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The Assimilation of the *Yijing* in Tibetan History and Culture

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ABSTRACT

Tibet has had a long history of cultural interaction with China and some Chinese elements were incorporated into the Tibetan cultural system. The *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes) and its related theories (such as *yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行, the two primal forces and five agents), practices (such as divination), and symbols (such as the eight trigrams and *taiji* 太極) can be found in different walks of cultural and religious life in Tibet. This is the first academic study of the *Yijing* in Tibetan history. Based primarily on Chinese and Tibetan primary sources, this study will provide an historical overview of the impact of the *Yijing* in Tibet and discuss the role of the *Yijing* and its related ideas and symbols in the making of Tibetan culture. Assimilating Chinese knowledge into non-Sinitic tribal cultures is a complex process of cross-cultural encounter. This article reveals that the historical reception of the *Yijing* in Tibet was a process of assimilating Chinese knowledge into Tibetan culture and religion. It will break new ground in the comparative study of the *Yijing* in Asia and in China-Tibet studies.

Keywords: *Yijing*, China-Tibet cultural exchange, Confucianism, Buddhism, Bon, divination

Introduction

The philosophy presented in the *Yijing* 易經 (also called the *Zhouyi* 周易, *Classic of Changes*) and its use in divination are an integral part of Chinese culture, as well as that of the rest of East Asia. Some related ideas, such as *wuxing* 五行 (five agents), cannot be found in the original *Yijing* text, but were added to *Yijing* scholarship following the Han period, and were also influential in the Sinosphere. In pre-modern Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the Ryukyu (Liuqiu) Kingdom, the *Yijing* was warmly received, and its interpretation and application were adapted to local traditions (Ng 2017a; Ng 2017b; Ng 2003, 1–12; Ng 2000a; Ng 2000b, 53–68; Smith 2012, 129–168). Its influence in China's peripheral tribal areas, however, remains largely unknown. The unearthing of ancient texts in Dunhuang and Khara Khoto (Heishui cheng 黑水城) has paved the way for researchers to map the spread of the *Yijing* in these areas. Based primarily on Chinese and Tibetan primary sources, this study examines the Tibetan reception and domestication of the *Yijing* and its related concepts and symbols. For instance, the five agents and the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦) of the *Yijing* tradition can be found in Tibetan mythology, religion, literature, art, architecture, medicine, and geomancy. This study will broadly investigate the impact of the entire Chinese *Yijing* system, rather than confining itself to the

original text, in Tibet.

Through an investigation of the role of the *Yijing* in Tibetan history, religion, and culture—in particular the process by which the book’s symbolism and mantic practices were incorporated into Tibetan indigenous traditions—this study sheds light on the localization and appropriation of the *Yijing* by China’s neighboring peoples. In so doing, it expands the comparative study of the influence of the *Yijing* beyond the countries and cultures of East Asia and into areas where the primary written language was not Literary Sinitic. The lack of a common written language in Tibet and in other tribal cultures on China’s Inner Asian frontiers introduced special problems for the assimilation of Chinese knowledge into Tibetan culture and religion. This study will attempt to describe and analyze this complex process.

The *Yijing* in Qiang History

In ancient China, an ethnic group called the Qiang 羌 lived on what is now known as the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. According to the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Commentary of Zuo [on *The Spring and Autumn Annals*]), the Qiang ancestor was the legendary emperor Shennong 神農, who allegedly wrote a work titled the *Lianshan* 連山 (literally “connecting mountains”), an early version of the *Yijing* (Shaughnessy 2014, 141–70; Li 1993, 1441).¹ The *Lianshan* is no longer extant and there is no evidence that the Qiang used it for divination.

During the Six Dynasties period (220–259) the Qiang founded a small kingdom, Tan Chang 宕昌, in present-day Gansu, where they survived politically by paying tribute to both the Northern and Southern Chinese regimes. The *Yijing* was introduced to Tan Chang through diplomatic channels in 488 when its king, Liang Micheng 梁彌承 (r. 488–502?), asked the Southern Qi for books and was given the Five Classics (*Classic of Changes*, *Classic of Poetry*, *Classic of History*, *Classic of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects of Confucius) (Xiao 2004, 796).

In the Sixteen Kingdoms period (303–439), the Qiang established the Later Qin (Hou Qin 後秦, 384–417) kingdom. Its king, Yao Xing 姚興 (366–414), promoted Confucianism, founding an imperial academy in the capital of Chang’an and recruited Confucian scholars for government service. Seng Zhao 僧肇 (384–414), a Chinese Buddhist thinker from the Later Qin, strove to combine Buddhism with Chinese thought, using the *Yijing* and Lao—Zhuang’s philosophy to expound Buddhist ideas. In the preface to the *Zhu weimojie jing* 注維摩詰經 (Commentary on *The Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*), he underlined the importance of this Mahayana Buddhist work as follows: “We can rule over different groups and understand the principles behind all things and act in accordance with these principles to attain success (*kaiwu chengwu* 開物成務). We can bring benefit to the world with no-action” (Maeda 1912, 2). Seng Zhao clearly borrowed the phrase “*kaiwu chengwu*” 開物成務 from the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳 (Commentary on the appended phrases) of the *Yijing*. His interpretations of the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* may also have been

