

# INTRODUCTION

BY LI SHIFU

IN ANCIENT CHINA the *Yi Jing*<sup>2</sup> was the first of all the scriptures to appear. It is ranked higher than the *Zhuang Zi*<sup>3</sup> and even higher than the *Daode Jing*, as well as the Four Books<sup>4</sup> and Five Classics<sup>5</sup> of Confucianism. This is how important a position it holds. The binary code used by modern computers is derived from the *Yi Jing*.<sup>6</sup> So the east and west have taken this in surprisingly different directions. In the west the binary notion was developed on the material level to manufacture computers, while in China it evolved on a philosophical and spiritual level. But the *Yi Jing* is several thousand years old.

In the title of the *Yi Jing*, the two radicals of the sun 日 and moon 月 combine into the character for 'Changes' 易.<sup>7</sup> The most ancient Chinese character for 'sun' was a circle with a black dot inside it, while the moon at that time was depicted as a crescent. The character for 'change' thus reflects the transformation of the sun and moon in their cycle from nothingness to existence and back again, and in this way it represents the great *dao*. It is

like the process of growth when *yin* and *yang* harmoniously form an embryo from the egg or ovum and sperm. One moon passes after another until ten moons have passed and there is a newborn baby, which then progresses from youth to middle age, old age and death – this is the wheel of nature. The circuit of the sun and moon is the same from morning to evening.<sup>8</sup> The life and death of the ten thousand things on earth follows the same cycle:

日月為易。

The [characters of the] sun and moon become [the character] ‘changes’.<sup>9</sup>

The *Yi Jing* is very mysterious. No one knows where it came from. But it has been passed down all the way from ancient times until now. Two thousand years ago, Qin Shihuang<sup>10</sup> had many books burned in the Qin Dynasty named after him, but the *Yi Jing* was not among them. Qin Shihuang was opposed to many books, but he chose not to incinerate this one, as it did not contradict the principles of cosmology. So valuable is the *Yi Jing* that even the Qin Emperor found it indispensable.

The earliest records of the origins of the *Yi Jing* are the Yellow River Map and the Luo River Scroll,<sup>11</sup> so called because they are said to have emerged out of rivers. Out of the He River a gigantic turtle bubbled up, which radiated light. It was as though fire were being spewed out of the water. Does such a great turtle with light and fire exist? You can imagine for yourself what it might have been.<sup>12</sup> In the Luo River, a fire-spitting dragon, shape-shifting, powerful and mighty, also came out of the water. The Yellow River Map and Luo River Scroll, which are the foundation of the *Yi Jing*, were then transmitted to earthlings, who at the time were

closer to animals than people.<sup>13</sup> But regardless of the mythological origins of the *Yi Jing*, it is also truly marvellous in its applications.

The *Yi Jing* can answer any question. For elementary school children, it responds at an elementary school level, for middle school pupils, it answers at the middle school level, and for professors it communicates at their own level. It will speak to you on your own respective level. It knows our everyday life and is as relevant for people today as it was several thousand years ago, when work involved farming the land and hunting. The *Yi Jing* knows how to connect with the heavens and earth and with the spirits in the heavens. The hexagrams and their meanings always stay the same, but through our experience with the book and our understanding of it, we make hexagrams dynamic and applicable to any situation. So this is how you should use it. It will work because humans always act, too readily, from the place of their own needs and desires. The *Yi Jing* came to lead us out of that. To understand the *Yi Jing* you need to grasp that its main purpose is to help you to unite with the *dao* and you need to know how to do that.

The *Yi Jing* has innumerable details while its design provides an outline, like the countless hairs on a body. It will give you the means to explore calendrical calculations<sup>14</sup> and everything in it has fixed numbers.<sup>15</sup> The *Yi Jing* oracle is relevant to any situation, whether inside or outside of society. Anything which falls within the principles of *yin* and *yang* can be predicted by the *Yi Jing*. As is stated in *The Scripture of the Hidden Talisman*,<sup>16</sup> to take control of *yin* and *yang* is to control your life, because you know how to transform it. Then you are no longer subject to its natural law. The *Yi Jing* is like searching on the internet – you enter within and whatever you want, you can find. You should know that the *Yi Jing* is employed for casting oracles in many fields, including military strategy and government affairs, but we use it to guide us through

