

**THE *CLASSIC OF*
CHANGES
OR *YIJING* 易經**

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What is the *Classic of Changes*?

An ancient work written by several different Chinese authors in the period from c. 800 BCE to c. 200 BCE.

易經



Like the Bible/Torah,
the Qu'ran, the
Bagavad Gita and the
Lotus Sutra, the *Yijing*
has long been a
“sacred scripture” in
China

Four ancient culture
heroes created the
document, without
divine assistance or
inspiration.

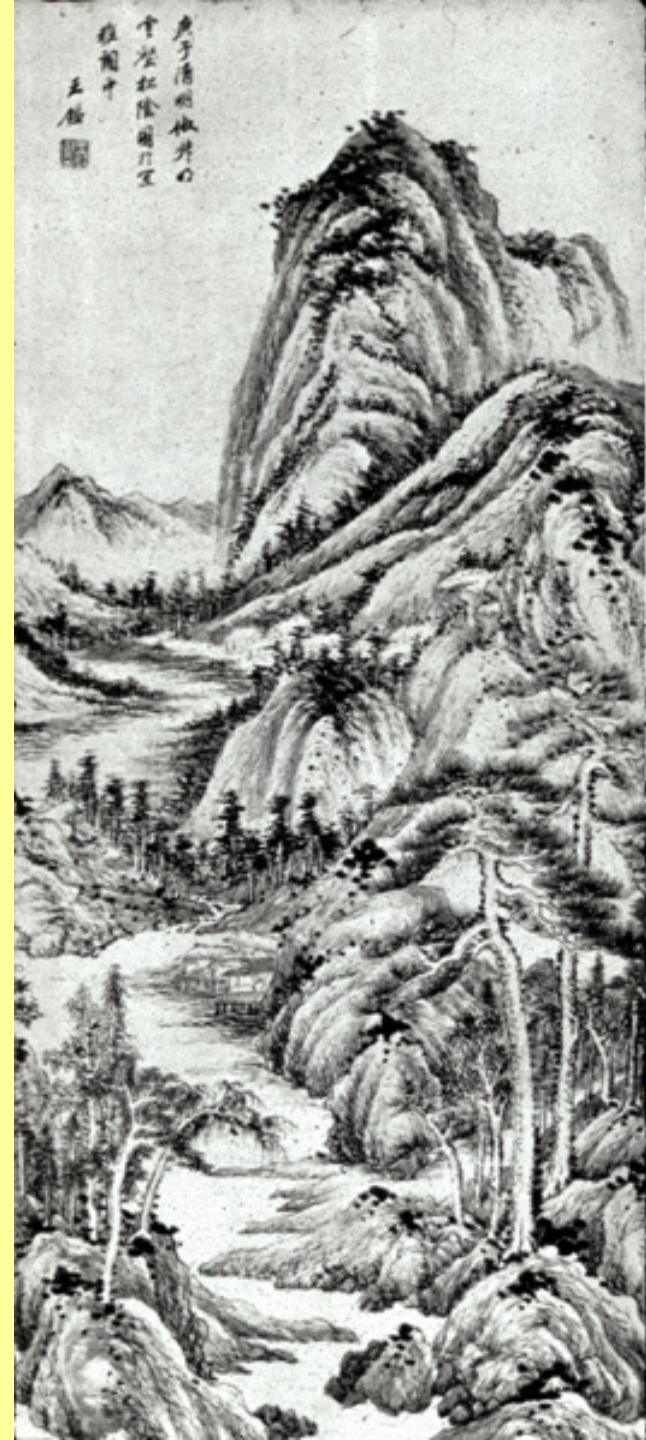


FOR OPENERS: THREE KEY CONCEPTS

Yin and yang 陰陽

Taiji 太極 (The Supreme
Ultimate)

Tian 天 (“Heaven”)





Yin and *Yang*: Creation, phases of change and categories



<i>Yin</i> 陰	<i>Yang</i> 陽
dark	light
passive	active
cold	hot
moist	dry
retreat	advance
contraction	expansion
emptiness	fullness
North	South
Autumn-Winter	Spring-Summer
square	round

The *Yijing* is based on eight three-lined symbols called trigrams



A UNIVERSAL ASSUMPTION IN
CHINA FOR WELL OVER TWO
THOUSAND YEARS:



The trigrams and
hexagrams of the
Yijing reveal
patterns of cosmic
change (“fate”)

By “knowing
fate,” one could
devise a moral
strategy for
coping with
difficulties and
dealing with
doubt



Each trigram has a
basic symbolic
meaning



Qian

Dui

Li

Zhen

Sun

Kan

Gen

Kun

Heaven

Lake

Fire

Thunder

Wind

Water

Mountain

Earth

And many other meanings as well. Here
are just a few:

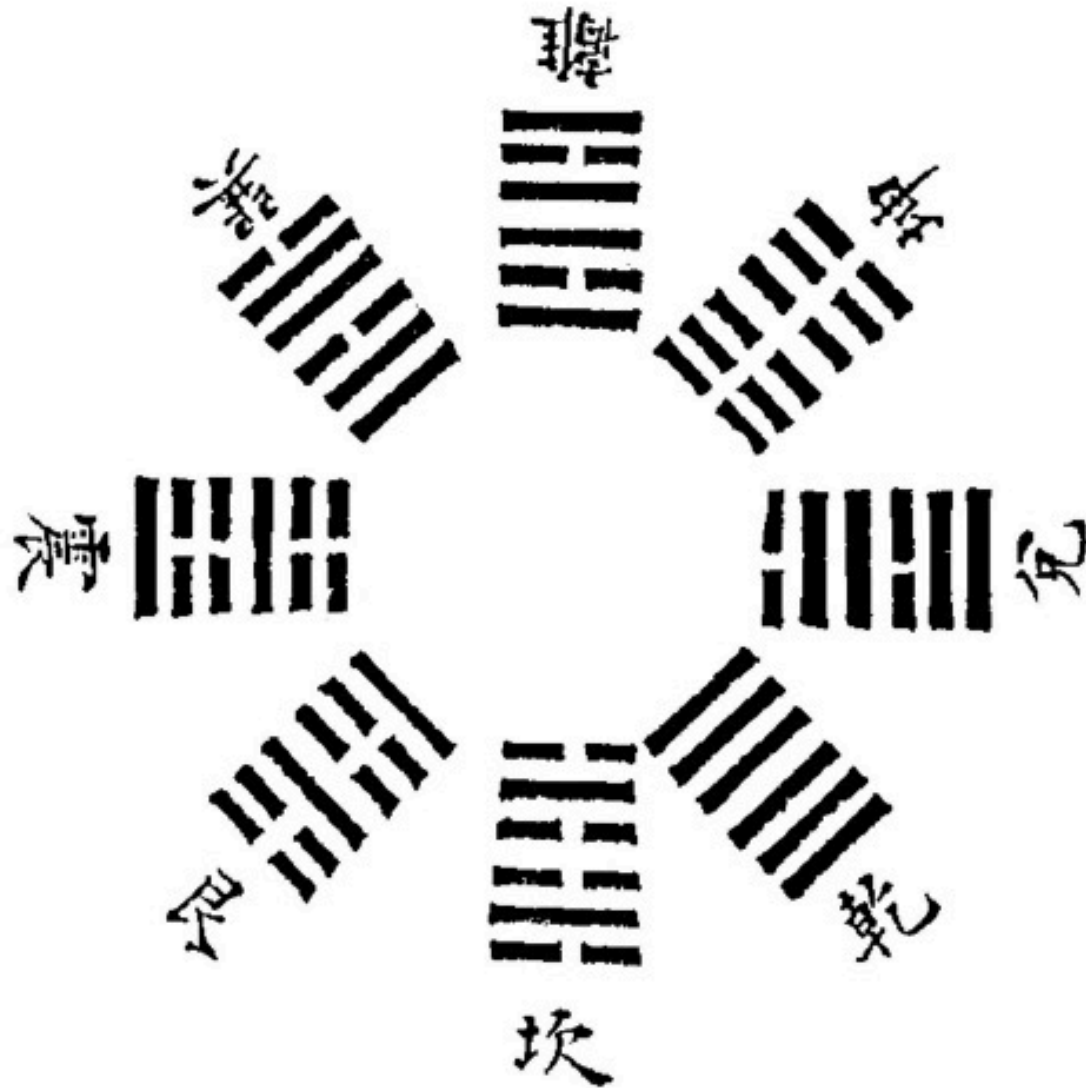
Name and trigram	Qian ☰ 乾	Kun ☷ 坤	Dui ☱ 兑	Li ☲ 離	Zhen ☳ 震	Xun ☴ 巽	Kan ☵ 坎	Gen ☶ 艮
Primary symbolism	Heaven	Earth	Lake	Fire	Thunder	Wind	Water	Mountain
Direction (King Wu)	NW	SW	West	South	East	SE	North	NE
Direction (Fuxi)	South	North	SE	East	NE	SW	West	NW
Agent	Metal	Earth	Metal	Fire	Wood	Wood	Water	Earth
Quality	strong 健	compliant 順	pleasing 悅	beautiful 麗	rousing 動	penetrating 入	sinking 陷	stable 止
Animal	horse	ox	sheep	pheasant	dragon	chicken	pig	dog
Body part	head	belly	mouth	eye	feet	thighs	ears	hands
Family member	father	mother	youngest daughter	middle daughter	eldest son	eldest daughter	middle son	youngest son



