

## The Plum Flowering Mind Method of Divination

by Guan-Cheng Sun, Ph.D.

### What is the Yijing?

The Yijing (I Ching) is an ancient consulting scripture which we know in English as the Book of Change. In Chinese, the character "Yi" means change; the upper part symbolizes the sun, and the lower part symbolizes the moon. The character graphically suggests the interactions between Yin and Yang. Thus, the character "Yi" naturally expresses the Dao (Tao) or laws of different energy interactions in the universe. The character "Jing" means scripture or classics. All changes in the universe arise through Yin and Yang acting upon each other; these are the very essences that determine the rise and fall, the death and life of things and events. These laws of natural interactions between Yin and Yang are called "Dao" in the Yijing.

The core of the Yijing consists of 64 symbolic hexagrams that are drawings of 6 lines with solid (Yang) or broken (Yin) or a mixture of solid and broken, which express the informational codes of collective unconsciousness in the universe. Each hexagram consists of a pair of trigrams. There are eight elemental trigrams in the Yijing, which represent eight natural figures: Heaven, Earth, Thunder, Wind, Lightning (fire), Rain (water), Mountain, and Lake. These natural elements communicate and interact with each other endlessly and give birth to sixty-four hexagrams, representing all things, events and affairs in the universe. In order to see the process of the development of an event or affair, three hexagrams are necessary for a complete observation and consultation. Thus, there are  $64 \times 64 \times 64 = 262,144$  possible permutations against a background of unlimited situations.

The Yijing has been widely used throughout Chinese history in many areas of life. For example, in politics, a Qin Prime Minister, Li Si, was an expert of the Yijing. By applying the wisdom of the Yijing, he assisted the first emperor, Qin Shihuang (259-210 B.C.), in successfully unifying six other kingdoms of the country. In the Tang dynasty, a Yijing specialist, Xu Maogong, assisted the emperor, Li Shimin (598-649 A.D.), who built up the most powerful, thriving, and prosperous country in the

world during that period of time, and created the great Chinese culture of the Tang. Regarding the functions of the Yijing, a Tang Prime Minister, Yu Shinan, said: "one should not be qualified as a prime minister or military general, who does not understand the Yijing." [1] These examples show the value and importance placed on the wisdom of the Yijing at the highest levels of government and leadership throughout Chinese history. Indeed, when the first emperor came to power, he ordered all books burned, with the exception of the Yijing.

In this article I will attempt to describe some of the many dimensions of wisdom and profound usefulness of the Yijing. When used appropriately and correctly, the Yijing helps us to increase our awareness of the energy flow within and around us and teaches us to understand the essence of things and of events as their courses unfold in motion--and this is very useful to all of us. It tells us of the laws of the universe and helps us to know the development of things and events and their process and outcomes. It also teaches us how to follow the impartiality of the universe, to set our minds to rest in our own positions, and to lead an honest and sincere life. As Confucius said: "One who is benevolent finds the Dao of virtue and rightness and calls it benevolence; one who is wise examines the natural laws of change and calls them wisdom. The Dao acts upon everyone, but ordinary people do not know it." Confucius also stated: "Whoever knows the Dao of changes and transformations, knows the actions of the gods." [2, 3]

### [Understanding the Meaning of Space within Hexagrams](#)

Every hexagram is composed of two trigrams, which represent the interactions and communications between two different energies and symbolize the process of change at work in the current situation. The upper trigram can be called the external trigram, and the lower trigram can be called the internal trigram. The internal trigram symbolizes the inner self, while the external trigram symbolizes the external conditions and environment. The six lines construct six layers and positions within a hexagram (each line is called yao in the Yijing): the beginning yao, third yao, and fifth yao constitute the Yang positions; the second yao, fourth yao, and top yao constitute the Yin positions. If a yang yao is in a yang position or a yin yao is in a yin position this is called "being in power." But, if a yang yao is in a yin position or a yin yao is in a yang position this is called "losing power." Being in power suggests that the development of an event is following the Dao, or natural laws; losing power suggests that the development of an event is violating the Dao,

or natural laws. The Yijing stresses that Yin and Yang should be in their own positions. A system will develop in wonderful order if everything and everyone is in its position and in power. In contrast, if everything and everyone is out of position, the whole system could become chaotic and order could be destroyed. For someone who is out of his/her position, the person will be facing difficulties and problems, even perhaps dangers.

