

Translating Change

Yijing or the Classic of Change is the world's oldest and most sophisticated system of wisdom divination, a powerful tool and spiritual vehicle that can help us navigate the voyage of our lives, both individually and together. It was designed to help us understand and work with the unconscious forces shaping the situations we confront. It does not describe change; it participates in and articulates change. It shows how change happens because it is a part of the process it models. By doing this, it brings out our helping spirit (*shen*), the inner voice that helps us on our Way.

Philosophically, this Way of Change is a gift to humans that gives us access to the primordial changes that initiate the generation and return of all the Myriad Beings or Ten Thousand Things, the *Wanwu*. It shows the symbols (*xiang*) and the spirits (*shen*) through which all transformation or change occurs. By using Change, we actively participate in this creative process rather than being its passive and unwilling victim. This can have a profound effect on our lives. It is a transformation of the way we experience ourselves and the world we live in.

The Warring States Sages who developed Change as an Inner Way felt it was a companion or helper, a compassionate and knowing presence. Through *Yi* we can seize the moment (*shi*), changing and moving as fluidly as the creative force behind it. Change and its symbols were made to connect the *Yi* of the universe and the Way to our own *Yi*, our creative imagination, if we choose to use it.

On Translation

Though based on extensive scholarly work, my translations are poetic rather than historical. In the process of making them, I have learned the limitations as well as the advantages of an historical approach, just as I have learned the equal limitations of the received interpretive tradition. To present the voice of *Change* as a living voice, I have had to break with both the current scholarly approach which sees the book as limited to a particular period in time and culture, and with the

fixed set of meanings and associations that characterize both traditional Confucian and latter day Daoist perspectives.

To do this I employed several techniques. I worked directly from Chinese originals, not from other translations, using the received classical text (Harvard *Yenching* edition of the *Chou-I-che-chung*), modern reconstructions of Early Old Chinese and the “original *Yijing*,” many sources on Chinese myth and ritual, and the vast archeological discoveries that have revealed so much of the Three Dynasties period and its Neolithic predecessors.

Throughout this work I considered each Chinese character or phrase that is part of this on-going stream of divinatory language as having all its meanings simultaneously present, including loan words, protographs and cognates. I moved back and forth at will between archaic and classical meanings, considering all of them as simultaneously present. I saw the Name of each Figure as not only important, but as implicitly repeated in each line statement, following old models of parallel construction. I often used old meanings and alternate syntax to deconstruct the fixed interpretation and mood of the received tradition and reverse its de-mythologizing tendency. This is particularly relevant to classical China’s official attitude to women and the feminine, which reflects a Han and Song Dynasty categorization of the yin as morally inferior to the yang and as directly related to gender.

Tools for Change

The *Tools for Change*, the interpretive strategies developed for these translations, are a further attempt to break the stranglehold of the Han Dynasty system of yin-yang line analysis that served to inscribe and enshrine Confucian philosophy and morality in the text. They connect with the polyvalent syntax of old Chinese, in which most terms exist simultaneously as nouns, verbs in any person or tense, adjectives and adverbs.

Myths for Change

These versions of *Yijing* also give you the old myths, rituals and images that accompany the received tradition, a World of Change that was lost or hidden in the later development of the book. I have explored the myth and ritual clusters that lurk behind the figures of *Change* in an eclectic and iconoclastic manner, fusing archaic, classical and philosophical meanings in an attempt to tell the dynamic story of the time each figure implies.

Recasting the Vessel

All this is put at the service of bringing out and making available to the reader and user the real transformative power of the images by activating what we might call their archetypal levels, the place where they speak directly to deepest layers of our imagination. I attempted to reconstruct the oldest and most imaginatively sophisticated way of reading the omens of Change, a way that has been effectively lost for two thousand years. This way of looking at language reflects the holographic modeling that characterizes the archaic imagination as it seeks to describe the magical world in which we live.

If I have a metaphor for this endeavor, it is the work of re-constituting the Sacred Vessel through which we are connected to the world of the spirits. This process of melting and re-casting is found in the Pair 49 *Ge* and 50 *Ding*. It images a deep paradigm shift in a time of troubles that contains an injunction to “change Heaven’s mandates.” Such a shift in language and thought enables the past to speak to us and help us to navigate our own great change. Together, we may be able to imagine a possible future.

It is my profound hope that this step in the Great Enterprise, the task of living with and through Change with compassion for the *Wanwu*, the Myriad Beings or Ten Thousand Things, and with the skilful means to help them, might be of service to us all. Through the entrance this translation provides, we might find our own way to those rituals that once linked Heaven and Earth, fed the Great Ancestors and let their blessings flow. In the words of *Change*, spoken as I wrote this, “the Way to the Source is open.” It is our job to make the re-connection.