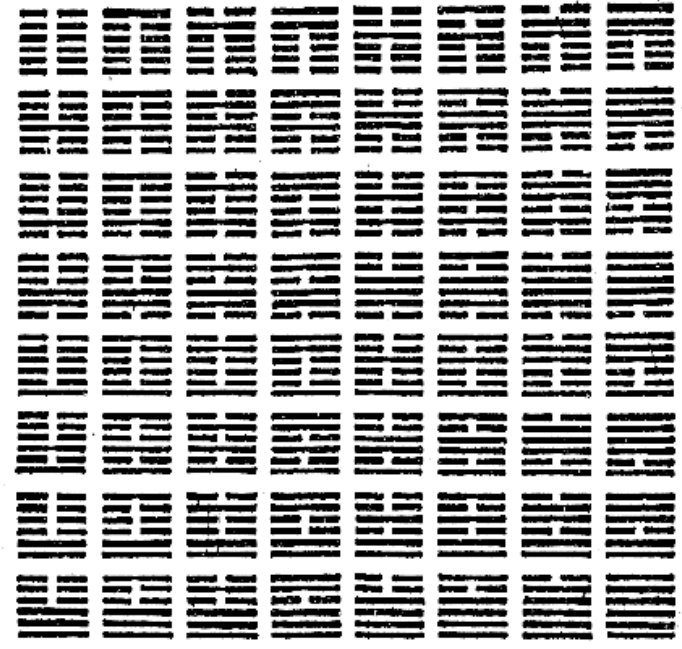
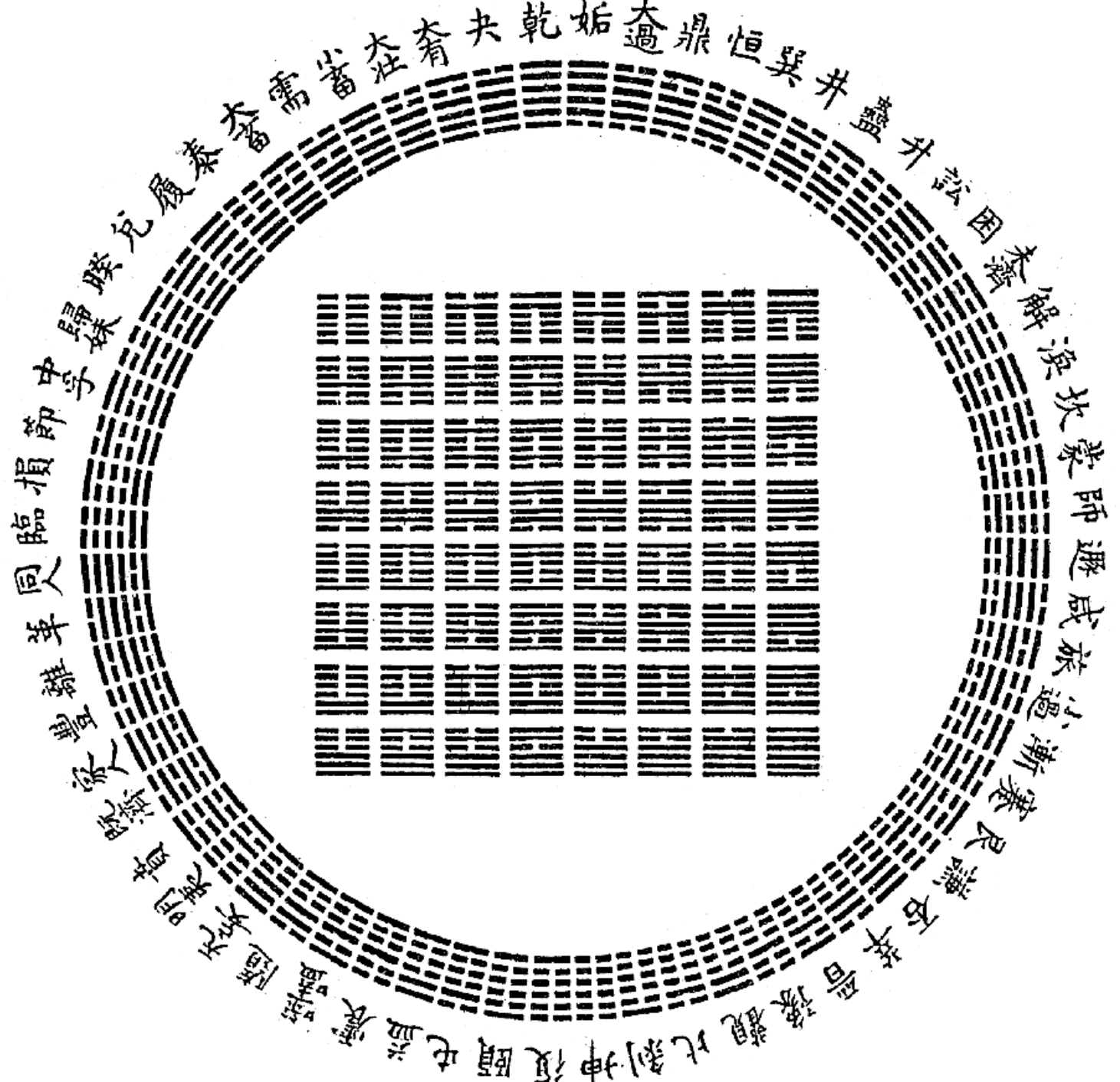
Qian 乾

Thus: Qian =
Heaven, activity,
creativity,
hardness, firmness,
the father, ordering,
controlling,
functioning like the
head, ruling, and
waging war.

圖 卦 八 王 文



When doubled, the eight trigrams produced sixty-four six-lined symbols called hexagrams



Each of the 64 hexagrams
had a name that explained
its basic meaning



Qian 乾 (assertive,
creative)



Kun 坤 (receptive,
responsive)



Tai 泰 (peace, greatness,
prosperity)



Pi 否 (obstruction,
stagnation, retrogression)



Gu 蠱 (poison,
corruption, decay)

A few other examples of hexagram symbolism

Kun 困 (distress, difficulty)

Ge 革 (changing, abolishing the old)

Jiaren 家人 (home and family)

Lü 旅 (a traveler or wanderer)

Song 訟 (litigation, dispute, conflict)

Dun 遁 (to hide, retreat, flee)

Tongren 同人 (fellowship, union)

Meng 蒙 (immaturity, inexperience)

The lines of the hexagrams also had symbolic significance, which was explained by written “line statements”

These statements, generally no longer than a sentence or two, described the evolution of the situation symbolized by the hexagram, beginning with the bottom line and proceeding in order to the top.

Tai 泰 (peace, prosperity)

Third line statement

Second line statement

First line statement

五支復貞厲

九五以剛中正履帝位而

无所疑礙故其象為夬決其履雖使得正亦危道也故其占為雖正而危為戒

深上九視履考祥其旋元吉

視履之終以考其祥

周旋无虧則得元吉占者禍福視其所履而未定也



泰小往大來吉亨

泰通也為卦天地交

而二氣通故為泰正剛之卦也小為陰大為陽言坤往居外乾來居內又自歸

妹來則六往居四九來居三也

初九拔

大易卷之三

泰卦

一

長

茅茹以其彙征吉

三陽在下相連而進按茅茹之象征行

之吉也占者陽剛則其征吉矣郭璞洞林請至彙字絕句下卦故此

九二

苞荒用馮河不遐遺朋亡得尚于中行

九二以剛居柔在下之中上有六五之應主乎泰而得中道者也占者能苞容

荒穢而果斷剛決不遺遐遠而不昵朋比則合乎此文中之道矣

九三

无平不陂无往不復艱貞无咎勿恤其

孚于食有福

將過乎中泰時極而否欲來之時也恤憂也孚所期

The first three line statements:

1. When ribbon grass is pulled up, it pulls up other plants of the same kind. [Collective] undertakings will bring good fortune.

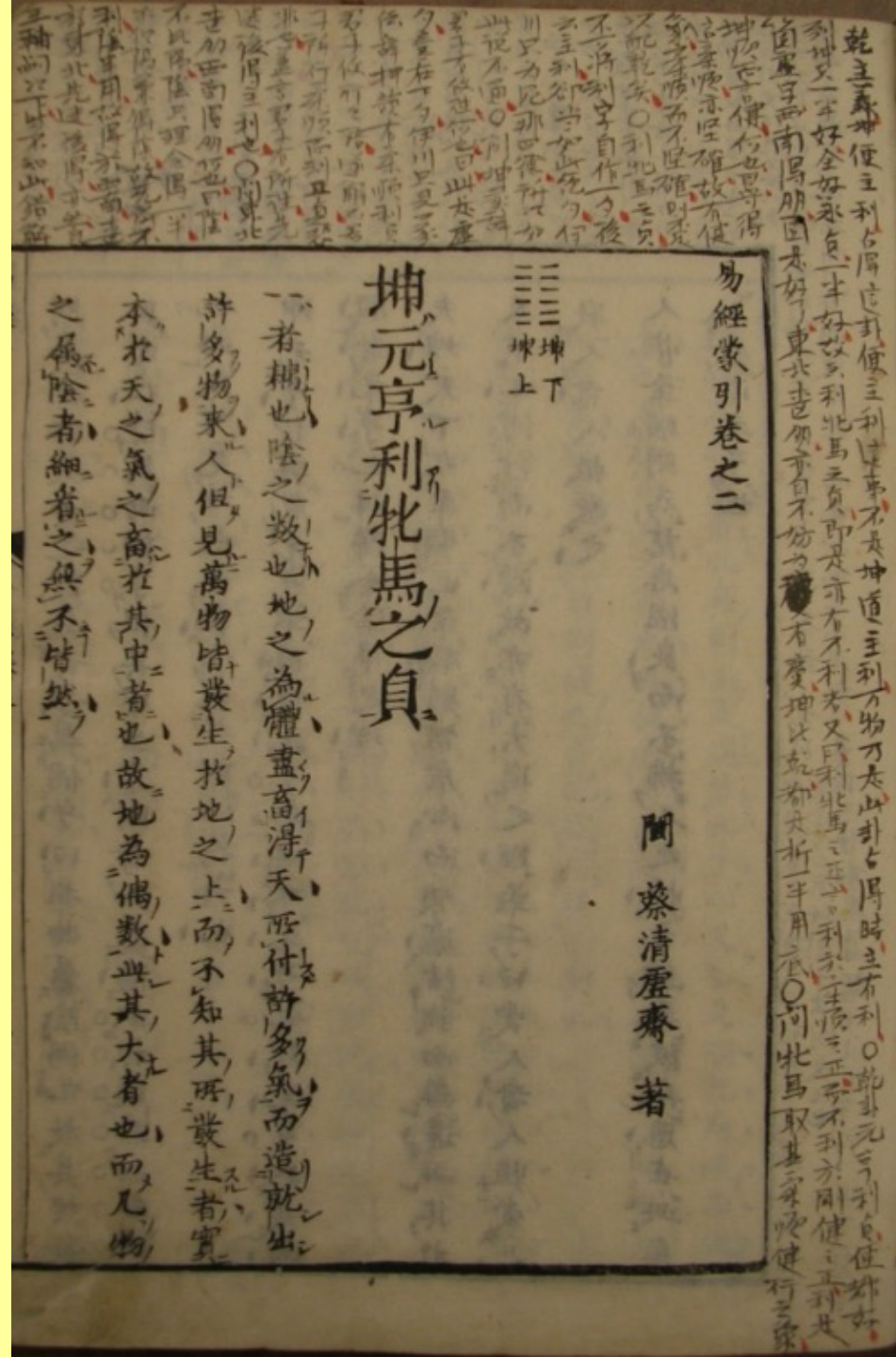
2. By putting up with the uncultured, fording the river with resolution, not neglecting those who are far away, and not [overly] favoring friends, one can manage to walk the middle path [achieve the Mean].

