

# THE BOOK OF CHANGES

BY

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As regards the *Book of Changes*<sup>1)</sup> there is among native scholars in China more agreement than on most subjects. It is agreed that it was in its origins not a philosophical work, but a book of divination. It has been found to contain rhymed proverbs and scraps of song in a style similar to that of the *Book of Odes*; and finally, it is accepted as dating from the end of the Yin dynasty (12th century B. C.) or at the latest, the beginning of Chou. Further progress towards understanding the true nature of the work has been barred by the fact that it has been regarded as a single whole. The thesis put forward in the present paper is that the *Book of Changes* is an arbitrary amalgam of two quite separate works: 1) An omen or 'peasant interpretation' text similar for example to the T'ang MSS. 2661 and 3105 in the Pelliot collection from Tun-huang; or to the MS. in the Kumjanzov Museum quoted by O. Schrader in *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion* IV, 814. 2) a divination text probably of later date and certainly of far more sophisticated nature.

The omen text is entirely in verse and tends towards the formula (typical of peasant lore) exemplified by the English proverb:

A red sky at night  
Is the shepherd's delight.  
A red sky at morning  
Is the shepherd's warning.

Apart from a few stock rhyming phrases the divination text is in prose. It consists of divinatory formulae closely akin to those found on the Yin oracle-bones. The contents of the omen text are of a kind extremely familiar to all students of folk-lore. Parallels<sup>2)</sup> could be cited in almost every case from every quarter of the globe, from every known phase of human society both in the past and the present.

Broadly speaking they may be divided into three classes: 1) Subjective: inex-

<sup>1)</sup> The *Book* itself, as apart from the seven appendices.

<sup>2)</sup> Particularly from modern China, for example.

plicable sensations and involuntary movements ('feelings', twitchings, stumbling, belching and the like). 2) Those concerning plants, animals and birds. 3) Those concerning natural phenomena (thunder, stars, rain etc.). Examples of all these classes are extremely familiar even in a highly educated and industrialized country like England. We find such beliefs codified in the most elaborate way as early as 2000 B. C. in the Babylonian omen tablets.<sup>1)</sup> Take for example the dog-omens:<sup>2)</sup>

When a dog runs in front of you  
A great battle will follow.  
What a dog halts in front of you,  
You will lose the fight.  
When a dog obstructs your path  
The fall of the city is certain.  
When a dog mounts a bitch in your house,  
Your house will be destroyed.

With this formula compare that of the *Book of Changes*, § 51:<sup>3)</sup>

'When the thunder comes crash, crash,  
There shall be laughter and talk, ho, ho.  
When thunder wakes people a hundred leagues away,  
You shall not lose ladle or spoon.  
When the thunder comes sharply,  
In your counting you shall lose a cowry.'<sup>4)</sup>

But generally speaking, in the *Book of Changes* the second clause or 'apodosis', if I may call it so, is replaced by a divination formula such as 'lucky for meeting a superior', 'unlucky for crossing a big river,' coupled with a number of divinatory terms such as 貞, 悔, 元, 亨 the function of which is far from certain.

Thus we get the formula:

A red sky at morning,  
*Unlucky. Unfavourable for seeing one's superiors.*  
A red sky at night,  
*Auspicious. Favourable for going to war,*

<sup>1)</sup> See Jastrow, *Religion Babylonians u. Assyriens*. Vol. II.

<sup>2)</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 789.

<sup>3)</sup> The reader of this paper will find it convenient to number the sections of the *Book* 1 to 64, as I have done. I would suggest that European scholars would also find it convenient to number the *Odes* consecutively in the same way, from 1 to 305.

<sup>4)</sup> For the connection between thunder and cowry-shells see Karlgren, *Some Fecundity Symbols*, p. 38.

or the like, the italicized lines representing the inserted portions of the divination text.

Let us take some examples from the *Book of Changes*, beginning with 'feelings', a class of omen still believed in all over the world.<sup>1)</sup>

Book of Changes § 31.

咸其拇 --- 咸其腓 --- 咸其股 ---  
憧憧往來。朋從爾思。

The circles indicate a rhyme in archaic Chinese.

'A feeling 感<sup>2)</sup> in the big toe, in the calf, in the thigh.'

'If you fidget and can't keep still, it means that a friend is following your thoughts.'

There then come allusions to feelings in the back, the corners of the mouth, the cheeks, the tongue.

Involuntary movements such as stumbling, knocking things over, etc., are extremely familiar as omens. We all know how William the Conqueror stumbled on reaching English soil, and skilfully averted the omen. George Brown (*Melanesians and Polynesians*, p. 154) tells us that in the Pacific stumbling is an omen of misfortune or death, and Grimm (op. cit. same page) mentions the same belief among the Teutons.

