***The Yi River Commentary on the* Book of Changes.** By Cheng Yi. Edited and translated by L. Michael Harrington. Introduction by L. Michael Harrington and Robin R. Wang. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 560. $85.00.

The *Yijing* 易經 (also *I Ching*, *Book of Changes*, or *Changes*) is a composite text with three distinct layers. The first layer comprises eight trigrams and sixty-four hexagrams, allegedly drawn by the mythical figure, Fu Xi 伏羲. The second layer consists of statements accompanying each hexagram, allegedly written by King Wen 文王 and the Duke of Zhou 周公 during the eleventh century B.C.E. The third layer is composed of seven pieces of writing from the fifth to the second centuries B.C.E. Divided into ten segments (hence, the name "Ten Wings"), the authors of these writings used the hexagrams to discuss cosmic patterns, the relations between humanity and nature, and the complexity of human life.[1] With these graphic, historical and philosophical layers, the *Yijing* had been read in many different ways in imperial China, including as a manual of divination, a treatise on cosmic patterns, a study of political leadership, and a book on self-cultivation. [2] It also gave rise to contrasting commentarial traditions, such as the "Images and Numbers School" (X*iangshu* 象數) and the "Principles and Meanings School" (*Yili* 義理).[3]

Yet, for a long time in the West, the *Yijing* was viewed as a coherent text disclosing timeless wisdom. When it was first introduced to Europe in the seventeenth century, it was presented as a Confucian classic from the Cheng-Zhu 程朱 school of neo-Confucianism. This initial image of the *Yijing* shaped its subsequent receptions throughout Europe and the United States.[4] In the Anglophone world particularly, this static image of the *Yijing* was reinforced by three translations—Thomas McClatchie

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[1] The Ten Wings are: *Tuan* 彖 (Judgements) I, *Tuan* II; *Xiang* 象 (Images) I, *Xiang* II, *Wenyang* 文言 (Words of text), *Xici* 繫辭 (Appended phrases) I, *Xici* II, *Xugua* 序卦 (Sequence of hxagrams), *Shuogua* 說卦 (Explaining the trigrams), and *Zagua* 雜卦 (Miscellaneous notes on hexagrams).

[2] For the textual history of *Yijing*, see Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 202–52; Geoffrey Redmond and Tze-ki Hon, *Teaching the* I Ching (Book of Changes) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–157; Richard J. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The* Yijing *(*I Ching*, or Classic of Changes) and Its Evolution in China* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), pp. 7–56; and Richard J. Smith, *The* I Ching*: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1–47.

[3] For the history of *Yijing* commentaries, see Smith*, Fathoming the Cosmos*, pp. 57–111; Redmond and Hon, *Teaching the* I Ching, pp. 158–80.

[4] For a study of the receptions of the *Yijing* in Europe and the United States, see Smith, *The* I Ching, pp. 170–210.

(1814–1885), *A Translation of the Confucian Yi-King* (1876), James Legge (1815–1897), *The Yi King* (1882), and Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) / Cary F. Baynes (1883–1977), *The* I Ching *or Book of Changes* (1950). For Thomas McClatchie, the *Yijing* was a pagan text of the ancient world outside Europe. For James Legge, it was an empirical account of early China, showing its development toward building a cohesive social and political order. For Richard Wilhelm, who first translated the *Yijing* into German *I Ging*, and Cary F. Baynes who rendered *I Ging* into English, it was a world literature, aimed at people around the globe when they were in doubt, distress, or downtrodden.[5]

This "book of wisdom" approach made the *Yijing* look sacred but one-dimensional. It suppressed its multiplicity and veracity, limiting it to one role or one voice. In the early 1990s, a new generation of scholars in North America promoted another approach which has changed the image of the *Yijing* in the English-speaking world. The leader of this group of scholars was Kidder Smith, who argued that the focus of the *Yijing* studies should shift from the original text to its commentaries. In his preface to *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching (1990), Kidder Smith writes,

> We study the *Book of Changes* historically. That is, we demonstrate how each of our four subjects brought a set of specific historical questions to bear on the *I* [Changes]. 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 [Song, 960–1279]. Our book is not a history of the Sung *I*—its schools, commentaries, and texts. Rather it is a study of the *I* in history.[6]

By shifting the focus to studying the *Yijing* commentaries, Kidder Smith asks readers to see the classic as a living text which is constantly being renewed through a "fusion of horizons" between the reader and the book. As such, *Yijing* commentaries not only explain the "original" meaning of the classic, but also reveal the momentous transformation in China. In a 1997 review of *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching, Richard John Lynn highlights the significance of this "historical turn":

> A significant shift in the way scholars and translators approach the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) has recently become apparent. Instead of viewing the work as a timeless book of wisdom existing outside history, with a single unchanging meaning that can and should be extracted throughout, we are

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[5] For a comparison of these three English translations, see Redmond and Hon, *Teaching the* I Ching, pp. 194–214.