3. There is no flat area not followed by a slope; there is no departing without returning. One who is correct in the face of difficulty is without blame. One should not grieve [over a changing situation], but instead appreciate one's blessings.

Basically the message of these and subsequent lines is to seek allies, be careful, and remain upright in the face of change and adversity.

Three basic things to consider in consulting a hexagram:

1. Nature of the situation
2. One's position in it
3. Best time(s) and ways to act (or not act)

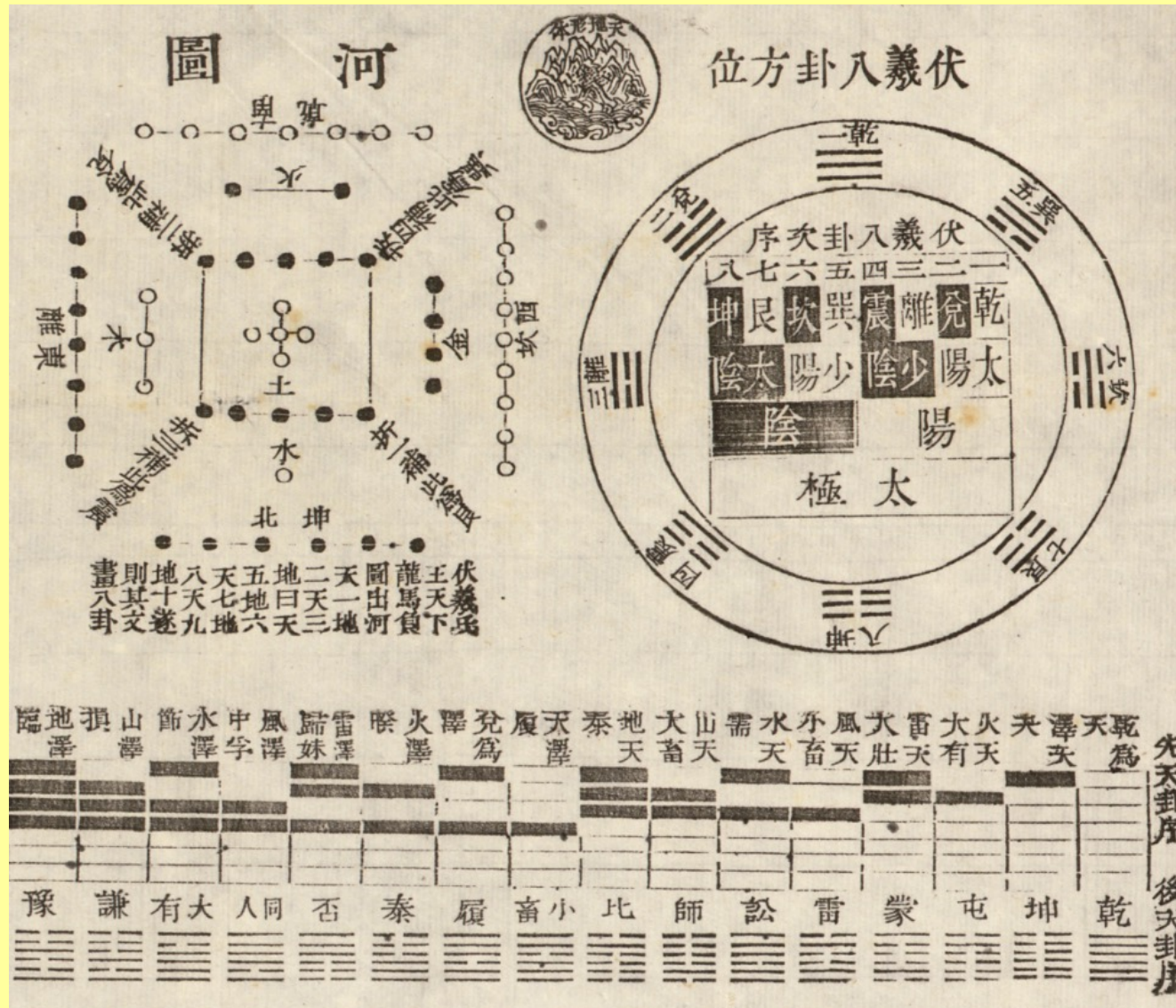


The complexity
of interpretation
(a book with
nine sets of
variables)

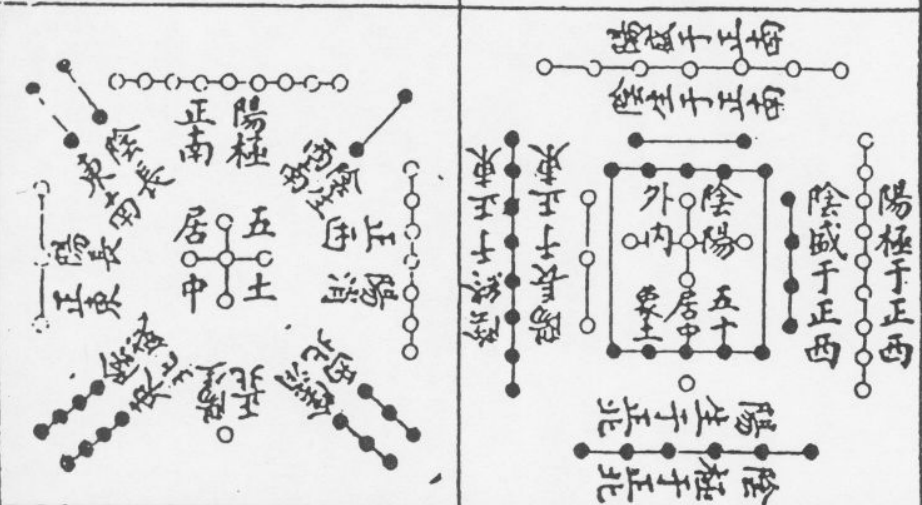
壽山堂易說

河洛三才四象五行六合七政
八卦九宮陰陽損益圖解

“Chart of the Unity of the Three Powers” (1722)



河圖天地交 洛書日月交



一三七九
陽也。天之
象也。二四
六八陰也。
地之象也。
即奇偶位
次而天地
之交見矣。

天地交則泰矣。易即嚴艱負於九三。日月交則既濟矣。易即謹衣衾于六四。君子因圖書而致慎于交也。深矣哉。若夫統觀河圖。除中五十。則外數三十。徑一圍三。故圓謂圖為天之象可也。統觀洛書。除中五數。則外數四十。徑一圍四。故方謂書為地之象亦可也。圖之數五十有五。其數奇而盈也。非日之象乎。書之數四十有五。其數偶而乏也。非月之象乎。潛神圖書者。可無反身之功哉。蓋天地日月之交。即吾人性命之理。始復之機也。果能以此洗心。退藏于密。天地交而一陽含于六陰之中。日月交而一貞完其純陽之體。則天地合德。日月合明。化生剋之神妙。不在圖書而在我矣。否則圖書固不當互相牽扯。而圖書自書。亦方圓奇耦之象數耳。於窮理盡性致命之學。何與哉。河圖天地交洛書日月交論

The need for commentaries

Over time,
thousands of
commentaries
were written to
explain how to
interpret the
trigrams and
hexagrams

周易大傳

讀懂周易
提振精神
把握命運



An example:

Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) commentary appears in small characters to the left of the larger characters in the middle of the page

其心寂然人莫能窺有事則神知之用
隨感而應所謂无卜筮而知吉凶也神
武不殺得其理而
是以明於天之道而
不假其物之謂
察於民之故是與神物以前民用聖人
以此齊戒以神明其德夫
神物謂著龜
湛然純一之
謂齊肅然警惕之謂戒明天道故知神
物之可與察民故故知其用之不可不
有以開其先是以作為卜筮以教人而
於此焉齊戒以考其占使其心神明不
測如鬼神之
是故闔戶謂之坤闔戶謂
能知來也

A partial translation of Zhu Xi's commentary

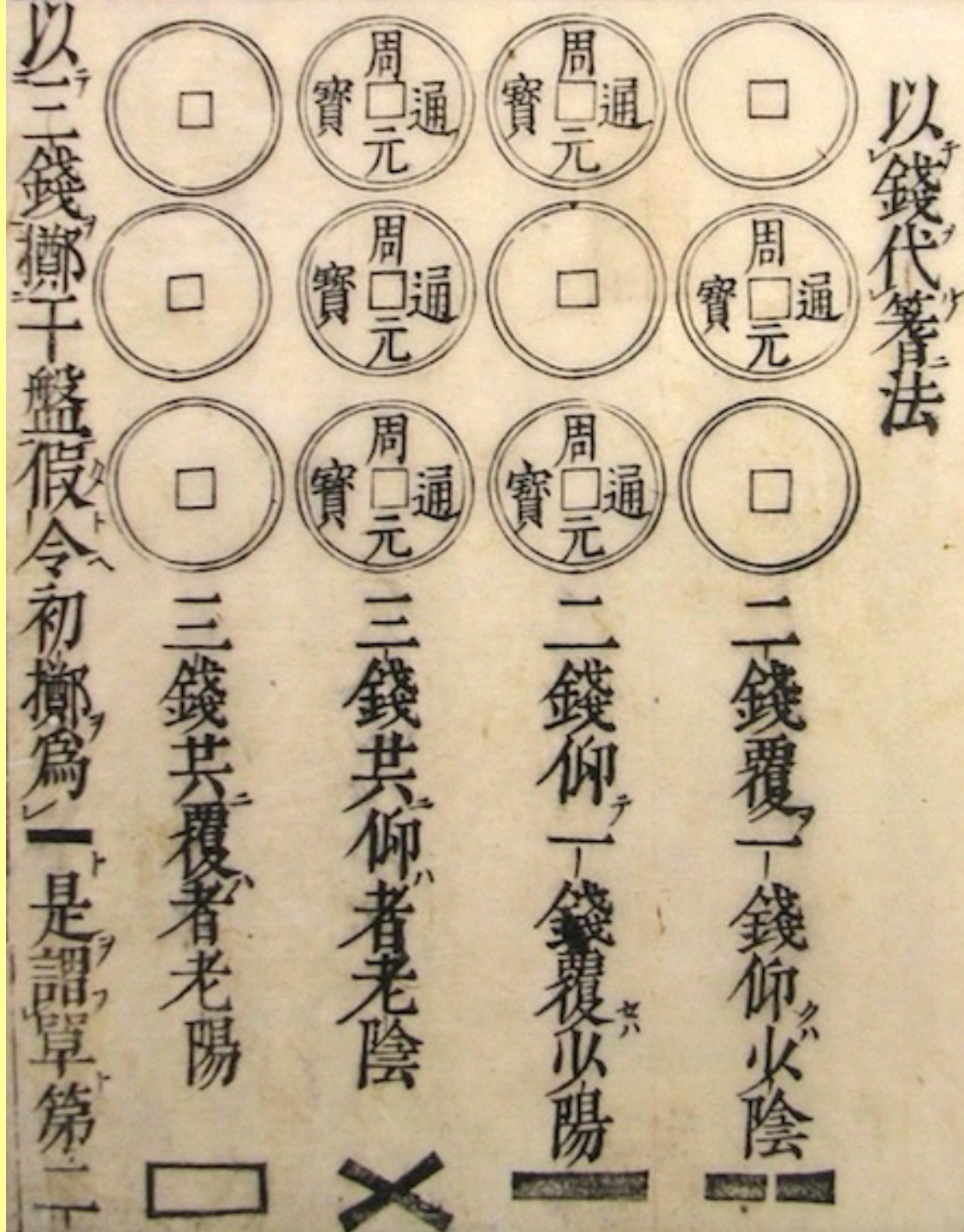
“Because the Sages ‘clarified the Way of Heaven,’ they understood that spiritually inspired divination was possible. And because they ‘examined the people’s circumstances,’ they understood that the future could be revealed to them. They therefore created milfoil divination to instruct people, on how . . . to make their minds spiritually clear.

