

The Spirit of Yijing 易經

— YuanQi 緣起 (Preface)

The Yijing 易經, or I Ching, the Book of Changes, is one of the most popular ancient Chinese classics in the West. We can find many published versions of the Yijing 易經 if we do an Internet search. However, after taking a look at some of these books and communicating for more than 5 years with some dedicated Yijing 易經 practitioners in America, I feel that some essential parts of the Yijing 易經 knowledge – the symbolism and numerology – have been lacking to Westerners.

The Yijing 易經, or I Ching, is a divination book that originates from the ancient Wu 巫 (Chinese Shaman or Enlightened Being). It contains three secret layers of wisdom: Xiang 象 (symbolism), Shu 數 (numerology), and Li 理 (philosophy). Since the Yijing 易經 is considered to be the root of ancient Chinese science and civilization, it can also be used to gain deep insights into the practice of Chinese Medicine and spiritual cultivation. However, the high-level Yijing 易經 masters regarded the practical Yijing 易經 information on Xiang 象 and Shu 數 as the secret keys to the mystical gates of the Universe and the Human Being. They believed that a person with high virtue who mastered the keys would bring great benefits to others. In contrast, a person with a big ego or without ethics who mastered the keys would bring much harm to others. Therefore, they always picked their students carefully and taught their complete knowledge to only a few specially chosen students. This is same situation in other Chinese wisdom traditions.

“Don’t teach someone if he or she is not the right person.”

“Don’t leak the secrets of the universe.”

I have read these two sentences very often in old texts on the Yijing 易經, Chinese medicine, martial arts, or internal alchemy. Because Chinese masters have followed these admonitions, most Chinese have no idea about the knowledge of Xiang 象 and Shu 數. Although there are many different English versions of the Yijing 易經, most of them just talk about Li 理, the philosophical part of Yijing 易經, and it is therefore difficult for Westerners to find good information about Xiang 象 and Shu 數.

My original plan was to write a series of Chinese shamanic wisdom books in English that did include some writing about the Yijing 易經. I was planning to begin with a book entitled: *The Way of Enlightenment – Chinese Shamanic 28 Lunar Mansions Cosmic Qigong*. However, after giving several workshops on Yijing 易經 divination techniques, healing, and spiritual cultivation, I received great inspiration from Nature during my recent travels. I changed my mind about the order of writing my books.

In late autumn of BingXu 丙戌(2006), Fire Dog Year, I visited the mysterious Salt Spring Island in British Columbia. Autumn belongs to the Metal Element and it is the Season of Change according to Yijing 易經 philosophy. Harmony requires the healthy process of change in Nature as well as in the human body. When I saw the colorful maple leaves decorating the entire island in a serene environment and my lungs took in the fresh and transparent Qi 氣(air) to rejuvenate

my energy and spirit, I felt that DingHai 丁亥 (2007), the Year of Fire Pig, would be one of peace and harmony.

The crystal clear water at Grandma's Beach reminded me where life comes from and why the Wu 巫 (Chinese shamans) apply water as the number one remedy for healing.

Every morning right before dawn reached Cusheon Lake, I jumped into it. I sensed the lake water energy to be like ice and crystals penetrating into my body through all the pores of my skin. I felt my body melting into the lake and becoming part of the lake. When I saw that the lake changed her face in each moment, I was experiencing the Wu 巫, ancient shaman, reading the mystery of Nature.

Yes, the lake corresponds to the Yijing 易經 trigram Dui 兌. Dui 兌 is lake, Dui 兌 is metal, Dui 兌 is mouth, Dui 兌 is a beautiful teenage girl, Dui 兌 is joy, Dui 兌 is west, Dui 兌 is goat, and Dui 兌 is shaman... Through the Lake, I appreciated that each trigram has many symbolic meanings or patterns and that there must be an energetic connection among all of the trigrams.

I understood the Yijing 易經 trigrams better with each moment I was in Nature. Confucius states:

“Jin qu zhu shen, yuan qu zhu wu, yu shi shi zuo Bagua. 近取諸身，遠取諸物，於是始作八

卦。”¹ This means “Near at hand, he learned each part of his body and at a distance, he

¹ *Yijing. Xici (Appended Statements)*. See *Zhouyi Shangshixue*. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju. 1988: 307

understood everything in Nature; then BaoXi包犧 (one of the oldest shaman kings in ancient China) invented the Bagua 八卦 (Eight Trigrams).” From this statement, we can tell that the Bagua八卦 is the model of the Universe and everything, including every part of the body, should belong to one of the trigrams. Ancient shamans understood this connection and they brought this lively connection into their interpretations of their divinations. We have to value this if we study Yijing 易經 philosophy and divination techniques, because this connection is fundamental to the old divination school of Yijing 易經. For instance, a person came from the west direction to consult the Yijing 易經, and I got the trigram Dui兌 because west belongs to Dui兌.

The moment the ferry left Fulford Harbor on Salt Spring Island, I was standing on the deck with my friends and enjoying my last view of the island’s magnificence. As I looked back at Mt Maxwell, Nature showed her magic to me again. The Earthly Qi rose from the island in the form of a cloud. In just a few minutes, it formed a bald eagle, and I quickly took out my camera and recorded that moment (Fig.1). The eagle was playing with its shamanic power and in just a few seconds, it changed into a huge tree to connect with Heaven and Earth (Fig.2). At that moment, I was aware of what the spirit of Yijing 易經 is.