[6] Kidder Smith, et al., *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. vii.

> becoming increasingly aware that the *Classic of Changes* exists in as many versions as there are commentaries on it: its text is so dense and opaque that its meaning depends on how commentaries interpret it.[7]

Over the last thirty years, this historical turn of *Yijing* studies has produced substantial results. There have been specialized studies of the *Yijing* commentarial traditions covering the period from the Han to the Qing dynasty.[8] There have also been translations of *Yijing* commentaries, which shows that the meaning of the *Yijing* has evolved over time.[9]

In this context, L. Michael Harrington's translation of Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033–1107) *Yichuan yizhuan* 伊川易傳 is a continuation of this historical turn. Entitled *The Yi River Commentary on the* Book of Changes, Harrington's translation not only gives Western readers access to an important *Yijing* commentary of eleventh-century China, but also compliments Richard John Lynn's translation of Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) *Zhouyi zhu* 周易注 from which Cheng Yi drew inspirations, and Joseph A. Adler's translation of Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 upon which Cheng Yi asserted great influence. With these three translations, Western readers now have a full picture of the *Yijing* studies in China from the third century (Wang Bi's time) to the twelfth century (Zhu Xi's time). Over this long period of time, the *Yijing* was drastically transformed from a classic discussing the ontological foundation of human existence to a classic giving meaning to everyday life. To a great extent, this change reflects the fundamental shift in the socio-political order of mid-imperial China.

In the translator's note, Harrington acknowledges that his translation is not the first (p. xii). In English at least, his translation follows Thomas Cleary's I Ching:

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[7] Richard John Lynn, review of *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching, by Kidder Smith, Jr. et al., *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 27 (1997), p. 152.

[8] For general studies of the *Yijing* commentarial traditions, see Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos*; Redmond and Hon, *Teaching the* I Ching. For the commentarial traditions of a particular period, see Bent Nielsen, *A Companion to* Yi Jing *Numerology and Cosmology: Chinese Studies of Images and Numbers from Han* 漢 *(202 BCE–220 CE) to Song* 宋 *(960–1279 CE)* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Tze-ki Hon, *The* Yijing *and Chinese Politics: Classical Commentary and Literati Activism in the Northern Song Period, 960–1127* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005).

[9] For translations of *Yijing* commentaries, see Richard John Lynn's translation of *Zhouyi zhu* 周易注 in *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the* I Ching *as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Joseph A. Adler's translation of *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 in Zhu Xi, *The Original Meaning of the* Yijing: *Commentary on the Scripture of Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). John Minford includes excerpts from the eighteenth-century Daoist Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734–1821) in his translation, I Ching (Yijing): *The Book of Change* (New York: Viking, 2014).

The Tao of Organization (1995). While Harrington is correct in criticizing Cleary for "silently omit[ing] nearly all the historical references and quotations of classical texts, as well the portions of the commentary that address the *Judgement* and *Symbol*" (p. xii), he does not give Cleary the credit for providing a coherent interpretation of the *Yichuan yizhuan*. Given the limited information about *Yijing* commentaries in the 1980s, Cleary was not totally inadequate in reading the *Yichuan yizhuan* as a study of "mental organization, concentration, knowledge, and understanding."[10] And Cleary's suggestion of adopting the "deliberate methods" of consulting the *Yijing*—namely, reading the whole text several times to engage in self-reflection rather than reading hexagrams randomly based on divination[11]—was part of Wang Bi's method of reading the *Yijing* that Cheng Yi inherited.[12]

More nuanced and detailed notwithstanding, what truly distinguishes Harrington's translation from Cleary's is the concerted efforts to situate Cheng Yi's commentary in its own time. Rather than presenting the *Yichuan yizhuan* as an aid to understanding the original meaning of the *Yijing,* Harrington reads the *Yichuan yizhuan* on its own terms, both triggered and limited by its historical circumstances. For readers who are not familiar with the history of eleventh-century China or Cheng Yi's moral-metaphysics, they would benefit from consulting the introduction co-authored by Harrington and Robin Wang. In there, they will find the connections between the *Yichuan yizhuan* and Cheng Yi's experience as a court lecturer and as a disgraced official suffering from exiles (p. 2). They will also find Wang Bi's influence on Cheng Yi through the Tang commentary, *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (pp. 3–8). Most importantly, they will find an analysis of the *Yichuan yizhuan* as a treatise on political philosophy, in response to the power struggle among literati who served in the government (pp. 11–15). In short, for Cheng Yi, there might have been many dimensions in the *Yijing,* but the classic provoked him to ponder deeply the mission of the noble people (*junzi* 君子) in bringing order to the human world.