The use of fifty milfoil stalks for selecting a hexagram is explained in an excellent video at <https://www.reed.edu/yijing-casting/> (you may want to write this URL down).





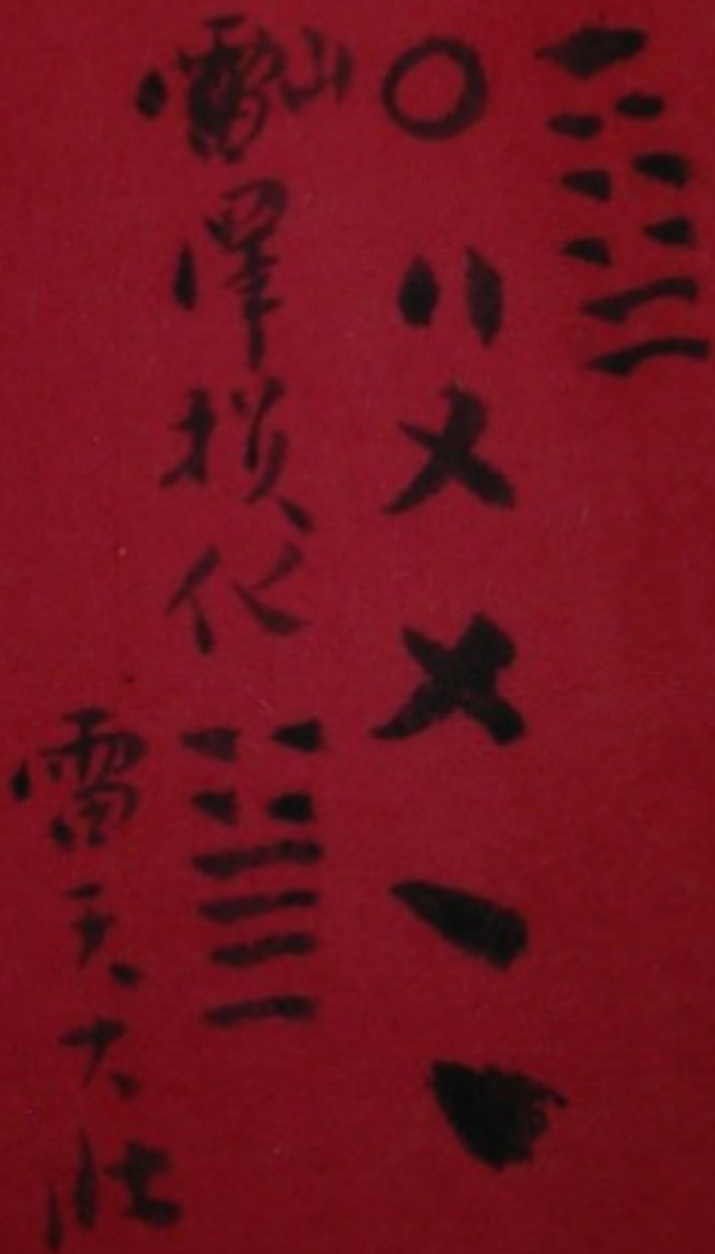
Another method:
coin divination



Sun 損 Be sincere and there will be good fortune and no blame. Persevere.

Dazhuang 大壯 It is fitting to practice perseverance.

We know that perseverance was required, but what was the situation?



DIVERSITY OF INTERPETATIONS

As the great scholar
Huang Zongxi (1610–95)
once noted, “The nine
traditions of philosophy
and the hundred schools
of thought have all drawn
upon [the *Yijing*] to
promote their own
theories.”



Thus, Confucians found Confucian meanings in the *Changes*, Daoists found Daoist meanings in it, and Buddhists found Buddhist meanings in it



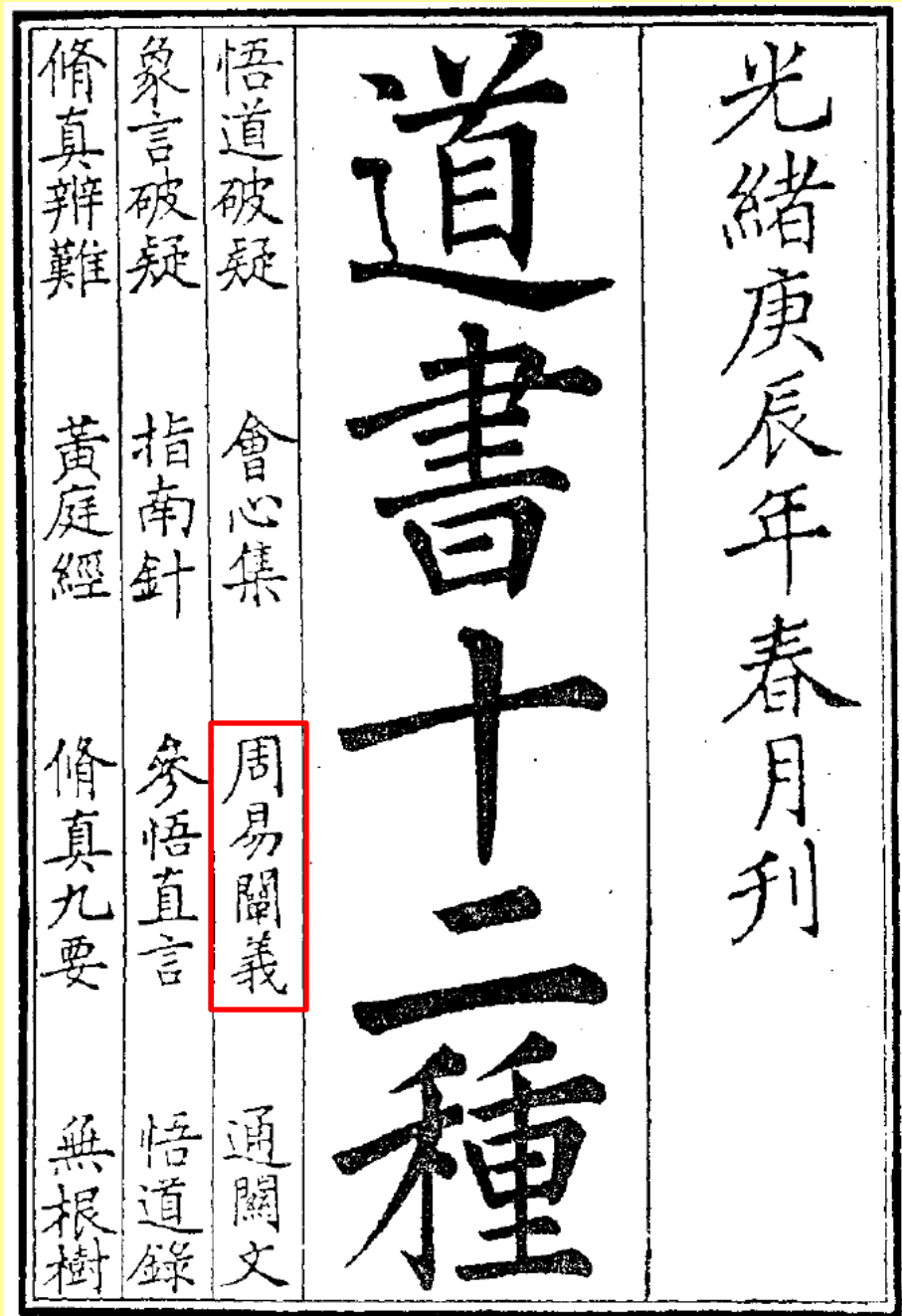
The Buddhist scholar named Ouyi Zhixu (1599–1655) wrote a book titled *A Chan [Zen] Interpretation of the Zhou Changes*, designed “to introduce Chan Buddhism into Confucianism in order to entice Confucians to know Chan.”

北天目道人藕益智旭著



瑞成書局

The Daoist cleric Liu Yiming (1724–1831) argued in *Elucidating the Truth of the Zhou Changes* that Daoist ideas of mental and alchemical refinement were perfectly compatible with Confucian notions of moral self-cultivation.



But most *Yijing* commentaries were “Confucian.” The dominant figure was Zhu Xi (1130–1200), whose interpretations of the work were considered “orthodox” by the Chinese state for six hundred years, from the fourteenth century into the early twentieth.



THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *YIJING*

What does a
text like the
Changes tell
us about
traditional
China?



Some opinions on the *Changes*

Confucius (c. 551–
479 BCE.):

“[The *Yijing*] is
broad and great,
complete in every
way.”



Cheng Yi (1033–
1107 CE): [The
Changes]
“conjoins
everything [in the
universe], from the
darkness and
brightness of
Heaven and Earth
to the minuteness
of insects, grasses,
and trees.”



Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692):
“[The *Yijing*] is the
showcase for sagely
achievement. Spirit
operates within it . . . the
great utility of
humaneness and right
behavior issues forth from
it; the calculation of order
and disorder, good and
bad fortune, life and death
is in accordance with it.”



