

## I-CHING ORACLES IN THE *TSO-CHUAN* AND THE *KUO-YÜ*

HELLMUT WILHELM

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

In an article which was written in 1930 and then incorporated into the third volume of the *Ku-shih-pien*,<sup>a</sup> *Li Ching-ch'ih*<sup>b</sup> has dealt with the *I-ching* oracles recorded in the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü*. The present paper is based on substantially the same material. From Li's data I have subtracted some which appeared doubtful to me, and to them I have added some which appeared to me helpful. This material is presented to throw some light on the textual tradition of the Book of Changes, both of its older layers, the hexagram and line texts, and some of its more recent layers, the so-called *Ten Wings*. A purpose of this nature can, of course, be maintained only if it is assumed that our present texts of the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü* have material incorporated which is roughly contemporary to the dates under which it is recorded. Some evidence to sustain this assumption will be presented as we go along.

It will be recalled that the Chinese tradition attributed the composition of the hexagram and the line texts to King Wen and the Duke of Chou respectively, that is to say to a time immediately preceding and following the Chou conquest of the Empire, and the composition of the Ten Wings to Confucius. Recent scholarship almost unanimously accepts the former date and unanimously rejects the latter. It has to be added, though, that even if it is accepted that the hexagram and line texts were fixed in very early Chou, what was written down then must have differed greatly from our present text. As Conrady and Waley<sup>1</sup> have pointed out, the original texts have been enriched by the addition of diviners' formulae which are frequently couched in the terminology of the bone oracle. They have furthermore been enriched by the addition of statements to elucidate obscure passages. A second type of change was brought about by a Confucianization of these texts, that is to say, by the addition of Confucianist ideas and

concepts and by a certain secularization of the texts, through which terms with heavily ritualistic connotations have been replaced by more temporal ones. Of these changes, the first type must have taken place rather early, the second one rather late.

To give an example of what the original texts might have looked like, an attempted reconstruction of the line texts of the first hexagram *Ch'ien* has been appended. In this reconstruction all the diviners' formulae have been taken out, an elucidatory passage has been taken out<sup>2</sup> and, most important of all, the concept of the gentleman has been taken out. This concept was alien to early Chou times and, for that matter, spoils the pristine logic and rhythm of the texts. What remains are texts of great formal beauty.<sup>3</sup> The dragon, the

<sup>2</sup> I take the passage<sup>1</sup> to be a commentary paraphrase of the preceding sentence. (For an example of such an interpolated commentary see E. Reifer in *Monumenta Serica*, 14 (1949-1953), 369.) If my interpretation is correct,<sup>m</sup> "in the evening" would be synonymous to<sup>n</sup> "at the end of the day," and<sup>o</sup> "as if prostrate" would be an elucidation of<sup>p</sup>. We would then possess here an old commentary on the only passage in the Chinese literature in which the term *ch'ien* appears in context and from which the name of the first hexagram has been derived. The question of the original meaning of the word *ch'ien* would in this way receive a solution which is as simple as it is surprising. The first two lines of the hexagram show the dragon in his original element: submerged in water and appearing in wet fields; toward the end of the day the dragon's progress then leads him unto dry land. If we take the doubling of the word as a mental reaction or a state of mind, a tentative translation of this line would be: "At the end of the day: oh dry! oh dry!" To be out of his element is of course for the dragon a frightening experience; he is however stirred into "creative" action and eventually soars up into the sky, conquering for himself another empire. The derived meaning of *ch'ien* would then be a frightening experience leading to creative action, or more precisely the germinating point of a creative resolve. (See Hellmut Wilhelm, "Das schöpferische Prinzip im Buch der Wandlungen," *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 25 [1957], 455-475.)