¹ This was echoed in the *Diwang shiji* 帝王世紀 (Records of emperors and kings) by Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282).

influenced by Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) *Zhouyi zhu* 周易注 (Commentary on the *Zhouyi*) (Wang 2003, 1–23). Seng Zhao compared his exegetical endeavor to the so-called Ten Wings (*Shiyi* 十翼), a collection of early commentaries on the *Zhouyi*, traditionally attributed to Confucius. In the *Zou Qinwang biao* 奏秦王表 (My memorial to the king of Qin), Seng Zhao wrote: “I want to accomplish something akin to what Confucius did with the *Zhouyi* through the Ten Wings. My objective is not to show off my literary skills, but to elucidate hidden messages. Hence, I wrote the *Niepan wuming lun* 涅槃無名論 (Treatise of unnameable nirvana)” (Seng 1988, 161).

The *Yijing* in Tubo during the Tang Period

The *Yijing* itself was introduced to the Qiang sometime prior to the Tang period (618–907). *The Graphic Scriptures of Shibi* 釋比圖經 (Tib. *Shua Le Ri*), a set of picture scrolls that Qiang priests (*shibi*) compiled during the Tang, clearly indicates that the Qiang people were familiar with such *Yijing*-related ideas as *yinyang* (the two primal forces), *wuxing* (the five agents), *qiankun* 乾坤 (the first two hexagrams, representing heaven and earth), and the eight trigrams. The five agents were combined with *yinyang*, the twelve zodiac animals, and the twelve earthly branches to form a theoretical framework for divination. In particular, Qiang priests used the doctrine of *wuxing* extensively as a way to understand the world and to make decisions (Luo 2017, 56–115).

In 633, during the early Tang period, Songtsen Gampo (617–650), the 33rd Tibetan king, united the Qiang tribes and founded the Tubo Kingdom in Tibet. He maintained close diplomatic relations with the Tang and introduced Chinese ideas and cultural practices to Tubo. During his reign, some Confucian classics, including the *Yijing*, were translated into Tibetan. Due to the difficulty of its text and images, the *Yijing* was not as popular as the *Lunyu* (Analects), the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of poetry), or the *Shangshu* 尚書 (or *Shujing* 書經, Book of documents). Like many other of China's peripheral tribal peoples, the Tubo were more interested in the *Yijing* as a tool for divination than in its philosophy. They found the system of *Yijing* divination more useful and much easier to understand, as divination itself was an integral part of Tibetan culture.

The cultural exchange between China and Tibet reached its peak in the Tang. Like other Confucian classics, the *Yijing* came to Tubo through the following four main channels:

First, Tubo students studied the *Yijing* in China. Songtsen Gampo sent many Tubo students from noble families to Tang China, where most of them studied Chinese classics at the National Academy (*Guoxue* 國學) in Chang'an, the capital. The *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New history of the Tang) reads: “He [Songtsen Gampo] sent young people of the noble families to study the *Shijing* and *Shangshu* at the National Academy. He also recruited Confucians to write official documents” (Ouyang and Song 1975, 6084). The *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Institutional history of Tang) mentions the influx of foreign students during the Zhenguan 貞觀 era in China (627–649) in the following terms: “Chiefs of such nations as Koryō, Paekche, Silla, Gaochang, and Tubo sent their students to study at the National Academy. As

a result, the National Academy had more than eight thousand students and reached unprecedented popularity” (Wang, 1991, 739). The Tang National Academy consisted of two schools: *Guozixue* 國子學 (School for the sons of the state) and *Taixue* 太學 (School for advanced learning). The *Yijing* was an elective subject in both schools. The number of Tubo students studying in both schools could match their Silla, Japanese, and Koryŏ counterparts.

In addition, some Tubo students went to China to study numerology—in particular, four scholars were sent to study with four Chinese diviners by Songtsen Gampo. The *Hanzang shiji* 漢藏史集 (Tib. *Rgya bod yig tshang*, Collection of Chinese and Tibetan historical sources, 1434) records:

[Songtsen Gampo] said: “Go you to learn from the Chinese how to predict life and death as well as the weather of the four seasons. All of you must try to become scholars and I will give you a handsome reward.” He then sent them to the land of the Han. Having arrived in China, each studied under one Chinese scholar. For one year and seven months, Jia Chi 嘉赤 and Moheyan 摩訶衍 taught them how to predict the four seasons and divination methods in such Chinese works as the *Mingdeng shu* 明燈書 (Book of enlightenment), *Gua shu* 卦書 (Book of hexagrams), *Tiandi lingji* 天地靈跡 (Sacred lands of this world), and *Zhisheng guashu* 紙繩卦術 (Methods of making hexagrams with paper and rope) (Tib. *dpal-vbyor-bzang-po* 1986, 99).

To a certain extent, the books listed above were all associated with theories of the *Yijing* system. When the four Tubo scholars returned to Tibet, they translated many Chinese divination books into Tibetan, and two of the scholars became official diviners at the Tubo court.

