

Article

“Simulating Images” (*xiangxiang* 像象): Qian Yiben’s Reconstruction of Cosmic Principle and Human Transcendence in the *Yijing*

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between “image” (*xiang* 象) and “simulation” (*xiang2* 像) in Qian Yiben’s theory of “simulating images” (*xiangxiang* 像象) and argues that this relationship constitutes a reconstruction of how cosmic principle (*li* 理) becomes manifested in human affairs. The central problem this study addresses is the precise meaning of “image” and “simulation” in Qian Yiben’s thought: what does it mean for “images” to “simulate,” and how does this bridge the gap between the hidden *dao* of Heaven and Earth and human affairs? Qian opposes both the view of taking “images” as “imaginable approximation,” and “principles abstract truths to be grasped apart from images.” Instead, he insists that “images” and “simulation” form a unity: “images” refer to simulations, and “simulation” is the process by which principles are embodied in human life. Therefore, Qian Yiben proposes his theory of “simulating images” on three interconnected perspectives. Cosmologically, “images” are generated throughout the interaction of *yin* and *yang* and realized through the human heart/mind (*xin* 心). From the perspective of cultivation, “knowing images as simulations” guides the practitioner from observation to profound, inscrutable and wondrous insight as divinities. Practically, “simulation” culminates in the practitioner’s active embodiment of the *dao* through participation in the three powers (*sancai* 三才, Heaven, Earth, Humanity); one “establishes the *dao* through oneself” (*dao zi wo er li* 道自我而立), thereby participating in the ceaseless creation and generation of the cosmos. Qian’s theory thereby reveals the religious and metaphysical dimensions of late-Ming *Yijing* scholarship.

Keywords: Qian Yiben; *Yijing*; image (*xiang*); simulation (*xiang2*); cosmic principle; three powers



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1. Introduction

The central problem this paper addresses is the precise relationship between “image” (*xiang* 象) and “simulation” (*xiang* 像)¹ in Qian Yiben’s *Yijing* thought and how this relationship reconfigures the interconnected issues of image, principle (*li*), and human action. Although Qian’s works are recognized as significant in late-Ming *Yijing* scholarship, the exact meaning of his concept of “simulating images” (*xiangxiang* 像象)² remains ambiguous. What does it mean for images to “simulate”? How does this simulation enable images to bridge the cosmic *dao* and concrete human affairs?

This paper argues that Qian Yiben’s theory of “simulating images” is not a mere interpretive tool but a cosmological ground that unites image and principle through human

action. “Simulation” is not an approximation or imaginative construct; rather, it is the active embodiment of the *dao* of the three powers (Heaven, Earth, Humanity) within the practitioner. By establishing that “images” and “simulation” form an inseparable unity, Qian Yiben provides a solution to the tension of discussion between image-number and principle-oriented approaches: one cannot discuss principle apart from image, nor image apart from principle, because images are already simulations, and simulation is the very process by which principles become manifest in human life.

The paper thereby proceeds in three sections. First, it clarifies the generation of images, showing that images are not arbitrary symbols but are intrinsically linked to simulation, and that Qian Yiben rejects the view of simulation as mere approximation. Second, it unpacks the concrete methodological implications of “knowing images as simulations,” demonstrating how this principle guides the interpretation of hexagram and line relationships. Third, it examines how “simulation” illuminates principles and directs ethical action, revealing that the ultimate purpose of the *Yijing* is to teach people to “act in accord with the *dao*” through the embodiment of the three powers. In this way, the study clarifies the philosophical structure of Qian’s image theory and its significance for understanding late-Ming *Yijing* thought.

Qian Yiben 錢一本 (1539–1610), courtesy name Qixin 啟新, known to scholars as Mr. Qixin, was a native of Wujin 武進 (present-day Changzhou, Jiangsu). In the 11th year of the Wanli era (1583), he earned the title of *jinshi* 進士 (a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations). After that, he served as a Supervising Censor for Fujian Circuit (*fu jian dao jian cha yu shi* 福建道監察御史). His life and deeds are recorded in the *History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Mingshi* 明史) and the *Record of Ming Confucian Scholars* (*Mingru xue’an* 明儒學案) (Huang 1985)³. He devoted himself to the study of the classics and history, exploring mostly the works of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, the Cheng brothers 二程, Zhang Zai 張載, and Zhu Xi 朱熹, with a particular focus on the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*, *I Ching*). He authored several works on the *Yijing*, among which *Xiangxiang Guanjian* 像象管見 (*A modest view of images and simulations*) in nine volumes, the fruit of twenty years of study, is his representative interpretive work. He also wrote *Xiangchao* 象抄 (*Transcription excerpts on images*) to elucidate the diagrammatic interpretations of the *Yijing*, and *Sisheng Yixin Lu* 四聖一心錄 (*Record of the one mind of the four sages*), which primarily discusses the philosophical principles. The distinguishing feature of Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing* is interpreting the *Yijing*⁴ through images and expounding principles through images.

Scholarly attention to Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing*⁵ has been limited. Zhang Kewei 張克偉 conducted an in-depth study of the structure of Qian Yiben’s system of images in the *Yijing* and explored the philosophical and logical relationship between the *Yijing* and its images (*xiang* 象) (Zhang 1996). Ma Shibiao 馬士彪 argued that Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing* aims to reveal the way of thorough connection between the Heaven and Humanity, reflecting the dual influence of the School of Principle (*lixue* 理學) and the School of Mind (*xinxue* 心學) (Ma 2016). Xu Kai 徐凱 provided a brief analysis of Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing* (K. Xu 2014). Yang Ziping 楊自平 examined Qian Yiben’s philosophy and investigated his interpretive practice, claiming and revealing that Qian’s study of the *Yijing* offers features and value that are distinctive from other studies of the *Yijing* (Yang 2023). Guo Yu 郭彥 briefly introduced Qian Yiben’s *Xiangchao* (Guo 2007). These achievements have pioneered the study of Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing* and deserve recognition. Nevertheless, there remains room for further research. For example, the precise meaning of “simulating” (*xiang*² 像) in Qian Yiben’s study of the *Yijing* still needs clarification.

Similarly, in Western scholarship on the *Yijing*, further *Yijing* studies focusing on images and simulations (as well as the concept of “simulating images” (*xiangxiang* 像象) to be discussed later) has received no dedicated research, although the concept of image has

drawn growing attention. Major studies, such as Richard J. Smith's *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The Yijing (I Ching, Or Classic of Changes) and Its Evolution in China*, provide comprehensive overviews of the *Yijing*'s evolution, but they treat individual Ming interpreters only in passing and also without engaging the detailed research on the development of the concepts of image and simulation (Smith 2012). Bent Nielsen systematically maps image-number (*xiangshu* 象數) terminology but limits itself to structural and cosmological dimensions, leaving aside the ethical and self-cultivational function of images in the development of the study of the *Yijing* (Nielsen 2003). Richard John Lynn's authoritative translation of Wang Bi's commentary illuminates the "image vs. meaning" paradigm but does not extend to later thinkers such as Qian Yiben (Lynn 1994). This paper, focusing on the *Xiangxiang Guanjian* and drawing on *Xiangchao* and *Sisheng Yixin Lu*, seeks to further explore Qian Yiben's thought on the images (*xiang* 象) in the *Yijing* and reveal the philosophical structure of Qian Yiben's theory, in order to present a comprehensive picture of Qian Yiben's study of the *Yijing* and thereby gain a view into the influence of the *Yijing* thoughts on scholars in the Ming dynasty.

Nevertheless, the precise philosophical relationship between image (*xiang* 象) and simulation (*xiang2* 像) in Qian Yiben's thought remains underexamined. What does it mean for images to "simulate", and how does this simulation bridge the gap between the cosmic *dao* and human affairs? More fundamentally, this paper addresses the following question: How does Qian Yiben's theory of "simulating images" (*xiangxiang* 像象) reconfigure the relationship between image, principle, and human action? By answering this question, the paper clarifies the philosophical structure of Qian Yiben's image theory, reveals his critique of Lai Zhide's view of simulation, and situates his thought within the late-Ming synthesis of image-number and principle-oriented approaches to the *Yijing*.

2. The Generation of Images (*xiang* 象): Establishing Images to Fully Express the Meaning

Having identified the need to clarify the meaning of "simulation" (*xiang2* 像) in Qian Yiben's *Yijing* thought, this section turns to the foundational concept of "image" (*xiang* 象) itself. It first outlines the traditional understanding of images in the *Yijing* and then examines how Qian Yiben distinguishes his view from other scholars. The central claim introduced here is that for Qian Yiben, images are not arbitrary symbols but are intrinsically linked to simulation (*xiang* 像), which enables images to fully express meaning. Thus, this section establishes the groundwork for understanding how images generate meaning and why simulation is inseparable from them.

The *Yijing* as a book takes images (*xiang* 象) as its foundation. The *Xici* 繫辭 contains many discussions of images. For example, "The *Yi* (change, the principle of the *Yijing*) is about images" (*yi zhe, xiang ye* 易者，象也), "When the eight trigrams were formed and arrayed, images were in between" (*ba gua cheng lie, xiang zai qi zhong yi* 八卦成列，象在其中矣), "Therefore, as for the images, the sages perceived the subtlest mysteries of all things under Heaven, then sketched them in their forms and shapes, representing the proper nature of things. Hence, they are called images" (*shi gu fu xiang, sheng ren you yi jian tian xia zhi ze, er ni zhu qi xing rong, xiang qi wu yi, gu wei zhi xiang* 是故夫象，聖人有以見天下之賾，而擬諸其形容，象其物宜，故謂之象), "Images are likenesses and simulating of these things" (*xiang ye zhe, xiang ci zhe ye* 象也者，像此者也) and "The sages established the hexagrams, observed the images, and attached words as *Xici* 系辭 to clarify good fortune and misfortune" (*sheng ren she gua guan xiang, xi ci yan er ming ji xiong* 聖人設卦觀象，繫辭焉而明吉凶).

The term *xiang* originally refers to the phenomena of the natural world, including astronomical observation and geographical phenomena. The images (*xiang* 象) spoken

of in the *Yijing* are representations and simulations of natural phenomena. Throughout the history of *Yijing* scholarship, scholars have attached great importance to the study of images. Liu Dajun 劉大鈞 has pointed out:

“Images were an extremely important part of the study of the *Yijing* by previous scholars. From the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, through the Han and Tang dynasties, to the Ming and Qing dynasties, using the images in the *Yijing* to interpret the classical text was a major current in the two-thousand-year-long river of the *Yijing* scholarship” (*xiang shi qian ren yan jiu zhou yi shi ji qi zhong yao bu fen. zi chun qiu zhan guo qi, jing han tang zhi ming qing zhi, yi yi xiang jie shi jing wen, yi zhi shi liang qian duo nian lai yi xue zhang he zhong de yi zhi zhu liu* “象”是前人研究《周易》時極其重要部分。自春秋戰國起，經漢唐至明清止，以《易》象解釋經文，一直是兩千多年來《易》學長河中的一支主流). (Liu 2016)

Liu reveals the fact that the ancient text of the *Yijing* was produced by observing images and attaching words to them. Thus, Images should refer to a fundamental category in the study of the *Yijing*; it is a subject that cannot be avoided in discussion. After the *Yizhuan* 易傳 (Ten Wings) was compiled, there were new developments in the understanding of images in the *Yijing*, especially in the *Shuogua* 說卦傳, which enriched the meaning of images. Thus, the study of images should be referred to as a main component of the study of the *Yijing*. Correspondingly, the relationship between image-number (*xiangshu* 象數) and philosophical meaning and principles (*yili* 義理) becomes a fundamental issue that every *Yijing* scholar must address when interpreting the classical and commentarial texts of the *Yijing*. The different ways of handling this issue reflect a scholar’s approach to studying the *Yijing*. Some scholars emphasize images (*xiang* 象), some emphasize philosophical meanings, and some affirm that the images and philosophical meanings interpenetrate each other.

