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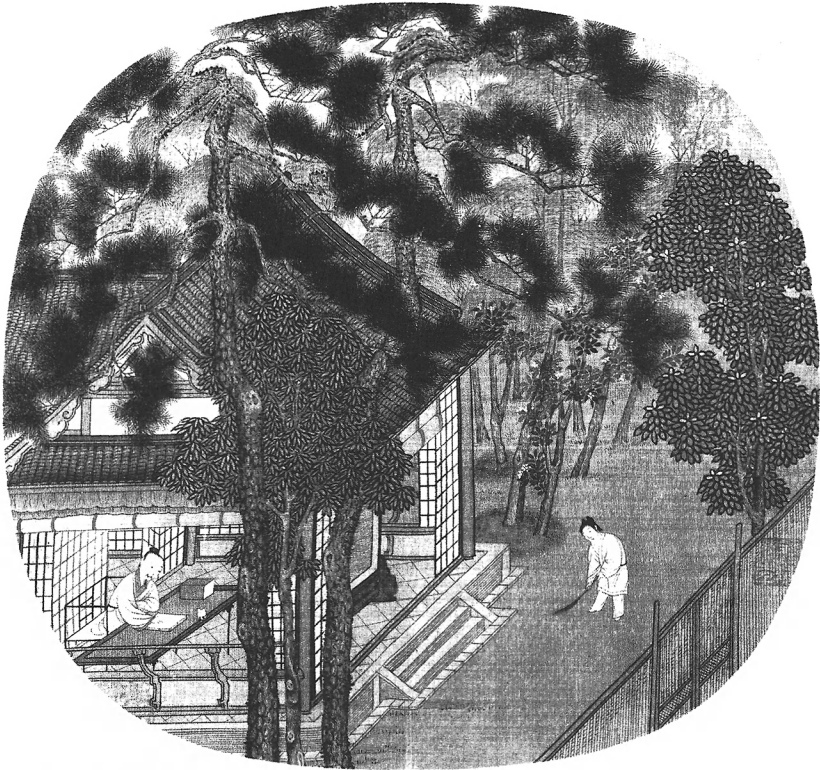
# Sung Dynasty Uses of the *I Ching*



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## Sung Dynasty Uses of the *I Ching*



*Reading the I Ching in the Pine Shade*, Liu Sung-nien (active A.D. 1190–1224)  
Source: Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

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*Kidder Smith, Jr., Peter K. Bol,  
Joseph A. Adler, and Don J. Wyatt*

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## Preface

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THE *I Ching* is so protean that over the last three thousand years of Chinese history it has occasioned hundreds of commentaries,<sup>1</sup> thousands of essays,<sup>2</sup> tens of thousands of citations,<sup>3</sup> and, we may surmise, millions of conversations. Sung dynasty (960–1279) *I Ching* studies are rife and renowned, for that text drew in every important thinker of the eleventh century and many of the twelfth.<sup>4</sup> This book examines how four influential figures of the Sung used the *I Ching* or *Book of Change* to address profound issues of human values. We are engaged in three interrelated pursuits. First is the historical study of a text: how the *I* was understood by particular people at a particular time. Second is the case studies of our four thinkers, Su Shih (1037–1101), Shao Yung (1011–1077), Ch'eng I (1033–1107), and Chu Hsi (1130–1200). Third, we suggest that in their diversity these four men reveal a commonality of goal and method within Sung literati thought. Here I will briefly discuss each of these aspects in turn.

We study the *Book of Change* historically. That is, we demonstrate how each of our four subjects brought a set of specific historical questions to bear on the *I*. In doing so, we seek to show how a classic was appropriated by later thinkers, how a single text could be taken to mean many different things, and what it is about the *I* that made it so significant to literati of the Sung. Our book is not a history of the Sung *I*—its schools, commentators, and texts.<sup>5</sup> Rather it is a study of the *I* in history.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Yen Ling-feng, *I-ching chi-ch'eng* (Complete collection on the *Book of Change*) (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1975), which contains nearly two hundred commentaries but is by no means a complete repository of extant works. Many other commentaries have, of course, been lost.

<sup>2</sup> Over two thousand of these were extant in the seventeenth century. See Larry Schulz, *Lai Chih-te (1525–1604) and the Phenomenology of Change* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1982), p. 3, for a brief discussion. A quick perusal of scholars' literary collections (*wen-chi*) reveals that many include at least one short piece on the *I*.

<sup>3</sup> We possess records from as early as 603 B.C.E. in which people quote a phrase or more from the *I*. See the discussion of the *Tso-chuan* in chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the works studied here, see, for example, the writings of Fan Chung-yen (989–1052), Hu Yüan (993–1059), Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072), Chou Tun-i (1017–1073), Ch'en Hsiang (1017–1080), Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1096), Chang Tsai (1020–1077), Wang An-shih (1021–1086), et al. For full citations and brief discussions of these and other works see Wang Chi-hsi, *Pei-Sung I-hsüeh-k'ao* (An investigation of Northern Sung *I Ching* studies) (Taipei: M.A. thesis, Taiwan Normal University, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> For that see Wang Chi-hsi, *Pei-Sung I-hsüeh-k'ao* and Imai Usaburō, *Sōdai ekikyō no kenkyū* (Researches on the Sung dynasty *I Ching*) (Tokyo: Meiji, 1958).



Our four literati thinkers are important for several reasons. Each was convinced that he understood the true nature of heaven, earth, and humanity. Each found in the *I Ching* evidence for believing that people who were socially and politically involved in a changing world could have a constant moral foundation. Their explanations were persuasive to many of their contemporaries and members of later generations. Their *I Ching* writings defined the principal issues that later students of the *I* would debate. Each, however, had a distinct view of the book. Su Shih saw it as evidence that an integrated human order ultimately depended on individual creativity. Shao Yung believed that *I Ching* images and numerology ordered the processes of an integrated universe. Ch'eng I took the *I* as a tool whereby literati might learn to act correctly in a world always threatened by selfishness and corruption. Chu Hsi used it in divination to realize the mind of the sages.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, we seek to demonstrate certain commonalities of Sung literati thinking, as well as its considerable diversity. Our four men shared with many of their contemporaries a commitment to arrive at the one real foundation for all values, to set out the method for doing so, and, as sages, to realize those values in the day-to-day conduct of life. While all of them used the *I* in these projects, each recognized that texts—even so remarkable a text as the *Book of Change*—were merely representations of values whose origins lay elsewhere. The *I* was a means for gaining access to those values. As such it must ultimately be transcended once that access was realized.