Second, Tang princesses brought *Yijing*-related books to Tibet. In 641, when Princess Wencheng 文成 (625–680) arrived in Tibet for an arranged marriage to Songtsen Gampo, she brought many Chinese books with her, among them about three hundred books on divination. Some of these divination books were translated into Tibetan, but not always accurately (Qiongna 2009, 38). According to *The Record of the Tibetan Kings and Noblemen* 西藏王臣記 (Ch. *Xizang wangchen ji*, Tib. *Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*, 1643), before leaving China, Princess Wencheng said to the Tang court: “If you want me to marry to Tibet, please grant me Shakyamuni Buddha statues. In order to protect the remote barren land in Tibet and expel evil spirits, I [also] need illustrated books on divination, calendars, and astrology” (Ngawang 2016, 45). The same text describes her as a master of geomancy who knew various divination methods based on the principles of *wuxing*. To overcome bad *fengshui* 風水 in Tibet, she asked the king to build the Jokhang Temple 大昭寺 at the center of Lhasa (Ngawang 2016, 60; Dowman 1997, 20). Inspired by the eight trigrams, she designed the Barkhor 八廓 (Eight corners street), a circular road surrounding the Jokhang Temple (An 2016, 83).

In 710 another Chinese princess, Princess Jincheng 金城 (698–739), was married to the Tubo king Me Agtsom (704–755). She brought with her many Chinese books on astronomy, calendars, numerology, and medicine, in which the concepts of *yinyang*, *wuxing*, and the eight trigrams were used extensively.

Like Princess Wencheng, she was familiar with geomancy, and, according to the religious history of Tibet, *A Scholar's Feast* 賢者喜宴 (*Chojung Khepai Gaton*, 1564), Princess Jincheng had the power to destroy and restore the *fengshui* of Tibet (Pawo 2010, 102–103).² She promoted Chinese learning in Tibet, in 731 asking the Tang court to send Chinese classics and literature to Tubo, but the *Yijing* was not one of the books she requested.³

Third, *Yijing*-related Chinese books came to Tubo through both diplomatic and business channels. The *Xin Tangshu* records that in 731, after the peace agreement between Tubo and the Tang dynasty, Tubo asked the Tang for the Five Classics as a gesture of respect for Chinese culture. The *Xin Tangshu* reads: “Using Chiling as the border, we erected a great memorial with the agreement engraved upon it. Tubo requested the Five Classics. The Tang emperor asked his secretaries to make a handwritten copy and sent the minister of public works Li Gao 李嵩 to Tubo with thousands of gifts” (Ouyang and Song 1975, 6085). Merchants, monks, and students also brought books to Tubo, including not only the *Yijing*, but also *Yijing*-related books such as the *Wenwang bagua* 文王八卦 (The eight trigrams of King Wen) and the *Wuxingzhan* 五行占 (Divination based on the five agents). Some of these books were translated into Tibetan by Tubo scholars who had returned from Tang China (Liu 2014, 22).

A number of fragmentary, handwritten copies of *Yijing* commentaries were found among the Dunhuang manuscripts, including some from the Tang period. Among them were the following three pre-Song representative commentaries: Wang Bi's *Zhouyi zhu* 周易注, [Tang] Lu Deming's 陸德明 (556–627) *Zhouyi shiwen* 周易釋文 (A textual explanation of the *Zhouyi*), and [Tang] Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (574–648) *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (Correct meanings of the *Zhouyi*) (Yu and Liu 2007, 324). The influence of the *Yijing* can also be seen in some Tibetan documents in the Dunhuang manuscripts. For example, two Tibetan texts (PT987 and PT988) contain translations of Confucian maxims from the *Yijing* (Stein 1990, 272–284). Both texts regard the *Yijing* as the book of sages. PT 988 (line 36) reads: “It is based on the maxims quoted from the *Zhouyi*, the book of sages” (Stein 1994, 271). PT987 (line 52) also says: “All of us should act in accordance with the maxims of the book of sages, *Zhouyi*” (Stein 1994, 278). PT988 quoted from the *Xici zhuan* of the *Yijing*: “If a man makes inappropriate remarks at home, his words will provoke others who live more than a thousand miles away” (Nie 2005, 78–84).

Fourth, Chinese migrants to Tubo popularized the *Yijing* and its related knowledge, since some of the Chinese scholars recruited to work in Tubo as officials, translators, secretaries, and teachers were familiar with it. For instance, Wang Xi 王錫, a Tang official captured in 776 when Dunhuang fell to the Tubo, became a secretary in the Tubo government. In a memorial to the Tubo king, he cited the *Xugua zhuan* 序卦傳 (Commentary on the sequence of the hexagrams),

² *The Record of the Tibetan Kings and Noblemen* has a similar story (Ngawang 2016, 45).

³ According to the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old history of the Tang), Princess Jincheng requested the *Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Rites*, *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, and *Wenxuan* (Selections of refined literature) (Liu 2004, 4499).

one of the Ten Wings: “Things cannot go smoothly forever. This is why the hexagram Tai 泰 is followed by the hexagram Pi 否” (Demieville 1984, 296). In 802, the Tubo court asked Wu Jiezan 吳杰贊, the son of a Tang official captured in Dunhuang, to use *Yijing* divination to predict the life of the newborn crown prince (Lianhua 1996, 185–186). Likewise, the Chinese monk Moheyanna 摩訶衍那 was invited from Dunhuang to spread Chan Buddhism in Tibet. *The Tibetan History in Five Chapters* 五部遺教 (*Bkav thang sde lnga*, eighth century, unearthed in 1285) describes Moheyana as a great teacher of Buddhism, medicine, and calendrical studies, asserting “From the land of the Han, we invited the most well-known Buddhist master Moheyana to teach us Chinese medicine and calendrical studies” (Wang 2000, 123). Moheyana was famous among the Tibetans for his divination skills. As noted above, before he went to Tibet he taught divination to the four Tubo students sent by Songtsen Gampo. In Tibet, Moheyana continued to instruct students in this aspect of Chinese knowledge.