Since the Han dynasty, the study of the *Yijing* emphasizing image-number flourished. To interpret the classical text (*Zhouyi* proper) in the *Yijing*, scholars built up theories based on the *Shuogua Zhuan*, generated complex images from basic images, and developed increasingly complex methods to interpret images, including interlocking hexagrams (*huti* 互體), transformation and change of hexagram (*guabian* 卦變), *najia* 納甲, eight palaces of triagrams (*bagong* 八宮), five elements (*wuxing* 五行), *yaochen* 爻辰, hexagram *qi* theory (*guaqi* 卦氣), and so on. The study of images (*xiang* 象) reached its peak. At times, those interpretations fragmented the hexagram images to fit the text, leading to forced interpretations that deviated from the original meaning of the *Yijing*. This gave rise, in the Wei and Jin dynasty, to Wang Bi’s “sweeping away images” (*sao xiang* 掃象) movement with his remark: “If the meaning lies in strong vigor and firmness, why must we have a horse?” (*yi gou zai jian, he bi ma hu* 義苟在健，何必馬乎). However, Wang Bi did not completely reject the use of images. He emphasized that one should “get the meaning and forget the image” (*de yi wang xiang* 得意忘象) and “seek the image to observe the meaning” (*xun xiang yi guan yi* 尋象以觀意). In his commentary on the *Yijing* text, Wang Bi also emphasized *yin* and *yang*, distinguished line (*yao* 爻) positions, and analyzed the relationships between lines. This reveals Wang Bi still recognized the image-number principles of the *Yizhuan* itself.

As the study of the *Yijing* developed into the Song dynasty, Song scholars emphasized the elucidation of philosophical meaning and principles while not neglecting the development of the studies of images. Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, Hu Yuan 胡瑗, Liu Mu 劉牧, Shao Yong 邵雍, Zhu Xi 朱熹, Zhu Zhen 朱震, Cai Yuanding 蔡元定, Lin Zhi 林至, Shui Yuquan 稅與權, Zhu Jian 朱鑒, Dong Kai 董楷, Hu Fangping 胡方平, Zhu Yuansheng 朱元升, Ding Yidong 丁易東, and others made significant contributions to the studies of image-number in the *Yijing*. These researchers paid greater attention to the value and meaning of images. Cheng Yi 程頤 opposed the convoluted image-number theories of

Han scholars, but he did not abandon the image-number theories in the *Yijing* classical and commentarial texts themselves. Cheng held that philosophical meaning (and principles) and images are related as “one source with two manifestations (substance and function), the dominant and the subtle are inseparable” (*ti yong yi yuan, xian wei wu jian* 體用一源，顯微無間) (Cheng and Cheng [1981] 2004) and that “principles (*li* 理) has no form, therefore it is made clear through images” (*li wu xing ye, gu yin xiang yi ming li* 理無形也，故因象以明理) (Cheng and Cheng [1981] 2004). Cheng Yi further elaborated the relationship between principles (*li* 理) and human affairs, interpreting the *Yijing* through human affairs in his book *Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan* 周易程氏傳. Zhu Xi distilled Cheng Yi’s idea of “one source with two manifestations (substance and function), the dominant and the subtle are inseparable” into the idea of the unity of principle and image as “substance and function” (*ti er yong* 體而用) and “dominant yet subtle” (*xian er wei* 顯而微). Zhu Xi composed the *Zhouyi Benyi* 周易本義, reaffirming that the *Yijing*, as a book of divination, should focus on images and divination.

By the Yuan dynasty, Hu Yigui 胡一桂, Wu Cheng 吳澄, Hu Bingwen 胡炳文, Bao Ba 保八, Yu Yan 俞琰, and others made contributions to the study of images in the *Yijing*. The study of images in the Ming dynasty largely continued the aim and characteristics of the study of images in the Song dynasty. Therefore, the study of images in the Yuan dynasty focused both on the theoretical elucidation of the concept of image and on the interpretation of philosophical meanings and principles based on images.

Qian Yiben in the late Ming dynasty was an outstanding representative of the study of images in the Ming dynasty. His work *Xiangxiang Guanjian* contains the two characters *xiang2 xiang* 像象 (simulating images), which merit careful consideration. The editors of the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 said:

“This book does not adopt the theories of Jing Fang 京房, Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽, Guan Lu 管輅, or Guo Pu 郭璞, nor does it adopt the interpretations of Chen Tuan 陳搏 or Li Zhicai 李之才. It simply seeks images through the hexagrams and lines, and illuminates human affairs through the images, hence the title *Xiangxiang Guanjian*. *Xiang* is the *dao* 道 of Heaven; “simulating” (*xiang2* 像) the images is the *dao* of integrating human affairs with Heaven” (*shi shu bu qu jing, jiao, guan, guo zhi shuo, yi bu qu chen tuan, li zhi cai zhi yi. wei ji gua yao yi qiu xiang, ji xiang yi ming ren shi, gu yue xiang xiang. xiang zhe tian dao, xiang qi xiang zhe, jin ren he tian zhi dao ye* 是書不取京、焦、管、郭之說，亦不取陳搏、李之才之義。惟即卦爻以求象，即象以明人事，故曰像象。象者天道，像其象者，盡人合天之道也). (Yong 1965)

The *Siku Quanshu* editors pointed out that the phrase *xiang2 xiang* 像象 aims to reveal the *dao* of integrating humanity with Heaven, but their explanation seems somewhat unclear.

In the “general examples” (*li lyue* 例略) of *Xiangxiang Guanjian*, Qian Yiben further explains the images. As he says:

“The *Yi* consists of images (*xiang* 象). Images are to simulate (*xiang2* 像). Images refer to the hexagram images written by the legendary sage king Fuxi. Images are also called simulating. Human beings, combining the capacities of Heaven and Earth, are fully endowed with images. If a single line is missing, one cannot be called a complete human being, nor does one resemble and simulate the image. Images are in human beings; human beings form simulations (*xiang2* 像). Fuxi established images to fully express meaning, without yet needing words. King Wen and the Duke of Zhou attached words to clarify the images: the words themselves are the images. Later generations obtained the words but lost the images: these are not the true words. They obtained the images but lost the

simulations (*xiang2* 像): these are not the true images. Only by obtaining the images through the words can one avoid the problem of discussing principle in a vacuum. Only by knowing that images are simulations (*xiang2* 像) can one attain the “learning of divine-like profound insight that is realized in wordless practice” (*shen ming mo cheng zhi xue* 神明默成之學). Some say, simulations (*xiang2* 像) refers to things and principles (*li* 理) that are approximate and can be imagined, not truly existing events or principles. Others say, the *Yi* does not contain these events or these principles; it only contains these images. Both of these views, along with the approach that discusses image apart from principle or principle apart from image, and the approach that approximates the image but still does not truly understand simulations (*xiang2* 像), share the same error” (*yi zhe, xiang ye, xiang ye zhe, xiang ye. xiang wei huang xi gua hua zhi xiang, xiang you wei zhi xiang. ren jian tian di wei cai quan, xiang jie bei yu ren, yi hua you que, ji bu cheng qi wei ren, ji bu xiang qi wei xiang, xiang zai ren, ren cheng xiang ye. huang xi li xiang jin yi, bu dai you ci, wen, zhou xi ci ming xiang, ji ci ji xiang. hou shi de ci yi xiang, fei qi ci. de xiang shi xiang, fei qi xiang. fu wei you ci de xiang, er hou wu xu xuan shuo li zhi bing. zhi xiang wei xiang, er hou you shen ming mo cheng zhi xue. huo yue: xiang zhe, nai shi li zhi fang fu jin si, ke yi xiang xiang, er fei zhen you shi shi. huo you yue: yi wu ci shi, wu ci li, wei you ci xiang. ci yu yan xiang yi li, yan li yi xiang, fang fu qi xiang er reng bu zhi suo yi wei xiang zhi bi duan bing tong* 易者，象也，象也者，像也。象謂皇犧卦畫之象，象又謂之像。人兼天地為才全，象皆備於人，一畫有缺，即不成其為人，即不像其為象，象在人，人成像也。皇犧立象盡意，不待有辭，文、周繫辭明象，即辭即象。後世得辭遺象，非其辭；得象失像，非其象。夫惟由辭得象，而後無虛懸說理之病；知象為像，而後有神明默成之學。或曰：像者，乃事理之仿佛近似，可以想像，而非真有實事。或又曰：易無此事，無此理，惟有此象。此與言象遺理、言理遺象，仿佛其象而仍不知所以為像之弊端並同). (Qian 1986)

This reveals the general outline of Qian Yiben’s thought on images. First, he proposes “the words themselves are the images”, holding that the legendary sage king Fuxi 伏羲 drew hexagrams and established images to fully express meaning, and the meaning is contained within the images. King Wen and the Duke of Zhou attached words to clarify the images. In this case, images and words interpenetrate each other and form an integrated whole without separation. Second, he proposes “obtaining the images through the words”, indicating a close relationship between words and images. This both affirms the importance of images for the *Yijing* text and provides a solid foundation by suggesting the image for the elucidation of principle. Third, he proposes “knowing that images are simulations (*xiang2* 像)”. Simulations (*xiang2* 像) are manifested due to images, and principle is discussed through images, with image and principle forming a unity.

