

Yijing (Book of Change)

The *Yijing* is a classic Chinese text developed in the Zhou Dynasty (~1034-256 BCE) which contains 64 hexagrams, each describing a very particular kind of energy. One of the ways the *Yijing* is used is as an oracle for divining one's most advantageous approach to life situations. The book was first used by the emperors of the Zhou Dynasty, and is therefore sometimes called the *Zhouyi*, but began to be used on an individual basis during the chaotic Warring States Period (~476-221 BCE). Its widespread use continues today.

The *Yijing* is based on ideas fundamental to the ancient Chinese view of the universe. This includes the view that originally there was just one undifferentiated, unchanging unity, which the Chinese refer to as *hundun* (cosmic chaos) or *wuji* (without extremity), symbolized as an empty circle (see Figure 1, first symbol). *Wuji* mysteriously gives birth to *taiji* (great extremity), differentiating into two polar energies, referred to as *yin* and *yang*, which are characterized as negative and positive, dark and light, female and male, respectively. *Yin* and *yang* constantly cycle, reaching their extreme and then turning into one another, as symbolized in the double-fish *taiji* symbol (see Figure 1, second symbol). *Yin* and *yang* interact to create the complex and constantly changing universe, referred to as the rise and fall of the 10,000 things.

In the *Yijing*, *yin* and *yang* are symbolized with a broken and solid line, respectively (see Figure 1, first set of lines). Because they fluctuate, they are further symbolized with two lines, creating four possibilities: young *yin*, old *yin*, young *yang*, and old *yang* (see Figure 1, second set of lines). When a third line is added, *yin* and *yang* are further differentiated to form the *bagua*, or eight trigrams: thunder, lake, fire, sky, wood, mountain, water, and earth (see Figure 1, third set of lines). These "trigrams" represent 8 basic universal energies. The *Yijing* combines the trigrams to form the 64 hexagrams.

A key premise of divination through the *Yijing* is that because we are part of the one universal energy, we can access universal wisdom through the window of chance. When we hold a question and summon the lines, the proper hexagram will naturally appear.

To use the oracle, you first clear your mind and ask a question. The question should reference a difficulty or challenge you are facing. Then, you summon the lines by either drawing yarrow stalks or tossing coins. In the coin-toss method, you use 3 coins. 0 heads represents old, complete *yin*, which is about to bring forth *yang*; 1 head represents young, stable *yin*; 2 heads represents young, stable *yang*; 3 heads represents old *yang*, which is about to bring forth *yin* (see Figure 2). Each line therefore has 4 possibilities. After you have received 6 lines, you have your hexagram and can read the text to receive the guidance and wisdom of the universe through the oracle (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. *Wuji*, *Taiji*, *Yin-Yang*, *Bagua*

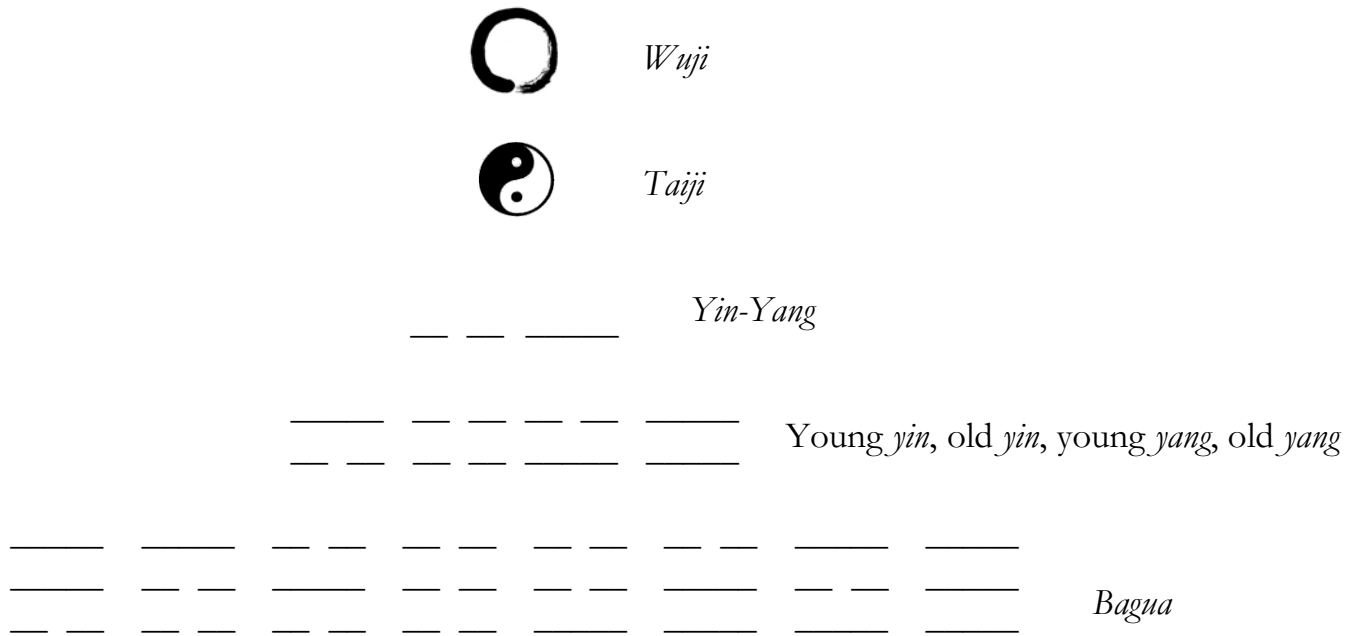


Figure 2. Four Possibilities for Each Line

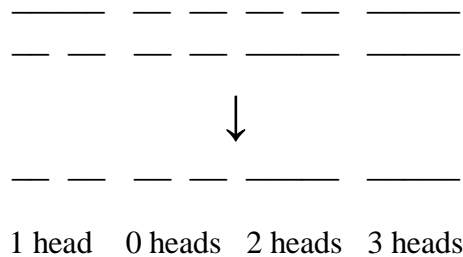
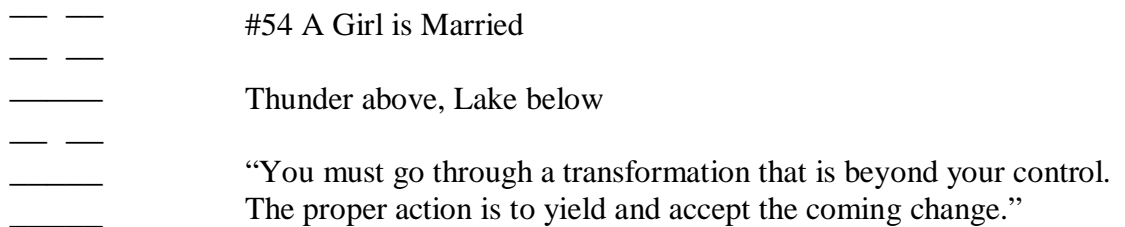


Figure 3. Hexagram



References

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 Wikipedia