蘇氏易傳卷之一

三三乾上乾下乾元亨利貞初九潛龍勿用

乾之所以取于龍者以其能飛能潛也飛者其
正也不得其正而能潛非天下之至健其孰能
之

九二見龍在田利見大人

飛者龍之正行也天者龍之正處也見龍在田
明其可安而非正也

宋



蘇軾子瞻

著



It sheds light on:

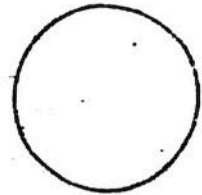
- Language
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Arts and crafts
- Literature
- Social customs
- Science
- Medicine

Preference for *yinyang*-style
contrasts in writing

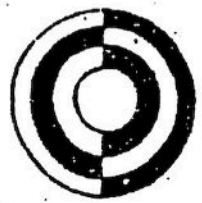
Heaven is honorable,
Earth is lowly; thus **Qian**
and **Kun** are fixed. With the
display of the **lowly** and
high, the **honored** and
humble are positioned.
Activity and **stillness** are
constant, determining the
firm and **yielding** lines.

天尊地卑。乾坤定矣。卑高以陳。貴賤位
矣。動靜有常。剛柔斷矣。方以類聚。物以
羣分。吉凶生矣。在天成象。在地成形。變

易有太極

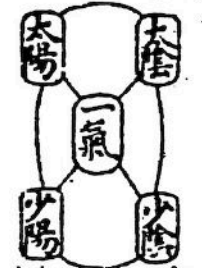


是生兩儀



分陰分陽

兩儀生四象



四象生八卦



周子太極圖與易繫辭表裏相合

Key concepts:
— *yin* and *yang*
— *Taiji* 太極
(The Supreme Ultimate)
— *Xiang* 象
(Heavenly images)
— *Xing* 形
(Earthly forms)

All major religions in China used the symbolism of the *Yijing*—even counter-cultural religious societies like the Eight Trigram rebels of the early 19th century and the Taiping rebels later in the century.







月

日



以 諸佛勅



太歲

乙丑年陳泰

星君到此鎮



北斗星君 勅令六丁夫兵 勅令招財進寶 勅令合家平安

太陽星君 勅令宙神將 勅令天官賜福 勅令鎮宅光明



太陽星君

北斗星君

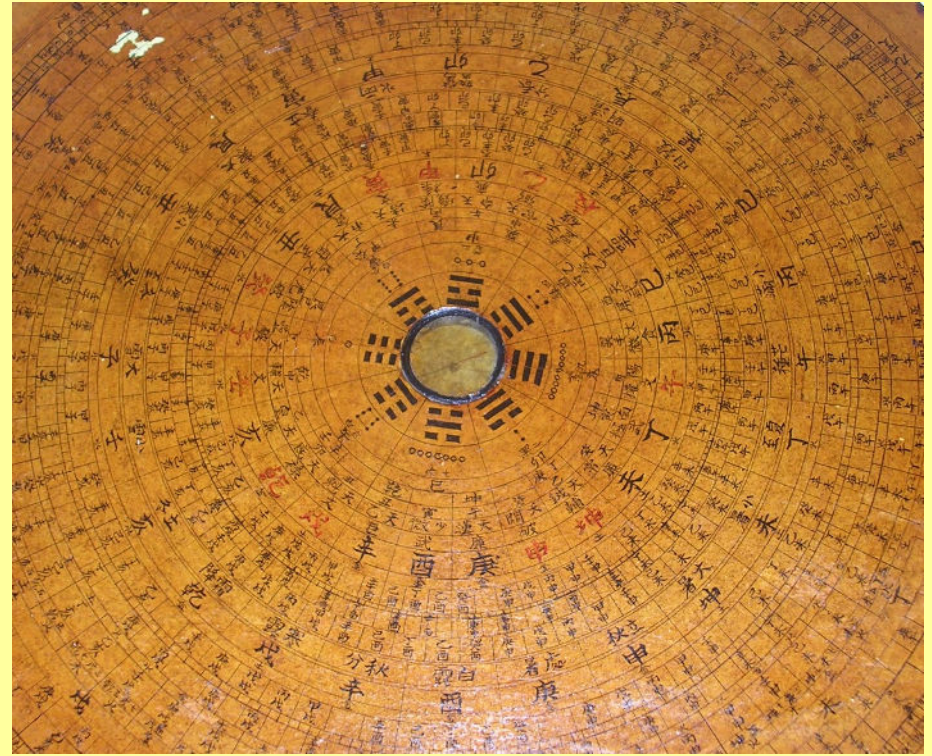
南斗星君

太陰星君

八卦祖師 勅令太歲

勅令天官賜

勅令招財進寶



Virtually all major Chinese systems of divination, including *fengshui* or geomancy, were based on symbols derived from or directly related to the *Yijing*.