our lives. For example, if we are about to attempt something, we can ask the *Yi Jing*: ‘Will I succeed in this task? Will it help me in my life? Will it help others? What will be the outcome?’ If we enter a competition, we can ask: ‘Will I win or will I lose?’ It can also tell you step by step how an outcome will be achieved. If you are looking for a new job, you can ask: ‘How will this turn out? Will it work out for me?’ Or if someone is ill, you can ask the *Yi Jing*: ‘What kind of sickness does this person have? Where did they get it?’ So the book encompasses all events. Everything is included.

Some of you have already studied the *Yi Jing* before coming to China, along with *fengshui* and so forth. But how much did you really understand? I have taught not even one tenth of it in the past. The quantity of information that it contains is just too great. If you can study only one or two tenths of the *Yi Jing* and use it purposefully, that is already quite good. But who is really able to use the Six Lines Method<sup>17</sup> of the *Yi Jing*? Compared to the meanings of the Tarot cards, the *Yi Jing* is much deeper and more detailed in content. You need to spend a lot of time in study before you can enter its portals. You must study well the Six Lines Method alone – do not study anything else – because you all live in the city, where you can use it. Many decisions on matters such as timing, work, and general affairs require the *Yi Jing*’s judgement. As soon as you have the book, you have your tool. Then it should be easy for you to employ the method to find whatever you need. There are a great many methods for healing. We are going to study just one, and a rather old one: healing by means of the *Yi Jing*. Ten to fifteen percent of *Yi Jing* methods are about predicting and resolving ailments. When healing through the *Yi Jing*, there is no need to prescribe medicine.

As a healer you tell the patient how to make crucial adjustments to their life. There are innumerable such methods of

healing. With regard to those of the *Yi Jing*, if each person were to pay you one Fen<sup>18</sup> for a reading, you could earn a living from that. Such an occupation would probably be a lot healthier in life-style than a normal job, such as office work. But you need money to live in society, so if you do not work then somebody has to buy you rice and flour. For an itinerant priest or a wandering monk, if you arrive somewhere and have no food, then if you know the *Yi Jing* you can say: 'I will cast an oracle for you, and you can give me as much as you please in return.' If that person is rich, they can give more. It does not matter. Thus, you will be guaranteed to survive on the road. This is not something you do to accumulate or hoard money. Having food to eat is enough, or to buy a plane ticket if you need one, and then you are off:

四海為家。

The four seas are my home.

I have already lived here on White Horse Mountain for twenty years. I want to run away but I cannot.<sup>19</sup> By making an effort in society, you will receive a reasonable amount of money in recompense, but you must be able to balance this with frugality and not succumb to greed. Many great masters who study life have provided hexagram calculations<sup>20</sup> for CEOs and other bosses only, not for commoners. Would they be successful in their great business undertakings? Important issues have to be resolved, to the tune of one or two hundred thousand Yuan. The CEOs want to excel in their business and say to the master: 'I will give you ten per cent of the profits if it is successful!' Pay attention to how this is done. Because you can find the problem through the *Yi Jing*, you can then solve it and help the plan to succeed. But this is not our purpose here, which is healing. Nevertheless, to provide

healing treatments in society is first to make a reasonable living. We do not do this out of greed as that would only be to increase our desires. On the contrary, we calculate hexagrams and thereby treatments for cancer patients, for example, and thereby save their lives. You might say: 'I am giving you your life back. How much is that worth? I am selling you your life.' And they would reply: 'I do not care about money, I just want to keep my life.' There is no point in having a great deal of money when you have no life in which to use it. They have finally grasped the importance of life. Even so, there are some people who even at the point of death will still be thinking about how to take their money with them. People in society have to use external instruments and methods, since they have not opened up the internal tools that arise from spiritual practice. If you have such internal means, then why would you still calculate?<sup>21</sup>

I like to tell stories and jokes, but they all share certain principles. I will reprimand you if, based on your interpretation of the six lines, you are looking for our temple dog here, Hua Dou,<sup>22</sup> in India as it were – in other words, if the orientation or direction of your thinking is wrong. This includes the heavenly order, its principles and timeliness, and the earthly principles or geography, human affairs, and common conventions. If you contravene them and go against common practices, you do not combine with life and become one with it. The one per cent of people who are beyond these common situations cannot be judged easily through divinations and you cannot control them. Everyone else might be eating lunch, but they have been fasting for days. They are beyond ordinary considerations and this does not apply to them.<sup>23</sup>

When using the *Yi Jing*, you should ask just one question.