Cheng Yi's interest in finding an ideal socio-political order shaped his interpretation of the *Yijing*. In the introduction, Harrington and Wang provide a diagram that shows how Cheng Yi read a hexagram (p. 13). He saw the bottom and top lines representing people without title, hence peripheral players in the game of politics. He viewed the fifth line (the ruler) and the second line (the minister) as key decision makers in government, and he considered their partnership (whether smooth or stormy) a determining factor in the success of a government. Finally, he saw the third line (marquises) and the fourth line (great minister) as administrators who help run the government but do not involve in decision making.

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[10] Cheng Yi, I Ching: *The Tao of Organization*, trans. Thomas Cleary (1988; Boston: Shambhala, 1995), p. x.

[11] Ibid., pp. x–xiii.

[12] For Wang Bi's method of reading the *Yijing*, see Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, pp. 25–46.

With this diagram in mind, readers can see how Cheng Yi transforms the *Yijing* into a sustained study of the Confucian organic community based on the Five Relationships (ruler/minister, father/son, husband/wife, older/younger brothers, friend/friend). Take, for example, hexagrams Qian 乾 ䷀ (The Creative, 1) and Kun 坤 ䷁ (The Receptive, 2).[13] In addition to interpreting these two hexagrams as the correspondence of the yin and the yang cosmic forces, Cheng Yi reads them as representations of the "Way of the Sage King" (*jundao* 君道) (Qian) and the "Way of the Minister" (*chendao* 臣道) (Kun). It is not that the two hexagrams have never been read politically; rather, it is the intensity Cheng Yi put into this political reading that makes his interpretation unique.

In Qian, counting from the bottom to the top, the hexagram depicts six dragons in various positions: "a hidden dragon" in line one, "a dragon appearing in the field" in line two, a dragon (personified by a superior man) in constant alert in line three, a dragon "hesitantly leaping in the deep" in line four, "a flying dragon" in line five, and "an arrogant dragon" in line six. If reading the six lines of Qian as a story, the hexagram can be interpreted as a Greek tragedy. On the one hand, the tone of the first five lines are upbeat, projecting an impression of an incessant progress from a hidden dragon to an emerging dragon, a wavering dragon and finally a flying dragon. On the other hand, the progression is abruptly cut short by the downfall of an arrogant dragon, warning of the danger of hubris.

But Cheng Yi intentionally turns Qian into a biography of Emperor Shun 舜, a legendary ruler of early China. He reads the second line as Shun "plows the field and fishes," the third line as Shun "rises and is unheard of," the fourth line as Shun "undergoes the test," and the fifth line as the sage king (supposedly Shun) "has acquired the position of heaven" (pp. 24–25). By inserting the biography of Shun into the six lines of Qian, Cheng Yi presents an image of an ideal ruler who is not only aggressive and determined, but also patiently waiting for his opportunity and meticulously planning for his rise.

By contrast, Cheng Yi reads Kun as a discussion of the "Way of the Minister." Whereas the sage king must be assertive, determined, and forward-looking, the minister must be passive, obedient, and submissive. In Kun, Cheng Yi is even more explicit in connecting the hexagram to political philosophy. In explaining the hexagram line statement which says that "at first, there is confusion, but later acquisition and the mastery of profit" 先迷，後得，主利, Cheng Yi reads it as a discussion about an ideal minister who follows the order of the ruler. For him, the “Way of the Minister” must be “ruler decrees and the minster acts” (p. 35). The crux of the matter is that an ideal minister must stay strictly within the bounds of his official duties. He must “[keep] guard over one’s mission so as to bring the affair to its end” (p. 39).

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[13] I am using the conventional style of translating the hexagram titles, not Harrington's. I will discuss Harrington's problems later.

