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by Kiang Kang-hu

# THE YI CHING OR "THE BOOK OF CHANGES"

BY

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The *Yi Ching* or "The Book of Changes" is the first of the Five Classics and was compiled by Confucius. Confucius not only compiled it, but also made for it ten commentaries, which are named the "Ten Wings" and are a great part of "The Book of Changes" to-day. According to "The Confucian Analects," he started to study "The Book of Changes" when he was fifty years of age, and he was so fond of it that three copies of it were worn out by his repeated reading.

"The Book of Changes" is the most ancient book existing, not only in Chinese, but probably in any human language. It is known as the book edited by four sages. The first, the Emperor Fu Hsi of 3,000 B.C., made the sixty-four diagrams; the second, King Wen of the Chou Dynasty, wrote the *Tuan Tsu*, the words under each diagram; the third, Duke Chou, the youngest son of King Wen, added the *Yao Tsu*, the words under each stroke of the diagrams; and the fourth, Confucius attached to it the "Ten Wings," some of which explain the general meaning of the whole book and others indicate the particular significance of each diagram or each stroke of a diagram.

The whole work can be divided into two parts; the first, the main text and the second, Confucius' commentaries. The first part is again divided into two sections of sixty-four chapters and 384 paragraphs. Each chapter is under a diagram, and each paragraph is under a stroke of the diagram. Every diagram has six strokes which are horizontal lines either single thus — or two broken parts thus — —. The former type of stroke represents the *Yang*, or the positive principle, while the latter represents the *Ying*, or the negative principle.


"The Book of Changes" is a most mysterious work and so allows of all kinds of interpretations. Each of the interpretations may express certain points of its truth to certain extents, but no one can be sure of the full understanding or accurate explanation of the whole. The writings of the *Tuan Tsu* and *Yao Tsu* and even the "Ten Wings" are so rich and profound, or, in other words, they are so unclear and uncertain, that they comprise great complicated thoughts and phenomena, and lead to different or even contradictory explanations. As Confucius said in his commentary, "The benevolent one sees in it benevolence while the wise one sees in it wisdom;" while the Chinese proverb says: "The shallow man sees its shallowness, while the deep man sees its depth." Above all the text and the commentaries, the drawing of the diagrams and the construction of the book is itself a great puzzle to all generations of mankind.

Viewing the above-stated condition, we see that we can never expect to obtain an exact knowledge of this book by depending on any com-

mentator, and that we have finally to try by ourselves employing our own rational judgment and bringing it to a reasonable conclusion, which may, as we think, be the nearest to the truth. In accordance with this theory, I beg to submit to the readers the following outline which is made after reading over more than five hundred commentaries, and there are still some points entirely independent of them.

"The Book of Changes" is a deductive philosophy of cosmology and sociology. It admits but one beginning of the whole universe presented always under two aspects. This oneness is called the *T'ai Chi* or the "Great Origin." This is presented by, or gives birth to, the two principles which are called the *Liang Yi* or the "Double Forms." One of them is the *Yang*, or the positive principle, and the other the *Ying*, or the negative principle. From these two a double number of four are produced. They are called the *Ssu Hsiang* or the "Four Designs." Double these four and the *Pa Kua*, or the "Eight Diagrams," are produced and completed. The Eight Diagrams multiply themselves and make Sixty-four Diagrams altogether as the whole.

The Eight Diagrams and the Sixty-four Diagrams are all shown in "The Book of Changes." The Great Origin, the Double Forms, and the Four Designs are mentioned in Confucius' commentary, yet their pictures were unknown until as late as the Sung Dynasty, when the Five Great Orthodox Philosophers brought them to the world through their teacher Ch'en T'uan, a profound scholar of Taoism as well as of Confucianism. It has since been commonly believed that these pictures were secretly handed down from Confucius' time; but, as the proof of this fact is rather weak and obscure, many doubts and disagreements arise among other schools. Despite all questions and criticism however, these pictures are very interesting and seem to be near to the truth. The Great Origin

is illustrated thus . The white part is the positive while the

black part is the negative. The white dot in the black half and the black dot in the white half are to show that the extreme negative force brings the birth of a positive element and the extreme positive force brings the birth of a negative element. The Double Forms are illustrated as  $\text{—}$  and  $\text{— —}$ . The former is the positive and the latter the negative and by these two types all diagrams are made as already stated. The Four Designs are illustrated  $\text{===}$ ,  $\text{— — —}$ ,  $\text{= =}$ ,  $\text{===}$ . The first is the *T'ai Yang*, or the Major Positive, the second is the *Hsiao Yang*, or the Minor Positive, the third is the *T'ai Yin*, or the Major Negative, and the fourth is the *Hsiao Yin*, or the Minor Negative. All these signs are supposed to have been in existence before the Eight Diagrams were formed, and, in fact, each becomes a part of certain diagrams with the exception of the Great Origin  $\text{—}$ , the one and the all.