Work by other scholars has been of great benefit to us. The translations of James Legge and Richard Wilhelm introduced the *I Ching* text to one hundred years of Western readers.<sup>7</sup> Iulian Shchutskii, working in the Soviet Union during the early 1930s, explored questions of origin and development of the text and its commentaries.<sup>8</sup> Arthur Waley was the first European to read the *I* in light of the critical scholarship of men like Li Ching-ch'ih and Kao Heng.<sup>9</sup> Wing-tsit Chan continues to make Sung li-

<sup>6</sup> Certain figures have been left out of our discussion. Most notable are Chou Tun-i and Chang Tsai, though in many respects Shao Yung and Ch'eng I raise issues that are functionally similar. We make no mention of the considerable Taoist interest in the *I*. We have also omitted any reference to popular usage, though we may imagine that Shao Yung had enormous influence on their later practices, especially those that used the *I* to predict the future.

<sup>7</sup> James Legge, *The Yi King* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892); Richard Wilhelm, *I Ging: Das Buch der Wandlungen*, 2 volumes (Jena, 1924); English translation by Cary F. Baynes, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3d edition, 1967). Both Legge and Wilhelm drew essentially on Ch'eng I's and Chu Hsi's traditions of the *I*.

<sup>8</sup> Iulian K. Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching*, translated by William L. MacDonald and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa with Hellmut Wilhelm (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), a translation of materials written between 1928 and 1935.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Waley, "The Book of Changes," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiq-*

terati thought accessible to English speakers in a remarkable series of translations.<sup>10</sup> Yet while the *I* is perhaps the work of East Asian culture best known in the United States, it is rarely treated as a historical document. A pioneering exception is an article by Chi-yun Chen that demonstrates the political uses to which three Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) writers put the *I*.<sup>11</sup>

Like Chen, we have studied the *Book of Change* in its historical contexts. Rather than arguing that it transcends human culture or contains a timeless wisdom, we have examined its specific use by specific people. Thus we do not speak of the “real meaning” of the book, nor of the intrinsic meaning of a hexagram, as the meaning of each has varied enormously from user to user. At the same time, we are interested in why certain interpreters have dominated most of their successors. Our approach is therefore at odds with that of Richard Wilhelm in his translation and studies of the *I*. Wilhelm set out, like his Chinese teachers, to define the *I Ching* once and for all. Because his is the most influential of European-language translations, and because our translations often differ from his, we have in every case referred the reader to his text, cited as “W/B” (for Wilhelm and his English translator Cary Baynes) with the page number of the Princeton University Press third edition. In the case of hexagram names we have provided the Wilhelm/Baynes version in square brackets if it differs from our own, e.g., “hexagram #3 Chun (Sprout [Difficulty at the Beginning]).”

We have followed the common practice of citing Chinese texts by *chüan* (i.e., chapter) and page number. Thus, a reference of the form *Erh-Ch'eng chi* 21A.269 indicates *chüan* 21A, page 269. A citation of *Hsi-tzu-chuan* B8 refers to part 2, section 8 of that work. The idiosyncratic pagination of the *Su Tung p'o chi* necessitates references of the form 2.5.29.110, indicating volume, *ts'e*, *chüan*, and page numbers.

Figures 3, 4, 5, and 7 in chapter 4 are taken from Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. II: *The Period of Classical Learning*,

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unities 5 (1933), pp. 121–42. The article owes much to the pioneering work of Li Ching-ch'ih published during the 1920s and 1930s. See bibliography for full citations of Li's and Kao's work.

<sup>10</sup> See especially his translation of Chu Hsi's and Lü Tsu-ch'ien's *Chin-ssu-lu* as *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> “A Confucian Magnate's Idea of Political Violence: Hsün Shuang's Interpretation of the *Book of Changes*,” *T'oung Pao*, series 2, 54 (1960), pp. 73–115. For a listing of Western-language materials on the *I*, see Hellmut Wilhelm, *Parerga*, no. 2, *The Book of Changes in the Western Tradition: A Selected Bibliography* (Seattle: Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies, University of Washington, 1976) and *Zhouyi Network* 2 (1987), pp. 3–14. There is, of course, a voluminous amount in Chinese on the *I*. However, very little of it, even among recent work, asks historical questions. Correspondingly, few of these studies are cited here.

trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), with the kind permission of Princeton University Press.

Each of us has worked closely with the others' chapters. The introduction is by Kidder Smith and Peter Bol. Chapter 1, on the early uses of the *I*, is by Kidder Smith. Chapter 2, on Ou-yang Hsiu and the Sung context, is by Peter Bol. Chapter 3, on Su Shih, is also by Peter Bol. He would like to thank Susan Bush, Ronald Egan, Michael Fuller, Neil Katkov and Stephen Owen for reading and commenting upon an early draft. Chapter 4, on Shao Yung, is by Kidder Smith and Don Wyatt. They would like to thank Anne Birdwhistell and John Henderson for their useful comments. Chapter 5, on Ch'eng I, is by Kidder Smith, who appreciates the careful reading given to it by John Ewell. Chapter 6, on Chu Hsi, is by Joseph Adler, who thanks Tu Wei-ming, Robert Gimello, Chi-yun Chen, and Richard Lynn for their helpful suggestions on an earlier version. Chapter 7 is by Kidder Smith, drawing on many conversations with Peter Bol; Joseph Adler wrote the materials on Chu Hsi. We would all like to express our deep appreciation to Wing-tsit Chan for many useful suggestions on translation and to Irene Bloom and Hoyt Tillman for their insightful remarks on the entire manuscript. Finally, our gratitude to Pete and Joanne Miller for their discerning indexing, to Wendy Chiu for her scrupulous copyediting, and to Margaret Case for her support throughout.