One important fundamental of the Yijing is that of corresponding relationships between yin and yang. Within a hexagram, the beginning yao corresponds to the fourth yao, the second yao corresponds to the fifth yao, and the third yao corresponds to the top yao. In these corresponding relationships, one is yang, and other is yin. In the corresponding relationships, if one is yang and other one is also yang, or if one is yin and other one is also yin, this is called "stagnation." In addition, even though every yao in a hexagram has its own position and function, every hexagram will have a leading yao in different situations. The leading yao is called the "master yao. In a dynamic situation, the yao that is going to change is the master yao.

### Understanding the Meaning of Time within Hexagrams

Any development of an event has its own process. For example, a human being goes through childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, and every stage has its own unique nature and mission. Similarly, the six yaos of a hexagram represent six different stages in the development of an event. Let's look at this development and compare it to the growth of a tree from a seed. The beginning yao represents the seed. In many cases, the seed needs to be hidden under the soil. It is not a good idea to let it be exposed, because it would easily get eaten by birds or be damaged. Thus it is important to avoid showing the seed to the "public" at this stage. The second yao represents next stage: the seed has sprouted and broken through the ground. It is fresh and vital, as a new life appears from the earth. In this stage, it is important to regulate the new growth, to be very careful and to avoid haste and impatience, because this is the special care and nourishing stage. The third yao is the top yao of the lower part of the trigram, which represents physical maturation and small success. This stage is a very critical time for further development. Historically, lots of businesses and personal achievements fail or are destroyed at this stage. The main reason is that small success may not only create envy in others, but it also easily creates illusions in the mind and the loss of objective perception regarding future development. The fourth yao represents the stage of beginning to bloom and bear fruit. This position/time also represents rising up over the low energetic frequencies,

while sheltered below the highest power. Thus, it is protected from above and has reached a relatively higher level, so that the negative energy, or envy, or competitive energy is no longer effective. It is usually a relatively safe and productive period of time. The fifth yao represents the stage of achieving the goal, and great success and leadership. In this stage, when one is rich, one should learn how to give and not be greedy. It is also a time for understanding the power of humility and modesty. The top yao represents the stage of the end of development, and as such brings with it new challenges.

### [The Development of the Yijing in Chinese History](#)

The trigrams of the Yijing were discovered by one of the earliest legendary rulers of China, Fu Xi (2852-2738 B.C.), but it was not until King Wen (1171-1122 B.C.), the King of the Chou that the meanings of the trigrams were understood. King Wen was captivated by the trigrams when he saw them the first time. He meditated on the trigrams, and brought them together to form the 64 hexagrams of the Yijing. He gave each hexagram its name and wrote the judgments that expound their fundamental meanings. Later, his son, the Duke of Chou, completed his father's work by writing commentaries on each of the six lines/yaos within the hexagrams. In addition, the Chinese philosopher, Confucius (551-479 B.C.) studied the Yijing deeply and wrote extensive commentaries, known as the "shiyi", or "ten wings," which give increased insight into the Yijing. [4-6] Generation after generation, sages clarified and expanded the great classic.

In the Song dynasty, Shao Kangjie (1011-1077 A.D.) developed a new way to consult with the Yijing. He called the new method "Plum Flowering Mind Yijing." [7] His plum flowering mind method is a revolutionary way to form hexagrams; instead of using coins or sticks, divinations are made on the basis of objective events or phenomena that have already happened at a specific time in the environment around us.