Therefore, Qian Yiben strongly opposes the view of his contemporary, the *Yijing* scholar Lai Zhide 來知德, as expressed in the *Zhouyi Jizhu* 周易集注. As Lai Zhide claimed that “Simulations (*xiang2* 像) refers to things and principles (*li* 理) that are approximate and can be imagined, not truly existing events or principles” (*xiang zhe, nai shi li zhi fang fu jin si, ke yi xiang xiang, er fei zhen you shi shi, fei zhen you qi li* 像者，乃事理之仿佛近似，可以想像，而非真有實事，非真有其理) (Lai 1986) and “the *Yi* does not contain these events or these principles; it only contains these images” (*yi wu ci shi, wu ci li, wei you ci xiang* 易無此事，無此理，惟有此象) (Lai 1986). Lai Zhide greatly valued the value and function of images, believing that after Wang Bi swept away images, the true meaning of images was buried, and scholars spoke only of principle without discussing images. Therefore, Lai Zhide proposed that the phrase “Images are to simulate (*xiang2* 像)” (*xiang ye zhe, xiang ye* 象也者，像也) in the *Yizhuan* means

“they are approximations of things and principles (*li* 理), imaginable, not truly existing events or principles” (*nai shi li zhi fang fu jin si, ke yi xiang xiang, er fei zhen you shi shi* 乃事理之仿佛近似，可以想像，而非真有實事) (Lai 1986), and held that “the *Yijing* differs from all other classics precisely in this respect” (*yi yu zhu jing bu tong, quan zai yu ci* 《易》與諸經不同，全在於此) (Lai 1986). In this sense, Lai Zhide said:

“If the *Yi* does not contain these events or these principles (*li* 理), it only contains these images. Once there are images, then principles of all scales, distances, subtlety, and crudeness, along countless pathways, are all contained within them, thus enabling it to encompass Heaven and Earth. Without images, what is spoken of is only a single principle. In this case, how could it encompass everything? Therefore, images are like a mirror. With a mirror, all things are reflected and illuminated. If one discards the mirror, it is like seeking reflection and illumination without a mirror. If one does not understand images, the *Yi* cannot be commented on” (*shi shu bu qu jing, jiao, guan, guo zhi shuo, yi bu qu chen tuan, li zhi cai zhi yi. wei ji gua yao yi qiu xiang, ji xiang yi ming ren shi, gu yue xiang xiang. xiang zhe tian dao, xiang qi xiang zhe, jin ren he tian zhi dao ye* 若《易》無此事，無此理，惟有此象而已。有象則大小、遠近、精粗、千蹊萬徑之理咸寓乎其中，方可彌綸天地。無象則所言者，止一理而已，何以彌綸？故象猶鏡也，有鏡則萬物畢照，若舍其鏡，是無鏡而索照矣，不知其象，易不可注可也). (Lai 1986)

Thus, Lai Zhide emphasized the function of simulations (*xiang* 像) in imitation and symbolization. He held that simulations are approximations of the principles (*li* 理) of human affairs. Therefore, simulations in the *Yijing* refer to imaginable imitations instead of truly existing things. This view shares similarities with that of Yu Yan 俞琰 from the Song dynasty. Yu Yan also held that images serve to represent the principles of things, and that this representation is one of “approximation.” As Yu Yan directly states: “An image is called a simulation; since it is called a simulation, it is merely an approximation of the principle” (*xiang ji xiang zhi wei, ji wei zhi xiang, ze bu guo qi li jin si er yi* 象即像之謂，既謂之像，則不過其理近似而已) (Yu 1986). The works of both Lai Zhide and Yu Yan represent the understanding regarding the relationship between image and simulation by the meaning-principle-oriented scholars (*yili xuezhe* 義理學者 scholars oriented by philosophical meaning and principles (*yili* 義理)) in the study of the *Yijing*. Unlike Yu Yan, who gave equal weight to both images and numbers, Lai Zhide built his scholarship on images, enriching and developing the study of images in order to unfold his interpretation. As Lin Zhongjun 林忠軍 has pointed out:

“Lai Zhide, with the idea of using images to contain principle, elucidated a philosophy centered on the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) or principle as ontology, penetrating Heaven and Humanity, thus distinguishing himself from Song dynasty Cheng-Zhu studies of *Yijing* and the Ming dynasty official study of *Yijing* that aimed to elucidate Cheng-Zhu *Yi* learning” (*lai zhi de yi jia xiang yu li wei li nian, chan fa le yi tai ji huo li wei ben ti, guan tong tian ren de yi li zhi xue, cong er yu song dai cheng zhu yi xue he ming dai yi chan fa cheng zhu yi xue wei zong zhi de guan xue yi xue qu bie kai lai* 來知德以假像寓理為理念，闡發了以太極或理為本體、貫通天人的義理之學，從而與宋代程朱易學和明代以闡發程朱易學為宗旨的官學易學區別開來). (Lin 2009)

Lai Zhide used the images as the foundation for interpreting principle. Qian Yiben opposed Lai Zhide’s tendency to emphasize images, holding that such a view that “discussing image apart from principle”, “discussing principle apart from image”, and “to speculate on the hexagram images while remaining unaware that the principles of human

affairs reside within them” shares the same level of error. This criticism simultaneously targets the Han dynasty image-number scholarship’s overemphasis on images.

When interpreting the *Shuogua* passage “Qian is to be Heaven, is to be the father, is to be jade, is to be metal” (*qian wei tian, wei fu, wei yu, wei jin* 乾為天，為父，為玉，為金), Qian Yiben said: “The Yi consists of images. Images are simulations. They are resemblances, not realities. To cling to images while seeking the Yi is to follow a picture in search of a horse” (*yi zhe xiang ye, xiang ye zhe, xiang ye, qi shi ye, fei zhen ye, zhi xiang yi qiu yi, an tu suo ji zhe ye* 易者象也，象也者，像也，其似也，非真也，執象以求易，按圖索驥者也) (Qian 1997). He emphasizes that images fully express meaning and holds that the many images of Qian in the *Shuogua* all conform to the meaning of pure *yang* in the Qian 乾 hexagram. One should not cling to images, but one can use images to attain recognition of principle. Interpreting the hexagram statement of Qian, Qian Yiben says:

“The Yi consists of images. Images are simulations. The six lines of Qian are the image of original nature (*xing* 性). Original nature cannot be imaged; Fuxi established Qian to image it, wishing people to transcend and awaken to their own nature beyond images and simulation” (*yi zhe xiang ye. xiang ye zhe, xiang ye. qian zhi liu hua, xing zhi xiang ye. xing bu ke xiang, fu xi li qian yi xiang zhi, yu ren chao ran zi wu qi xing yu xiang xiang zhi wai ye* 易者象也。象也者，像也。乾之六畫，性之象也。性不可象，伏羲立乾以象之，欲人超然自悟其性於象像之外也). (Qian 1997)

Qian Yiben holds that images and simulation are ways to transcend and awaken to their own original nature (*xing* 性). Moreover, he considers image and principle as one, which means that one cannot discuss principles (*li* 理) apart from image, nor image apart from principle. According to Qian Yiben, “discussing image apart from principle” and “discussing principle apart from image” refer to the biased approaches of image-number scholars who emphasize images and principle-oriented scholars who emphasize principle in the history of the study of *Yijing*. Qian Yiben opposes both views. He holds that the hexagrams use *yin* and *yang* symbols to represent things and the principles contained within them. When the *Yijing* elucidates principles (*li* 理), it must use images and numbers. Since the *yin* and *yang* lines that constitute the images are simulations of the *dao* of Heaven and Earth, they can contain inexhaustible principles. Qian Yiben further says:

“The Yi has the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), which generates the two primary forms (*liangyi* 兩儀). The sages, from the very beginning, took the two lines of Qian and Kun 坤 as the two forms of humanity, and combined the eight trigrams of Heaven and Earth, thunder and wind, water and fire, mountain and lake, as the images of humanity. They taught that human beings truly have simulations. Therefore, it is said: the eight trigrams determine good fortune and misfortune, and good fortune and misfortune generate great undertakings. Thus, the meaning of images as likenesses can be roughly seen, and apart from this, there is no other place where the subtlety of original nature (*xing* 性) and destiny (*ming* 命) can be discussed” (*fu yi you tai ji, shi sheng liang yi, sheng ren gai pi tou yi qian kun liang hua wei ren yi, he tian di, lei feng, shui huo, shan ze ba gua wei ren xiang, er jiao ren zhi shi you xiang, gu yue ba gua ding ji Xiong, ji xiong sheng da ye ye, ran ze xi-ang xiang yi zhi yi lue ke du, er xing ming jing wei she shi yi bie wu ke rong yan zhi chu yi* 夫易有太極，是生兩儀，聖人蓋劈頭以乾坤兩畫為人儀，合天地、雷風、水火、山澤八卦為人象，而教人之實有像，故曰八卦定吉凶，吉凶生大業也，然則像象義指亦略可睹，而性命精微舍是亦別無可容言之處矣). (Qian 1986)

Qian Yiben indicates that the sages, in composing the Yi 易, established hexagrams and generated lines from the two primary forms (*liangyi* 兩儀, basically *yin* and *yang*) to the

eight trigrams, matching the images of human affairs with the images of Heaven and Earth, taking images from afar and from near, embodying the *dao* of Heaven through humanly *dao*. Therefore, images, words, and principles (*li* 理) form an integrated whole without separation. Discard images, and there is no way to discuss the subtlety of original nature and destiny (*xingming* 性命). On the other hand, Qian Yiben describes how images should be observed:

“Observe the image of gain and loss and then act, good fortune and misfortune will certainly be clear. Observe the image of worry and satisfaction and then act, regret and misacts to be blamed (*jiu* 咎) will certainly be examined. Observe the image of advance and retreat and then act, change and transformation will appear. Observe the image of day and night and then act, hardness (*gang* 剛) and suppleness (*rou* 柔, softness) will be decided. Thus emulating the function of the *dao* of Heaven and making it effective: the *yin* and *yang* lines of the hexagram images, when activated, establish the ultimate of the *dao* of Heaven. Emulating the function of the *dao* of Earth: the hard (*gang* 剛) and supple (*rou* 柔) lines of the hexagram images, when activated, establish the ultimate of the *dao* of Earth. Emulating the function of the *dao* of Humanity: the lines of ‘*yang* and firmness’ (*yanggang* 陽剛) as benevolence (*ren* 仁) and ‘*yin* and suppleness’ (*yinrou* 陰柔) as righteousness (*yi* 義), when activated, establish the ultimate of the *dao* of Humanity.” (*guan de shi zhi xiang er dong, ji xiong bi ming. guan you yu zhi xiang er dong, hui lin bi shen. guan jin tui zhi xiang er dong, bian hua nai jian. guan zhou ye zhi xiang er dong, gang rou yi duan. yi xiao tian dao zhi yong, gua xiang zhi yin yang yao ye, dong ze tian dao zhi ji li yan. yi xiao di dao zhi yong, gua xiang zhi gang rou yao ye, dong ze di dao zhi ji li yan. yi xiao ren dao zhi yong, gua xiang zhi yang gang zhi ren, yin rou zhi yi zhi yao ye, dong ze ren dao zhi ji li yan* 觀得失之象而動，吉凶必明；觀憂虞之象而動，悔吝必審；觀進退之象而動，變化乃見；觀晝夜之象而動，剛柔以斷。以效天道之用，卦象之陰陽爻也，動則天道之極立焉。以效地道之用，卦象之剛柔爻也，動則地道之極立焉。以效人道之用，卦象之陽剛之仁、陰柔之義之爻也，動則人道之極立焉). (Qian 1986)

According to Qian Yiben, those who observe images, through observing the images, can understand good fortune and misfortune, regret and misacts to be blamed (*jiu* 咎), examine the changes of hardness (*gang* 剛) and suppleness (*rou* 柔), produce rich interpretations of images, and thereby emulate the functions of the *dao* of Heaven, the *dao* of Earth, and the *dao* of Humanity. Gain and loss, worry and satisfaction, advance and retreat refer to human affairs. Day and night refer to the *dao* of Heaven. The hexagram images contain the *dao* of the three powers—Heaven, Earth, Humanity. Concerning humanity (for example, ethics), human beings can observe the changes of the hexagram images and decide their actions of advance and retreat.