The *Yijing* in Tibet from the Song to the Qing Dynasties

The Tubo Empire collapsed in the late Tang. From the Song period to the Qing, Chinese language and culture were taught at the official schools (*guanxue* 官學) established for Tibetans who lived in Chinese territory. The curriculum consisted of Confucianism, medicine, and *yinyang* learning (*yinyangxue* 陰陽學). The *Yijing* was studied both as a Confucian classic and as a divination manual.

During the Ming period, the Imperial Academy in Nanjing enrolled a small number of children of Tibetan chiefs to learn Confucian classics and Chinese history. The Ming court also donated a large number of Chinese Buddhist and Confucian texts to the Tibetans. For instance, in 1452 the Pacification Commissioner’s Office (*Xuanweisi* 宣慰司) in Dongbuhuanhu 董卜韓胡, one of the thirty-six Tibetan districts under Ming control, asked the court for the *Classic of Changes*, the *Classic of Poetry*, and the *Classic of History* (Wang 1726, 21).

In the Ming and Qing periods, a number of Tibetan Buddhist monks showed a keen interest in the *Yijing*. Dun dam Smra Ba’i Seng Ge (Ch. Dondam Mawei Senge 頓當麻偉僧葛, 1516–1551), in his encyclopedia of Tibetan culture, *The Treasury of Sayings: The Wish-fulfilling Gem* 格言集綿：如意寶石 (*Bshad mdzod yid bzhin no bu*), provided a detailed explanation of *byung rtsis* 五行算學 (literally, “The study of five-agent calculation”), a Chinese-Tibetan divination system based on the five agents, eight trigrams, nine palaces (*jiugong* 九宮), and twelve signs of the zodiac. He believed that the Sha kyamuni Buddha, to promote Buddhism, had sent his disciple, the Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, to Mount Wutai in China and then to Tibet to teach these methods (Zeng and Lin 2015, 197–198).

Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), the regent of the fifth Dalai Lama (in office 1617–1682), was a famous scholar of medicine and astrology. In the *Blue Beryl Treatise* 藍琉璃 (*Baidurya ngonpo*), he attempted to combine Indian and Chinese medicine by using the concepts of *wuxing* and the eight trigrams. Tibetan medicine, as presented in this beautifully illustrated book, uses divination to diagnose and heal illnesses (Gerke 2012, 93). In the *White Beryl Treatise* 白琉璃 (*Baidurya dkarpo*), Sangye Gyatso also applied *wuxing* and the eight trigrams to explain

Indian astrology (Cornu 2002, 120–126; Smith 2012, 162–163). He believed in the legend that the Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva had taught Confucius himself the five-agent calculation method.

The monk Thuken Lobsang Chokyi Nyima (1737–1802) was a representative *Yijing* scholar in Tibetan history. Thuken spent three years in Beijing where he became absorbed in the study of the *Yijing*. Although he did not write specifically about the *Yijing*, his most important work, *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* 土觀宗教流派鏡史 (*Grub mtha'shel gyi me long*, 1801) contains a large section on the history, nature, and mantic methods of the *Yijing* (Thuken 2009: 331–350). He maintained that the ideas in the *Yijing*, such as *taiji* (supreme ultimate), *yinyang*, *sancai* 三才 (three powers), *sixiang* 四象 (four images), and *bagua* (eight trigrams) were compatible with Tibetan Buddhism (Smith 2012, 160–161). He also believed that:

In regard to the formation of the Chinese classics, the emperor Fuxi 伏羲 wrote the *Lianshan*, a book about the eight trigrams. This is the first important Chinese classic. Fuxi also wrote the *Neijing* 內經 (Inner Classic) to lay down the principles for understanding real knowledge. Then the Five Classics, namely the *Yijing*, *Shijing*, *Shujing*, *Liji* 禮記, and *Chunqiu* 春秋, appeared and circulated widely. The *Yijing* was written by Fuxi. We are not sure who wrote the remaining four classics. (Thuken 1980, 193)

This passage contains a number of assertions that differ from the commonly held views among Chinese scholars. According to legend, the *Lianshan* and *Neijing* were written by Shennong and Huangdi 黃帝, respectively. In the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, however, Thuken ascribed the authorship of these texts to Fuxi. Although Thuken did not state the reasons for his assertion, his admiration for Fuxi was clear. His view on the creation of the *Yijing* was more conventional:

King Wen, the father of the first emperor King Wu, was a man of integrity. Having understood the meaning of the pre-heaven sequence of the eight trigrams, King Wen invented the post-heaven sequence of the eight trigrams and then the sixty-four hexagrams. This Chinese classic is the *Zhouyi*. It shows that the hexagram *qian* is the image of heaven. The *Zhouyi*, together with the *Lian Shan* and *Gui Cang* 歸藏 (literally, “returning to be stored,” an early edition of the *Yijing*) that were written before it, are called the three editions of the *Yijing*. ... The Duke of Zhou, a son of King Wen, elaborated upon his father’s thinking by writing the clarification of the lines (*yaoci* 爻辭). Confucius, in order to elucidate the meanings of King Wen and the Duke of Zhou, wrote commentaries. ... Fuxi, King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius are called the four sages in China and the “four collectors” in Tibet (Thuken 1980, 196).