### [The Yijing Studies of Shao Kangjie](#)

Throughout Chinese history, many people devoted time and effort to studying the Yijing, but only a few people made significant progress. Shao Kangjie was one of them. He not only understood the meaning of the Yijing, but also developed a revolutionary way to consult with the Yijing.

Shao Kangjie's dedication to studying the Yijing was unbelievable! He studied the Yijing with great sincerity for many years, not sleeping at night, forgetting to make fire in the winter, and forgetting to use a fan in the summer. He copied all the hexagrams and judgments on the walls of his home so that they were available for inspection at all times. However, no matter how passionately he studied the Yijing, he made only a little progress.

One day, he lay down for mid-day nap. He was awakened by an unusual sound and saw a large rat by his bed, so he hurled his pillow at the rat. The rat disappeared, but his pillow, which was made of china, was broken to pieces. Shao Kangjie looked at the broken pieces of the pillow and saw among them a slip of paper with writing on it. He read the writing on the slip: "In the year of 1050 on April 10 in the afternoon this pillow will be destroyed by its being thrown at a rat." Big surprise! He looked at the time. It was the exact date and time written on the slip of paper which had been hidden in the pillow for years. Shao Kangjie felt very strange. He realized that whoever wrote the message in this slip of paper must have been a profound Yijing master. He decided to go to find the Yijing master. So he brought the broken pieces of the pillow with him and visited the store where the pillow was purchased. The storekeeper sent him to the wholesaler of pillows, who sent him to the product maker who made the pillow. The pillow maker told Shao Kangjie: "There used to be an old man who would come and watch us work. He always had a copy of the Yijing in his hands. Maybe he put the paper in the pillow."

Shao Kangjie was excited and hurried to the old man's home. He knocked on the door and was greeted by a young man. When he gave the name of the old man, the young man replied: "That's my grandfather. He died several years ago." At that moment, Shao Kangjie's hope was gone. However, as he was about to leave the young man's house, the young man continued to speak to Shao Kangjie: "Before my grandfather died, he gave me a book and told me that on a certain day, a person would come to visit, and I should give him that book. It is now that exact time. Wait here, and I will get the book for you."

Shao Kangjie took that book home and resumed his studies, diligently and carefully. He had found the master-key. The book contained a method for consulting with the Yijing that was more accurate than the traditional yarrow stalks. In his first judgment, he received the message: there is some white gold hidden in the old man's house, near his bed, under the northwest corner. He went to the old man's house, and told the grandson, and they dug out the ground near the old man's bed. Under the northwest corner of the old man's bed, they found the gold! [7-9] The plum flowering mind method gave Shao Kangjie new depths of insight into space

and time, and great ability to predict future events, given acute observations to which he applied his new-found system of Yijing divination.

### [The Methods of Plum Flowering Mind Yijing](#)

There are two methods in plum flowering mind Yijing: **the postnatal method and the prenatal method**. The postnatal method stresses that our living environment is the driving force for the development of an event or an individual's life. Thus, the postnatal method is characterized by applying the natural phenomenon and objective energetic interactions around our environment to form the primary hexagram. In contrast, the **prenatal method** stresses that genetic make-up or the predetermined program, rather than environmental effects, pre-ordains outcomes. With the prenatal method, the primary hexagram is characterized by using the year, month, day and the timing of the birth, or by applying the year, month, day and the timing of an event as it is occurring.

When the energy flow is dominated by environmental forces, it usually is appropriate to anticipate the outcomes by using the postnatal method. However, when the energy flow is dominated by an internal driving force, it would be more accurate to predict the result by applying the prenatal method. In many cases, of course, the outcome of an event is not only based upon the predetermined program, but is also modified and influenced by postnatal conditions. Therefore, the development of an event depends on the interactions between the internal driving forces and external conditions. In a complex situation, both prenatal and postnatal methods are necessary for accurate divination.