3. From Image (*xiang* 象) to Simulation (*xiang2* 像): The Method of “Knowing Images as Simulations”

The previous section showed that for Qian Yiben, images and simulation are inseparable, and that he opposed Lai Zhide’s view of simulation as mere approximation. This section further explores what it means to “know that images are simulations”. Qian Yiben holds that because image and principle form a unity, one can seek images through the hexagrams and lines, and through images illuminate the “learning of divine-like profound insight that is realized in wordless practice” (*shen ming mo cheng zhi xue* 神明默成之學). He develops this by reinterpreting the relationships among hexagrams and lines, such as overturning hexagrams, master lines, and the interactions of *cheng*, *cheng*, *ying*, while rejecting Wang Bi’s claim that the first and topmost lines have no fixed *yin* or *yang* position.

He also addresses the debate between the “current version” and “ancient version” of the *Yijing*, arguing that the true ancient version lies in Fuxi’s hexagrams and their simulations, not in the separation or combination of words. Thus, this section unpacks Qian Yiben’s method of “knowing images to simulate” as a concrete interpretive practice grounded in the hexagram and line texts themselves.

In Qian Yiben’s view, since image and principle are one without separation, and principle is within the image, one can seek images through the hexagrams and lines, and through images illuminate the “learning of divine-like profound insight that is realized in wordless practice” (*shen ming mo cheng zhi xue* 神明默成之學). This understanding of images in the *Yijing* is fundamental to his study.

In the “general examples” (*li lyue* 例略) of *Xiangxiang Guanjian*, Qian Yiben provides an explanation to guide the grasp of images in the *Yijing*. *Xiangxiang Guanjian* reveals two points. First, Qian Yiben was considerably influenced by Cheng Yi’s *Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan*. Second, Qian Yiben’s discussion of the theories of image-taking responds to several issues in Wang Bi’s *Zhouyi Luelie* 周易略例, extending and developing the issues in some respects, agreeing with some points and disagreeing with others. Qian Yiben highlighted and discussed his understanding of Wang Bi’s approach to the *Yijing*.

Wang Bi’s *Zhouyi Luelie* points out that “there is a governing principle, a unifying source” (*tong zhi you zong, hui zhi you yuan* 統之有宗，會之有元) (B. Wang 2012). It states that each hexagram has a governing idea (the main body of the hexagram), and among the lines, one line is the master of that hexagram. In Qian Yiben’s view, observing images does require a holistic analysis. He says:

“Heaven and Earth have closing and opening, have bending down and looking up; therefore, hexagrams have opposite aspects. The four seasons, sun and moon, alternating and shining within, and the myriad things growing, storing, and flourishing within. Therefore, lines have intermingled into mixtures. Intermingled yet not chaotic, thus, when speaking of the world’s utmost complexities, they are not to be hated. When speaking of the world’s utmost movements, they are not to be confused. In discussing the hexagram as a whole, one must look at the two overturning hexagrams, look at the inner and outer trigrams, look at all six lines together, and look at the intermingle middle lines. In discussing the master line, although it is often discussed in terms of the “ideally high and appreciated” (*zun* 尊) position, each of the two trigrams has its own master line. Some hexagrams have one line as master, some have two lines as master. One should not only take the fifth line as the “ideally high and appreciated” (*zun* 尊) line, nor exclusively take the fifth line as speaking of the *dao* of the ruler. To look at the *Yi* without obtaining the master line is to have no guiding theories at all, and all discussions will be muddled” (*tian di you he pi, you fu yang, gu gua you zheng fan. si shi ri yue cuo xing dai ming yu qi zhong, wan wu sheng zhang shou cang yu qi zhong, gu yao you za zhuan. za er bu yue, gu yan tian xia zhi zhi ze er bu ke e, yan tian xia zhi zhi dong er bu ke luan. gua lun ti, yao fan liang gua kan, yao fen nei wai kan, yao liu yao zong he kan, yao zhong yao xiang za kan. yao lun zhu, sui duo yi zun wei lun, ran liang ti zi ge you yao zhu, you liu yao yi yi wei zhu, you liu yao jian liang wei zhu, bu dan zhu wu wei zun yao, yi bu zhuan zhu wu yan jun dao, kan yi bu de zhu yao, quan wu tou nao, dou shi gu tu shuo* 天地有闔辟，有俯仰，故卦有正反。四時日月錯行代明於其中，萬物生長收藏於其中，故爻有雜撰。雜而不越，故言天下之至蹟而不可惡，言天下之至動而不可亂。卦論體，要反兩卦看，要分內外看，要六爻總合看，要中爻相雜看。爻論主，雖多以尊位論，然兩體自各有爻主，有六爻以一為主，有六爻兼兩為主，不單主

五為尊爻，亦不專主五言君道，看《易》不得主爻，全無頭腦，都是鶻突說)。(Qian 1986)

Qian Yiben holds that attention should be paid to relationships between hexagrams. “The two overturning hexagrams” (*fan liang gua* 反兩卦) refers to what Han dynasty scholars called “reversed hexagrams in pairs” (*fan dui gua* 反對卦) and “hexagrams deviating through other hexagrams” (*pang tong gua* 旁通卦). It is also what Kong Yingda in the Tang dynasty called “Either reversal or change” (*fei fu ji bian* 非覆即變) and what Lai Zhide called “the hexagram of Intertwining” (*cuo zong gua* 錯綜卦). Moreover, Qian Yiben states that one should look at the hexagram as a whole—not only the inner and outer trigrams, but with all six lines together—and also attend to the intermingled use of the middle four lines. To understand and interpret a specific hexagram, one should look at the master line. It should be noted that Qian Yiben inherited from the theory of the two trigrams as a pair from Cheng Yi’s study of the *Yijing*, not only the fifth line that serves as the master line. Instead, we can understand a hexagram by its composing trigrams. In this case, each of the upper and lower trigrams has its own master line.

Wang Bi’s *Zhouyi Luelie* also points out that “the first and topmost lines are the beginning and end of affairs thus have no fixed and determined *yin* or *yang* position” (*chu shang zhe shi shi zhi zhong shi, wu yin yang ding wei ye* 初上者是事之終始，無陰陽定位也) (B. Wang 2012). Qian Yiben opposes this view. He holds that according to the *Xici*, regarding the relationships among the six lines, one should follow the principle of “only change is shown”. The *Wenyan* of the topmost line of Qian 乾 says “noble yet do not deserved a position” (*gui er wu wei* 貴而无位); the *Xici* says that “the third and fifth lines, and the second and fourth lines, share the same function but differ in position” (*tong gong er yi wei* 同功而異位); the *Xiangzhuan* 象傳 of the topmost line of the hexagram of Xu 需 says “although not in the appropriate corresponding position, not a great loss” (*sui bu dang wei, wei da shi* 雖不當位，未大失) None of these are fixed, unchanging rules. The *Yijing* emphasizes change, as it states “Flowing through the six voids, up and down with no fixed rule” (*zhou liu liu xu, shang xia wu chang* 周流六虛，上下無常). Qian Yiben comments if there is a fixed rule that a hard (*gang* 剛) line should occupy a hard position and a supple (*rou* 柔, soft) line a supple position, then “the six voids would become six solid positions; what is above and below would be fixed and constant, and hardness (*gang* 剛) and suppleness (*rou* 柔) could not be exchanged. It would be a rigid standard with no room for change” (*liu xu ban wei liu shi, shang xia ji yi you chang, gang rou geng bu ke yi, qi wei dian yao, wu bian ke shi shen yi* 六虛板為六實，上下既宜有常，剛柔更不可易，其為典要，無變可適甚矣) (Qian 1986).

Wang Bi interprets the relationships of the interchanging nature of lines by the image of the master line. Qian Yiben also holds that analyzing the relationships among the six lines should be based on the master line while considering the middle lines in between. According to Qian Yiben’s view, a hexagram can have constancy, but lines are changing. He further indicates “whenever discussing overcoming, following, responding, one must look at the master line, and also look at what is mixed in the middle lines, what virtue is expressed, and whether the intermingle lines reaches the great balance (the optimum) or not” (*fan cheng cheng ying xu kan yao zhu, you kan zhong yao za he wu, zhuan he de, yu fu za zhuan ji bu ji* 凡乘承應須看爻主，又看中爻雜何物，撰何德，與夫雜撰及不及) (Qian 1986). In this way, one can understand the changing conditions of the six lines as described in the *Xici*: “The conflict of love and aversion gives rise to good fortune and misfortune; distance and nearness take from each other, giving rise to regret and misacts to be blamed (*jiu* 咎); truth and falsehood influence each other, giving rise to benefit and harm” (*ai e xi ang gong er ji xiong sheng, yuan jin xiang qu er hui lin sheng, qing wei xiang gan er li hai sheng* 愛惡相攻而吉凶生，遠近相取而悔吝生，情偽相感而利害生).

In summary, Qian Yiben holds that “the hexagrams in the *Yijing* have fixed images, and the words in the *Yijing* have fixed references. Lines change, but the hexagram does not change. In the images of the lines there may be change, but in the images of the hexagram there is originally no change. The lines take meaning according to the corresponding time and situations” (*yi hua you ding xiang, yi ci you ding zhi, yao bian er gua bu bian, zai yao xiang ruo you bian, zai gua xiang yuan wu bian, yi yao wei sui shi qu yi* 《易》畫有定象，《易》辭有定指，爻變而卦不變，在爻象若有變，在卦象原無變，以爻為隨時取義) (Qian 1986). Qian Yiben also states “Why are the Yi called images? The myriad things under Heaven are extremely intricate and subtle, beyond any possibility of complete exhaustion, yet there is not a single one that is detestable or loathsome. Whenever there is a thing, there must be a describable appearance that can be approximated, an appropriate thing that can be imaged. These are all things that principle necessarily contains and are naturally to be sorted out” (*yi he yi wei zhi xiang, tian xia wan wu sui zhi ze er bu ke sheng qiong, ran wu yi zhi you ke yan er e. fan you yi wu, bi you yi ge xing rong ke ni, bi you yi ge wu yi ke xiang, dou shi dao li zhong he you di shi, zi he li hui* 易何以謂之象，天下萬物雖至赜而不可勝窮，然無一之有可厭而惡。凡有一物，必有一個形容可擬，必有一個物宜可象，都是道理中含底事，自合理會) (Qian 1986). Qian Yiben focuses on interpreting the images of the *Yijing* classical and commentarial texts themselves. He believes that only by understanding such images can one illuminate the principle of the Yi.