Like many other Tibetans, Thuken was primarily interested in the numerological implications rather than the textual and moral significance of the *Yijing*. He remarked:

Many schools of knowledge are derived from Confucianism and the earliest knowledge to arise from it is numerology. The *Yijing*, as foremost among the Five Classics, is a book for interpreting numerology. Yi means either “trade” or “change.” During the Tang period, this Chinese book of numerology became popular in Tibet. That is why we call it Tang *Yijing* (*botang* 博唐). (Thuken 1980, 194–195)

Thuken stressed that the numerology in the *Yijing* was consistent with Tibetan Buddhism, therefore Tibetan monks should study it. He cited the Taoist text *Liezi* 列子 to suggest that Confucius looked upon the Śākyamuni Buddha as a sage of the west:

[Shang Taizai 商太宰] asked, “Are you a sage?” Confucius replied, “I do not deserve such praise!” [Shang Taizai] asked, “Where does the sage live now?” Confucius replied, “The sage is in the west.” This shows that Confucius regarded Śākyamuni as the sole sage. The hidden messages in Confucian classics can build the [Buddhist] Way. Our teacher Cangkyā Khutukhtu Rolpe Dorje once said: “The hidden messages in the *Yijing* match the ultimate wisdom in Tibetan Buddhism.” (Thuken 1980, 198)⁴

The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems is the most important Tibetan source that discusses the *Yijing* at length. It shows that Thuken was knowledgeable about Chinese studies of the *Yijing*, and able to offer his personal views linking the *Changes* with Tibetan Buddhism.

The *Yijing* in Tibetan Religions

Before the arrival of Buddhism, the Tibetan people believed in a system of shamanistic and animistic practices called Bon, which came to incorporate Confucian and Taoist elements. According to Bon tradition, Confucius was the reincarnation of Kong tse 'phrul rgyal 孔澤楚傑, a disciple of the Bon Hierarch Shenrab Mivoche and one of the four great masters of Bon. When Kong tse 'phrul rgyal was reincarnated as Confucius in China, he learned five-agent calculation from the Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva (Lin 2007, 105–129; Chen 2004, 88–95).

Bon priests practiced various divination methods, including the *Yijing* (Wang 1989, 98). Besides using yarrow stalks, they liked to make the hexagrams by throwing bronze coins, a simple method that can be traced to the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE) but only became popular after the Tang (Wang 2016: 61–64; Compton 2006: 29–32). Bon priests and Tibetan scholars were not experts in the *Yijing* and they did not feel obliged to follow the original divination method as stated in the *Yijing* and the Ten Wings. As a matter of fact, coin oracles were popularized among tribal peoples along China's Inner Asian frontiers because it was much easier and faster to make a hexagram with them.

The Dunhuang manuscript CH.9II68 “Jinqian shen ke panci” 金錢神課

⁴ Changkya Rölpe Dorjé (1717–1786) was the spiritual head of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism in Inner Mongolia during the Qing period. He was invited to visit the Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor (1711–1799) in Beijing and received the title of national preceptor (*goshi* 國師).

判詞 (Oracles from coin-throwing) credits Confucius and Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang 唐玄宗 (685–762) for creating this particular divination method: “In the beginning of the world, Confucius defined the Way by editing the classics. The holy emperor Li Sanlang 李三郎 (literally, “the third younger brother of the Li family,” a reference to Xuanzong) had a deep thought on horseback and wrote commentaries” 於坐騎上久思後定下卦辭 (Zhang and Chen 2010, 69).

There were different coin-divination methods used by the Tang people, such as the three-coin, eight-coin, and twelve-coin methods. In Tibet, the twelve-coin method was most popular (Kalinowski 1994: 37–88). The Dunhuang manuscript E.372 traces this method to the *Zhouyi* and Laozi: “According to the *Li laojun zhouyi shierqian bufa* 李老君周易十二錢卜法 (The twelve-coin divination in Laozi and the *Zhouyi*), a coin with the “tails” (i.e., patterned) side up is *yin*, and one with the heads side (with characters) up is *yang*. This is the divination of Laozi. Throwing twelve coins into a bowl, we will know whether they represent good or bad from the configurations of these coins. This method was one hundred percent accurate” (Zhang and Chen 2010, 69). Although the coin-divination method originated in China, Tibetans used it to ask for help from their own native deities, particularly the Tibetan battle god (Zhanshen 戰神 from Bon) and the fox spirit (Dexiantaolang 地仙桃朗), rather than looking to Chinese deities for aid (Zhang and Chen 2010, 70). Here we see an excellent example of the localization or domestication of *Yijing*-based divination in Tibet.