Yijing-based inscriptions in the Forbidden City



正大光明

奉正萬邦慎厥身脩恩永

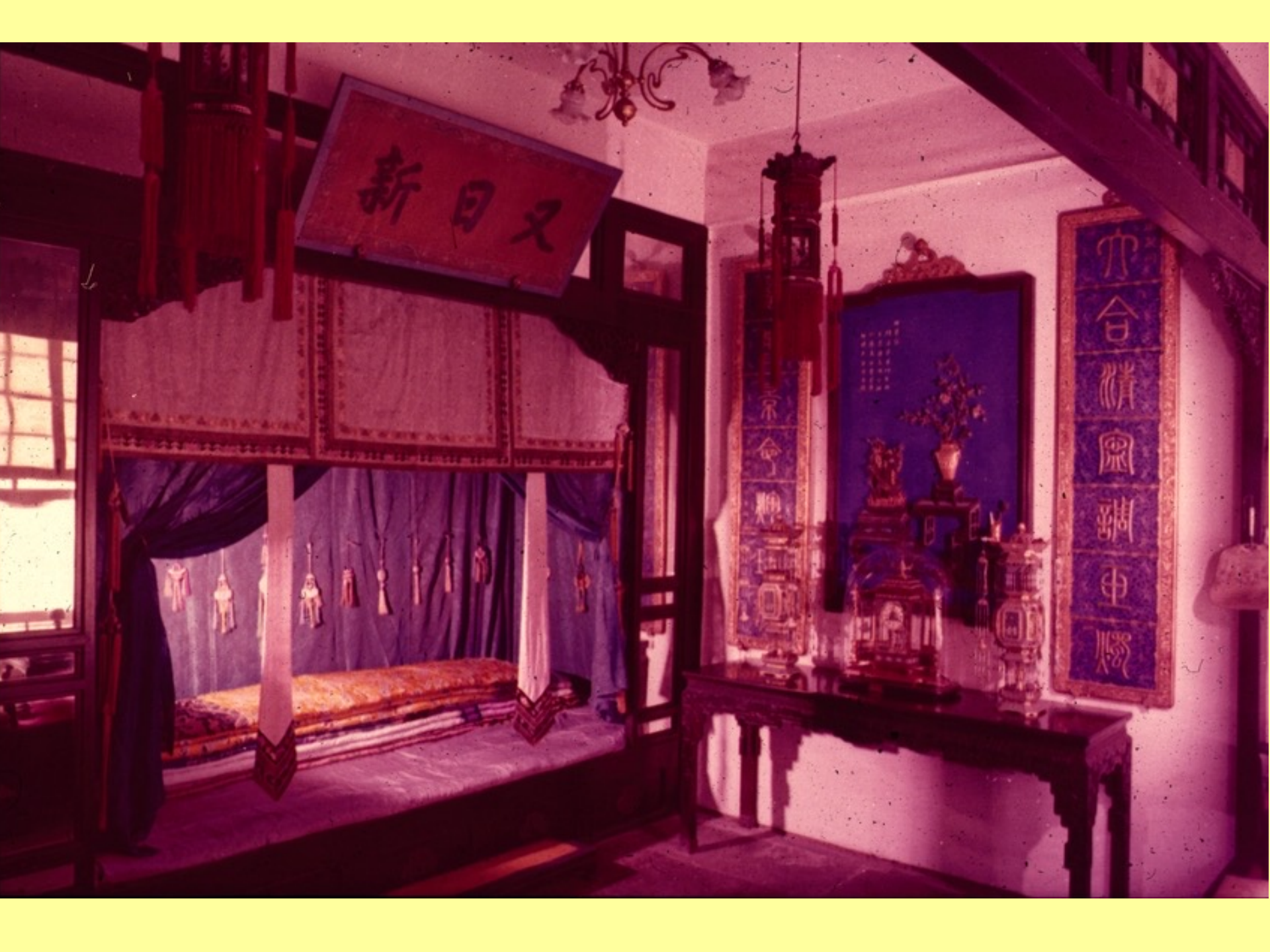
克寬克仁



惟精惟一

弘敷五典無輕民事惟難

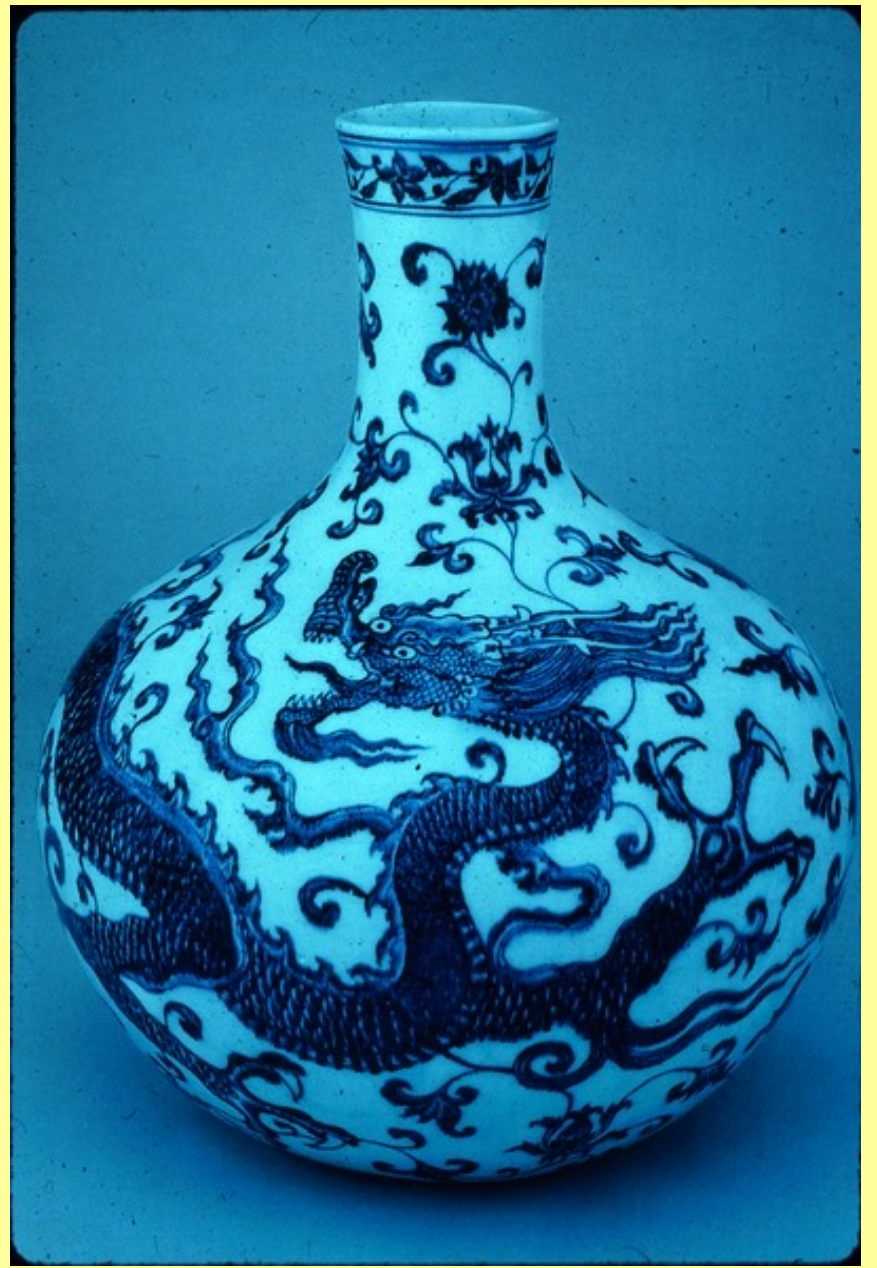




又日新

景令卿

六合風調雨順

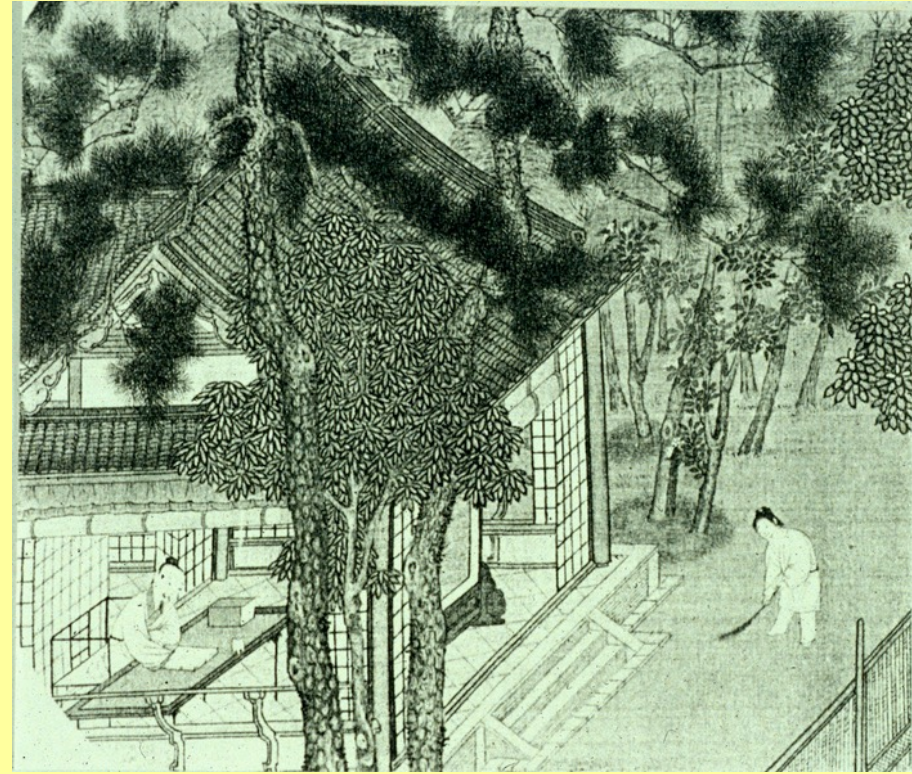
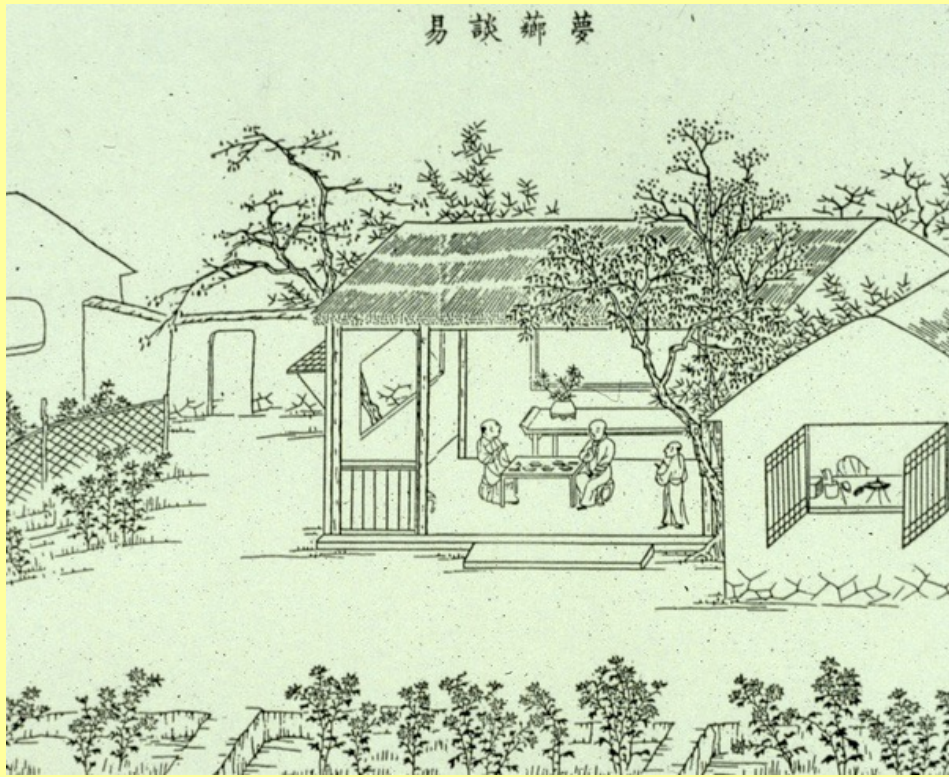








“Discussing the *Changes* with Mengxiang” (left) and
“Studying the *Changes* amidst the Pines” (right)



“Confucius Teaching the *Yijing*”



Yijing symbolism in literary and musical criticism. The hexagram Bi (#22), for example, stood for beauty, grace and simplicity of form. Thus, Yuan Mei (1716–1797), justifies his preoccupation with landscape gardens by reference to “the grace [Bi] of hills and gardens.”



Excerpt from a poem by Gao
Panlong (1561–1626)

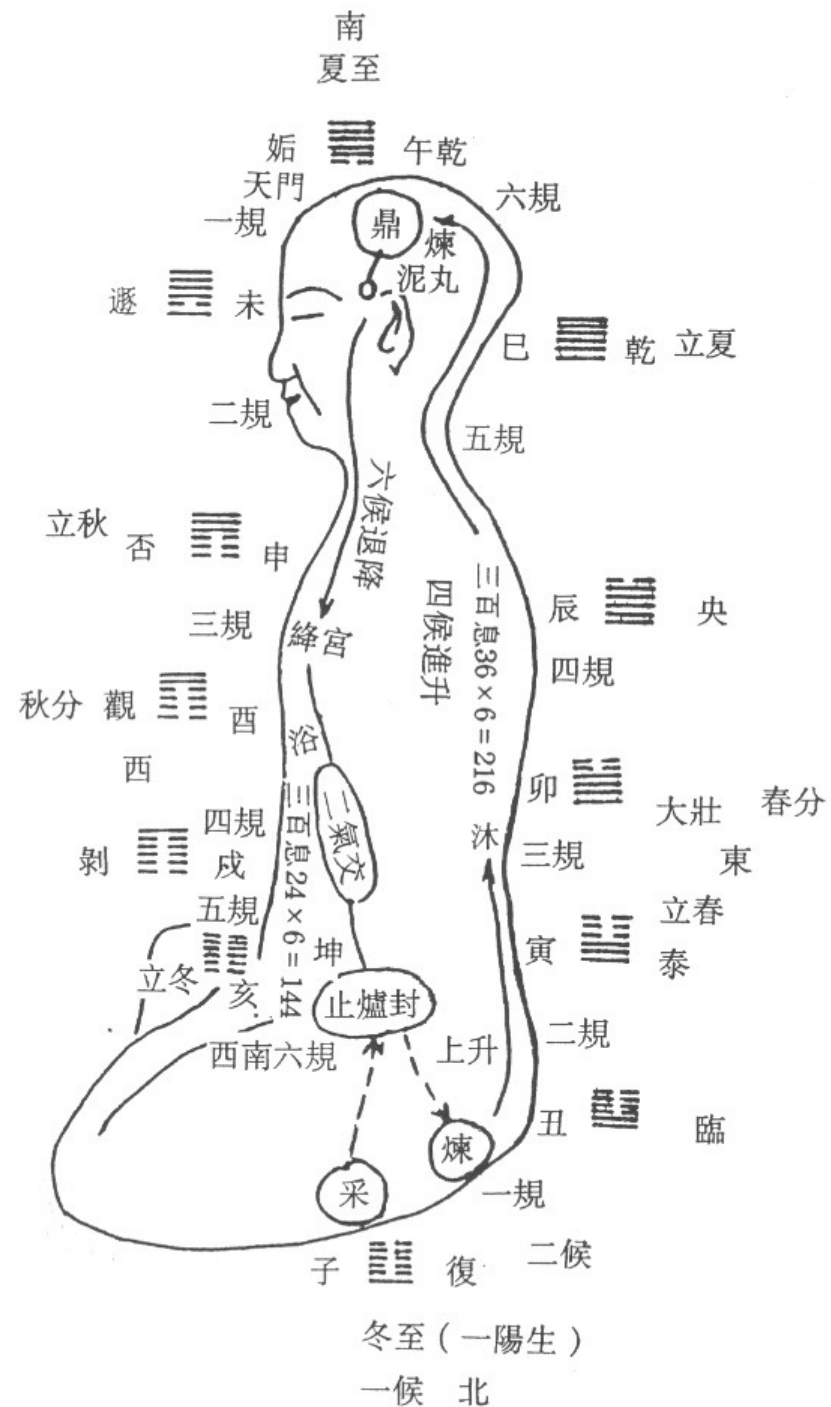
Seeing the *Changes*, it is necessary to
employ the *Changes*;

The early sages emphasized nothing but
centrality and commonality [the Mean].