<sup>3</sup> It will be noticed that the lines 2 to 5 are four-word verses, the normal length in the *Shih*, and that they are rhymed. Rhymes in the different layers of *I* texts have been pointed out by Chang Hsien-i<sup>q</sup> (fl. 16th c.) in

<sup>1</sup> August Conrady, "Yih-king-Studien, herausgegeben von Eduard Erkes," *Asia Major*, 7 (1931-32), 409-468; and Arthur Waley, "The Book of Changes," *Bulletin of Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 5 (1933), 121-142.

symbolic animal of *Ch'ien* in this layer of the text, is the subject of all six lines; he is presented progressing through six different situations, each representing, to use a term of early Chinese poetics, an "evocative image."<sup>c</sup>

The development leading from such an attempted reconstruction of the original form to the present wording must have been gradual. Among the earliest additions might have been the diviners' formulae, which we find already in many of the *I-ching* quotations in the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü*. There is one instance among them to show that even these diviners' formulae underwent further change. In the hexagram text of hex. 18, *Ku*, the quotation in *Hsi* 15 still reads: *she ho*, whereas our present text has here and in many other cases: *li she ta ch'uan*.<sup>4</sup> The more concrete term *ho* has been replaced by the generic term *ta ch'uan* in the later version.

Just as in this instance, *I-ching* passages quoted in the *Tso-chuan* which differ from our present text always a more original version. As a first example I would like to refer to the line text 6/6 of the hexagram 54, *Kuei-mei*. Here the *Tso-chuan* version differs somewhat from the present reading, even though the meaning is approximately the same. The present text has reversed the order of the girl and the knight, possibly to keep in consonance with the sequence *yin-yang*, which had become dominant; it has replaced the ritualistically loaded terms *wang* and *k'uang* by the more temporal ones *hsüeh* and *shih* and has shortened the reading somewhat. In this way the rhythm of the original version and the rhyme were lost. The perfect rhyme of the *Tso-chuan* version alone would tend to attest to its being the older one.

Another instance of a *Tso-chuan* text which concurs or almost concurs in meaning but differs in wording from our present version is the line text 9/2 of the hexagram 36 *Ming-i*. This case needs a special justification, as the *Tso-chuan* ascribes this text not to *Ming-i* but to the hexagram 24 *Fu*. From the context, however, it becomes apparent that three words have dropped out of the *Tso-chuan* text and that the hexagram arrived at on

his *Tu-I yün-k'ao*<sup>r</sup> (see *Ssu-k'ü ch'üan-shu ts'ung-mu t'i-yao*, Com. Pr. ed., 1, 917-18. I have not seen a copy of this). Ku Yen-wu<sup>s</sup> surmised that all old oracle texts must have originally rhymed (*Jih-chih lu*, 21, #7). See also Chiang Yu-kao,<sup>t</sup> *I-ching yün-tu*<sup>u</sup> (first published in 1817) in his *Chiang-shih yin-hsüeh shih chung*.<sup>v</sup>

<sup>c</sup> All texts referred to here are given in the appendix.

that occasion was not an unchanging *Fu* but a *Ming-i* changing into a *Fu*.<sup>d</sup> The text refers to the eye,<sup>e</sup> which is the symbol of the lower trigram *li* ☲ of *Ming-i*, and the third line of *ming-i* would have to be changed to arrive at a *Fu*. (Already pointed out by the *Tso-chuan* commentary.) No related text is found in the hexagram *Fu*. What the present version does here, in addition to a slight change in wording, is to tie the line more closely into the context of the image of the whole hexagram.

Another type of related texts in the *Tso-chuan* and the *I-ching* show much more serious differences. I refer here to the hexagram text of hexagram 18, *Ku*, and to the line text 9/6 of the hexagram 38, *Kuei*. In both cases only a few words of the *Tso-chuan* text resemble our present *I-ching* version; the meaning as such has been considerably changed. I would like to point out, though, that in both cases the *Tso-chuan* versions show perfect rhymes. The change in meaning might have come about here through a re-analysis of the situations in question. Whereas the original texts might have interpreted these situations as unambiguous and definite, a later reappraisal revealed their ambivalent aspects, which were then expressed in terms like: *Hsien chia san jih, hou chia san jih*, and *hsien chang chih hu, hou t'o chih hu*.