Like Bon, Tibetan Buddhism also absorbed elements from the *Yijing*. In the eighth century, the Indian missionary monk Padmasambhava came to Tibet and founded the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He allegedly invented the famous Tibetan diagram of nine palaces and eight trigrams, synthesizing his understanding of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan esoteric traditions. He saw the concepts of *wuxing* and eight trigrams as a way to promote Buddhism, explaining:

We should know that divination, astrology, astronomy, geography, geomancy, *yinyang*, *wuxing*, and fortune-telling are phenomena of the dharma realm. As long as we are not stubborn and use our Buddhist mind to perceive the elusive phenomena of all worlds, Buddhist law and human knowledge can mix, and perhaps we can make use of these elusive skills. (Lianhua 1995, 366)

Padmasambhava claimed that the Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva taught him how to use *Yijing* divination to enrich Buddhism: “The Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva lectured on topics from non-Buddhist texts to the inner meanings of Buddhism. By combining *Yijing* divination and other divination methods, he explained the elusive phenomena of the world” (Lianhua 1995, 366).

Some influential texts in Tibetan Buddhism contain ideas that can be associated with the *yinyang wuxing* doctrine. The *Mahāvairocana Tantra* 大日經 (Tantra of the Great Illuminator), a seventh-century Indian tantric text introduced to the Tang and Tubo in the eighth century, contains ideas (such as the five colors, five directions, five elements, and five buddhas) that seem to be compatible with the five-agent doctrine (Beer 2003, 234). In the *Hevajra tantra* 喜金剛本續 (Tantra

of *Hevajra*), an early Indian esoteric Buddhist text from the beginning of the eighth century, experiencing the harmony of *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) through sexual intercourse was seen as an ideal way to apprehend the source of life. The words *yin* and *yang* do not appear in this particular text, but the basic concepts exist in Tibetan tantric Buddhism. In the *Hevajra Tantra*, *yin* and *yang* are represented by the bell and the *vajra* (an ancient Indian weapon) respectively; both are important ritual objects in Tibetan Buddhism (Ruland 1998, 98).

In both Bon and Tibetan Buddhist traditions, divination was important. The Tibetan people used various divination methods, including the *Yijing*, which Tubo priests and scholars learned about during the Tang period and continued to use through the Qing (Smith 2012, 160). The Dunhuang manuscripts, for example, contain a number of *Yijing*-related divination documents.⁵ The two most noteworthy are Ch. 1635 *Yiguazhan* 易卦占 (Divination using *Yijing* trigrams) and S. 6349 *Yisanbei* 易三備 (The *Zhouyi* in three parts).⁶ The *Yiguazhan* uses the theory of *najia* 納甲 (literally, “adaptation of the cyclical sign *jia*”) to predict the future in matters such as warfare, marriage, illness, and death, based on the eight trigrams.⁷ For example, if the querent throws the trigram *kun* 坤, things will go smoothly: “No matter what you ask, if you get *kun*, things will go smoothly. The nature of *kun* is soft and it can cover everything” (Zhai 2013, 92). The *Yiguazhan* also contains a diagram that matches the eight trigrams with the six Chinese mythical creatures (green dragon, red phoenix, *gouchen* 勾陳 (a fox-like animal), flying serpent, white tiger, and black tortoise).

The *Yisanbei* is a book of *fengshui* 風水 (geomancy). It was a fragment of the lost Chinese text by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), a famous Eastern Jin (317–420) *fengshui* master. The text uses the sixty-four hexagrams to discuss *fengshui* in three parts (Zhang and Lin 2006, 47–54). For example, the fourteenth hexagram *dayou* 大有 indicates how different people who use the same piece of land can experience very different outcomes:

The image of the hexagram *dayou* is upper trigram *li* 離 and lower trigram *qian* 乾. . . . One should not reside here or he will have no offspring. However, Zi Xia 子夏 (a student of Confucius) once said if one is buried in this kind of land, he will have three sons who become dukes. It will bring good fortune to his offspring. (Zhang and Lin 2006, 49)

The Dunhuang manuscripts also contain divination methods attributed to the Duke of Zhou or Confucius, as, for example, S. 1339 *Kongzi matou bufu* 孔子馬頭卜法 (Horseback divination of Confucius), which was a handwritten copy of the divination book *Kongzi matou yiboshu* 孔子馬頭易卜書 (Book of *Yijing* divination on

⁵ According to Huang Zhengjian, at least twelve documents in the Dunhuang manuscripts are related to *Yijing* divination (Huang 2001, 15). Rong Xinjiang has found more titles (Rong 2013, 383–385).

⁶ Ch. 1635 originally had no name and the current title *Yiguazhan* was given by Rong Xinjiang who conducted research on it. S. 6349 is a fragment of the lost ancient Chinese text *Yisanbei*.

⁷ *Najia* was a theory about correlations between the moon cycle, the eight trigrams, and the ten heavenly stems (Zhai 2013, 92–98).

the head of Confucius's horse) by [Sui 隋] Lin Xiaogong 臨孝恭. Instead of using yarrow stalks or bronze coins, it suggests simply shaking a bamboo container until one of the nine counting rods falls out (Strickmann 2005, 140). Its preface reads: "The divination of *yinyang* should be based in the way of the *Yijing*. Like getting lost at sea, we have too many theories to choose from. Only the sages can judge. How can ordinary people decide? Therefore, Confucius created this divination method" (Wang 2010, 31).