Thus, he emphasizes and explains the theory of “overcoming, following, comparing, responding” (*cheng cheng bi ying* 乘承比應) of hexagrams in the study of the *Yijing*, arguing that it is not necessary to understand line relationships as rigidly as Han scholars prescribed. He says:

“When the Yi speaks of overcoming (*cheng* 乘), it is not that suppleness (*rou* 柔) residing above hardness (*gang* 剛) is called overcoming. When it speaks of following (*cheng*² 承), it is not that suppleness residing below hardness is called following. When it speaks of responding (*ying* 應), it is not that the first line must respond to the fourth, the second to the fifth, the third to the topmost. Whenever overcoming, following, responding, one must look at the master line, and also look at what is intermingled in the middle lines in between, what virtue is expressed, and whether the intermingle lines reaches the great balance (the optimum) or not. In all the dynamics of the *Yijing*, when two line positions are near each other but fail to attain mutual harmony, misfortune ensues, or harm arises, along with regret and misact to be blamed. The *Yijing* also does recognize the feeling of nearness, yet it addresses this only with respect to the master line. Referring to nearby lines as ‘adjacent comparing (*bi* 比) lines’ is a notion unknown to the *Yijing*” (*yi yan cheng, bu shi rou ju gang shang bian wei cheng. yan cheng, bu shi rou ju gang xia bian wei cheng, yan ying yi bu shi chu bi yu si ying, er bi yu wu ying, san bi yu shang ying. fan cheng, cheng, ying xu kan yao zhu, you kan zhong yao za he wu, zhuan he de, yu fu za zhuan ji bu ji. fan yi zhi qing, jin er bu xiang de ze xiong, huo hai zhi, hui qie lin, yi you xiang jin zhi qing, yi yu zhu yao lun. mu jin yao wei bi yao, ci yi zhi suo wu* 《易》言乘，不是柔居剛上便為乘；言承，不是柔居剛下便為承，言應亦不是初必與四應、二必與五應、三必與上應。凡乘、承、應須看爻主，又看中爻雜何物，撰何德，與夫雜撰及不及。凡易之情，近而不相得則凶，或害之，悔且吝，易有相近之情，亦於主爻論。目近爻為比爻，此易之所無。 (Qian 1986)

Regarding the different textual arrangements of the *Yijing*, Qian Yiben notes that there is the “current version of *Yijing*” put forward by Fei Zhi 費直, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, and Wang Bi, which combines the classical *Zhouyi* proper with the commentary *Yizhuan* 易傳, and the “ancient version of *Yijing*” of put forward by Lyu Dafang 呂大防, Chao Shuozhi 晁說之,

and Lyu Zuqian 呂祖謙, which separates the classical *Zhouyi* proper from the commentary *Yizhuan*. Qian Yiben provides another view:

“The *Yi* originally consisted of Fuxi’s hexagrams. Although it had no words, the eight trigrams interlocked, hardness (*gang* 剛) and suppleness (*rou* 柔) dwelt intermingled together, and it was already richly the world’s first and most refined writing. This reflects, the first writing since the beginning of the cosmos thus what is called ancient. The words of King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius all serve to illuminate the images of Fuxi’s hexagrams. To combine them in one place should not be identified as the current version; to separate them into two places should not be identified as the ancient version. Do ancient or present versions lie in the separation or combination of words? If one seeks words without the images as simulation, then even if the words are ancient, the simulations remain bewildered. Lamentations such as ‘after the *Yizhuan* there is no *Yijing*, after the deletion there is no *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs)’ arise from this” (*yi ben xi hua, sui wu wen ci, ba gua xiang cuo, gang rou za ju zhi zhong, yu yu hu wei tian xia zhi zhi wen, nai yu zhou kai pi di yi wen zi, shi zhi wei gu er. ruo wen zhou kong zi zhi ci, fan jie yi ming xi hua zhi xiang, he yu yi chu fei jin, li yu er chu fei gu, jin gu ju zai ci zhi li he jian? fei xiang zhi xiang er ci zhi, qiu ci ze gu wen, er xiang ze mang ran. yi hou wu yi, shan hou wu shi deng kai yi* 《易》本義畫，雖無文辭，八卦相錯，剛柔雜居之中，郁郁乎為天下之至文，乃宇宙開闢第一文字，是之謂古耳。若文周孔子之辭，凡皆以明義畫之象，合於一處匪今，厘於二處匪古，今古詎在辭之離合間？匪象之像而辭之，求辭則古文，而像則茫然。“翼”後無《易》，刪後無《詩》等慨矣). (Qian 1986)

Qian Yiben points out that the true ancient version of *Yi* is Fuxi’s creation of the *Yijing*. The completion of the *Yijing* text from King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius are elucidations of Fuxi’s images, which contain simulations (*xiang*2 像). Scholars should not become attached to the dispute between ancient and present arrangements of the classical *Zhouyi* proper and commentary *Yizhuan* texts. They should seek the simulations of the images and seek principles through simulations.

When interpreting the *Xici* passage “The *Yi* consists of images. Images are simulations” (*yi zhe xiang ye, xiang ye zhe, xiang ye* 易者象也，象也者，像也), Qian Yiben distinguishes between the *Yi* before Fuxi established hexagrams and the *Yi* after Fuxi established hexagrams. He argues that the essence of images lies in simulations (*xiang*2 像), and that simulations, when embodied in human beings, are the *dao* of Humanity. As he states:

“The *Yi* before Fuxi established hexagrams originally had no images. After Fuxi established hexagrams then has images. To be considered as the *Yijing*, images are all contained in the hexagrams established by Fuxi. The simulations of images, these are all the *dao* of Humanity. When human beings achieve images, this is called simulations (*xiang*2 像)” (*hua qian yi yuan wu xiang, hua hou yi si you xiang. yi zhe, xiang jin zai hua zhong. xiang zhe xiang, dou shi ren dao. ren cheng xiang wei zhi xiang ye* 畫前易原無象，畫後易斯有象。易者，象盡在畫中。象者像，都是人道。人成象謂之像也). (Qian 1986)

Qian Yiben holds that Fuxi established hexagrams refer to a depiction of *Yi* in nature. The *Yi* in nature existed before Fuxi established hexagrams. Once the hexagram images were established, the *Yi* in nature exists within the images. This point is influenced by Zhu Xi’s idea of “the *Yi* before hexagrams is established”. And Qian Yiben further develops Zhu Xi’s idea:

“Before hexagrams are established, the sages drew hexagrams based on the *Yi* in nature within Heaven and Earth. Speaking of Heaven and Earth, Heaven and

Earth are the *Yi* of the human heart/mind (*xin* 心) in its entirety. When seen in established hexagrams, they are called Qian and Kun. Heaven is “ideally high and appreciated” (*zun* 尊) that works above, and thus the hexagram image of Qian is established. Earth is lowly below, and thus the hexagram image of Kun is fixed established. The “ideally high and appreciated” that works above, and thus the hexagram image of Qian is established and lowly positions of Heaven and Earth being arrayed, the high and lowly positions of the hexagram images are established. The movements and stillness of Heaven and Earth having constancy, the hardness (*gang* 剛) and suppleness (*rou* 柔) of the hexagram images are decided. Among Heaven and Earth, things inevitably gather by kind and divide by group. All those that gather by kind in the hexagrams and lines refer to *fang* 方; all those that divide by group refer to *wu* 物. If gathering is appropriate and gain, good fortune; if not, misfortune. If division is appropriate and gain, good fortune; if not, misfortune. The good fortune and misfortune in the *Yijing* rise from this.” (*ci zi hua qian, sheng ren yin tian di zi ran zhi yi hua er wei gua. shuo qi tian di zhe, ren xin quan ti zhi yi ye, jian yu hua ze yue qian kun. tian zun yu shang er yi hua zhi qian ding yi, di bei yu xia er yi hua zhi kun ding yi. tian di zhi gao bei yi chen, yi hua zhi gui jian wei yi. tian di zhi dong jing you chang, yi hua zhi gang rou duan yi. tian di jian fang bi yi lei ju, wu bi yi qun fen. fan gua yao lei ju zhe jie fang, qun fen zhe jie wu, ju er de ze ji, shi ze xiong, fen er de ze ji, shi ze Xiong. yi zhong zhi ji xiong sheng yi* 此自畫前，聖人因天地自然之易畫而為卦。說起天地者，人心全體之易也，見於畫則曰乾坤。天尊于上而易畫之乾定矣，地卑于下而易畫之坤定矣。天地之高卑以陳，易畫之貴賤位矣。天地之動靜有常，易畫之剛柔斷矣。天地間方必以類聚，物必以群分。凡卦爻類聚者皆方，群分者皆物，聚而得則吉，失則凶，分而得則吉，失則凶。易中之吉凶生矣). (Qian 1986)

Here, Qian and Kun refer to the two lines of *yin* and *yang* respectively. That is, Heaven and Earth refer to the *Yi* of the human heart/mind in its entirety. Before hexagrams are established, there is the *Yi* in the nature of Heaven and Earth. When seen in hexagrams, it becomes the sixty-four hexagrams constituted by the two lines of *yin* and *yang*. The hexagrams Qian and Kun symbolize Heaven and Earth. Before the hexagram images Qian and Kun were established, the *Yi* of Heaven and Earth already existed. Before there were the honored and lowly positions of hexagrams and lines, the “ideally high and appreciated” (*zun* 尊) and lowly of the myriad things of Heaven and Earth already existed. Before hexagrams and lines are established, the myriad things of Heaven and Earth, each according to its good or bad qualities, had already gathered by kind, and good fortune and misfortune could already be distinguished. The high and low positions of the hexagram lines embody the principle that Heaven is “ideally high and appreciated” and Earth lowly. The regular movement and stillness of Heaven and Earth are manifested as the changes of the *yin* and *yang* lines of the hexagram images. The gathering and division of the myriad things of Heaven and Earth are manifested as the good fortune and misfortune of the hexagram images. Qian Yiben explains the legitimacy of the *Yi* in nature. He holds that the sages’ *Yi* comes from natural Heaven, and the changes of the hexagram images represent the changes of the cosmos and myriad things. As he states:

“Between Heaven and Earth, there is originally one vital material force (*qi* 氣). Rising upward, in Heaven it forms the images of sun, moon, and stars. Descending downward, on Earth it forms the shapes of water, fire, earth, and stone. In all hexagrams and lines, the hard (*gang* 剛, here means *yang*) ones are images of Heaven, sometimes changing and transforming into supple (*rou* 柔, here means *yin*) ones. Supple ones are shapes of Earth, sometimes changing and transforming into hard ones. The changes in the *Yijing* appear from this” (*tian di jian ben*

yi qi, sheng er shang zai tian ze cheng ri yue xing chen zhi xiang, jiang er xia zai di ze cheng shui huo tu shi zhi xing. fan gua yao gang zhe tian zhi xiang, huo bian er hua rou. rou zhe di zhi xing, huo bian er hua gang, yi zhong zhi bian hua jian yi 天地間本一氣，升而上在天則成日月星辰之象，降而下在地則成水火土石之形。凡卦爻剛者天之象，或變而化柔。柔者地之形，或變而化剛，《易》中之變化見矣). (Qian 1986)