In summary it can be said that all the cases where the wording of the *Tso-chuan* differs from our present version are explained most readily if the *Tso-chuan* version is accepted as the earlier one. However, after all these differences have been pointed out, it has to be said that the bulk of the *I-ching* quotations in the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü* are identical in wording with our present texts and that no divergent versions are recorded under dates belonging to the last third of the Ch'un-ch'iu period. By that time the hexagram and line texts of the "Book of Changes" must have already been fixed.

In addition to these quotations from the older layers of the Book, we find in the *TC* and the *KY* material quoted or discussed which eventually went into the composition of three out of the ten wings. To start with the book *Shuo-kua*, the major portion of which consists of a discussion or enumeration of the symbolic images connected with the trigrams. I have not yet come across any evidence concerning the date when the concept of the trigrams arose and I do not believe that the traditional view that the complexes of the trigrams

antedeceded the hexagrams should be accepted without further proof. The oracles recorded in the *TC* and *KY* do, however, give proof that by Ch'un-ch'in times the concept of the trigrams did exist and played a very important part in the interpretation of an oracle. The emphasis placed on the interplay of trigrams in such interpretations is frequently much stronger than the interest shown in the texts themselves. On one of the tables in the appendix a list is given of the symbolic images connected with the eight trigrams in the *TC* and the *KY* alongside those recorded in the book *Shuo-kua*. Again it appears that the bulk of the material coincides or that the changes are minor, such as the transformation of brocade into cloth under *k'un*, of the bird into pheasant under *li*, or of the fox, which by the way is doubtful, into the dog under *ken*. This coincidence pertains not only to the enumeration of images in the *Shuo-kua* but also to that impressive *Shuo-kua* passage in which the manifestations of the "Lord on High" in the cycle of the trigrams is described. This cycle is alluded to twice, once under *k'an* in the *Kuo-yü* and once under *ken* in a late *TC* quotation. But again the differences appear to be significant. I want to draw attention to the fact that for the basic symbol of the trigram *k'un*, the earth, the word *t'u* is used and not the word *ti*, which appears in the *Shuo-kuo* and consistently in the *Hsiang-chuan* of the "Book of Changes." It can be considered established that of the two *t'u* is the older word. Already in the oracle bones *t'u* and not *ti* is juxtaposed with *t'ien*, "Heaven." The correlation of *t'u* and *k'un* appears twice under early *Tso-chuan* dates (*Chuang* and *Min*) and once in the *Kuo-yü*. We have no evidence as to whether in late Ch'un-ch'iu times *t'u* had already changed into *ti*.

Another significant difference is the main symbolic animal of the trigram *k'un*, which is given as the horse under an early date in the *TC* (*Min* 1) but as the cow in the *Shuo-kua*. It will be recalled that in the older layers of the *I-ching* the mare was connected with *k'un*, so that again the *Tso-chuan* appears to preserve an older tradition. The cow appears as the symbolic animal of *li* under a late date in the *TS* (*Chao* 5). This change thus might have occurred in post-Ch'un-ch'iu times. One symbol, *chung*, the crowd, appears correlated with *k'un* in the *Shuo-kua* and in the *TC* but with *k'an* in the *Kuo-yü*. We have no evidence concerning the time of this shift but it again shows that

some of the symbols did change places during Ch'un-ch'iu times, just as the dragon was shifted from *ch'ien* to *chen* between the time the hexagram texts were composed and the *Shuo-kua* was finally fixed. A few of the symbolic images contained in the *TC* and the *KY* were dropped by the compilers of the final version of the *Shuo-kua*. In general it can however be said that the bulk of the material contained in the *Shuo-kua* was already in use in Ch'un-ch'iu times.

The book *Hsiang-chuan* consists of two entirely different parts. The first correlates the images of the two trigrams and draws from their interplay maxims for the attitudes and actions of the gentleman which are not based on the wording of the older layers. The second part consists of commentaries on the line texts. No trace of the second part is found in the *KY* or the *TC*; there is however one *TC* passage which looks like an earlier version of these correlations of symbols and another one which seems to allude to a semi-sentence in such a maxim. The material is, however, too scanty to permit any definite conclusions.

