

## The world of I Ching Volume I

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## Preface

### What are Yi, Zhou Yi and the I Ching?

Hexagrams originally existed only in the form of symbols, and those symbols contain oracular messages and deliver them through divination. Yi materialized them with names and texts; it is alleged that besides Zhou Yi (i.e. the Yi of the Zhou dynasty), there were another two versions of Yi available: Lian Shan Yi 連山易 and Gui Cang Yi 歸藏易, but both had been out of print. Ten wings, i.e. the commentaries, were later composed by Confucians to paraphrase Zhou Yi, which also define the solid line as Yang (the masculine) and the broken line as Yin (the feminine) in terms of rigidity and tenderness, the big one and the small one etc, and designate the eight trigrams as Qian<sup>1</sup> (perseverance, the sky), Kun<sup>1</sup> (submissiveness, the earth), Zhen<sup>4</sup> (quake, the thunder), Xun<sup>4</sup> (entrance, the wind), Kan<sup>3</sup> (the abyss, water), Li<sup>2</sup> (clinging, fire), Gen<sup>4</sup> (keeping still, the mountain) and Dui<sup>4</sup> (joy, the marsh). Thereafter people integrated Zhou Yi with ten wings into the I Ching.

Zhou Yi commences with the hexagram Qian<sup>1</sup>, a pure masculine hexagram, and the hexagram Kun<sup>1</sup>, a pure feminine hexagram, follows next, symbolizing the lead and dominant position of masculinity, as well as submissiveness and receptiveness of femininity. Ten wings introduce righteousness, sincerity & trust as well as the principle of moderation with view to establishing conduct codes between them. Zhou Yi was accomplished in the era of turmoil and its text is teeming with warnings of cautioning mankind against impending disasters and advice of how to pursue fortune and evade misfortune. Ten wings put the villain and the gentleman, monarch and subject on the stage, and elaborate their norm. Zhou Yi and ten wings constitute a classic of life philosophy: the I Ching.

### How to read the I Ching?

The enlightenment of a hexagram is originally derived from the phenomenon created by its presenting images and the performance of its lines. In following these, Zhou Yi denominated each hexagram and provided it and its lines with the text. Interpreting the text according to its literal meaning but without analyzing the image and the line's performance won't bring about a thorough comprehension. To trace back to their fountainhead, i.e. the image and the line's character, and track down along the course of each text will lead us to find the cause and effect, as well as its true significance.

Each hexagram has its own subject and can be regarded as an era or a world of that particular topic. The hexagram text exhibits its background; the six positions are six different time-spaces in that era or world, and six lines perform their roles and assigned missions according to the circumstances they live. The hexagram text elaborates the principle and norm of a hexagram, and the six lines provide living examples. To read the texts of a hexagram and its six lines together is must to understand what happens in this hexagram. Journeying along the sequence of 64 hexagrams and among the related hexagrams of each hexagram, the beginning and subsequence development of a

hexagram is unfolded in front of us.

Once we comprehend what a hexagram intends to tell us and why it told us those, the I Ching will become part of us, instead of a book.

### **What does the I Ching offer us?**

Zhou Yi was designated for divination; however, the divination of I Ching is definitely not fatalistic but rather meant to provide people with guides to contemplate a problem from the perspective in viewing the related hexagrams, comprehending the cause and effect of its text, and observing its change, in order to seek proper measures and take correct actions. The advice given by the I Ching is definitely something clear with the rights and wrongs, good and evil, and the advice is surely that which will lead people to pursue fortune and avoid misfortune.

Zhou Yi is like a puzzle in words, a detective story and a riddle of human life. Seeking the meaning behind a character and the scene presented by it can enable us to understand the significance of a sentence; deducting and analyzing the line's performance and the phenomenon created by its change can link the unrelated sentences of a text; studying the interrelationship among the lines and their layout in a hexagram can guide us to trace out what happen in that hexagram, and following the hexagram sequence and surveying the related hexagrams can lead us to unfold a philosophy of human life.

The I Ching is a story of life and life stories. After having experienced the life in the I Ching, we could realize those which exist around us and those which are going to happen to us, make the best judgments and take the best action suited to us.