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## Sung Dynasty Uses of the *I Ching*



## Introduction

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IN THE COURSE of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, China experienced one of the greatest transformations in its history. Sung dynasty thinkers laid the basis for later practices of moral philosophy, social organization, political theory and aesthetics. This book studies four men who had particular influence on Sung intellectual culture—Su Shih, Shao Yung, Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi. These men sought to define the relationship between the natural world of heaven-and-earth (*t'ien-ti*) and the world of human values. Each, in varying ways, saw heaven, earth, and humanity as an integrated field, in which values existed naturally. Knowing this natural unity, men would have a foundation on which to bring order to all under heaven. Each man, in varying ways, found the *I Ching* central to his project.

Sung society differed profoundly from its T'ang (618–906) antecedents. To understand the urgency of these men's work, we need first of all to ask briefly what their society had become, what social group they belonged to, why they sought a new basis for human values, and why the *I Ching* was so pertinent to their concerns.

Sung not only reunified China in the 960s, it removed from power men who had become militarily and fiscally independent of the central authority during the previous era, replacing them with officials selected by, sent from, and answerable to the court and emperor. Thus, what had been the rule of local strongmen was transformed into a single, well-organized, centralized, civil bureaucracy. Eliminating the primary cause of over a century's disorder, Sung created conditions for three centuries of growth. Agricultural production steadily increased. Technological and marketing innovations, an expanding population, developing urban centers, economic exchange freed of many restrictions that had been imposed by T'ang—all these led to greater wealth, spread over more regions and shared by more of the population than ever before. This wealth created resources that allowed new men to establish their families as members of the elite, especially men of commercial origin or from previously marginalized areas like the south. The revolution in economic production coincided with a revolution in the production of cultural materials—that is, with the invention of printing. The laborious and expensive hand-copying of manuscripts had encouraged scholars to specialize in a single text. Now many books became easily accessible, enormously expanding the potential for intellectual synthesis and innovation.

We can best understand the elite of this new society by contrasting them with their T'ang predecessors, aristocrats belonging to or allied with large, powerful and longstanding lineages based particularly in the north China plains. These men had supplied high officials to the empire since before T'ang itself came to power. Their claim to service thus rested on a pedigree independent of the state. However, the military conflicts that preceded Sung put an end to these lineages, as warfare devastated their economic base, familial networks, and the state on which they depended, and as warlords sought military or administrative skills without reference to class origins.

Both T'ang and Sung elite were landowners, and many served in the national bureaucracy as officials. As the chief educated group, they saw themselves as the holders of traditional culture. The crucial difference between them is the extent to which the Sung elite can be defined by their success in the imperial civil service examinations. By this measure the state itself institutionalized the primary mechanism by which one might seek and claim elite status. These exams tested the mastery of traditional cultural forms, especially the ability to compose in regulated styles and the memorization of canonical texts. This meant that for the first time in its history, China was governed by men whose qualifications for office were measured first in cultural and intellectual terms. The traditional name for this elite is *shih*. We translate that word as "literati" to reflect its predominantly cultural content.

Passing the final level of exams at the palace assured one of government appointment and thus the exercise of a small portion of the imperial power. In sharing its power in this manner Sung believed that they had chosen men who would look to the integrity of the state and the interests of the whole. Undoubtedly this was often true, as the various figures discussed in this book attest. In particular, through the first century of Sung rule, literati seem to have welcomed and abetted the state's centralized authority. Yet they might not always act in the interest of the whole. Ch'eng I stridently attacked literati as ambitious and self-serving, complaining that they did not seek to know *tao*. Though he was more fervent in his critique than the other three men we address, the substance of his analysis is echoed in their writings, and in the writings of others.

Ch'eng's dissatisfaction with prevailing literati values reflects a larger disjunction that had been developing between social, political and economic practices, on the one hand, and cultural identities on the other. In the former realm, T'ang institutions had generally been superseded. Yet T'ang cultural models still prevailed publicly well past the start of the eleventh century. Sung, however, had no aristocratic lineages that could be assumed to act as repositories of tradition—where the external forms of culture were uninterruptedly maintained, where ritual, etiquette, and

style were practiced in a manner worthy of emulation. Such issues were not simply matters of private taste, for political power to shape society and the lives of both elite and commoners was at stake.

By the mid-eleventh century, the uneasiness about culture in general and cultural values in particular was obvious. In the 1030s Fan Chung-yen (989–1052) and Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072) had called for a major reconstruction of literati political practice, challenging the notion that received traditions were a sufficient grounding to literati values. The four men we treat here were passionately involved in the ensuing debates. The issues they raised were worked through slowly and painfully, from the 1030s to the death of Chu Hsi in 1200. We can identify three sets of questions that they, with other literati, sought to answer. These questions are the ground on which our book is built, and we believe that they afford the best means for seeing the commonalities and differences within Sung literati thought, and for developing a sense of the whole.

The first question concerns a new basis that would guide men in the creation of an integrated human society, one dedicated to benefiting all. Literati recognized that the inevitability of historical change meant a discontinuity between past and present forms. Where, then, could a constancy be found? Was the history of the Han (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) or T'ang empires the proper model, if it were flexibly applied? Should Sung base itself on the age of the sages that Confucius (551–479 B.C.) had struggled to transmit to his time? Was the basis instead inherent in the nature of the world—in heaven-and-earth—if one knew how to read it? (If the latter were the case, then what was the relevance of the preceding two thousand years of historical and cultural experience?) Or could the source itself never be directly known?

Related to these is the second set of questions: What is human nature? Are literati primarily social actors? Bearers of cultural tradition? Or do all human beings share something essential with heaven-and-earth? What, in other words, might human beings aspire to? Can they compare themselves with the sages of antiquity? Can individual literati establish themselves in the present as morally autonomous from political authority—yet remain responsible to the whole of society?

Third, whatever the basis, by what manner of *hsüeh* (study, learning) does one obtain access to it? Can one rely on cultural traditions, as transmitted by family, schooling or government service? Do texts convey the sages' wisdom from the past? If so, which texts? Can the mind apprehend values directly by contemplating the things of the world? Or does the mind itself contain primordial wisdom that can be tapped by the proper practices?

Why did men with these concerns turn to the *Book of Change*? One simple answer is that the *I Ching* had for centuries been intimately linked



with related issues of heaven, earth, and humanity. Those who sought a universal grounding for values might turn naturally to such a model, especially one that claimed to encompass everything in heaven-and-earth. But there are many other reasons for its usefulness, which will emerge over the course of this book.