Fig.1



Fig.2

Confucius points out: “Tian chui xiang xian ji xiong, sheng ren xiang zhi. 天垂象見吉凶，聖人象之。”² This means “Nature showed its pattern to indicate the way, and from this the Sage learned the Natural Way.” What will we learn from this cloud in our Yijing 易經 study? Of course, Yijing 易經 is about Yi 易, Change. What is the meaning of Change? Change has three layers of meaning: Bu Yi 不易 (No Change), Bian Yi 變易 (Change), and Jian Yi 間易 (Simply Change). It has been difficult for many people to understand these three layers of meaning of Yi 易 when I have shared this information with friends.

Now, let us go back the cloud pattern again. No matter what pattern a cloud forms, we still call it a cloud. This is the meaning of No Change and it represents that the Dao 道 is always there and never changes its way. The cloud pattern changing from an eagle to a tree, this is the meaning of the Change. It represents that the Dao 道 expresses its way in different patterns in Nature and in our daily lives. Although the cloud changed into different patterns, we could still recognize that it was the pattern of an eagle or a tree. This is the meaning of Simply Change. It represents that although the Dao 道 expresses its way in different patterns, we can learn about this through our vigilant observation.

From a Yijing 易經 numerology perspective, the three layers of Change is Han San Hei Yi 含三合一 in Chinese, which means holding Three in One. Chinese ancient Wu 巫 (shamans) understood that three is the universal creation number. Trinity is one of the most important

² *Yijing. Xici (Appended Statements)*. See *Zhouyi Shangshixue*. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju. 1988: 301

concepts in the Chinese shamanic spiritual traditions.³ Yi 易, Change, is the expression of the Dao 道; it is the number one, Yi 一 in Chinese. The three layers of Change are represented by the number three, San 三 in Chinese. In the Yijing 易經, one trigram is made up of three lines; to understand the number three is another way to understand Yi 易, the Change, and the Dao 道.

When I meditated with the spirit of Salt Spring Island, I got many more indications from Nature. With my heart deeply connected with the knowledge of Yijing 易經, I decoded the messages from these natural images:

From the image of the bald eagle flying over the mountain, I got the hexagram Lu 旅– Travel, because eagle belongs to the trigram Li 離 and mountain belongs to the trigram Gen 艮. Li 離 over Gen 艮 is the trigram Lu 旅. From Lu 旅, Travel, I interpreted the information as: 1) I will continue my traveling style of teaching for another three years because Li 離 is equal to number 3 in XianTian BaGua 先天八卦, the Prenatal Trigram Arrangement; 2) The spirit of Nature is shifting to the northeast or a mountainous area, and this direction or area will be good for me to settle down in because Gen 艮 represents mountain and it is located in the northeast position in HouTian BaGua 後天八卦, the Postnatal Trigram Arrangement.

From the changed image of the tree positioned between Heaven and Earth, I got two hexagrams: Gou 姤 – Union and Guan 觀 – Observation, because Heaven or sky belongs to trigram Qian 乾,

³ Wu, Zhongxian . *Vital Breath of the Dao – Chinese Shamanic Tiger Qigong*. St. Paul: Dragon Door Publications. 2006: 41

tree belongs to the trigram Xun 巽, and the Earth belongs to Kun 坤. Heaven above the tree is the hexagram Gou 姤 and tree above the Earth is the hexagram Guan 觀. Gou 姤, Union, means one unites the Yin and Yang energy through breathing techniques in Qigong or other types of spiritual cultivation. Guan 觀, Observation, means observation or meditation is the way to truly understand ourselves, Yijing 易經, and the Dao 道. These two hexagrams indicate to me that I should continue my public teaching about the Yijing 易經 and other Chinese wisdom traditions for another 19 years, and then I should shift to my personal cultivation without public teaching.

The above divination depends on the knowledge of Xiang 象 (symbolism) and Shu 數 (numerology) in the Bagua 八卦 (Eight Trigrams) of the Yijing 易經. It goes back to the old Yijing 易經 divination schools. This old divination system will not check what the book of Yijing 易經 says during the divination process, because the lineage extends way back before the book was written. This divination system is based on the Yijing 易經 knowledge of Xiang 象 (symbolism) and Shu 數 (numerology) in the XianTian BaGua 先天八卦 (Prenatal Trigram Arrangement) and HouTian BaGua 後天八卦 (Postnatal Trigram Arrangement). We can find some of the knowledge in Confucius' Shiyu 十翼 —Ten Wings and in one of the oldest historical books, ZuoZhuan 左傳. The Wu 巫 (Chinese shamanic) oral divination tradition holds some of the secret divination skills from this old system.

In this book, I will share some fundamentals from this old divination school. This will include Yijing/I Ching divination, its medical application to diagnosis and healing, and its relationship

with spiritual cultivation. I will present this magical information to friends in the relaxing style of a classical Chinese scholar's tea conversation.