When firmness and yielding are manifest,
availing of the incipient moment [of
change] brings good fortune.

When centrality and correctness are lost,
action results in misfortune.

Trigram and hexagram symbolism was central to explaining nearly everything about traditional Chinese science and medicine. Here, hexagrams are correlated with the body, the seasons and the cardinal directions



Some
examples of
the *Yijing*'s
influence in
modern
Chinese life







Decorations and divining sticks in a contemporary Taiwan temple dedicated to Fuxi, the ancient Chinese culture hero credited with inventing the trigrams







THE TRAVELS OF THE *YIJING* IN EAST ASIA

The key common denominator: **The classical Chinese language**, which could be read by any literate person in Japan, Korea and Vietnam

Like Latin in the premodern West



THE *YIJING* 易經 (*EKIKYO*) IN JAPAN



子夏曰元始言通利和貞正也言若乾坤交也乾天地交為泰序卦曰泰者通也伊藤氏曰程氏後文言首章說解意德
朱子則從諸卦象
說解為百餘

荀爽曰天行之數五
十云乾初九潛龍
勿用故用四十九初
九元也即太極也
極也三爻三行
之數虛不用耳
非勿用二字他卦
亦有

甲上乾与坤傍通
坤田上故ニ云フ
荀氏曰大人天子
ヲ云フ田上テ地ニ
云サレ田上則稼
利益見

三

此卦下乾ニレテ上亦乾故ニ乾ト云天徳ニ君徳ニ伏羲氏八卦ヲ作り即
千重子テ六十四卦トス○元亨利貞コレヲ象ノ辞ト云文王ノ作り玉フ処一
卦ノ惣体ヲフトリ玉フ辞ニ多ク断シトテ一卦ノ惣体ヲ断ル義ニ元ト象ハ
大ニレテ象ニ頭ヲ拳レハ入王体ニナ見エ故ニヲ取テ一卦ノ惣體ヲ断ル辞ノ
名トス○初九潜龍初九ヨリ上九ニ至レ迄ノ辞ヲ象ノ辞ト云周公ノ作り玉テ
処也伏羲六陽爻ノ卦ヲ乾ト名ク乾ニ元亨利貞四徳備ハレリ固公マ
夕一爻ノニ辞ヲ作りテ其義ヲアラワシ人ニ知ラシム一五三七九コレヲ陽ノ數トス
二四十六コレヲ陰ノ數トス九ハ老陽ノ數ニ九ヨリ易ハ爻易ヲ尊フ陽ミテ最
モ初ニテリ故ニ初九ト云其少陰少陽ハ易ニ載セハス比白老陽老陰ヲ以テ沙
汰シ玉ヘリ老ハ爻ニ少ハ爻ニ又故ニ初九爻ノ初ヨリ三ニ至ルニテ巽卦ニ
巽ヲ入トス故ニ潜ト云龍ハ乾卦象也○九ニ爻シテ初ヨリ三ニ至ルニテ

序



易易學乎哉昔聖人讀義文
諸索而慨狀以思曰書不盡
言言不盡意則十翼固為三
聖人解經也乃為三聖解者
復多不盡之肯又煩後之人

Uragami Gyokudo
(1745–1820), “Reading
the *Classic of Changes*
in the Cloudy
Mountains” (dimensions:
about 6 feet tall)



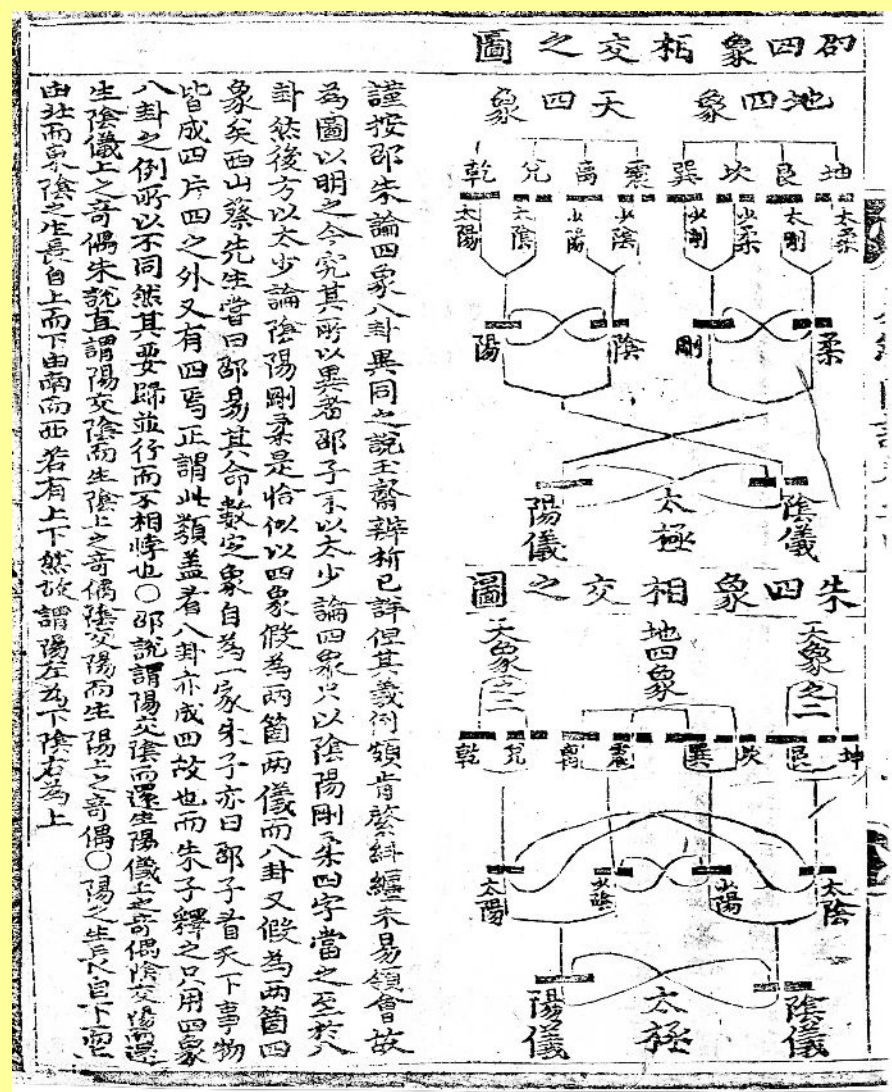
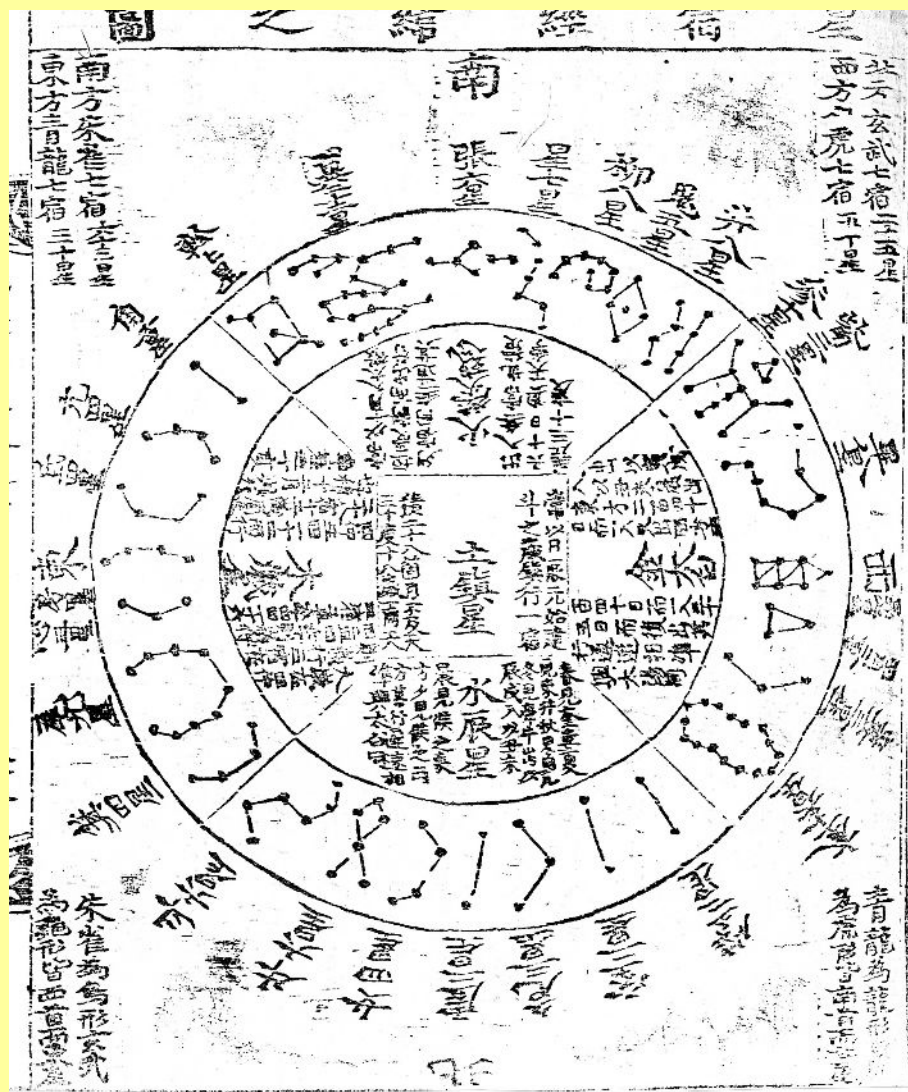
“Domestication” of the *Changes*

Jiun Sonja (1718-1804),
The [Chinese authors of
the *Changes*] copied our
ancient divination . . . in
formulating the text and
style of the *Ekikyo*. The
whole book is completely
borrowed from us [the
Japanese].”