Just in these two hexagrams, we can see the significance of Harrington’s translation. With or without a training in classical Chinese, researchers now have the evidence to evaluate the *Yichuan yizhuan*. On the one hand, Harrington’s translation affirms what Kidder Smith has called “the literati’s *Yijing,*” which “reflects how eleventh-century China provided enormous opportunities for literatus advancement into real power—as politicians, within a vigorous economy, as litterateurs, as members of influential families, etc.”[14] Indeed, as shown in the *Yichuan yizhuan*, the most important issue for literati of Cheng Yi’s times was how to carry out their mission to assist the emperor to govern the country.

In addition, in the first two hexagrams, we also see how Cheng Yi differs from Wang Bi in reading the *Yijing*. In Richard John Lynn’s translation of *Zhouyi zhu*, we find Wang Bi reading these two hexagrams as the symbols of various combinations (or correspondences) of forces. In Qian, Wang Bi does not see the need to insert the biography of Emperor Shun. Nor does he find a linear progression from a hidden dragon through a leaping dragon to a flying dragon. Instead, he views all six dragons of Qian (including the arrogant dragon) as equally important because “each of the six positions forms without ever missing its moment, its accent or descent not subject to fixed rule.”[15] For Wang Bi, the key point of Qian is to remind readers to act proactively in responding to the changing circumstances. The same is true for Kun. Although Wang Bi sees the fifth line of Kun as a symbol of “the Dao of the subject, whose excellence is completely realized below in the position of subordinate,”[16] he does not consider the hexagram as a discussion of what a submissive minister should do. Instead, he sees a determined and patent person (symbolized by a mare) who finally finds his or her voice.

This difference in interpretation does not imply that one commentator is better than the other, or one interpretation is closer to the original meaning of the *Yijing*. As a living text, the true meaning of *Yijing* lies in provoking readers’ responses when facing challenges in life. On this score, both Wang Bi and Cheng Yi responded to the *Yijing* in their own ways. In Qian and Kun, Cheng Yi basically shared Wang Bi’s view that the two hexagrams are grids of corresponding forces, separated by positions, groupings, and potentialities. What he added in his interpretation was to make these grids directly relevant to literati's mission in eleventh-century China. For him, there was no better way to make the *Yijing* speak to literati than answering their burning issue—namely their identity and duty in a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

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[14] Smith, et. al., *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching, p. 139.

[15] Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, p. 129.

[16] Ibid., pp. 148–49.

While Harrington's translation makes possible a comparative study of *Yijing* commentaries, his translation also complicates it. The problem arises from his rendition of the trigram and hexagram titles. Granted that every translator has the liberty to find the best way to convey meaning, it is surprising that Harrington decides to totally break from the convention of translating trigram and hexagram titles. Instead of leaving the original title untranslated (e.g., Qian for the first hexagram), Harrington decides to use a fixed title (e.g., "Lead" for Qian). Hence, in *The Yi River Commentary on the* Book of Changes, whenever hexagram Qian appears in the text, readers will only see "Lead," not Qian or 乾 or ䷀. In the translator's note, Harrington explains his decision. First, he justifies it based on historical accuracy:

> Because the commentary requires a text tailored to its interpretation, I have provided a new translation of the *Book of Changes* itself together with its ancient commentaries, as they are found in the *Zhouyi zhengyi* edition, compiled in the Tang dynasty. (p. xii)

Second, he supports his decision based on what he sees as the direct effect of simple terms:

> I do not follow James Legge's practice of leaving the titles in Chinese, as some of them are words used in everyday speech. There is no reason to mystify the reader of Hexagram 17 with a title like "Sui," when in fact the Chinese character is mundane and easily translated as "follow" (*sui* 隨). (p. xiii)

These are indeed justifiable reasons. However, Harrington ignores the convenience of the readers, especially those who are going to undertake a comparative study of *Yijing* commentaries based on translation.

What Harrington forgets is that the conventional way of translating trigram and hexagram titles is to give full recognition to the multiple meanings of the graphic symbols and the polysemy of the Chinese characters. In other words, both the graphic symbols (i.e., the six lines of a hexagrams) and the Chinese characters (e.g., 乾 and 坤) are open to interpretation. They are signifiers that give a general idea about a force, an event, or a situation. As such, their specific meanings depend on their contexts. For this reason, the authors of the *Shuogua* 説卦 (Explaining the trigrams), one of the Ten Wings, argue that the trigram titles can have different meanings in accordance with different classifications, ranging from animal images to human feelings to the family system.[17] In the *Xici* 繫辭 (Appended phrases), another Wing, the authors identify different meanings in the titles of the sixty-four hexagrams.[18] Similarly, the Chinese characters in the hexagram titles can connote various meanings due to the polysemy of the Chinese language. A prime example is Ge 革䷰(Radical Change, 49). As Richard Wilhelm points out, the Chinese character for Ge has two meanings: a change in the colour of an animal's pelt and a change in the political structure.[19] Both meanings of Ge—one in the animal kingdom and the other in human society—stress the continuity between rupture and norms. Thus, Richard Wilhelm translates Ge as "revolution (molting)" to highlight the double meaning of Ge, showing that "revolution" here means the renewal of the mandate of heaven, just as an animal changes its skin colour to adjust to the environment. In Richard John Lynn's translation of *Zhouyi zhu*, we clearly see Wang Bi read Ge this way.[20]