Chapter 1 introduces the *I Ching* text. More than the other Classics, the *I* has its particular language and hermeneutic protocols. This chapter presents these and other matters that Sung literati took for granted. It proceeds by discussing issues put to the *I* text from earliest times through the T'ang, whose version was the received text in Sung. Chapter 2 addresses the Sung intellectual context, beginning with the work of Ou-yang Hsiu, who more than anyone determined the questions that would be discussed in the mid-eleventh century. It also introduces the four central figures of our book. Chapters 3 through 6 are devoted to individual thinkers. Su Shih, while in many ways the heir of Ou-yang, went well beyond him in what he would consider relevant to the literati search for values. Shao Yung, though thirty years Su's senior, raised concerns about heaven-and-earth that only attained a wide audience in the period of Su's majority. Ch'eng I regarded Shao's morality as perfect yet proposed an alternative understanding of the pattern of heaven-and-earth. Chu Hsi found a solution to these eleventh-century issues that was considered conclusive by many Chinese through the remainder of the imperial period. In the final chapter we turn to the commonalities of Sung literati thought and to the particular qualities of the *I Ching* that made it so useful to these and other literati thinkers.

## CHAPTER ONE

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### The *I Ching* Prior to Sung

LITERATI in Sung China made claims about the *Book of Change* that should give us pause. Ch'eng I remarks:

There is not a single thing that those who made the *I* did not conjoin, from the obscure and bright of heaven-and-earth to the minute subtleties of the various insects, grasses and trees.<sup>1</sup>

His slightly older contemporary Chou Tun-i (1017–1073) asks rhetorically:

How is the *I* the source of only the Five Classics? It is the mysterious abode of heaven, earth and the spiritual forces.<sup>2</sup>

Shao Yung built his philosophical framework from elements he found in and around the *I Ching*. Su Shih claimed that

Those who are enlightened bring its *tao* (way) into practice. For them there is neither coming in nor going out. There is neither inside nor outside. They “flow through the six line-places [of the hexagrams],” and wherever they go “it is fortunate.” Even acting as a sage is possible for them.<sup>3</sup>

And Chu Hsi, quoting one of the Appendixes to the *I Ching*, remarks:

“The *I* discloses things, completes affairs, and encompasses the *tao* of all under heaven.”<sup>4</sup> This is the general purpose of the *I*.<sup>5</sup>

Clarifying this, he says:

“To disclose things and to complete affairs” means to enable people to divine in order to understand good and ill fortune and to complete their undertakings. “To encompass the *tao* of all under heaven” means that once the hexagram lines are set, the *tao* of all under heaven is contained in them.<sup>6</sup>

These claims challenge modern readers. How can the *I Ching* contain the *tao* of everything under heaven? How can this text do, or mean, so

<sup>1</sup> *Erh-Ch'eng chi* (The collected works of the two Ch'eng brothers) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1981), *Wai-shu* 7.394, i.e., *chüan* 7, p. 394 of the *Wai-shu*.

<sup>2</sup> *T'ung-shu* (Writings comprehending [the *Book of Change*]), section 30.



<sup>3</sup> *Su Shih I-chuan*, 8.182, quoting the *Hsi-tz'u-chuan* B8.

<sup>4</sup> *Hsi-tz'u-chuan* A10.

<sup>5</sup> *Chu-tzu yü-lei* 66, p. 2575.

<sup>6</sup> *Chou-i pen-i* 3:13b.

many things? While we may never fully share the convictions of Sung literati about these matters, we can begin our own investigation of their claims by asking questions from four familiar perspectives: What is the text of the *I Ching*? What were its origins? How was it first used? By what methods was it later interpreted? In this way we will move gradually from the *I* as a readily identifiable set of words to something more problematic, engaging, and powerful.

*What is the text?* In this sense we can define the *I Ching* as a closed system, consisting of sixty-four hexagrams and the texts in Chinese that are associated with them. These hexagrams, or six-lined figures, are composed of solid (yang —) and/or broken (yin --) lines, one atop the other, for example  or . Since each line can be either broken or solid, and since there are six line-places, sixty-four hexagrams can be formed.

Each hexagram has a name. The two examples given above are Ch'ien (Primal Yang [The Creative])<sup>7</sup> and Fu (Return), the first and twenty-fourth in the sequence. Others are Chun (Sprout [Difficulty at the Beginning]), Shih (Army), T'ai (Peace) and, the last hexagram, Wei-chi (Not Completed [Before Completion]). Each hexagram also has a hexagram statement (*t'uan* or *kua-tz'u*) associated with it.<sup>8</sup> That for Ch'ien reads "*yüan heng li chen*." The original meaning of these words when the *I* was composed over the early centuries of the first millennium B.C.E. was perhaps "Initial receipt: profitable to divine," indicating that the *I* could be usefully consulted.<sup>9</sup> But at least as early as the third century B.C.E. this phrase was reread as four qualities: "primal, successful, beneficial, upright."<sup>10</sup> These words have since been combined and interpreted in various ways. Some have directed this phrase of the *I* away from matters of divination. This rereading represents one of several steps in transforming a specialized divination text into a "classic" (*ching*) that might eventually support the interest of Sung China's most creative moral thinkers.

The hexagram statement for Fu has changed relatively less in meaning,

<sup>7</sup> Hexagram names in brackets are the English renderings in Cary F. Baynes's translation of Richard Wilhelm's German translation of the *I*, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*.

<sup>8</sup> What is called "The Judgment" in Wilhelm/Baynes.

<sup>9</sup> For an extended discussion of the reading of *heng* as "receipt" and *chen* as "to divine," which revises earlier work by Kao Heng based on oracle bone evidence, see Edward Shaughnessy, *The Composition of the Zhouyi* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), pp. 124–33. This phrase, *mutatis mutandum*, appears in a dozen hexagrams.