That is, the changes of the myriad things in the cosmos are all manifested in the Yi. Human beings, through representing the Yi in nature, produce the Yijing. Qian Yiben then explains the “moral cultivation, education and transformation” (*jiaohua* 教化) function of the Yi. He holds that Fuxi established hexagrams and used images as teaching; through images, one could know good fortune and misfortune. If people observed the images but did not understand them, then King Wen and the Duke of Zhou established the Xici 系辭 and attached words to teach people to understand good fortune and misfortune. Therefore, he claims:

“The Yi consists of images. When the eight trigrams were formed and arrayed, images were in between. Originally, the sage king Fuxi drew and established hexagrams and used images as teaching, speaking without words yet showing good fortune and misfortune. King Wen writes the statements for the Zhou hexagrams. If we speak of it as establishing, then when the hexagrams are established, the images can be seen. Each hexagram has its own image, each line has its own image. When the images are seen, words can be attached. Each hexagram has its own words, each line has its own words. King Wen and the Duke of Zhou attached words to clarify good fortune and misfortune for those who observed the images but did not understand” (*yi zhe, xiang ye. ba gua cheng lie, xiang zai qi zhong. yuan chu huang xi hua gua, yi xiang wei jiao, bu yan er jian ji xiong. wen xu zhou yao ruo geng zhi er ci di zhi wei zhi she, gua she er xiang ke jian. yi gua you yi gua zhi xiang, yi yao you yi yao zhi xiang, xiang jian er ci ke xi. yi gua you yi gua zhi ci, yi yao you yi yao zhi ci, wen zhou xi ci ming ji xiong wei guan xiang wei ming zhe she ye* 易者，象也。八卦成列，象在其中。原初皇羲畫卦，以象為教，不言而見吉凶。文序周爻若更置而次第之謂之設，卦設而象可見。一卦有一卦之象，一爻有一爻之象，象見而辭可系。一卦有一卦之辭，一爻有一爻之辭，文周繫辭明吉凶為觀象未明者設也). (Qian 1986)

In Qian Yiben’s view, what the sages did was truly to take the heart/mind (*xin* 心) of Heaven and Earth as their own heart/mind and use images as teaching. He holds that heart/mind, principle, and Yi are one. He says:

“The heart/mind of Heaven and Earth is entrusted to the sages. The sages take the heart/mind of Heaven and Earth as their own heart/mind” (*tian di zhi xin ji zhi yu sheng ren, sheng ren yi tian di zhi xin wei xin ye* 天地之心寄之于聖人，聖人以天地之心為心也). (Qian 1986)

And

“Hardness (*gang* 剛, here means *yang*) and suppleness (*rou* 柔, here means *yin*), the eight trigrams, are all fixed principles (*li* 理) of the human heart/mind, not something that human effort can arrange or that private wisdom can deliberate upon, add to, or diminish” (*gang rou ba gua jie ren xin zhi ding li, fei ren li suo ke an pai bu zhi, fei si zhi suo ke ni yi zeng sun* 剛柔八卦皆人心之定理，非人力所可安排佈置，非私智所可擬議增損). (Qian 1986)

Wang Yangming 王陽明 said: “Human beings are the heart/mind (*xin* 心) of the myriad things of Heaven and Earth; the heart/mind is the master of the myriad things,

Heaven and Earth. The heart/mind is Heaven; speak of the heart/mind, and Heaven and Earth and the myriad things are all included” (*ren zhe, tian di wan wu zhi xin ye. xin zhe, tian di wan wu zhi zhu ye. xin ji tian, yan xin ze tian di wan wu jie ju zhi ye yi* 人者，天地萬物之心也；心者，天地萬物之主也。心即天，言心則天地萬物皆舉之也矣) (Y. Wang 2015). Qian Yiben absorbed the view of the School of Mind (*xinxue* 心學), holding that the sages take the heart/mind of Heaven and Earth as their own heart/mind, and that the eight trigrams are fixed principles of the human heart/mind. The sages used the changes of *yin* and *yang* to represent the myriad things of the cosmos. Their true heart/mind was clear and undefiled by selfish considerations. By simulating the principles in original nature (*xing* 性), they could create hexagram images that were perfectly natural. Thus, through the representations of the eight trigrams and the sixty-four hexagram images, one can illuminate the principle of the *Yi*, that is, the learning of divine-like profound insight that is realized in wordless practice (*shen ming mo cheng zhi xue* 神明默成之學).

4. Illuminating Principle (*li* 理) Through Simulation (*xiang* 像): Acting in Accord with the *dao* 道

Having established that simulation enables humans to “know images” and thereby participate in the cosmic *dao*, this section moves on to the question: How does simulation illuminate principles (*li*) and guide human action? Qian Yiben answers that the very purpose of the *Yijing* is to teach people to “act in accord with the *dao*”, and this accord is achieved precisely through simulation. This section analyzes the three dimensions of the sages’ *dao*: the ceaseless generation and regeneration of life power (*sheng sheng* 生生), the fourfold manifestation (words, changes, images, divination), and the three powers (*sancai* 三才: Heaven, Earth, Humanity). By simulating the images, one embodies the principles of original nature and destiny (*xing ming*) and establishes the *dao* through oneself.

The *Yijing*, as one of the important Confucian classics, is unique not only in having a symbolic world composed of hexagram and line statements, but more importantly, in using a system of divination culture to express its own world of meaning. It embodies the sages’ intended meaning and contains the *dao* 道 of the cosmos. Although the myriad things in the world are complex and varied, the sages compared their appearances and symbolized their appropriate meanings, so the images contain the principles of things. The “images” spoken of here are the sages’ recognition and refinement of the internal patterns of the myriad things in the cosmos. In the process of the sages’ comparison, determination and simulation, things, images, and principles achieve unity. That is to say, images contain affairs, and images contain principles. In Qian Yiben’s view, the entire *Yijing* teaches people to exhaustively investigate the principles of original nature and destiny and to ascend from the physical (*xingerxia* 形而下) to the metaphysical (*xingershang* 形而上), as the *Yijing* is the work of the sages and is a book that carries the *dao*. He holds that if one uses yarrow stalks to seek the *Yi*, exhausts numbers to seek the *Yi*, draws hexagrams to seek the *Yi*, the *Yi* cannot be seen. Instead, one must illuminate the principles of original nature and destiny of the sages. As he claims:

“The *Yijing* as a book entirely teaches people to exhaustively investigate the principles of original nature and destiny, to ascend from the physical to the metaphysical, and to open up things and accomplish affairs for the future” (*yi zhi wei shu, quan shi jiao ren qiong xing ming zhi li, you xing er xia zhi qi da xing er shang zhi dao, yi kai wu cheng wu yu fang lai* 《易》之為書，全是教人窮性命之理，由形而下之器達形而上之道，以開物成務于方來). (Qian 1986)

And

“The *Yijing* reflects the profound and subtle of the sages’ virtue, righteousness, principle, original nature, and destiny” (*fu yi zhe, sheng ren dao de yi li xing ming zhi ao ye* 夫易者，聖人道德義理性命之奧也). (Qian 1997)

And

“Every person has his own original nature and destiny. Back to the original nature and destiny, taken together, are called origin (*yuan* 元). Their flow is called prosperity (*heng* 亨). Their preservation and harmony are called benefit (*li2* 利). Their being each align with the ideal perfect *dao* is called perseverance (*zhen* 貞). All the *Yi*’s references to *yuan*, *heng*, *li2*, and *zhen* are the learning of the principles of original nature and destiny. If people today do not discuss the learning of original nature and destiny, what *yuan*, *heng*, *li2*, and *zhen* can they have” (*fu ren mo bu you xing ming, xing ming tong shi wei zhi yuan, xing ming liu xing wei zhi heng, xing ming bao he wei zhi li, xing ming ge zheng wei zhi zhen. yi fan yan yuan, yan heng, yan li, yan zhen jie xing ming zhi li zhi xue ye. jin ren zhi xing ming zhi xue bu jiang, you he yuan he heng he li he zhen zhi you zai* 夫人莫不有性命，性命統始謂之元，性命流行謂之亨，性命保合謂之利，性命各正謂之貞。《易》凡言元，言亨，言利，言貞皆性命之理之學也。今人置性命之學不講，又何元何亨何利何貞之有哉). (Qian 1997)

This point inherits from Cheng Yi, who said: “The sixty-four hexagrams and three hundred eighty-four lines all serve to be in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny and to exhaust the *dao* of change and transformation” (*liu shi si gua, san bai ba shi si yao, jie suo yi shun xing ming zhi li, jin bian hua zhi dao ye* 六十四卦，三百八十四爻，皆所以順性命之理，盡變化之道也) (Cheng and Cheng [1981] 2004). Thus, the meaning of the original nature and destiny is within the images.

If we set aside the symbolic world and divination culture of the *Yijing*, what is its deeper world of meaning? The *Xici* provides the answer: “The *Yijing* takes Heaven and Earth as its standard, is on a par with Heaven and Earth, therefore it can comprehensively encompass the *dao* of Heaven and Earth” (*yi yu tian di zhun, gu neng mi lun tian di zhi dao* 《易》與天地准，故能彌綸天地之道). This elevates the *Yijing* to a height where it clarifies the *dao* of Heaven and Earth and achieves a standard on a par with Heaven and Earth. In Qian Yiben’s view, the *Yijing* refers to a book that “carries the *dao*”. The *Yi* contains the *dao* of Heaven and Earth and embodies the principles of *yin* and *yang*, so the sages use the *Yi* to exhaustively simulate the principles of *yin* and *yang*. It implies the following question: how does Qian Yiben understand the *dao* of the sages in the *Yijing*?

Qian Yiben replies in three responses. First, the *dao* of the sages in the *Yi* refers to the *dao* of ceaseless generation and regeneration of life power (*shengsheng* 生生). The *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 interprets (*sheng* 生) as “*Sheng* means advancing. It depicts the plants and trees emerging from the soil” (*sheng, jin ye. xiang cao mu sheng chu tu shang* 生，進也。像草木生出土上) (S. Xu 1978). The *Xici* says “The ceaseless generation and regeneration of life power constitutes *Yi*” (*sheng sheng zhi wei yi* 生生之謂易). With reference to the meaning of generation and regeneration of life (including human life), the *Yijing* observes Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things, thus gaining an understanding of the cosmos. Hexagram images are a vivid manifestation of this observation. When interpreting the *Xici* passage “Alternating one *yin* and one *yang* is called the *dao*” (*yi yin yi yang zhi wei dao* 一陰一陽之謂道), Qian Yiben explains:

“*Yin* and *yang* are the two primary forms. One is the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極). When *yin* and *yang* are unfathomable, that is the entire sagehood and spirituality. The Supreme Ultimate embodies the whole of the Supreme Ultimate’s movement and stillness. Alternating one *yin* and one *yang* is called the

dao: One, then two, then four, then eight, then sixteen, then thirty-two, then sixty-four. It is nothing other than the two images of *yin* and *yang* interchanging and transforming, generating and regenerating of life power without end. The *dao* of the *Yi* is just like this" (*yin yang shi liang yi, yi shi tai ji, dao yin yang bu ce, bian shi sheng shen quan ti. tai ji hui tai ji dong jing zhi quan. yi yin yi yang zhi wei dao, yi er er, er er si, si er ba, ba er shi liu, shi liu er san shi er, san shi er er liu shi si, bu guo yin yang liang hua jiao yi bian yi sheng sheng wu yi, yi zhi dao ru si er yi* 陰陽是兩儀，一是太極，到陰陽不測，便是聖神全體。太極會太極動靜之全。一陰一陽之謂道，一而二，二而四，四而八，八而十六，十六而三十二，三十二而六十四，不過陰陽兩畫交易變易生生無已，易之道如斯而已). (Qian 1986)

Here Qian Yiben employs Shao Yong's "method of doubling" (*jia yi bei fa* 加一倍法) to explain how the *dao* of the *Yi* is manifested. According to Qian Yiben, the way the hexagram images in the *Yi* "divide into two" is a representation of the operation and change of the *dao* of Heaven and Earth. Consider Supreme Ultimate as one: through differentiation, it gives rise to the two *qi* of *yin* and *yang*. The interaction of *yin* and *yang* brings about the generation and development of the myriad things. As the *dao* of Heaven and Earth alternates *yin* and *yang* and generates life without cease, the myriad things depend on the action of the Heavenly *dao* for their endless life power and growth to generate and regenerate.

