

# The Hexagram Sequence Papers

Anyone who has studied the *Yi-jing* 易經 with some attention notices the curious sequence of the hexagrams in the classic. Traditionally the choice of the sequence is attributed to King Wen, but there is no solid evidence to support this view. In fact there is no solid archaeological proof that the *Yi-jing* as a text or even as trigrams and hexagrams existed in China during the early Zhou dynasty. There is a tradition that several other versions of the classic once existed, such as the *Lian-shan-yi* 連山易 beginning with the hexagram Gen and the *Guei-cang-yi* 歸藏易 beginning with hexagram Kun. The Mawangdui text from the early Han period (168 B.C.) has yet another sequence. Apparently there was no fixed arrangement of the hexagram sequence, or even a standard way of writing the name of a hexagram, until the “received” *Zhou-yi* 周易 text was standardized and placed in the Confucian canon during the Han period.

Recent archaeological finds continue to reveal aspects of Chinese development of the *Yi-jing* from the early Zhou period to the Han. We now have added to the list of recovered texts the Shanghai Museum version from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Wangjiatai (Hubei) version with two manuscripts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., and the Fuyang (Anhui) version from 165 B.C. (found in 1977). The Wangjiatai version is thought by some to represent the *Guei-cang* tradition. The *Lian-shan* version mentioned in traditional texts remains a question mark. For a detailed discussion of these various new findings see Edward L. Shaughnessy's latest book **Unearthing the Changes** (2014).

Some scholars believe that early Zhou period tortoise plastrons, bones, and even some pottery pieces with sets of six numbers appearing on them represent an early period in the development of the Changes as a divination tool, before the standard solid and broken lines were invented as a notation system. We may see here a transition from the divination medium of interpreting fire-cracked bones to the more sophisticated random sorting of straws to arrive at a number from among a large set of possibilities. As Chinese archaeology continues to develop we may discover further evidence of how divination by the Changes evolved in China.

The articles I have included in this section of the website begin with a little book called the *Zhou-yi-tu* 周易圖 that was compiled by Wang Zhao-zung 王肇宗 during the Qing dynasty (1829). I found this book in the Harvard-Yenching Library and made a copy for professor Nan Huai-jin, with whom I had been studying the *Changes*. He was pleased to see the work and had my photocopy transcribed and printed for the two of us and with copies for his students. Recently I discovered that after over 40 years (approximately from 1974 to 2015) the pages had yellowed and the print had faded. So I digitally scanned my copy and cleaned up the scan as best I could. I noticed a few scribal errors and lacunae, but nothing critical to understanding the text. Then I “googled” the text on the Internet and discovered that in June of 2008 someone had scanned the Harvard-Yenching Library copy into Google’s digital library as *Zhou-yi-tu-zheng-xu-bian* 周易圖正續編. This was the same text that I had photocopied 40 years ago, except that I

apparently did not take a copy of the short addendum that added a few more charts and some comments by various scholars and was somewhat damaged at the end.

Unfortunately the person who scanned the work apparently did not know Chinese and copied twice an entire section and then formatted the entire work backwards when he placed it in the Google library. So I downloaded a copy of this more recent scan, cleaned it up somewhat, and put it into its correct order so that it agreed with my own transcribed copy of the book. I also removed the boorish "Google" stamps that had been applied to almost every page. The "Yench" librarian had only placed one discreet chop nicely carved in Chinese on this rare book when they added it to their collection. Google's habit of stamping their name all over an old and rare book that they digitize but have no copyrights to and do not even understand is something I wish they would stop doing. It reminds me of the way the Qian-lung emperor ruined lots of wonderful paintings by putting his huge red collector's stamp on them. Until such time as I can obtain a better copy of the book, this will have to do. At least the material about the sequence of hexagrams is clear as also are many of the other charts.

The third document I include is an article entitled "Some Cultural Principles Expressed by the Sequence of Hexagrams in the *I-ching*" that I wrote in 1978 and presented at the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs in Lincoln, Nebraska. In that article I start with the findings of Wang Zhao-zung and then add some of my own analysis of the sequence along with a listing of some unanswered questions that remain in my own mind about the rationale of the sequence. The sequence as received in the classic has an order that is defined by the interaction of several important cultural principles that were important for the Confucian Chinese. An individual in a social context inevitably adapts to a dynamic combination of social roles such as child, parent, companion, leader, and follower. The hexagrams are organized in complementary pairs and then in a general sequence from higher to lower rank in terms of seniority and rank as suggested by the qualities of the component trigrams. In the paper I also give a brief survey of some of the other ways in which the hexagrams have been organized by scholars throughout Chinese history, and I bring in for comparison a set of qualities and principles that Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has suggested are fundamental to the nature of creative intelligence.

The fourth article is an excerpt from my two volume complete translation of and commentary on the *Changes* that covers the text on the sequence of the hexagrams as it appears in the canonical classic (I reproduced Legge's version of that text in the "Cultural Principles" article.) The original Chinese text is followed by my translation and comments on the text.