<sup>10</sup> See the *Tso-chuan*, Hsiang 9, 564 B.C.E., which is reproduced nearly verbatim in the *Wenyan*, Wing Seven of the *I Ching* (what Wilhelm/Baynes call the "Commentary on the Words of the Text"). For Ch'eng I's remarks on these as the beginning, growth, continuation and completion of things, see his *I-chuan* (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1972), p. 3.

though its interpretations have also varied, as subsequent chapters will show. It reads:

Return. An offering.  
In going out and coming in there will be no illness.  
A friend will come without misfortune.  
He will turn around and go back on his way (*tao*).  
He will come and return in seven days.  
Favorable for having somewhere to go.<sup>11</sup>

These are typical of the hexagram statements. As Arthur Waley has suggested, they contain concrete fragments of late Shang or early Chou life, as well as prognostication phrases like “without fault” or “beneficial whatever one does.”<sup>12</sup>

Each line of the hexagram also has a text associated with it; these are called line statements (*yao-tz'u*). Their language is similar to that of the hexagram statements. For example, the first or bottom line statement of the Ch'ien hexagram reads:

Hidden dragon. Do not act.

The second:

One sees a dragon in the field. It is beneficial to see the great man.

The fifth line statement of Fu reads:

Nobly returning, without repentance.

The sixth or top line:

Confused return. Ill fortune. There are calamities and errors. If one were to set troops in motion, it would end in great defeat, bringing ill fortune to the country's ruler. Even in ten years one could not correct it.

The line statements have usually been understood as representing variations on the central theme of the hexagram. Readers, however, have construed the precise nature of this relationship in various ways. The basic text of the *I Ching* consists of no more than these six-line hexagram configurations, the hexagram names, hexagram statements, and line statements. (The other parts of the *I* will be discussed below.)

<sup>11</sup> Translation, with slight modification, from Richard Alan Kunst, *The Original “Yi-jing”: A Text, Phonetic Transcription, Translation, and Indexes, with Sample Glosses* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1985), p. 287. Kunst's translation attempts to reconstruct the *I* at the time of its origin.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Waley, “*The Book of Changes*,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 5 (1933), pp. 121–42.

*What were its origins?* There is general agreement that the *I* originated as a book of divination around the late second/early first millennium B.C.E. Stalks were cast and somehow counted, leading to an eventual prognostication. It has been thought that the *I* came from the Chou people, who conquered Shang in the mid-eleventh century B.C.E. Indeed, the most common way of referring to the text in the immediately succeeding centuries was as the *Chou I*, the *Change of Chou*.<sup>13</sup> The Shang practiced divination by reading cracks in bones. However, some form of divination by counting seems to have developed well before the end of that dynasty. Research in China over the last decade has addressed forty-odd examples of three- and six-numeral groupings, found as part of inscriptions on late Shang and early Chou oracle bones and bronzes.<sup>14</sup> The association with oracle bones suggests divination; several of the inscriptions accompanying the number groupings make this connection explicit. One text on a bronze vessel reads: “*Shih* [scribe-diviner] Yu Fu made this treasured precious vessel. Divined: 7–5–8.”<sup>15</sup> The *I* may well have grown out of these practices. However, no clear stages of development have been demonstrated. In particular, no Chinese texts have been found that resemble the hexagram and line statements of today’s *I Ching*.<sup>16</sup>

Recently, two American researchers have developed arguments originally suggested by Chinese scholars on the origin and structure of the hexagram and line statements. Both agree that the *I* underwent a process of editing by scribe-diviners (*shih*) in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C.E. But one view stresses the multiple nature of its sources, while

<sup>13</sup> See the *Tso-chuan*, where the entries from 672 to the mid-sixth century always refer to it as such. Note however that since the second century C.E. it has been suggested that “Chou” refers not to the Chou people but instead means “global,” in the sense of “complete and comprehensive.” See Willard Peterson, “Making Connections: ‘Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations’ of the *Book of Change*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42.1 (1982), p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> See Chang Cheng-lang, “Shih-shih Chou ch’u ch’ing-t’ung-ch’i ming-wen chung ti I-kua,” *K’ao-ku hsüeh-pao* (1980) 4, pp. 403–15 (an English translation, “An Interpretation of the Divinatory Inscriptions on Early Chou Bronzes,” appears in *Early China* 6 [1980–1981], pp. 80–96); David N. Keightley, “Was the *Chou-i* a Legacy of Shang?” paper presented to the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, April 1982; and Chang Cheng-lang, “Mien-shu ‘Liu-shih-ssu kua’ pa” (Postscript to the Silk Manuscript of *The Sixty Four Diagrams*), *Wenwu* (1984) 3, pp. 9–14.

<sup>15</sup> Keightley, “Was the *Chou-i*,” p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> That text has been largely stable since about the early centuries C.E.; see Ch’ü Wan-li, *Han shih-ching Chou-i ts’an-tzu chi-cheng* (Taipei, Commercial Press, 1961). About a dozen short passages of today’s *I Ching* are attested to in the *Tso-chuan*, dating to the fourth century B.C.E. and deriving from earlier material. For a discussion, see Hellmut Wilhelm, “*I-ching* Oracles in the *Tso-chuan* and *Kuo-yü*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 79.4 (1959), pp. 275–80 and Kidder Smith, “*Zhouyi* Divination from Accounts in the *Zuo-zhuan*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49.2 (forthcoming, 1989).

the other emphasizes the internal logic imparted by its editors.<sup>17</sup> Writing for the first, Richard Kunst states that the *I* is a collection of “brief, unconnected notes compiled as an aid to diviners who were already familiar with the subject matter.”<sup>18</sup> More specifically, “It came into existence as an orally transmitted, organically evolving anthology of omens and their prognostications, popular sayings, historical anecdotes, and wisdom about nature, which were assembled into a manual around a framework of hexagrams and their solid or broken lines by diviners relying on the manipulation of yarrow stalks to obtain oracles.”<sup>19</sup> This theory has the explanatory virtue of making it unnecessary to account for seemingly unrelated line statements within a single hexagram.<sup>20</sup> Expressing the other view, Edward Shaughnessy argues that the *I* “represents the conscious composition of an editor or editors.”<sup>21</sup> For example, the line statements of hexagram #52 Ken (Stopping) refer, with one exception, to the parts of the body from feet to head, and the six lines of hexagram #24 Fu unexceptionally describe a “return” that is beautiful, repeated, sincere or confused.

As this research continues, the early history of the *I* will eventually emerge with greater clarity. As it does, however, it will diverge more and more from Sung views of how and why the *I* began. Sung writers received, sometimes skeptically, the tradition that the *I* was the product of four sages: the legendary hero of culture Fu-hsi; King Wen and the Duke of Chou (founders of the Chou dynasty); and Confucius.<sup>22</sup> Certain modern scholars might study the origins of the *I* so as to better understand the worldview of late Shang and early Chou. Sung scholars, however, like some other modern readers, studied it as evidence of sagely wisdom in the context of their own search for universal values. Thus as historians we may be separated from Sung figures not merely by a different set of facts but by a fundamentally different set of questions. What these earlier questions were, and how the *I* was made to speak to them, are the subjects of the subsequent sections.