Besides causing unnecessary confusion, Harrington's new translation of the trigram and hexagram titles can distort our understanding of Cheng Yi's commentary. A prime example is the third line of Qian 乾 ䷀ (The Creative, 1). The original line statement is "君子終日乾乾." Harrington renders this line as "noble people lead, and lead again, all day long" (p. 24). The translation implies that the noble people, presumably the ministers, must work hard from morning till evening to lead the government. If we compare Harrington's translation of the third line to Cheng Yi's comment, we may have an impression that Cheng Yi must have made a creative interpretation of this line. To Cheng Yi, 乾乾 is not understood as "lead and lead" but as "alarmed and careful" (p. 24). But what appears to be Cheng Yi's creative reading is utterly conventional. In other translations, "君子終日乾乾" is rendered as "all day long the superior man is creatively active"[21] or "the noble man makes earnest efforts throughout the day."[22] If we compare the conventional translation of the line statement to Cheng Yi's comment, Cheng Yi did not make a path-breaking interpretation. He realized that 乾乾 in the original line statement does not refer to the title of the hexagram, but to a state of mind when someone is in the midst of transition. Ironically, Harrington's mistranslation arises not from the subtle meaning of the original line statement, but from his mechanical mindset that whenever he sees the Chinese character 乾, it must be "Lead." Unfortunately, the *Yijing* does not work this way. The Chinese characters in the text are graphic symbols like trigrams and hexagrams. They are to provoke thoughts or arouse imagination, rather than to close the reader's mind.

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[17] Ibid., pp.119–24.

[18] Ibid., pp. 87–89.

[19] Richard Wilhelm / Cary F. Baynes, trans., *The* I Ching *or Book of Changes,* 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 189.

[20] Lynn, *The Classic of Changes,* p. 451.

[21] Wilhelm and Baynes, *The* I Ching, p. 8.

[22] Lynn, *The Classic of Changes,* p. 134.

From the perspective of the historical turn, the problems in Harrington's translation are minor. A thoughtful reader can find a way to navigate *The Yi River Commentary on the* Book of Changes by creating a list of trigrams and hexagrams with Harrington's translation on one column and the images and Chinese characters on the other. A careful researcher can combine Richard John Lynn's translation of the *Yijing* text with Harrington's translation of Cheng Yi's commentary, keeping in mind that Cheng Yi responds to Wang Bi's *Yijing,* not Harrington's *Yijing*. The key point is that with minor adjustments, researchers can now compare three *Yijing* commentaries in translation: Wang Bi's *Zhouyi zhu*, Cheng Yi's *Yichuan yizhuan*, and Zhu Xi's *Zhouyi benyi*. By comparing Wang Bi's and Cheng Yi's commentaries, researchers can study *diachronically* the changes in the Chinese *Yijing* studies from the third century to the eleventh century. By comparing Cheng Yi's and Zhu Xi's commentaries, they can study *synchronically* the changes in the Chinese *Yijing* studies in the Song dynasty. Finally, thirty years after the publication of the *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching, Western scholars have the tools and resources to demonstrate that the *Yijing* is indeed a living text—a classic that constantly gains new meaning by provoking its readers to think creatively about human existence.

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The Writ of the Three Sovereigns: From Local Lore to Institutional Daoism. By Dominic Steavu. New Daoist Studies. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 370. $72.00.

> ". . . no Daoist books surpass the *Esoteric Writ of the Three Sovereigns* 三皇內文 and *True Form Charts of the Five Peaks* 五嶽真形圖 in importance." (Ge Hong 葛洪 [283–343], in *Baopuzi* 抱朴子)

The formation of Daoism into an institutional religion in medieval China remains a critical question not just in Daoist studies, but also in the study of Chinese religions more broadly. Indeed, this question lets us continue to ponder the category of "religion" in China, and perhaps allow for some comparative and methodological