專心一意。

Your mind should be focused, with a single intent.

Moreover, just as in the past, one rule is that you must never draw more than two or three hexagrams for a single issue. Just one is best. Secondly, you must be in a certain frame of mind. Sometimes, if you're very clear in your method of communication,<sup>24</sup> you might calculate a hexagram and the event that you forecast turns out to be the right one and then a couple of months later you return to your notes and realise that you calculated wrongly.<sup>25</sup> The fourth and fifth dimensions are full of mischievous spirits. In time you'll begin to understand what this means.<sup>26</sup>

I began to research the *dao* in 1985, more than thirty years ago, which is why I know the difference between the straight path of Daoism and the heterodox side paths. Thus, I know how the *Yi Jing* can easily lead a student of the *dao* in a wrong direction.<sup>27</sup>

The *Yi Jing* is cosmologically based on the changes of the heavenly *qi* and its movements, as well as *yin* and *yang*, the five phases, the heavenly stems and the twelve earthly branches, which all form its foundation. It would take too long to teach every aspect of *Yi Jing* divination, so we will have to take some shortcuts. Cheng Tong, one of my senior students, studied the Six Lines Method for three to four hours each day. In total, he studied for more than five months, just so he could understand this one aspect only: healing. He did well in that method, though even five whole months did not give him time enough to study other basic methods such as the four pillars and the eight characters.<sup>28</sup> You must study how to find out the illnesses of people through the *Yi Jing* as its highest goal. You do so by using the five phases – wood, fire, earth, metal and water – along with the ten heavenly stems

and the twelve earthly branches, and also *yin* and *yang* and their mutual unification.<sup>29</sup>

Casting oracles for illness is only one aspect of the *Yi Jing*. There are other domains such as travel, weddings, and commerce. In total, there are twenty-two or so aspects, including construction projects and employment. We will explore just one aspect. In Daoist Medicine we study the influence of *fengshui* on the body. We focus on its methods to address health problems. Likewise, that is all that is involved in using the *Yi Jing* to treat illness. The protest and revolt of the body has no language in which it can express itself. If your heart jumped out and started talking, you would run away in fear, yet many people know well what is wrong with them but ignore it. So, when you encounter health problems, use this method. It is very fast working and will resolve issues in just one or two days.

You must learn how to use the *Yi Jing* as it is a great tool. It can be likened to a key that opens the door of a car. If you wish to enter into the *Yi Jing* more deeply, you must study all sixty-four hexagrams and for this you need to have a very capacious memory. The numbers<sup>30</sup> of pre-heaven and post-heaven arrangements, the five phases, the supporting and controlling cycles, and the transforming, insulting and unification cycles<sup>31</sup> are all related to human life.

Without this foundation it is impossible to study the *Yi Jing* successfully. We must begin with *yin* and *yang*, the five phases, the eight trigrams,<sup>32</sup> the Yellow River Map, the Luo River Scroll and learn how to consult the lunar calendar. The west uses the Gregorian calendar,<sup>33</sup> yet what we are looking for does not exist within it, such as the Twenty-Eight Constellations, the heavenly stems and earthly branches and the black and yellow paths, as well as other auspicious and inauspicious dates of the lunar calendar.<sup>34</sup> You would need very good brain functions, were you to convert



the time between the east and west manually.<sup>35</sup> We need to study all of this and more. The topics are all interlinked and integrated together. Such a vast study is just too much to talk about fully, so I wish to draw this to a close. But what you must study if you enter deeply into the *Yi Jing* includes *yin* and *yang*, the calendrical calculations of the Four Pillars, the Six Lines Method, the Plum Blossom Art<sup>36</sup> and the Iron Plate Spirit Book.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to divination, sometimes in the morning a group of city people will come up to the mountain and want me to foretell the future. These are the needs of city people: ‘you want a safe and sound family? I can help you. You have disaster and misfortune at home? No problem, I can help you. But you want to start a business and get rich? You want to become the Deity of Wealth? You want to become an official? I am not Xi Jinping<sup>38</sup> – this is a headache.’