*How was it first used?* We possess a few glimpses of early readers consulting the *I Ching* about matters of great personal and political im-

<sup>17</sup> Developing the ideas of Kao Heng and Li Ching-ch'ih, respectively. See Kao's *Chou-i ku-ching t'ung-shuo* (Peking, 1958) and Li's *Chou-i t'an-yüan* (Peking, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> In private communication.

<sup>19</sup> *The Original Yijing*, Abstract, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See hexagrams #2, 6, 9, etc.

<sup>21</sup> *The Composition of the Zhouyi*, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup> Though traditions vary, it was generally held that Fu-hsi devised the eight trigrams, King Wen the hexagram statements, the Duke of Chou composed the line statements, and Confucius wrote the Appendixes or “Ten Wings.”

portance: battles and rebellions, aristocratic marriages, sons and heirs, etc. These come from the *Tso-chuan*, a history of the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 B.C.E.) that was itself assembled in the late Warring States.<sup>23</sup> They demonstrate the extent to which the meaning of the *I* has always changed as the needs and applications of its users changed. Taken together they also suggest the process through which the *I* evolved into a text that Han authorities were persuaded to canonize in 136 B.C.E.

The *Tso-chuan* shows people struggling to make sense of an extremely difficult text. Indeed, in a number of cases interpreters get into arguments over its proper reading.<sup>24</sup> We may recognize some of their other reactions as well: uncertainty, frustration, occasional dismissal—but primarily respect for the text. It is clear from these accounts that use of the *I* was fully integrated with other institutions of Spring and Autumn culture. When, for example, a ruler of the state of Ch'i seeks an auspicious prognostication to sanctify his incestuous marriage, a battle of interpretation ensues that draws upon current moral and religious practices, social expectations, and the ministerial right to criticize, involving as well court politics and a ruler's intimidation of his diviners.<sup>25</sup> Thus using the *I* text for prognostication did not produce a simple answer from a transcendent source but was instead conditioned by these sorts of social pressure.

The *Tso-chuan* material also shows how the *I* developed from a divination text into a book through which major moral issues could be addressed.<sup>26</sup> The nature of this process is suggested by the case of Nan-k'uai, who in 530 B.C.E. plots a rebellion against his ruler. Consulting the *I Ching*, he obtains the fifth line statement of hexagram #2 K'un, which reads "Yellow skirt, primally auspicious." Greatly encouraged, he shows this to a friend, without mentioning his intentions. The friend replies: "I have studied this. If it is a matter of loyalty and fidelity, then it is possible. If not, it will certainly be defeated. . . . If there is some deficiency [regarding these virtues], although the stalkcasting says 'auspicious,' it is not."<sup>27</sup>

Thus Nan-k'uai's improper purpose renders his whole prognostication invalid. His friend's fundamental assumption is that an act's moral qualities determine its consequences. The *I* will advise on which of several

<sup>23</sup> It is generally assumed that the *Tso-chuan* was put together from existing traditions around the late fourth or early third century B.C.E. See Barry B. Blakeley, "Notes on the Reliability and Objectivity of the Tu Yü Commentary on the *Tso Chuan*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 101.2 (1981), p. 209 n. 17. The *Tso* contains approximately two dozen references to the *I*, dating from 672 to 485 B.C.E. On the use of the *Tso-chuan* as a source for the early use of the *I*, see Kidder Smith, "Zhouyi Divination."

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the story of Mu Chiang (Hsiang 9, 564 B.C.E.) and the two cases discussed below.

<sup>25</sup> Hsiang 25, 548 B.C.E.

<sup>26</sup> For a stimulating account of this development, see Yü Tun-k'ang, "Ts'ung *I Ching* tao *I-chuan*," *Chung-kuo che-hsieh* 7 (1982), pp. 1–27.

<sup>27</sup> Chao 12.

equally proper courses of action is best, but only something that is already moral can ever be “auspicious.” Here we see how developments in sixth-century moral-cosmological thinking change not only the interpretation of a particular line statement of the *I* but also the very tasks to which the text could be directed. (Nan-k’uai, by the way, disregards this analysis, and within a year he is dead.)

In the case of Nan-k’uai we can see a perennial tension between two views of what determines future events, human action or a fate decreed by heaven. Nan-k’uai believes the *I* will give him knowledge of the latter. His friend, however, insists that humanity and heaven—the latter both as fate and as the source of morality—are not so set apart. The *I*, then, in giving information about heaven, also speaks of human actions. As we will see, Sung literati also used the *I Ching* in their attempts to redefine that relationship.

The *Tso-chuan* also gives evidence of a use for the *I* that stands outside formal divination. This is to cite its hexagram or line statements in conversation, much as one might cite any well-known text. Here, in contrast to those uses in which the *I* is valued for its access to heaven, it is valued as a part of the human cultural tradition, whose evidence it preserves. Thus in 513 B.C.E. a historian cites the *I* as proof that men of yore once tended dragons.<sup>28</sup>

More strikingly, in 603 B.C.E. a youth confides his political ambitions to the prince of Cheng. Later the prince remarks: “Covetous and without virtue—it’s in the *Chou I* at the top line of Feng hexagram [#55]. He will not get beyond that.” This line statement of Feng in today’s *I Ching* reads in part, “He locks his door . . . and for three years he is not seen. Inauspicious.” And indeed, the *Tso-chuan* reports that “after a year the people of Cheng killed him.”<sup>29</sup> Here a prediction is made without stalks being cast. Thus the *I* moves farther still from its origin in a formal ritual context. Such usage depends on the text being so widely known that the prince of Cheng can invoke a particular statement simply by noting its place in the Feng hexagram. Toward the end of the Spring and Autumn period this method of using the *I* becomes increasingly common. In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. we find people citing it in suasion, in medical prognosis, and even to help analyze the outcome of a battle.<sup>30</sup> Thus the *I* becomes used in ways that increasingly resemble other contemporary texts.