Second, the *dao* of the sages in the *Yi* refers to how the sages can manifest the *dao* according to the *Yijing*. According to Qian Yiben, the *Yijing* can manifest the *dao* through four forms: images (*xiang* 象), words (*ci* 辭), change (*bian* 變), and divination (占 *zhan*). As he directly indicates:

"The *Yi* contains four aspects of the sages' *dao*. The words in the *Yijing* refer to the sages' speech. The changes of the *Yi* refer to the sages' movement and action. The images of the *Yi* refer to the sages' formation of implements. The divinations of the *Yi* refer to the sages' divination by yarrow and tortoise. Words, changes, images, and divinations are completely present in every hexagram and every line. Therefore, they are not only refined, but are the ultimate refinement of the world. They are not only changing, but are the ultimate change of the world. They are not only numinous and divine, but are the ultimate numinous and the utmost divinity of the world. For any person, if in speech, movement, making implements, or divination one does not value the sages' words, all one's speech is reckless. If one does not value the sages' changes, all one's movements are reckless. If one does not value the sages' images, then he will employ unorthodox strange skills and crooked ways, having no benefit but only harm, all lose the way of making implements. If one does not value the sages' divinations, taking benefit and harm to determine good and bad fortune rather than taking righteousness and principle to determine good and bad fortune, then all one's divinations are those of deluded shamans and blind historians" (*yi you sheng ren zhi dao si. yi ci, sheng ren zhi yan ye. yi bian, sheng ren zhi dong ye. yi xiang, sheng ren zhi qi zhi zhi ye. yi zhan, sheng ren zhi bo zhi shi ye. ci bian xiang zhan, gua gua yao yao, wu bu bei ju. gu bu wei jing er wei tian xia zhi zhi jing, bu wei bian er wei tian xia zhi zhi bian, bu wei shen er wei tian xia zhi zhi shen. fan ren zhi yan, dong, zhi qi, bu shi, bu shang sheng ren zhi ci, jie wang yan er yi yi. bu shang sheng ren zhi bian, jie wang dong er yi yi. bu shang sheng ren zhi xiang, qi ji yin qiao, wu yi you hai, jie shi zhi zhi qi er yi yi. bu shang sheng ren zhi zhan, yi li hai wei huo fu, bu yi yi li wei huo fu, jie yin wu gu shi zhi bu shi er yi yi* 《易》有聖人之道四。易辭，聖人之言也。易變，聖人之動也。易象，聖人之器之制也。易占，聖人之蓍之筮也。辭變象占，卦卦爻爻，無不備具。故不惟精而為天下之至精，不惟變而為天下之至變，不惟神而為天下之至神。凡人之言、動、制器、卜筮，不尚聖人之辭，皆妄言而已矣。不尚聖人之變，皆妄動而已矣。不

尚聖人之象，奇技淫巧，無益有害，皆失制之器而已矣。不尚聖人之占，以利害為禍福，不以義理為禍福，皆淫巫瞽史之卜筮而已矣). (Qian 1986)

Qian Yiben claims that the four elements: words (*ci*), changes (*bian*), images (*xiang*), and divinations (*zhan*), as the primary forms in which the hexagram and line statements of the *Yijing* appear, are all the true carriers of the *dao* of the *Yi* that determines why the *Yijing* is defined as what it is. Each also accordingly instills the life wisdom of the sages at different levels. Therefore, a person should embody and simulate the sages' *dao* in these four forms: words, changes, images, and divinations, and not deviate from them.

Third, the *dao* of the sages in the *Yi* refers to the *dao* of the three powers (*san cai* 三才). Qian Yiben holds that the *dao* is within the images, and the movement of the six lines is precisely the way of the three powers: Heaven, Earth, Humanity. As he mentions:

“The movement of the six lines is the *dao* of the three ultimates (*san ji* 三極, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity). No movement is without an image, and every image refers to the *dao*. One does not merely observe through images, but observes through the *dao*. Therefore, the *Yi* has its sequence and order, and it is all the *dao* of the three ultimates. What “the superior man (*junzi* 君子, virtue man) stores in his heart/mind (*xin* 心) is nothing other than the order of the *Yi*. Abiding in it, how could he not be at peace (mentally) and settled? The *Yi* has line statements, and all of them refer to the *dao* of the three ultimates. What the superior man delights in his heart/mind are the lines of the *Yi*. Playing and simulating with them, how could he not be joyful? Thus, when the superior man settles and stays, he contemplates and observes the images of the hexagrams, plays with the attached statements (words), and thereby knows good fortune and misfortune. When the superior man take motions, he contemplates and observes the the changes of the lines, plays with the attached divinatory judgments, and thereby knows good fortune and misfortune” (*liu yao zhi dong, san ji zhi dao. wu dong fei xiang, wu xiang fei dao, fei tu guan zhi yi xiang, er jie guan zhi yi dao, shi gu yi you ci di, dou shi san ji zhi dao. jun zi suo yi cun zhu xin, jie yi xu ye. ju zhi, fu qi bu an? yi you yao ci, dou shi san ji zhi dao, jun zi suo yi shuo zhu xin, jie yi yao ye. wan zhi, fu qi bu le? shi gu ju ze guan gua zhi xiang, wan suo xi zhi ci er zhi ji xiong. dong ze guan yao zhi bian, wan suo xi zhi zhan, er zhi ji Xiong* 六爻之動，三極之道。無動非象，無象非道，非徒觀之以象，而皆觀之以道，是故易有次第，都是三極之道。君子所以存諸心，皆易序也。居之，夫豈不安？易有爻辭，都是三極之道，君子所以說諸心，皆易爻也。玩之，夫豈不樂？是故居則觀卦之象，玩所系之辭而知吉凶。動則觀爻之變，玩所系之占，而知吉凶). (Qian 1986)

That is, according to Qian Yiben, what the sages observed when the six lines move; there are images, and no image is without the *dao*. In this case, observing the movement and change of the six lines refers to observing the way of the three powers (three ultimates used by Qian Yiben). The superior person, by observing the hexagram images when staying still and playing with the hexagram and line statements, and by observing the line changes in taking motion and playing with the divination statements, can know good fortune and misfortune.

Therefore, the *dao* of which Qian Yiben speaks is comprehensive and all-encompassing, penetrating Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, manifesting as the *dao* of Heaven, the *dao* of Earth, and the *dao* of Humanity. The *dao* of the *Yi* regulates the natural world of Heaven and Earth through “*yin* and *yang*” and “suppleness (*rou* 柔) and hardness (*gang* 剛)”, and regulates social norms and human life through “benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness

(*yi2* 義)". Thus, it causes the myriad things of Heaven and Earth and social life to be filled at all times and in all matters with the *dao* of the *Yi*. Qian Yiben further states:

"The principles (*li* 理) of original nature (*xing* 性) and destiny (*ming* 命) manifests in Heaven as *yin* and *yang*, in Earth as suppleness (*rou* 柔) and hardness (*gang* 剛), and in human beings as benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi2* 義). To harmoniously accord with the *dao* and moral virtue and order it according to appropriate principles, to completely simulate principles (*li* 理) and fully realize one's original nature and thereby reach one's own destiny. This is to be in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny. People today mostly go against it. Thus, one's original nature is daily chiseled away, and one cannot speak of fully realizing it. Their destiny is daily disordered, and one cannot speak of reaching it. The sages, worried about this, composed the *Yijing* to teach people to follow along and to have no opposition. The *dao* of Heaven has manifested into *yin* and *yang*, I took *yang* to synthesis generate the myriad things, and *yin* to complete the myriad things, being in accord with Heaven and not going against it. Thus, the *dao* of Heaven is established through me: this is being in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny. The *dao* of Earth has manifested into suppleness and hardness, I took hardness as the way of firmness and suppleness as the way of softness, being in accord with Earth and not going against it. Thus, the *dao* of Earth is established through me: this is being in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny. The *dao* of Humanity has manifested into benevolence and righteousness, I took benevolence to nurture, which is the *yang* from Heavenly *dao* and the hardness from Earthly *dao*; I took righteousness to be align with the ideal perfect way, which is the *yin* from Heavenly *dao* and the suppleness from Earthly *dao*, being in accord with Humanity and not going against it. Thus, the *dao* of Humanity is established through me: this is being in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny. The *dao* of Heaven, the *dao* of Earth, and the *dao* of Humanity are called the *dao* of the three powers (*san cai* 三才)" (*xing ming zhi li zai tian wei yin yang, zai di wei gang rou, zai ren wei ren yi. he shun yu dao de er li yu yi, qiong li jin xing yi zhi yu ming, bian shi shun xing ming zhi li. jin ren duo shi ni, shi yi xing ri zao er bu ke yi yu yu jin, ming ri chuan er bu ke yi yu yu zhi. sheng ren you you zhi gu zuo yi yi jiao ren zhi you suo shun er wu suo ni. tian dao you yin yang, wu yi yang sheng wan wu, yi yin cheng wan wu, shun hu tian er bu ni, tian dao zi wo er li ye, xing ming zhi li zhi shun ye. di dao you gang rou, wu yi qi gang wei gang ke, yi qi rou wei rou ke, shun hu di er bu ni, di dao zi wo er li ye, xing ming zhi li zhi shun ye. ren dao you ren yi, wu zhi yi ren yu ye, tian zhi yang ye, di zhi gang ye, wu zhi yi yi zheng ye. tian zhi yin ye, di zhi rou ye, shun hu ren er bu ni, ren dao zi wo er li ye, xing ming zhi li zhi shun ye. tian di ren zhi dao, wei zhi san cai zhi dao* 性命之理在天為陰陽，在地為剛柔，在人為仁義。和順于道德而理於義，窮理盡性以至於命，便是順性命之理。今人多逆，是以性日鑿而不可以語於盡，命日舛而不可以語於至。聖人有憂之故作《易》以教人之有所順而無所逆。天道有陰陽，吾以陽生萬物，以陰成萬物，順乎天而不逆，天道自我而立也，性命之理之順也。地道有剛柔，吾以其剛為剛克，以其柔為柔克，順乎地而不逆，地道自我而立也，性命之理之順也。人道有仁義，吾之以仁育也，天之陽也，地之剛也，吾之以義正也。天之陰也，地之柔也，順乎人而不逆，人道自我而立也，性命之理之順也。天地人之道，謂之三才之道)。 (Qian 1986)