After many decades of study with many teachers, as the *Yi Jing* is closely interwoven with longevity and life, I finally decided to teach it. I have seen many students become specialists in the *Yi Jing* for economic reasons. This practice violates our purpose, so I made up my mind to stop teaching it, hence this may be the last time I do so. It is not easy to follow this course. You might have to draw on all of your brain cells for the memorizations it requires. We are not a school, but there are studies. We are not a hospital, but there are regulations. We are in a religious space, but there are no strict requirements.

For weddings, receiving guests, childbirth, travel, building houses, and marriage, all Chinese fortune-tellers predict good fortune. Do they not get tired of living this way? Even for the birth of a child they must find a suitable date! Is childbirth not a natural occurrence? They say: ‘This is a bad time to give birth! This is a good time!’ In the past there was no Caesarean surgery or

inductions, hence it was not possible to fix a date for childbirth, but nowadays they can shift it even ten days forward. If, as with these fortune-tellers, your way of thinking is problematic and you study the *Yi Jing*, then you will deviate from the central purpose of the *Yi Jing* for us, namely healing, as well as from the goal of our teachings. Likewise, *gongfu*<sup>39</sup> is not only for fighting or sparring. We must also have *gongfu* compassion.<sup>40</sup> Just as the study of Daoist medicine<sup>41</sup> imparts skills that enable us to help others and to relieve their suffering, so too does studying the *Yi Jing*, whose purpose becomes corrupted if this is not our aim. Why do I teach the *Yi Jing*? Because it enables you to find out what influences the health and wellbeing of the human body:

醫道同。

Medicine and the *dao* are one and the same.

Any disease that cannot be detected through tests and computers in hospitals, you can discover through your knowledge of the *Yi Jing*. Once you have found the problem, you can then solve it. The same applies to *fengshui*,<sup>42</sup> as it also affects our health and body and creates illnesses.<sup>43</sup> The goal of the study is to find out where there is good *fengshui*.<sup>44</sup> If you approach the *Yi Jing* saying, 'I want to get rich!', this is not in accordance with my teachings. If you ask, 'How can I obtain great authority and an official position?', this is also not the way that we are following. Our aim is to study and remove that which negatively influences our body in the field of time and space. The following saying is also true of the *Yi Jing*: 'Life comes first, not money or status.' The aim of the *Yi Jing* as a cultivation tool is to harmonize people with the universe and to unify them with the heavens and earth in order to better understand the world, life, people and nature. This enables

them to relieve their suffering and cure their present and future diseases. However, those very high masters or sages who have already grasped hold of their life<sup>45</sup> are no longer predictable by the natural laws on which the prognostications of the *Yi Jing* are based, as they have gone beyond them.

There are many ways to study the *Yi Jing* and many roads you can follow. Some people learn a subject and then put it down. It is like yeast in cold weather, when it does not ferment. Maybe ten or twenty years later you will ferment, when the weather is warmer. You read a book when you are younger and it holds no meaning for you at that moment. When you are older, you read it again and there is a new knowledge in it which you can then grasp:

學習認知實踐總結。

Study, recognize [the meaning of what you are studying], put [that knowledge] into practice, and [be able] to sum up [the essence of it].

This is human life. Maybe years later you will be able to distil the essence of the teachings of the *Yi Jing*, and after this will come the transformation of your mind. Some things cannot be brought with you on that path:<sup>46</sup>

一分錢帶不走。

You cannot take even a dime with you.