As to how the Eight Diagrams were made, Confucius tells us: "When the Emperor Fu Hsi was ruling the Under-Heaven, he looked upwards at the designs in the Heaven and downwards at the methods of the Earth, he saw the figures of birds and animals and all products from

the land, he took the measure inwardly from his body and outwardly from the universe, and then, he began to make the Eight Diagrams in order to translate the virtue of God and to classify the dispositions of ten thousand things." On another occasion Confucius said: "From the Ho river came the 'picture' and from the Lo river came the 'Writing.'" In accordance with these, the ancient sage was enabled to draw the diagrams. But, both the form of the 'picture' and that of the 'writing' were entirely unknown until Ch'en T'uan published them with other sacred pictures. This again invited many and even more criticism and questions. As this 'picture' and 'writing' are only of indirect relation and so of less importance than the Eight Diagrams, I omit them here.

The Eight Diagrams are the roots of the Sixty-four Diagrams and therefore the roots of "The Book of Changes." We are not able to study all the Sixty-four Diagrams separately, but we must have some knowledge on the individual, Eight Diagrams as to their forms, their names, their relations, and their symbolic meanings. They are each composed of three strokes of either the *Yang* or the *Ying*, and arranged in various orders. The first form of the eight is ☰, its name is *Ch'ien*, its relation in the family is the father, while in the universe it is the Heaven, and its symbolic meaning is "strong." The second form is ☷, its name is *K'un*, its relation in the family is the mother, while in the universe it is the Earth, and its symbolic meaning is "weak." The third form is ☱, its name is *Chen*, its relation in the family is the elder son, while in the universe it is the thunder, and its symbolic meaning is "to move." The fourth form is ☴, its name is *Sun*, its relation in the family is the elder daughter, while in the universe it is the wind, and its symbolic meaning is "to distribute." The fifth form is ☵, its name is *K'an*, its relation in the family is the middle son, while in the universe it is the water, and its symbolic meaning is "dark." The sixth form is ☲, its name is *Li*, its relation in the family is the middle daughter, while in the universe it is the fire, and its symbolic meaning is "bright." The seventh form is ☳, its name is *Ken*, its relation in the family is the youngest son, while in the universe it is the mountain, and its symbolic meaning is "to stand still." The eighth and last form is ☶, its name is *Tuei*, its relation in the family is the youngest daughter, while in the universe it is the valley, and its symbolic meaning is "to collect."

From this statement we can easily observe that the Eight Diagrams represent four different natures and four different actions. Those meaning "strong," "weak," "dark," and "bright" are the four natures, and those meaning "to move," "to distribute," "to stand still," and "to collect," are the four actions. Again, we observe that they are of two classes, one opposing the other. "Strong" reverses "weak," "dark" reverses "bright," "to move" reverses "to stand still," and "to distribute" reverses "to collect." These eight symbols are in fact inclusive

of almost everything in the world, of the universe as well as of human society.

After these eight symbols are thus established and assigned, all different natures and actions are divided under and distributed among them accordingly. We find in Confucius' commentary that anything which is strong belongs to the *Ch'ien* and anything which is weak belongs to the *K'un*, and so on. Since everything must fall under one of these eight symbols, nothing will be allowed as neutral or exceptional. As man belongs to *Ch'ien* and woman belongs to *K'un*, and at the same time, goodness belongs to *Ch'ien* and evil belongs to *K'un*, so woman is so very unfortunate as to be looked upon as an evil being or of an evil class. This sad condition is only due to this arbitrary symbolic classification, and, of course, does not imply the actual case. On the other hand, everything, besides its own classification, itself can be divided into parts, or faces, and distributed again. For example, although woman is weak and so belongs to *K'un*, yet a woman of middle age or manly stature should belong to *Ch'ien*, while an old woman or a small girl or one feeble and sick should belong to *K'un* in the second classification. The former case is called the positive of the negative and the latter case the negative of the negative. "The Book of Changes" is full of such dualistic deductive philosophy.

The Eight Diagrams multiply and produce the Sixty-four Diagrams of six strokes each. Each of these diagrams has its form, its name, and its symbolic meaning, and each represents something in the universe and in human society. The first section of the main text contains thirty diagrams which represent the universe generally; and the second section contains thirty-four diagrams which represent human society generally. The first two diagrams in the first section are *Ch'ien* and *K'un* their full forms (of six strokes), the Heaven and the Earth; while the first two in the second section are *Hsien* and *K'un*, the husband and the wife. The arrangement of all diagrams follows a fixed order to meet a proposed plan, as shown in one of Confucius' Commentaries, the *Hsu Kua Chuan*, or "Order of Diagrams." The six strokes of each diagram are counted from bottom upwards and the highest is the last.