That demonstrates that the *Yijing's* *dao* of the three powers concerns the principles of original nature and destiny. The principles of original nature and destiny are, in Heaven, *yin* and *yang*; on Earth, suppleness (*rou* 柔) and hardness (*gang* 剛); in Humanity, benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi2* 義). To grasp the principles of original nature and des-

tiny, the key lies in “being in accord” (*shun* 順). Human beings, situated between Heaven and Earth, participate in and are in accord with the principles of original nature and destiny of the three powers: Heavenly *dao*, Earthly *dao* and Humanity *dao*. The purpose of the sages in composing the *Yijing* was precisely to teach people to “being in accord” with the *dao* of Heaven, “being in accord” with the *dao* of Earth, and thereby establish the *dao* of Humanity. Qian Yiben also discusses substance (*ti* 體, the whole body, including the nature) and function (*yong* 用, the use) in terms of the relationship between the metaphysical (*xing er shang* 形而上) and the physical (*xing er xia* 形而下) level, by applying the term *dao* and *qi* 器 (vessels, meaning material level to use). He speaks of substance and function in terms of unity and differentiation: when spoken of as a whole, it is called the principle of original nature and destiny; when differentiated, it is called the *dao* of three powers. Qian Yiben states that human beings should participate in and assist the generation, nurturing and transformation process of Heaven and Earth, take up their own social responsibilities, “achieve and realize images through simulations” (*ren cheng xiang* 人成像), and thereby establish the *dao* through themselves.

Qian Yiben elaborates on the hexagram and line statements in detail in his works *Xiangxiang Guanjian* 像象管見 and *Sisheng Yixin Lu* 四聖一心錄, clarifying the essential tenets of the study of *Yijing* in his thoughts. In his later years, Qian Yiben further developed the study of images and composed *Xiangchao* 象抄. In his book *Xiangchao*, Qian Yiben cites numerous explanations from various scholars, appends his own opinions, copies multiple *Yijing* diagrams, and draws new schemata. Thus, Qian Yiben interprets the study of *Yijing* through concise illustrated forms in his work. *Xiangchao* complements *Xiangxiang Guanjian* and *Sisheng Yixin Lu*.

Regarding the quotations from various scholars, they are mainly from the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, including both great Confucians of previous dynasties such as Yang Shi 楊時, Zhu Xi, Cai Yuanding, Hu Fangping, and Hu Yigui, as well as contemporaries (in the dynasty and decades Qian Yiben lives in) such as Geng Tinghuai 耿庭懷 and Tang Rujiang 湯汝敬.

Regarding structure, *Xiangchao* chapter one lists various hexagram diagrams with explanations. Chapter two interprets the *Xici* in the *Yijing*. Chapter three appends letters to fellow scholars. Chapter four appends poems, using regulated verse poems to express understanding of the eight trigrams, the pre-heaven and post-heaven diagrams, and the interchange of hexagrams. In chapters five and six, Qian Yiben explains the hexagram and line statements in detail, mainly presenting the author’s own views with fewer citations and textual references. In his book *Xiangchao*, there are over thirty *Yi*-diagrams in total.

Regarding content, *Xiangchao* expresses Qian Yiben’s different understandings of the studies of the He-Luo diagrams (*Luoshu* 洛書 and *Hetu* 河圖), pre-heaven (*xiantian* 先天) and post-heaven (*houtian* 後天), changes of hexagram, and other diagrams and compares them to Zhu Xi’s *Zhouyi Benyi* and *Yixue Qimeng* 易學啟蒙. *Xiangchao* further develops the interpretive discussions of the *Yijing* classical and commentarial texts in *Xiangxiang Guanjian*. For example, in explaining the *Xici*’s “thrice setting forth the nine hexagrams” (*san chen jiu yao* 三陳九爻), Qian Yiben quotes Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 and interprets around the category of “original heart/mind” (*benxin* 本心). For example, he explains the philosophical principles of the *Xugua* and *Zagua* through the category of “original heart/mind” (*benxin* 本心). In these discussions, he addresses both images and numbers and discusses principles, providing a detailed examination of basic issues in the study of *Yijing*.

5. Conclusions

This study began with a central question that has remained insufficiently clarified in the existing scholarship on Qian Yiben: What exactly does it mean for “images” (*xiang* 象)

to “simulate” (*xiang* 像), and how does this simulation enable images to bridge the cosmic *dao* and concrete human affairs? By examining the three interconnected dimensions of Qian’s theory, the cosmological, perspective of cultivation, and practical, this conclusion reaffirms that the unity of image and simulation is not an interpretive tool but a fundamental reconstruction of how cosmic principle becomes embodied in human life.

To properly evaluate the value of Qian Yiben’s study of image in the history of the study of the *Yijing*, it is necessary to reveal the profound meanings that his study presents. Returning to the question posed at the outset: how simulation bridges image and principle. This conclusion shows that Qian Yiben’s answer lies in the unity of image and simulation, where images are not mere approximations but genuine vehicles for embodying the *dao* through human action. Qian Yiben emphasizes grasping the original intent of the classical *Zhouyi* proper and the commentary *Yizhuan* in the *Yijing*, engaging in dialogue with the texts, and through this ongoing process of dialogue, manifesting their rich meanings. Qian Yiben’s study of image in the *Yijing* seeks—through an investigation of the foundational issue of images, based on the understanding that “Images (*xiang* 象) are to simulate (*xiang* 像)” —to interpret the original meaning of *Yi* images and, through these images, to reveal the *dao* of the sages within the *Yijing*. It discloses the *Yijing*’s guiding significance for the cosmos, society, and human life. His image study reflects a characteristic of compatibility between the School of Principle and the School of Mind. However, Qian Yiben’s study was significantly influenced by Wang Shihuai 王時槐, a transmitter of Wang Yangming’s teachings, and has a strong color of the School of Mind in terms of the study of *Yijing*. Qian Yiben was also considerably influenced by Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. In his works, he repeatedly quotes the thoughts of Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, and later Zhu Xi scholars as annotations.

In the late Ming period, when the studies of image flourished, the study of *Yijing* developed in multiple directions. First, the school of evidential investigation and dialectics of the study of the *Yijing* in the Han and Tang dynasties saw a further return, which significantly influenced the development of empirical *Yi* studies and textual criticism of the studies of the *Yijing* in the Qing dynasty. Second, diagrammatic studies (*tuxue* 圖學) remained an important subject in the study of the *Yijing*, with diagrams proliferating and with influential figures such as Huang Daozhou 黃道周 and Fang Yizhi 方以智 (and his father Fang Kongzhao 方孔炤). Third, influenced by the thinking of the School of Principle and the School of Mind, the elucidation of principles in the *Yijing* took on a characteristic of compatibility and inclusiveness with other thoughts.

Qian Yiben’s thought reflects the characteristics of the development of the studies of the *Yijing* in the late Ming dynasty. His study of the *Yijing*, not emphasizing evidential investigation and dialectics but focusing on examining principles, represented a breakthrough from the studies in the Han and Tang dynasties and a development of the study of the *Yijing* in the Song dynasty. Qian Yiben’s diagrammatic studies were greatly influenced by Zhu Xi, but he also, to some extent, revised Zhu Xi’s *Yi* learning. His interpretation of the *Yijing*, based on image and simulation, merits the attention of the academic community and further discussion.

To end by answering the core question, this study has shown that for Qian Yiben, “simulation” is precisely the active, participatory process through which the practitioner embodies the *dao* of the three powers (Heaven, Earth, Humanity) within oneself. This is not a passive approximation but a transformative engagement that establishes the *dao* through oneself (*dao zi wo er li* 道自我而立).

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Notes

- ¹ This study translates *xiang* 像 as “simulation” since the basic sense of *xiang* 像 is an imitation or replication of the images (*xiang* 象). This translation carries no connotation of falsification or mere approximation. In Qian Yiben’s thought, it denotes the practitioner’s active embodiment of the *dao* through human action.
- ² This study translates *li* 理 as “principle” for convenience, following established scholarly practice. However, the Chinese term *li* 理 carries a wider meaning than “principle” in English. It refers not only to abstract moral or metaphysical principles, but also to the inherent veins, grain, patterns, and ordered structures that underlie both cosmic phenomena and human affairs. Whenever “principle” appears in this study, it should be read with this comprehensive sense in mind.
- ³ This study draws extensively on Chinese-language resources in the fields of classical exegesis and classical study. Several of the texts consulted by the author are not accessible in English translation. Moreover, where English versions do exist, they do not generally adopt a word-for-word, deep, and accurate translation. As a result, they cannot faithfully render each Chinese character under investigation. Whenever those translations introduce unnecessary interpretative difficulties in explaining specific terms, the author provides an original English translation of the quoted Chinese passage. Some key Chinese terms are left untranslated. Unless otherwise indicated, any citation from the *Yijing*, Qian Yiben’s works or other Chinese texts in this article uses the author’s own translation.
- ⁴ The *Yijing* (also referred to as the *Zhouyi* or *I Ching*) encapsulates a distinctive worldview that emerged from the Zhou dynasty onward. Its thought integrates cosmology of Heaven and Earth, religious ideas, and ethical thought. Its core consists of the *Zhouyi* proper (*Zhouyi Gujing* 周易古經), which is built around sixty-four hexagrams (*gua* 卦), each composed of six lines (*yao* 爻) that are either broken (signifying *yin* 陰) or unbroken (signifying *yang* 陽). Attached to each hexagram is a hexagram judgment (*guaci* 卦辭), traditionally ascribed to King Wen, along with line statements (*yaoci* 爻辭) traditionally attributed to the Duke of Zhou, his son. Through a process that accelerated during the Warring States period, this divinatory handbook was gradually enriched by a body of commentaries known as the *Yizhuan* (the Ten Wings), thereby transforming it into a work of profound philosophical and cosmological depth. As the text has been understood since the Han era, the *Yijing* comprises both the original *Zhouyi* proper and the later *Yizhuan* as an inseparable whole. In line with this understanding, the present study adopts the term *Yijing* to denote precisely this unified combination of the core hexagram text *Zhouyi* proper and its *Yizhuan* commentaries. It will use the terms the *Zhouyi* proper and the *Yizhuan* respectively to denote the separate use.
- ⁵ With respect to the frequently quoted language of the *Yijing*, the original Chinese text drawn upon in this article is hereby understood, without further specification, to be based on the following edition: (Yang and Zhang 2011).

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