Why does our *Yi Jing* course include the practice of *gong*<sup>47</sup> and sitting meditation as a requirement? We have to transcend the *Yi Jing* in order to look back at it with true understanding. Thus, the *Yi Jing* has eight Chinese characters that sum up its purpose and it has been said that these might be meditation practices:

寂然不動感而遂通。

Quiet and unmoving, perceive it and succeed in communion.<sup>48</sup>

These are the most important characters in the *Yi Jing*. The first two, *jiran* 寂然, mean 'still and stopping', which refers to the cessation of all electrical impulses and discharges in the brain. The second two characters, *budong* 不動, also mean 'stopping' or 'unmoving', in both a physical and mental sense. If you move in a disordered and chaotic way, how can you become still? This stillness is the true meaning of the *Yi Jing* and it comes from sitting meditation. A common person may try to use the *Yi Jing* to tell fortunes, cast oracles and predict the future, but they cannot open up its deeper meanings. The fifth character, *gan* 感, means 'to feel', 'to sense' and 'to perceive' – not only with the sixth sense, but even with the seventh sense!<sup>49</sup> Which brings us to the last three characters, *er suitong* 而遂通 which describe the opening of your third eye to commune from this third dimension to higher dimensions. This is why you need to find absolute serenity.

There are three conditions if one wishes to commune between dimensions. Firstly, this requires sound, voices, and music, such as that employed in musical healing.<sup>50</sup> Secondly, it requires incense.<sup>51</sup> In the past you also had to have an altar. You had to pray and to light incense. There were three platforms with steps between them<sup>52</sup> and the altar was kept very clean. This was the designated place for lighting incense, praying and ceremonies: a place for communicating between heaven and earth. In Catholicism, Buddhism and Daoism alike, the goal of incense is to commune with heaven and to purify. This communion is why incense is extremely important. Before playing the zither, you must wash your hands and the same applies to lighting incense.

The third condition is that of one's thoughts. This can be exemplified in just one word: 'sincerity'.<sup>53</sup> This is the word that is your generation name as my students.<sup>54</sup> Sincerity is the most important thing of all.

一誠通天地。

Single-minded sincerity communes with heaven  
and earth.<sup>55</sup>

A sincere heart can move up to heaven or down into the earth. Your thoughts must not be fragmented or scattered, but pure and single-minded in honesty and sincerity. When you light incense, perform music or engage in the *Yi Jing*, you must be single-minded in sincerity.

To recapitulate: Whatever your practice, be still and unmoving and maybe a portal will open. This is one example of how to open the gate. In today's language this is called a special ability. You will comprehend what this entails as soon as you see things beyond ordinary perception. You will be able to recognize and become aware of any external energetic field.<sup>56</sup> This is a skill that arises from spiritual practice – you do not need to have an innate ability. Practise sitting meditation persistently and you will just see and feel it.

So now you can understand the eight characters. If you have not acquired such special abilities, you have to use external, material tools and be able to calculate. One plus one equals two, two plus two equals four, and eight times eight equals sixty-four hexagrams. If you have inner tools, special abilities, then you can get rid of the external ones. Start with the *Yi Jing* like building a house from the bottom up, step by step, and in the final stage remove the external structure. As with the scriptures, such as the *Daode Jing*,

when you have finally understood them, you can let go of them. Do not rest at the foundation but keep moving up. The *Yi Jing* is a vast subject, no one can become a master of it in just a few days.

The aim of your predictions is crucial. Make health your main focus<sup>57</sup> and priority. Equilibrium is a key principle here. People often consult the *Yi Jing* about possessions, houses, cars and property, but if you are physically suffering every day, this is not a good way to be. If you have no life to use, this is an issue. Everything is built on top of one's quality of life. If you are alive, you need to have good health. Life without health is to suffer in the shadows, to experience stress, pressure and constraints.

It takes several decades to study and research just one aspect of the *Yi Jing*, and each has its own methods. These aspects are all connected and so each must be studied well, and you also need to study the appropriate hand symbols, rituals, incantations, and talismans, in order to purify your thoughts and your space:

沒有練功不行。

To lack the practice of *gong* is not acceptable.

If you do not practise these, then you will not have power, and your castings will all be empty. If you do practise them and thus possess a strong energetic field, *they*<sup>58</sup> will see this very clearly. So you must practise your *gong*. You need to understand the importance of this. All the masters of the past practised *gong*.

