

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

HIDDEN HISTORY IN THE I CHING

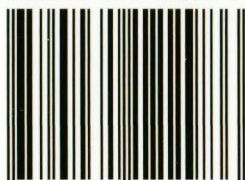
S J MARSHALL

Presenting new evidence that challenges current thinking on the origin of the *I Ching*, *The Mandate of Heaven* tells the story of the fall of a dynasty, the rise of another, and a dramatic solar eclipse on June 20, 1070BC, that served as an omen for this transfer of power. S J Marshall uncovers and dates in the *I Ching* a previously unrecognized record of this total eclipse, regarded by King Wu as a sign from Heaven to invade the Shang state immediately. *The Mandate of Heaven* recounts the little-known events surrounding the conquest of the Shang and the founding of the Zhou, showing how the earliest layer of the *I Ching* has preserved a hidden history that has remained undetected for three millennia.



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS/NEW YORK
www.columbia.edu/cu/cup

ISBN 0-231-12298-5



9 780231 122986



COLUMBIA

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

S J MARSHALL

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

HIDDEN HISTORY IN THE I CHING

S J MARSHALL



天命

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

HIDDEN HISTORY IN THE I CHING

S J MARSHALL

The mysteries of the ancient Chinese text known as the *I Ching* continue to fascinate scholars and New Age enthusiasts alike. While sinologists rely on historical criticism to explain the meaning of the work, those who use it for divination tend to accept without question the traditional account of its origin and purpose. Whereas modern scholars are generally dismissive of the book's reputed mystical significance, traditionalists may resent academic research into the oracle because it seems irreverent or iconoclastic. *The Mandate of Heaven* attempts to resolve the antagonism between these two approaches.

A two-thousand-year-old tradition holds that the *I Ching* was created by King Wen at the end of the second millennium BC during his struggle with the tyrannical Shang dynasty. The struggle came to a climax shortly after Wen's death when his son, King Wu, finally defeated the Shang and founded the Zhou as the new royal dynasty, thus establishing the Mandate of Heaven—the divine right to rule. According to the tradition, these events are in some ways alluded to in the earliest layer of the *I Ching* but no sound historical basis had been discovered to substantiate this claim. Consequently, since the 1930s sinologists have discounted the value of this tradition.

Continued on back flap

Continued from front flap

Now, the links between history and tradition are clearer. *The Mandate of Heaven* is the first book to systematically compare the story of the Zhou victory with the text of the *I Ching*. The author shows that the oracle has preserved a record of a total solar eclipse, never previously identified, that served as an omen persuading King Wu to march on the Shang. This key episode unlocks the hidden meaning of many obscure statements in the *I Ching*, opening the way to fuller understanding of this powerful text.

S J Marshall was born in Wolverhampton, England, in 1958. He studied chemistry at Imperial College, University of London, and later read widely in European literature and philosophy, Asian mysticism and archaeology. In 1982 he began to investigate the *I Ching*, developing an interest in ancient Chinese history. *The Mandate of Heaven* is his first book on the subject.

Jacket photograph: The total solar eclipse of October 24, 1995, photographed by George T Keene from the deck of the *Marco Polo* in the South China Sea. The Chinese calligraphy reads *tianming*, 'The Mandate of Heaven,' and was brushed by Wei Bing.

Printed in the United Kingdom