pollination" (Mungello 2019: 16) of Confucian and Christian elements, which influenced so many Christian missionaries, and maybe the real author of *Pi wang*. We should remember that in most cases works such as the one

described here were by definition the result of the cooperation between Western missionaries and Chinese converts. Defining their respective boundaries is not an easy task, also considering that Jesuits themselves at times needed to modify contents for obtaining the *imprimatur*. On the other hand, Xu Guangqi was a high-level official. While the attribution to him could be determined by his prestige, the contrary can also be considered—that is, *Pi wang* was perhaps not accredited to his brush due to problems in the terminology used which, as we all know, was particularly sensitive when it came to religious content. In any case, the hypotheses, sources, and lexicological questions presented in this article can better integrate the few relevant studies conducted and point to new research paths to be further explored.

In fact, the information discussed above indicates that one of the ways to reach an even clearer conclusion on the topic is to expand the research to other texts, particularly secondary sources published right after *Pi wang,* and most of all, to other linguistic peculiarities that can provide new insights. As evidenced in section 4 of this article, the lexicological features of the text can indeed better contribute to, and perhaps definitively disentangle, the attribution of *Pi wang,* together with the textual research of section 3. All this, combined with previous studies, possible future archival and textual discoveries, and the analysis of the personal connections between some of the actors mentioned, might finally bring a positive conclusion to this debate, casting a brighter light on cross-cultural interactions between Chinese converts and Western missionaries.

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