As we immerse ourselves in the *Yi Jing* during these lectures, let go of whatever you have studied in the past, regardless of what that might be. Your time here is very short, so drop all past things. Right now you must strive for stillness and purity, and your mind should be located in just one place only: in the eye of your belly.<sup>59</sup> As soon as your thoughts run away with themselves, bring the

mind back to that place. But you can spend ten or twenty years attempting to retrieve the mind in this way without fully succeeding. It is a very great task. Yet as long as you can grasp hold of the mind, you can train and tame the tiger and monkey,<sup>60</sup> and eventually the mind will be quiet and still. Do not be scared of any visions you might see in meditation, but also do not follow them out of curiosity. If you comply with this, you will be able to go higher and higher. If you acquire small abilities, do not feel happy about this as there are much greater abilities, yet it all depends on your individual fortune. To be able to come here to study the *Yi Jing* out of all the eight billion people on earth is already a great good fortune!

## THE FAMILY FEUD

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THE PEOPLE IN this story are still around here. One is outside right now, he's the big man who sells incense in the front of the temple. At one time he had lost his cow and could not find it. The man and his wife searched for a long time in vain. In the countryside a cow amounts to half of a family's property and income. They could not find it anywhere. So they approached me to help them. I had an oracle cast and obtained the *qian* trigram, which revealed that the cow could be found in the north-west. Furthermore, it was by the water and had been taken by someone close and related to them, who was now looking after it. This person was a man who fed it grass, was between fifty and sixty years old, and was very thin. While the husband was still pondering the oracle and had not yet begun to search again, two people came looking for cows to buy. A few days before the cow went missing, a butcher had come to a relative of the man, called Da Pingzi, also looking to buy cows. Therefore, the man and his wife strongly suspected the relative of selling their cow.<sup>130</sup> His home was the highest house in Zhangjiapo below Taishan Temple, the temple mid-way up the mountain, though he has since moved. The farmer and his wife confronted the man: 'Did you steal our cow?' 'No, I didn't', he replied. 'When do you think I might have stolen your cow? Who said so?' 'Elder Li<sup>131</sup> from the Five Immortals Temple said it.'

So they all came up to the temple together. Fortunately, I still had the paper on which the oracle had been written. 'What has this to do with me?' I asked them. 'I never mentioned anyone's



name. I have shown you what I wrote. Did I ever say you stole the cow? Go and look for it.' I showed them the trigram and pinned it on the wall. 'You still need to look for it in the north-west', I said to them. They had been arguing about the matter for two whole hours at the temple, but at these words they stopped. Where did the cow go? It had run off around the mountain, next to the water. And this turned out to be precisely correct. On the path to the Yellow Dragon Village, someone had found the cow and handed it over to the police. They tried to find the owner but did not succeed. As they could not have it tied up in the police station, they gave it to someone to look after and feed it, who lived next to the river. This happened to be the second cousin of the cow's owner, a skinny man who was more than fifty years old. In the end the owner led it back from the police but was told to give his cousin some compensation for the care it had received. Although the farmer gave me some cigarettes for my help,<sup>132</sup> he argued with his cousin over the compensation money.

Therefore, you should not cast for lost property! It will lead to arguments and strife. You might get someone imprisoned and then the family members will give you trouble for incarcerating that person. My oracles have led to three such disputes in the past, so I no longer cast them. An arrogant and conceited attitude – 'My oracles are so accurate!' – will create selfishness and a desire for wealth and fame. Instead, we should move towards the light and show compassion and forbearance. We should be good to others and of help to society, bringing people together rather than creating division between them. We should not act only for ourselves. Our moral behaviour dictates how we should use the *Yi Jing*:

君子得之固窮，小人得之輕命。

Noble people obtain [knowledge of the *dao*],  
whereas low people learn [about the *dao*], they only  
take lightly their life-destiny.<sup>133</sup>

A good person applies their wisdom in order to assist people, to express their love and tolerance. A lowly person does things only for personal gain and is very selfish. If you learn the *Yi Jing*, you should ask how this might benefit others? You can accumulate wealth on a material level without any elevation of your spiritual nature. This will affect you in a very negative way and you will lose more and more of your compassion. Eventually, everything you do will be for selfish purposes alone.