For example, Mount St. Helens erupted again for the first time in 18 years on Friday, October 1, 2004. A friend of mine thought that it was a significant sign for the US 2004 president election, because that just happened to be the day after the **First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate**. He asked me "Can you tell who will win the presidential election between George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry by using your knowledge of the Yijing?" As Shao Kangjie said: "don't consult with the Yijing if there is no new change, and no new movement, and don't consult with the Yijing if there is no new event occurring." The Mount St. Helens eruption was a big earth energy movement on our planet. And the US presidential election was also a big event in the world. I told my friend: "If you know their dates and times of birth, I will give you some insights about the possibilities from the perspective of the Yijing." He was excited and got on the internet immediately to find the dates and times of the birthdays of George W. Bush and John Kerry. He found that the date of

George W. Bush's birthday is July 6, 1946 [10, 11] and the date of John Kerry's birthday is December 11, 1943. [11, 12] But he had no idea about the times of their births. I told him that I could not consult with the Yijing without that specific information. He got on the internet again, and searched on the birth time, but got nothing. He was disappointed, and asked me "Can you do something creatively to consult with the Yijing without the birth time?" Then I asked him "Can you get the information *where* they were born?" He found the information and told me that George W. Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut and John Kerry was born in Denver, Colorado.

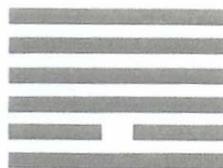
On the basis of the above information, first, by following the **Postnatal Method of Plum Flowering Mind Yijing**, the Mount St. Helens eruption gives us the hexagram fire over heaven, #14 Sovereignty, as follows:



**Mount St. Helens Eruption on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004  
Forming a Hexagram Fire over Heaven  
USGS photograph by Gene Iwatsubo [13]**

Second, by following the **Prenatal Method of Plum Flowering Mind Yijing**, the day of the election, November 2, 2004, gives us the hexagram heaven over fire, #13 Community, as follows:

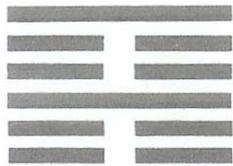
**Community**



**Symbol of the Energy of Election Day**

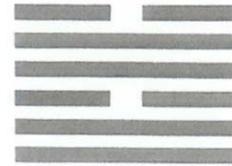
Third, by using a modified **Prenatal Method of Plum Flowering Mind Yijing** (modified for the modern calendar), George W. Bush is represented by a pure mountain hexagram, #52 Pure Mountain, and John Kerry is represented by a pure lake hexagram, #58 Pure Lake. These two hexagrams symbolize their personal driving power respectively as follows:

**Pure Mountain**



**Symbol of Bush**

**Pure Lake**



**Symbol of Kerry**

Fourth, the important step is to analyze the interactions between each candidate's personal driving power and the postnatal conditions as well as the specific energy on the Election Day. This analysis is made on the basis of the five transformation phase theory.

The five transformation phases represent the manifestation of the extensive interactions between Yin and Yang in nature, and are symbolized by five different energies as follows: fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. In general, these five universal energies function according to cyclic relationships based on their unique characteristics. Fire phase generates earth phase, earth phase generates metal phase, metal phase generates water phase, water phase generates wood phase, and wood phase generates fire phase. On the other hand, in order to maintain the dynamic balance of the universe, wood energy suppresses earth energy, earth energy suppresses water energy, water energy suppresses fire energy, fire energy suppresses metal energy, and metal energy suppresses wood energy.

The postnatal hexagram, Sovereignty, consists of two trigrams, fire and heaven. In this case, fire symbolizes the war, and heaven symbolizes the president. Fire over heaven suggests that the Iraq war would be the top priority in the 2004 presidential election. The prenatal hexagram, Community, also consists of the two trigrams heaven and fire. Similarly, heaven symbolizes the new president; fire symbolizes the war in Iraq. Heaven over fire suggests that the new president must be able to deal with the war very capably.