Both the *T'uan Tsu* and the *Yao Tsu* are often given indications such as "lucky," "unlucky," "beset with remorse," "inauspicious," or "no blame." It is because this book has been used in divination, and the result of a given course has been believed to be predicated by these phrases. There are many explanations on various grounds why such different phrases are given under the respective diagrams or strokes of diagrams. These explanations sometimes help us to find some generalizations, but, as often lead us only into confusion. Certain bold scholars held that there were no general rules, and each case was directed by an instant of revelation when it was written.

"The Book of Changes" is the smallest in size of the Five Classics, but has the largest number of commentaries of them all. For convenience, we may classify these commentaries under three types. The first type of commentator tried to explain the text according to *reason* and believed that nothing in this book is beyond the common sense of everyday-life. No supernatural is admitted and the book is made very simple

and easily readable. The second type of commentator stuck to the *symbolic designs* and believed that every word corresponds to a certain symbol from which the very diagram or the very stroke is derived. For instance, dragon is the symbol of *Ch'ien* and cow is the symbol of *K'un*, and so whenever dragon is mentioned it refers always to *Ch'ien* and cow to *K'un*. Not even a single word is incidental or empty. The third type of commentators took the *number* as the first course of diagrams. Ch'en T'uan and Shao Yung were the representatives of this school. The latter wrote a big book along this special line. It involves a great deal of mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and astrology.

Although the original purpose in the writing of this book seems to be beyond our ordinary knowledge, yet it is true that since the Chou Dynasty this book has been actually used for divination. Owing to this fact it was saved from the "Ch'in Fire" and preserved without destruction or disarrangement. The ancient Chinese believed that whenever something happens, there is a sign or omen which presents itself beforehand. This sign or omen is shown through some substances at some opportunity. It is sometimes very strong and attracts the attention of even a common man, but, is usually subtle and occult. Only the wise man can see this sign and understand its meaning, otherwise, it needs a medium through which the manifestation is issued. This is the beginning of divination and this book is used as its medium. Be it clearly understood, however, that this is certainly not the original purpose of the writing of "The Book of Changes," but that "The Book of Changes" is being adapted to meet this usage.

All the superstitious exercises, not only divination but many others, in China claim their foundations in "The Book of Changes." There are numerous traditions about its divine and wonderful effects. Two stories in my life may be taken as good examples, not because I believe these stories, but because I knew men who were involved in them. In the spring of 1911, when I was in Belgium, a friend of my father's wrote me from Nanking saying that he had consulted "The Book of Changes" on New Year's day, and found that there would be a great change in the middle of the autumn in the middle of China Proper. And he added that he and my father might escape from this disaster, but Nanking would be a dangerous place to live in. After half a year my father died and I returned to China, at which time the great revolution took place in Hankow and afterwards in Nanking. The next year I learned that this gentleman died only a few days before the revolution. Last summer when I was in Peking, Mr. Hang Hsin-chai, a congressman and a member of the Socialist Party, told me that he was imprisoned by Yuan Shih-kai on account of his opposition to Yuan's monarchic movement. The first day he went to the prison, another political prisoner came to comfort him and told him that he would be out and free within one hundred days. He said he made a special study in "The Book of Changes" and knew it from the book. A month later, this man was taken to another court. When he departed, he handed to Mr. Hang a sealed parcel. In it Mr. Hang found a volume of his commentary on "The Book of Changes" and a note written thus: "I will see you no

more. Please preserve my book and publish it if you will. Somebody may be able to read it and understand it." On the 98th day of Mr. Hang's imprisonment, Yuan Shih-kai died and all political criminals were set free, but this man was executed just a few days before. Mr. Hang published this commentary and distributed it among his friends. One copy is in my possession. Nothing seems very unusual in it. I am sorry that I am not the one who can read and understand it as the author expected.

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TO THY LOVE BE TRUE

TRANSLATED BY  
ELFRIDA HUDSON

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" Eastward flies the shrike  
Westward moves the swallow ;  
Not haphazard-like  
They their courses follow.

" Oh, the happy day  
When the fair Chi-nui  
On the Milky Way  
Meets her brave Niu-lan ! \*

So mused a young girl by her casement.  
The moon bathed in its silv'ry light  
Her pretty face—her slender form ;  
Her pearly skin shone gleaming white.  
The curtains fluttered in the wind  
While these thoughts occupied her mind.

" Fleet springs come and go,  
Flow'rs their petals shed ;  
Ruthless winds them mow  
When the summer's fled.

" Rivers know their way  
To the welcoming sea.  
' Moon,' let thy kind ray  
Lead my love to me."

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\* Lover true.