*By what methods was it interpreted?* How does one move from mute hexagrams and laconic texts to meaning? The earliest surviving accounts

<sup>28</sup> Chao 29.

<sup>29</sup> Hsüan 6.

<sup>30</sup> Hsiang 28, Chao 1, Hsüan 12.



to answer this in a systematic way are known as the Ten Wings (*shih-i*). These consist of seven texts in ten sections dating from the late Warring States and early Han (third and second centuries B.C.E.). Though only three of these will be discussed below (marked with an asterisk), it will be useful to set out all seven in table format here.

However they may differ, all Wings begin with the unstated assumption of the *I*'s coherence, both as text and as change. Not only is the *I* itself coherent, it reproduces in certain ways the coherence of heaven-and-earth. Thus the questions posed in the late Warring States differ in an important way from those of the late Spring and Autumn. Seventh- and sixth-century B.C.E. readers attempted to determine the meaning of individual lines, usually deliberating specific courses of action.<sup>31</sup> The Wings however set out to understand the *I* as the system of heaven-and-earth. Thus the text becomes useful for structuring thought about the present, not just as a tool to know the future.

The first of the Ten Wings we will examine is the *T'uan-chuan*, or "Commentary on the hexagram statements."<sup>32</sup> As its name suggests, the *T'uan-chuan* usually begins by quoting and glossing the text that is attached to the hexagram. Regarding hexagram #24 Fu, it says:

"Return. Successful." The firm comes back.

In acting, proceed (*hsing*) with compliance so that "going out and going in are without distress. Friends come and it is without fault."

<i>Wing</i>	<i>Chinese Title</i>	<i>Translated Title [W/B]</i>
1 & 2*	<i>T'uan-chuan</i>	Commentary on the Hexagram Statements [Commentary on the Decision]
3 & 4	<i>Hsiang-chuan</i>	Commentary on the Images [The Image]
5 & 6*	<i>Hsi-tz'u-chuan</i>	Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations [Appended Judgments/Great Treatise]
7	<i>Wen-yen</i>	Elegant Words [Commentary on the Words of the Text]
8*	<i>Shuo-kua</i>	Remarks on the Trigrams [Discussion of the Trigrams]
9	<i>Hsü-kua</i>	The Ordered Hexagrams [The Sequence]
10	<i>Tsa-kua</i>	The Miscellany of Hexagrams [Miscellaneous Notes]

<sup>31</sup> See Smith, "Zhouyi Divination."

<sup>32</sup> Wilhelm/Baynes's "Commentary on the Decision," Wings 1 and 2.

“Reverting and returning to *tao*; in seven days comes the return”: the heavens proceed (*hsing*).

“It is beneficial whatever one does”: the firm grows. Does not Fu make apparent the mind (*hsin*) of heaven-and-earth!<sup>33</sup>

In explaining each phrase, these glosses provide a context in which to read hexagram statements. This context is moral (“proceed with compliance”) and cosmic (“the mind of heaven-and-earth”). Indeed, the implication is that moral behavior parallels cosmic processes, and that the pattern of both can be found in the *I*. Thus human behavior and heavenly movement are described with the same word, *hsing* (act or proceed).

Combining these, the *T'uan-chuan* for hexagram #30 Li (Attachment/Brightness [The Clinging, Fire]) remarks:

*Li* is “attachment.” The sun and the moon are attached to the sky. The various grains, grasses and trees are attached to the earth. The double brightness [of *Li*] is attached to correctness and so transforms and completes all under heaven.

The soft [second line] is attached to the centrally correct and is therefore “successful.”

And the *T'uan-chuan* for hexagram #60 Chieh (Regulations [Limitation]), quoting the hexagram statement, says:

“Harsh regulations cannot be upright”: their *tao* (way, course) will be exhausted. He is joyful so as to direct a dangerous situation. He takes his position according to regulations. He is centrally correct so as to penetrate.

Heaven-and-earth are regulated and so the four seasons are realized. If [the ruler] regulates by means of his institutions, he will not hurt property nor harm the people.

While the *T'uan-chuan* describes the moral universe it sees reflected in the texts of the *I*, it also seeks to demonstrate how the line configurations of the hexagrams imply the accompanying texts, with their prognostications of “inauspicious” or “no fault.” The *T'uan-chuan* never explicitly defines the rules that govern these relationships, but we can readily infer several, three of which are especially prominent.

The first rule combines centrality (or the Mean, *chung*) with a traditional division of the hexagram into lower and upper trigrams, or three-line figures. In such a view, the second and fifth lines of the hexagram, being in the middle of their respective trigrams, possess the virtue of centrality, thus tending toward auspiciousness. The second rule concerns

<sup>33</sup> Note that the translation of the excerpts from the hexagram statement that appear here differs from that cited earlier. There we saw Richard Kunst's reconstruction of its original meaning. Here it is translated as the author(s) of the *T'uan-chuan* seem to have understood it.

“correctness” (cheng), in which the odd-numbered lines are solid and the even broken. This apparently derives from the fact that the solid line is written with the same mark as the Chinese numeral one, and the broken line requires two marks. Thus the *T’uan-chuan* generally declares that odd-numbered solid lines and even-numbered broken lines are auspicious, and that even-numbered solid lines and odd-numbered broken lines are not. The second lines of the Chieh and Li hexagrams are broken; thus both these lines are “centrally correct.” Third, a relationship of “responsiveness” (ying) is possible between corresponding line places in the two trigrams (1–4, 2–5, 3–6). If the first line of a hexagram is solid and the fourth broken, or vice versa, they are responsive, which is generally auspicious.<sup>34</sup>

Yet the *T’uan-chuan* authors were not fully successful in demonstrating the coherence of the *I*. However consciously the text may have been composed, there are still prognostications of “auspicious” or “regret” or “nothing that is not beneficial” that such rules cannot readily explain. The *I* is, after all, not so consistent or easily governed. Furthermore, these rules are necessarily incomplete. Take, for example, a broken fifth line. It is central, but not correct. What if it “responds” to a solid second line, which is also central and incorrect? What additional rules, if any, does an interpreter invoke in these circumstances? At this point the *I*, like heaven-and-earth, escapes any simple explanation and reverts to being somewhat mysterious. What is more, even if the *T’uan-chuan* demonstrates a certain consistency to the *I*, its texts must still be applied to the user’s current situation. As we have seen from the *Tso-chuan*, this process may be enormously complex. Thus the *T’uan-chuan* does not solve the matter of interpretation. It only refines and extends the route the interpreter must take. And thus one must still read the texts in a partially new way each time he or she consults the *I Ching*.