The situation is different however with regard to the *Wen-yen*. Under a mid-Ch'un-ch'iu date the *TC* quotes a long passage which is found almost literally in the present text of the *Wen-yen*. But again two differences of the versions appear significant. One is that the *I-ching* text has added the term *chün-tzu* "gentleman," and the second occurs in the first sentence, where the *I-ching* reads *shan* instead of *t'i*. Of the two readings *t'i* seems to be the original one, if only for the reason that it is taken up again in a later part of the passage. For reasons which I do not want to go into here, it became imperative to replace *t'i* by *shan*. And in a *Tso-chuan* quote under a late Ch'un-ch'iu date this change has already taken place!

It thus appears that the material from which at least two, possibly three, of the ten wings were composed was already in use in Ch'un-ch'iu times and that in part the terminology even of the Ch'un-ch'iu period exactly coincides with our present version. Some of the Ch'un-ch'iu traditions were later discontinued. This is the case with part of the imagery connected with the trigrams. Beyond this in Ch'un-ch'iu times symbolic terms have been correlated also with the hexagrams. Thus the 3rd hexagram *chun* is called "firm"<sup>f</sup> or "thick,"<sup>g</sup> the 8th hexagram *pi* is called "the entering,"<sup>h</sup> the 16th hexagram *yü* is called

“joy,”<sup>i</sup> the 17th *sui*, “the leaving,”<sup>j</sup> the 36th *ming-i*, “the sun.”<sup>k</sup> This usage was not maintained in later times. Similar equations in the book *Tsa-kua* are based on an entirely different tradition.

The greater part of the *Ten Wings* is however not in this way accounted for in earlier texts. This is true for the *T'uan-chuan*, which contains commentaries on the hexagram texts, and that part of the *Hsiang-chuan* which contains commentaries

on the line texts. It is then true for the books *Hsü-kua* and *Tsa-kua* and most important of all for the *Hsi-tz'u chuan*, which, even though it is in part possibly based on earlier oral traditions, strikes us frequently as being of very late date. It might thus have taken close to a thousand years of work to formulate our present texts of the *I-ching*. What is amazing is that our present texts still form a unity with a coherent meaning and a forceful message of their own.

## GLOSSARY

|         |        |         |           |
|---------|--------|---------|-----------|
| a. 古史辨  | g. 厚   | m. 夕    | s. 顧炎武    |
| b. 李鏡池  | h. 入   | n. 終日   | t. 江有誥    |
| c. 興    | i. 樂   | o. 惕若   | u. 易經韻讀   |
| d. 明夷之復 | j. 出   | p. 乾乾   | v. 江氏音學十書 |
| e. 日    | k. 日   | q. 張獻翼  |           |
| f. 固    | l. 夕惕若 | r. 讀易韻考 |           |

## APPENDIX

## A

| Line texts of the first hexagram in the present version | Attempted reconstruction |
|---|--------------------------|
| 9/1 潛龍勿用。   | 9/1 潛龍。                  |
| 9/2 見龍在田。利見大人。  | 9/2 見龍在田。                |
| 9/3 君子終日乾乾。夕惕若。厲。无咎。                                    | 9/3 終日乾乾。                |
| 9/4 或 (or 惑) 躍在淵。无咎。                                    | 9/4 或躍在淵。                |
| 9/5 飛龍在天。利見大人   | 9/5 飛龍在天                 |
| 9/6 亢龍有悔。   | 9/6 亢龍。                  |