The *Kongzi matou bufa* was only one such popular divination method. The proliferation of other divinatory techniques in Tibet is recorded in the *Xizang zhi* 西藏記 (Records of Tibet, 1794) by an anonymous Chinese author:

There are many divination methods in Tibet, including: writing the eight trigrams on paper by Buddhist monks, writing in Tibetan, using barley to make a trigram, drawing five-color wool, counting beads, drawing on the ground, burning lamb bones, and observing water in a bowl. Methods are numerous and some are relatively accurate. (Zhonghua shuju 1985, 30)

Many of these divination methods also incorporated the concepts of the eight trigrams and nine palaces (Pang 2002, 49).

The *Yijing* in Tibetan Culture

The doctrine of *yinyang wuxing* is a key element in the Tibetan calendar created in 1027 (Yuan, Kunga, Li 2015, 24). *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* explains: "Our calendar came from the land of the Han. We have discarded the Indian notion of earth, water, fire, wind, and air and adopted the Chinese *wuxing* concept of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water" (Wang 2000, 133–134). Each year is associated with either *yin* or *yang*, one of the five agents, and one of the twelve animals. In the ninth century the Tubo people created their own unique method of chronological dating. For instance, the Tibetan edition of the Tang-Tubo Alliance Monument 唐蕃會盟碑 (823) had names for years such as "yin-metal-ox" 陰鐵牛, "yang-water-tiger" 陽水虎, and "yin-water-rabbit" 陰水兔 (Wang 1982, 43–44). The Tibetans used *yinyang* and *wuxing* to match the ten heavenly stems, and the twelve zodiac signs to replace the twelve earthly branches.

The concept of *wuxing* can be found throughout Tibetan history and mythology. For instance, *The Record of the Tibetan Kings and Noblemen* presents the Genealogy of the Nang, a noble family influential in Tibetan politics and religion, as follows:

The *Qilin baoce* 麒麟寶冊 (The treasure book of Qilin) reads: "My ancestors came from a big egg which was made of the essence of the five agents: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. . . . The five organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body), as well as the hands and feet, appeared in the egg. A beautiful baby was formed. He was named Yemojiabu 耶默嘉補 (Wang 2000, 115).

Wuxing was applied to the names of the Tibetans. This practice can be traced to the Eastern Han period (25–220) in China, as evidenced by Dunhuang

Manuscript F. T. 127, entitled *Renxing guishu wuyin jing* 人姓歸屬五音經 (Book on the association between human names and the five notes) (Chen 2011, 76–84). Dunhuang Manuscript P. 2581 *Kongzi beiwenshu* 孔子備問書 (A record of detailed questions by Confucius) describes the five agents or five names (*jiao* 角, *zheng* 徵, *yu* 羽, *gong* 宮, *shang* 商) as follows: “What are the five names? They are *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zheng* and *yu*. What are the attributes of the five names? *Jiao* belongs to the wood in the east, *zheng* belongs to the fire in the south, *yu* belongs to the water in the north, *gong* belongs to the earth in the middle, and *shang* belongs to the metal in the west” (Wang 2000, 133–134). The Tibetans in the Hexi Corridor adopted Chinese names and applied the five notes of the pentatonic scale, namely *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zheng*, and *yu*, to five major categories of names. Each name was associated with *yin* or *yang* and with one of the five agents, and determined whom someone should marry and what kind of dwelling they should live in. People who lived in the Amdo region of Tibet also applied *wuxing* to the five most prominent families. The Tibetan book on astrology, *Changyong xingsuan baoping* 常用星算寶瓶 (The treasure vase of frequently used astrology), reads: “In the Amdo region, the Dong family belongs to earth and its spirit resides in the deer. The Zhu family belongs to water and its spirit resides in the yak. The Zha family belongs to metal and its spirit resides in the wild donkey. The Kuo family belongs to fire and its spirit resides in the goat. The Ga family belongs to wood and its spirit resides in the sheep” (Sun 2007, 30).

Wuxing is also a key concept in Tibetan medicine, and appears throughout medical classics such as the *Lunar King of Medicine* 月王藥診 (Tib. *sMan-dpvad ZLa-ba'I rGyal-po*) and *The Four Medical Tantras* 四部醫典 (Ch. *Sibu yidian* or Tib. *Brgyud bzi*). *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* states: “*The Four Medical Tantras* transmitted in Tibet borrows its theory from the Land of the Han to discuss the origins of things. The five agents in the text are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, rather than the Indian version of earth, water, fire, wind and air” (Thuken 1980, 197). Like many Chinese medical texts, *The Four Medical Tantras* applies the five agents to internal organs, stating: “Now I want to lecture on the mutual generation and mutual control of the five agents. At first, the five organs are related to pulses. “The pulses are caused by the mutual generation of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. The relationships between the four pulses follow the mutual control of fire, water, earth, wood, and metal” (Yutog 1983, 405). The application of the five agents to pulse diagnosis was an important feature of Tibetan medicine, and divided the five agents into mother-son and friend-enemy relationships, as noted in *The Four Medical Tantras*: “The order of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water is mother, whereas the reverse order is son. The order of fire, water, earth, wood, and metal is enemy, whereas the reverse order is friend” (Yutog 1983, 405). In other words, the pulse of a person is determined by the mother-son and friend-enemy relationship between the five agents and the patient’s organs.