We have already encountered the tradition of viewing the hexagram as composed of a lower and an upper trigram. Since the trigrams each have three lines, broken or solid, there are eight possible trigram configurations. Many of these have a proper name—that is, a name that uniquely indicates that trigram and does not equally stand for some other word in Chinese (as “Fu” also means “return” in ordinary usage). For example, the trigram with three solid lines is called Ch’ien, like the hexagram with six solid lines, and the trigram with a solid line between two broken lines is called K’an [W/B The Abysmal/Water]. These names are attested to in

<sup>34</sup> For a more systematic treatment of these relationships, see section two of Wang Pi (226–49), *Chou-i lüeh-li*. A French translation with accompanying Chinese text is Marie-Ina Bergeron, *Wang Pi, Philosophe du non-avoir* (Taipei/Paris: Ricci Institute, 1986).

the *Tso-chuan*, as are a set of qualities associated with each trigram. One of the Ten Wings, the *Shuo-kua*,<sup>35</sup> records these qualities—the element, virtue, season, animal, bodily part, etc., that characterize each of the eight. Thus with K'an are associated water, danger, winter, pig and ears. The *Shuo-kua* says of it:

K'an is water, ditch.

It is lying concealed, crookedness, bow, wheel.

In regard to humans, it is increased worry, heart disease, earache.

It is the trigram of blood; it is red.

In regard to horses it is a lovely back, high spirits, lowered head, thin hooves, shambling gait.

In regard to carriages, it is many defects.

It is penetration, moon, thief.

In regard to trees, it is the strong and pithy.

The *Shuo-kua* also examines the trigrams structurally, naming Ch'ien and K'un, with all solid or all broken lines, the “parents” of the other six, which are then termed elder, middle, or younger son or daughter.

Trigrams, then, are not merely components of hexagrams. They are orientations to a dozen or more “fields” within heaven-and-earth that range from cosmic positioning (north) to earache, heart disease, and family structure, touching on plants and animals along the way. A user of the *I* can assign everything in heaven-and-earth to one of the eight trigrams. Through the set of trigram interrelationships he can also relate that thing to all other things. Sung literati thus inherited a tool with a phenomenal power to order the world.

These symbolic associations of each of the eight trigrams are known as “the images” or *hsiang*. So fundamental are they to the *I* and its workings that an early definition reads “The *I* is images.”<sup>36</sup> Here we will examine three applications of the images, two from the mid-seventh century B.C.E. and one from the second century C.E. In the seventh century *I* divination was almost always interpreted in reference to the trigram images.<sup>37</sup> Thus in the *Tso-chuan* account of an approaching battle, we see an auspicious

<sup>35</sup> “Explanations of the Trigrams,” Wilhelm/Baynes’s “Discussion of the Trigrams.”

<sup>36</sup> *Hsi-tz'u-chuan* B3. K'ung Ying-ta, editor of the orthodox T'ang edition of the *I*, also opens his General Preface with this definition; see *Chou-i cheng-i* (*Ssu-pu pei-yao* ed.), p. 1. Both these texts are discussed below.

<sup>37</sup> And decreasingly after that. See Smith, “*Zhouyi* Interpretation.” Most interpreters in the imperial period hold that the trigrams were in fact created first and later doubled to become hexagrams. See, *inter alia*, K'ung Ying-ta's “Shu ch'ung kua,” the second introductory essay to his *Chou-i cheng-i*. For arguments that the hexagram probably came first, see Sherman Hsiao-hai Chu, “*Chou I* chi-ko chi-pen wen-t'i ti t'i-ts'e,” *Tsinghua hsüeh-pao* n.s. 16.1–2 (December 1984).

prognostication made because “The lower trigram of [hexagram #18] Ku is wind, its upper mountain. . . . We bring down their fruit and take their possessions [like a wind sweeping over a mountain].”<sup>38</sup> These two associations—wind and mountain—have remained the best-known qualities of the trigrams in question until today. In another example, a divination official, obtaining the line statement “Behold the light of the state,” remarks:

K’un is earth. [The trigram] Sun is wind. Ch’ien is heaven. Wind becoming heaven above the earth [means] mountain. If the treasures of the mountain are illuminated by the light of heaven, then he will rule the earth. Therefore it says, “Behold the light of the state.”<sup>39</sup>

One function of the *Shuo-kua* seems to have been to collate and standardize these associations.<sup>40</sup> Han dynasty interpreters then combined and recombined these standard images via mathematical operations upon the hexagram structure. This school of *I Ching* interpretation is known as *hsiang-shu* or “image and number.” “Number” here refers to the systematic generation of new tri- and hexagram relationships out of the originating hexagram. For example, the negative counterpart of hexagram #24 Fu, with its solid first line and five broken lines above, is hexagram #44 Kou, with a broken first line and five solid lines above. Because of this relationship, a thorough examination of Fu entails an examination of Kou. When this method is taken to its logical conclusion, all hexagrams can be formally related to each other in various ranks of intimacy. Specific manipulations define the various possibilities—inversion, alterations of specific lines, reading the “nuclear trigrams” (lines 2–3–4 and 3–4–5), etc.<sup>41</sup>

*Hsiang-shu* practice scrupulously relates each element of the hexagram configuration or text to images and number. For example, we have seen that the top line statement of Fu reads:

Confused return. Misfortune. There are calamities and errors. If one were to set troops in motion, it would end in great defeat.

<sup>38</sup> Hsi 15, 645 B.C.E.

<sup>39</sup> Chuang 22, 672 B.C.E.

<sup>40</sup> This appears to parallel the syncretic systematization of diverse lore that John Henderson has shown lies at the root of much of the Han correlative thinking that soon followed the assembling of the *Shuo-kua*. See his *Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), especially “Origins of Correlative Thought in China,” pp. 28–46.

<sup>41</sup> For a concise exposition of these and other Han methods, see Ch’ü Wan-lí, *Hsien-Ch’in Han Wei I-li shu-p’ing* (Taipei: Student Books, 1975 [1940]), pp. 77–149.