## B Hexagram and line texts in TC and KY

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Hex 2 坤<br>TC Chao 12 (C 3,201): 黃裳元吉<br>I 6/5 : identical  | Hex 20 觀<br>TC Chuang 22 (C 1,180): 觀國之光。利用賓于王。<br>I 6/4 : identical  |
| Hex 3 屯<br>TC Chao 7 (C 3,151): 利建侯。<br>KY 10, 11v : 元亨。利貞。勿用有攸往。利建侯。<br>I Hex : identical                                    | Hex 36 明夷<br>TC Ch'eng 16 (C 2,133): 南國蹇。射其元。<br>I 9/3 : 明夷于南狩。得其大首。  |
| Hex 11 泰<br>KY 10, 15r : 小往大來。<br>I Hex : identical<br>TC Ai 9 (C 3,658) refers to 帝乙。<br>I 6/5 ditto                         | TC Chao 5 (C 3,100-1): 明夷于飛。垂其翼。君子于行。三日不食。有攸往。主人有言。<br>I 9/1 : identical  |
| Hex 14 大有<br>TC Hsi 25 (C 1,369): 公用亨于天子。<br>I 9/3 : identical  | Hex 38 睽<br>TC Hsi 15 (C 1,304-6): 睽孤(*kwō)<br>寇張之弧(*g'wo) 姪其從姑(*ko)<br>六年其逋 (*pwo)<br>I 9/6 : 睽孤。(見豕負塗。載鬼一車。)先張之弧。後說之弧。<br>匪寇婚媾。(往遇雨則吉。) |
| Hex 16 豫<br>KY 10, 11r : 利建侯行師。<br>I Hex : identical  | Hex 47 困<br>TC Hsiang 25 (C 2,419-21): 困于石。據于蒺藜。入于其宮。不見其妻。凶。<br>I 6/3 : identical   |
| Hex 17 隨<br>TC Hsiang 9 (C 2,236): 元亨利貞。无咎<br>I Hex : identical   | Hex 54 歸妹<br>TC Hsi 15 (C 1,304-6): 士刲羊(*ziang)<br>亦無盍(*xmwang)也。<br>女承筐(*k'iwang)<br>亦無貺(*xiwang)<br>I 6/6 : 女承筐无實。士刲羊无血                 |
| Hex 18 蠱<br>TC Hsi 15 (C 1,295-6): 涉河。<br>I Hex : 利涉大川<br>TC ibid : 三千乘三去(*k'iab)。三去之餘(*dio)獲其雄狐(*g'wo)<br>I Hex : 先甲三日。後甲三日。 |   |

## C Symbolic imagery of the Trigrams

| TC and/or KY                   | Shuo-kua                 | Notes  | TC and/or KY                 | Shuo-kua                 | Notes                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 乾：天<br>天子君<br>父<br>金<br>玉      | 天<br>君<br>父<br>金<br>玉    |  | 坎：水<br>夫<br>象                | 水<br>中男                  |                            |
| 坤：土<br>母<br>馬                  | 地<br>母                   | Shuo-kua gives the cow 母牛 as the symbolic animal of k'un. The hex. text however has the mare 牝馬. | 勞<br>離：火<br>日<br>日<br>牛<br>鳥 | 帝勞乎坎<br>火<br>日<br>日<br>離 | Symbol of k'un in Shuo-kua |
| 震：象<br>帛<br>雷<br>長男兄<br>足<br>車 | 象<br>布<br>雷<br>長男長子<br>足 | See also k'an<br><br>大輿 is the symbol for k'un in Shuo-kua                                       | 艮：山<br>於人為言<br>雄狐(?)<br>庭    | 山<br>帝成言乎艮<br>狗          | Not recorded in Shuo-kua   |
| 巽：風                            | 風                        |  | 兑：澤<br>澤                     | 澤                        |                            |

## D Hsiang quoted in TC

Chuang 22 (C 1,180-182): 風行而著於土

I, Hex 20 觀：風行地上

Chao 7 (C 3,151) alludes to the passage 建萬國 in Hex 8, 比

## E Wen-yen quoted in TC

Hsiang 9 (C 2,236-7) : 元體之長也。亨嘉之會也。利義之和也。貞事之幹也。  
體仁足以長人。嘉會足以合體。利物足以合義。  
貞固足以幹事。

I : 元者善之長也。君子體仁。足以和義。...

Chao 12 (C 3,202) : 元善之長也。