Next, let us see how the postnatal and prenatal hexagrams are related to each candidate's personal driving power. But first we must understand the creative and destructive energies at work here, from the Yijing perspective. Regarding the nature of the eight fundamental trigrams, Heaven and Lake belong to the metal phase, Water belongs to the water phase, Thunder and Wind belong to the wood phase, Earth and Mountain belong to the earth phase, and Fire belongs to the fire phase. George W. Bush is represented by the hexagram pure mountain, which belongs to the earth phase; John Kerry is represented by the hexagram pure lake, which belongs to the metal phase. According to the theory of the five transformation phases, the fire phase generates the earth phase. Therefore, the trigram/fire in the postnatal hexagram, Sovereignty, is a great generating force supporting George W. Bush. At the same time, the trigram/fire in that same postnatal hexagram, Sovereignty, suppresses the metal phase, pure lake, of John Kerry. Thus, this fire energy not only supports George W. Bush, but suppresses John Kerry. This analysis led me to believe that **George W. Bush would win the election.**

From the perspective of the Yijing, John Kerry's hexagram, pure lake, matches George W. Bush's hexagram, pure mountain, very well. The results of the 2004 presidential election showed that John Kerry received more votes than Al Gore in 2000, and he even received more votes than the previous vote-getting leader, Ronald Reagan, in 1984. President George W. Bush just did even better. [14] In the post-mortem analysis of the 2004 election, pundits concluded that George W. Bush won and John Kerry lost because Republicans are perceived as strong on moral values and fighting terrorism, and Democrats are perceived as weak. [15] What's the insight of the Yijing on this issue? As mentioned above, there were two important factors in the 2004 presidential election: first, the candidate must deal capably with the Iraq war, and second, the candidate must have a great generating force to support him. George W. Bush had the fire element, a great generating force in the postnatal hexagram, Sovereignty, to support him. In contrast, John Kerry had no generating force to support him in this specific situation. What kind of element would have been a great generating force for John Kerry? John Kerry's hexagram is pure lake. Lake belongs to the metal phase. According to the five transformation phase theory, earth phase generates metal phase. Thus, a military general who has the mountain element would have been a great generating force to help John Kerry achieve victory. Was there such a candidate in the Democratic Party? Yes, the former general, Wesley Clark--not only does he know how to deal with war very capably, but he also has the mountain element, according to my analysis of his prenatal hexagram. He appears to have been the perfect running mate for John Kerry's presidential campaign. Looked at from the perspective of the Yijing, one

mistake John Kerry made was that he did not select the right running mate for his presidential campaign.

## Conclusion

Obviously, this article can go only part of the way in a subject to which so many have devoted a lifetime of study. My intention has been to suggest dimensions of usefulness and applicability of the Yijing that may not be common knowledge in the West—or in the East, for that matter! Plum Flowering Mind Yijing takes into account the objective phenomena in a person's immediate environment: out-of-the-ordinary encounters with people or animals, as well as colors, date and time, sounds, direction—all are just some of the elements that correspond to the trigrams used to form the hexagrams for a divination. The Plum Flowering Mind Method Yijing teaches us to recognize the objective energetic interactions in the natural world, identify them, and anticipate what these interactions will create. And once the hexagrams are formed that illustrate the process of change at work in the situation, we scrutinize the interactions between yin and yang in order to evaluate the process of the development; we study the 5 transformation phase relationships within hexagrams and between trigrams in order to understand the essences of the energy interactions and the character of the outcome.

The Yijing is a powerful and integrated system that translates information from the dimension of unconsciousness into the dimension of consciousness, helping the unknown to become known. Used appropriately and correctly, it can help us gain a more objective and panoramic awareness as we learn to integrate the wisdom of the Yijing with our personal intuitive system.

### Acknowledgment:

My thanks to Jill Gonet for her help with the writing of this article.

### Endnotes:

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