THE YIJING 易經 (*YOKKYONG*) IN KOREA



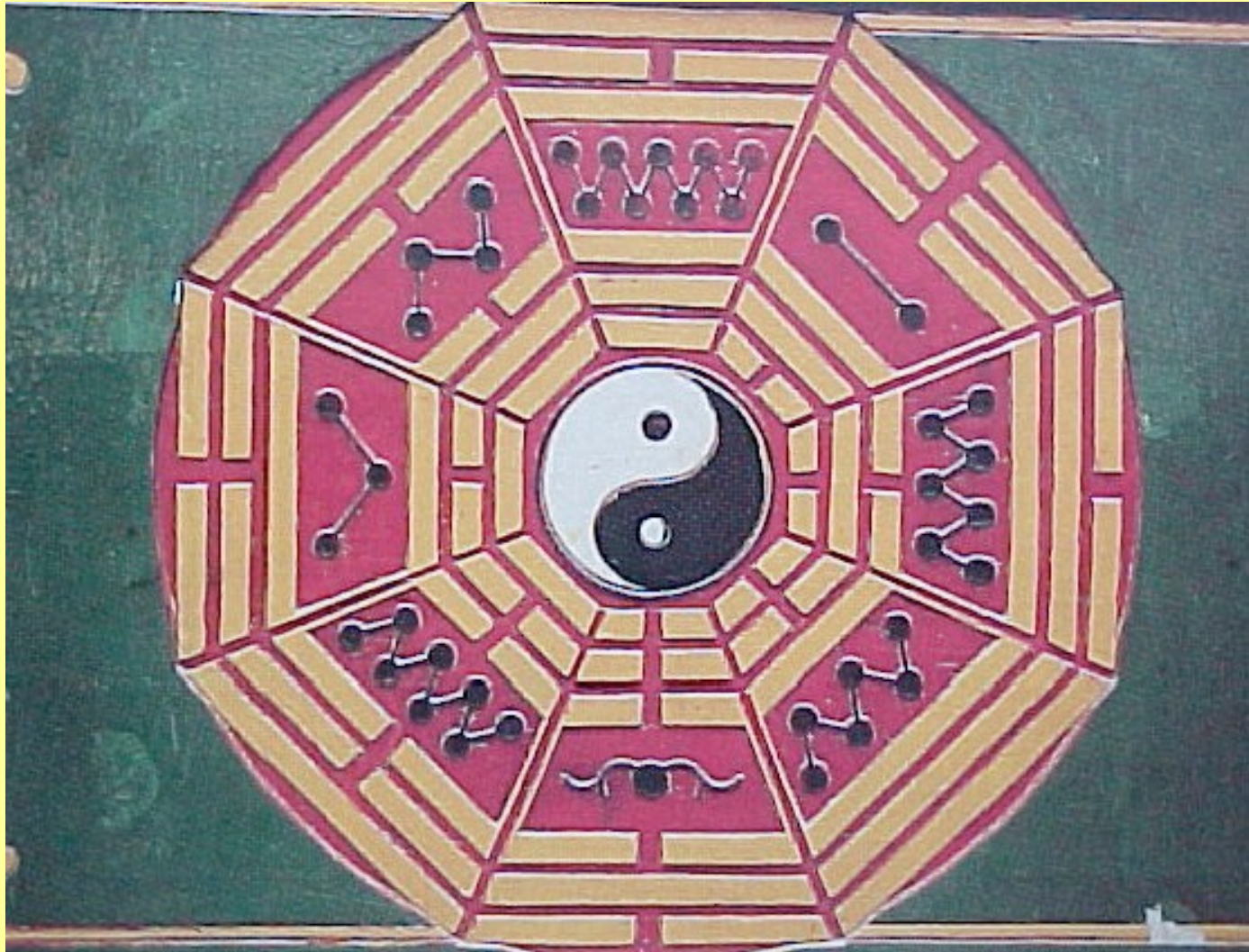


Original *Yijing* illustrations by Chang Hyon-gwang (1554-1637)

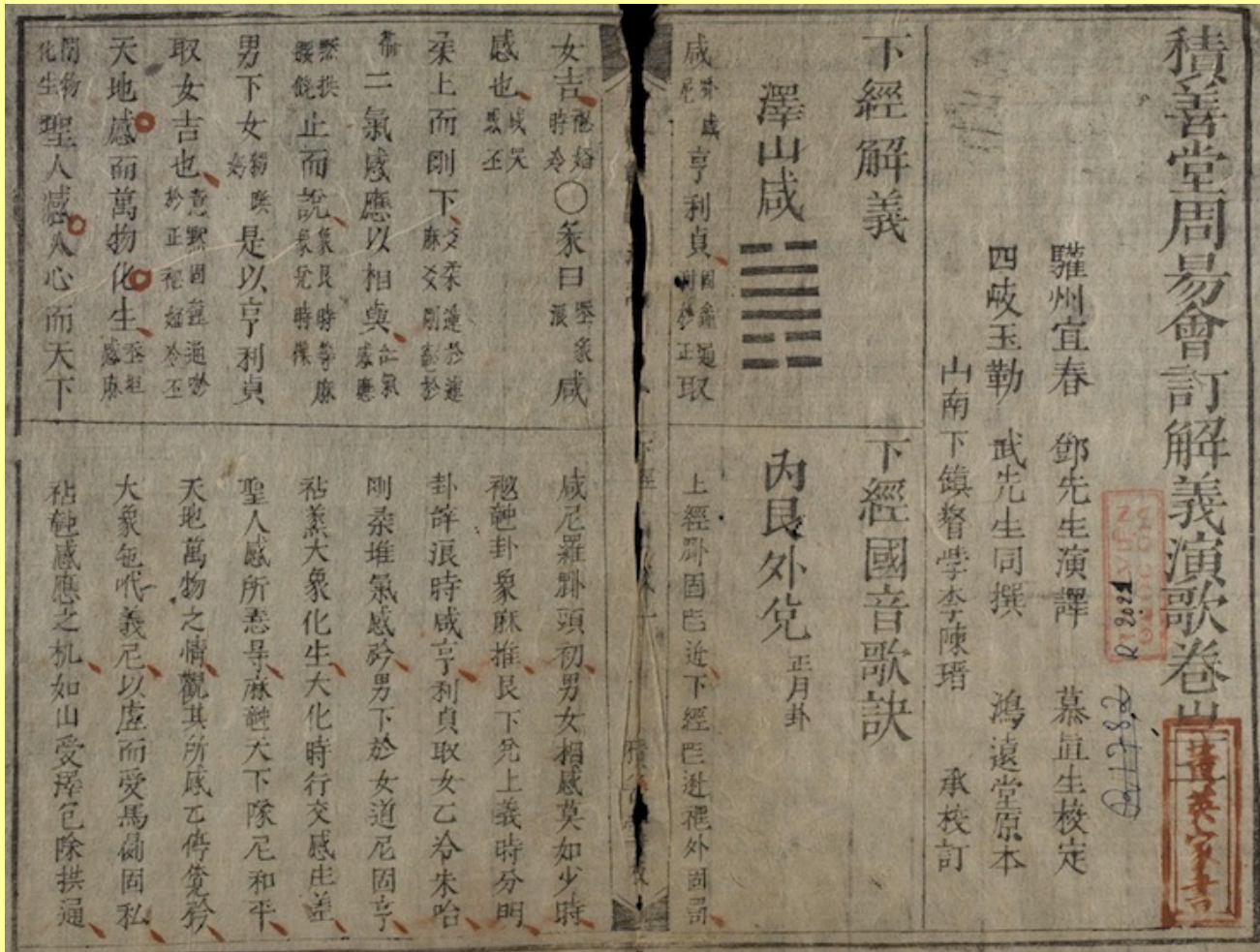
Korean representations of the *yinyang* symbol



THE YIJING 易經 (*DỊCH KINH*) IN VIETNAM



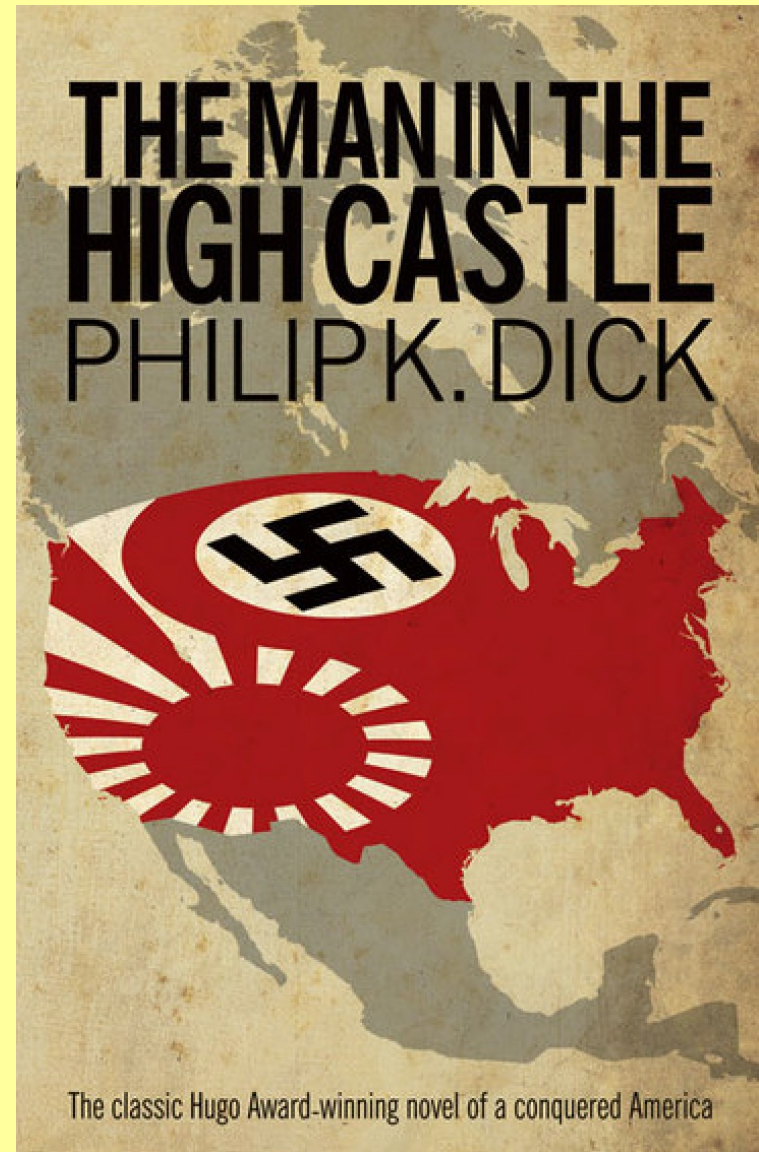
Đặng Thái Bàng's Zhou Changes in National Pronunciation (1815).



The classical Chinese text with *Nôm* annotations above; *Nôm* verses corresponding to it below

THE *YIJING* IN THE WEST

A great many creative people in the West have been influenced by the *Yijing*, including I.M. Pei, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Philip Dick, Allen Ginsberg, Octavio Paz, Jorge Luis Borges, and Bob Dylan



The problem of
translating Chinese
works into Western
languages





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