Of central importance in *The Four Medical Tantras* is the need to harmonize the patient’s *wuxing*. Its author Yutog Yontan Gonpo (708–833) also wrote the *Wuxing tiaohelun* 五行調和論 (Harmonizing the five agents) to elaborate on this theme. But he attributed the concept of the harmony of the five agents to Buddhist

rather than Chinese medicine (Yutog 1983, 472). *The Four Medical Tantras* explains disharmony among the five agents in terms of bad karma from a previous life, and stresses that the fundamental principle of medicine is to achieve and maintain balance among the five agents (Yutog 1983, 472–476).

In Tibetan design, the pattern of eight trigrams and nine palaces is common (Smith 2012, 166). Meditating on this pattern was supposed to help people achieve enlightenment and expel evil influences from their environment. This pattern consists of three circles: the twelve zodiac signs around the outermost circle, the eight trigrams around the next circle, and the nine palaces in the center. In the Bon classic *Zermik*, the creation of this pattern was attributed to Shenrap, the founder of Bon (Schaeffer 2013, 270–271).⁸ It can be found in *thangka* (Tibetan Buddhist paintings), buildings, murals, and Mandala keys.⁹ Due to the cultural exchange between Yuan-Ming-Qing China and Tibet, this three-circle pattern could also be found in Buddhist paintings and murals in China. For example, the Yonghe Temple, a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Beijing built in 1694, collected a number of *thangka* with the pattern of the eight trigrams and nine palaces. Moreover, the *taiji* diagram, a symbol of the *yin-yang* dynamics, was also introduced to Tibet during the Tang period. For instance, it decorated the ceiling of the main hall of the Jokhang Temple (Zhongguo Zangchuan fojiao yishu 2006, 20–21). The painting in the White Temple of the Tholing Monastery (built in 997 in Western Tibet) has many *taiji* symbols (Wu 2007, 102).

Concluding Remarks

For some two thousand years the Tibetans and their forebears interacted closely with the Chinese. In world history, when two strong cultural traditions have come into contact, they have often influenced each other. In the area of *Yijing* scholarship, the *Yijing* and its related concepts of *yinyang*, *wuxing*, and the eight trigrams influenced Tibetan religion and culture, while the Tibetan pattern of eight trigrams and nine palaces was introduced to China.

The nature of the reception of the *Yijing* in Tibet was not a process of the Sinicization of Tibet, but the selective inclusion of Chinese elements into Tibetan society and culture. It has the following three major characteristics:

First, the *Yijing* was not highly esteemed as a classic of Confucian philosophy or Chinese wisdom. Tibetans had little interest in its textual interpretations and moral teachings. They found them too difficult to understand. Unlike Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the Ryukyu Kingdom, Tibet did not include the *Yijing* in its educational curriculum. Only a few Tibetan noblemen, monks, officials, and scholars studied it. Although the *Yijing* was translated into Tibetan and some Chinese commentaries were brought into Tibet, it was never popular among Tibetan intellectuals. No Tibetan scholars wrote commentaries devoted solely to it, and no Chinese commentaries, whether from the Han or Song, were seriously

⁸ The pattern is called the Parkha Mewa Circle.

⁹ For the symbolic meanings of the Mandala key, see *The I Ching Project: The I Ching Key* (Compton 2006, 3–8).

studied or reprinted in Tibet.¹⁰

Second, the *Yijing* was influential in Tibetan religion and culture as a divination tool. Divination was an important part of Tibetan life and *Yijing* divination and its related concepts and symbols were incorporated into various Tibetan divination practices. To most Tibetans, the *Yijing* was mainly a book of divination, which they used in their own way. For instance, to make a hexagram, they preferred simple methods such as throwing bronze coins or counting rods instead of throwing forty-nine yarrow stalks. They often sought help from Tibetan deities rather than Chinese deities or sages when consulting the oracle. Using local methods and praying to local gods for divination are examples of the domestication of the *Yijing*.

Third, Tibetan culture assimilated concepts associated with the *Yijing*. In particular, the five agents and the eight trigrams can be found in Tibetan mythology, religion, literature, art, architecture, medicine, and geomancy. The Tibetans localized the *Yijing* and assimilated it into the Tibetan cultural framework. For example, they often linked the eight trigrams and the nine palaces to each other and used the Buddhist five agents and the Chinese five agents interchangeably. In medicine, they used the eight trigrams and the five agents much more frequently than the concepts of *yinyang*, which were ubiquitous in Chinese medicine.

All in all, these characteristics indicate that the historical reception of the *Yijing* in Tibet was a complex process of assimilating Chinese knowledge into Tibetan culture and religion. During this process, Tibetan and Indian elements were added to the philosophy and divination methods of the *Yijing*, making the Tibetan *Yijing* quite different from the Chinese *Yijing*.

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¹⁰ By contrast, Wo Daochong 韓道衡 (?–1183) of the Xixia Empire used the Tangut script to write a commentary on the *Yijing*, titled *Zhouyi bushi duan* 周易卜筮斷 (Divination of the *Zhouyi*). Bao Ba 保巴 (?–1311), a famous Mongol (or Central Asian) scholar of the *Yijing* in the Yuan period, wrote the *Yiyuan aoyi* 易源奧義 (Hidden meanings of the origins of the *Yijing*) and *Zhouyi yuanzhi* 周易原旨 (Fundamental meanings of the *Zhouyi*).

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