§ 39 of the *Changes* concerns 蹇:

往蹇來譽,大蹇朋來

'He who goes stumbling shall come praised.'

'A great stumble means a friend shall come.'

The fundamental meaning of 蹇 is 'foot-impediment'. It will be noticed that here stumbling is a good omen.<sup>3)</sup> But the section begins (and this, in common with other opening clauses, I take to be part of the later, divination text) 利西南,不利東北

<sup>1)</sup> We say in England 'I have a 'feeling in my bones' that such and such a thing will happen.' A feeling of tingling in the ears means that someone is praising one. For such beliefs in Russia see Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion* IV, 814 b. For Morocco, see Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* I, 35. For ancient Germany, Grimm and Stallybrass, *Teutonic Mythology*, p. 1117.

<sup>2)</sup> As is well known, archaic Chinese writing makes very little use of significatives ('radicals'). That in the interpretation of the *Book of Changes* these often have to be supplied is a principle already accepted by modern scholars in China. See *Ku Shih Pien* III, 220.

<sup>3)</sup> To stumble going upstairs means in England that one is going to be married.

'Profitable if to the S. W., unprofitable if to the N. E.'

Perhaps the most widespread type of omen is that which concerns the movements of animals, insects, birds and even plants (apparently uncausated movements of tendrils, twigs and the like). If an animal is of an unusual kind, merely to meet with it is an omen. To meet a piebald horse is lucky in England. I take the couplet in § 3:

乘馬班如。泣血漣如。

'If the horse she rides on is brindled,

Tears and blood will flow profusely

to refer to an omen taken from the sort of horse that the new bride arrives on at her husband's house. The fact that this section refers to primitive marriage institutions has already been recognized.

It is noteworthy that the element 豕 'hog' occurs in many Chinese characters implying motion, 逐 to drive out, 遂 to follow, 避 to hide. The movements of swine were closely observed by the Chinese. A herd of swine with white trotters crossing a stream is a portent of heavy rain (*Ode* 232; i. e. Hsiao Ya, last but two).

In section 33 of the *Changes* we read, under the heading 避 'to take it you must use a thong made of the hide of a yellow bull and no one will be able to loose it.' And then 係避, 好避, 嘉避. It does not need much perspicacity to see that here we must read 豚 'young pig' and not 避 'to hide'. And when we finally come to 肥避, the matter is clenched. For what can be the sense of 'a fat hiding'? Whereas 'to tie up the pig', 'a good pig', 'a lucky pig', 'a fat pig' are natural and familiar expressions.

The 'lucky pig' indeed plays an important part in modern New Year observances in Teutonic countries (e. g., Bavaria and Austria), and doubtless elsewhere. The original text beyond doubt concerned pig-omens and pig-ritual; but it has been mutilated beyond possibility of re-construction.

The fox plays so large a part in Far Eastern mythology and belief that it would be surprising if we did not encounter fox-omens. Section 40 says 'If in hunting you catch three foxes . . .,' but the apodosis (interpretation) is lost. Compare § 57: 'If in hunting you catch three different kinds of game.'

田獲三狐：田獲三品

Section 64 says:

小狐汔濟。濡其尾。无攸利。

'If the little fox when almost over the stream  
Wets its tail,  
Your undertaking will completely fail.'

Section 34 concerns the behaviour of rams:

羝羊觸藩，不能退不能遂。  
无攸利。

'If a ram butts a hedge,  
And cannot go back or go in (i. e. gets stuck),  
Your undertaking will completely fail.'

Let us turn to insects. The ant is extraordinarily sensitive to atmospheric conditions and is esteemed as a weather-prophet all over the world. By observing the behaviour of ants the peasants of the Tirol, as I have had occasion to witness, arrive at amazingly accurate prognoses of coming snow-falls, both as to date and extent. The modern Chinese peasant of course has his ant-proverbs.<sup>1)</sup> The usual Chinese word for the ant is 蟻, also written 螳. This word does not occur in the *Changes*. About twenty times, however, we find the character 孚, which is said to mean 'sincere'. In almost every case, the context requires a far more concrete, substantival meaning. Moreover moral meanings, such as upright, just, sincere, etc., come late into a language. Thus the Greek *dike* means originally not justice, but merely 'what is customary.' 'Moral' too has etymologically the same meaning. 'Virtue' means potential power, not virtuous conduct in the moral sense.<sup>2)</sup> 'Sincere' cannot have been the original meaning of 孚. In the Oracle Bones it seems generally to stand for 俘 'prisoner'. A possible semantic history of the word is as follows: (1) the creature which carries its young (i. e. eggs) in its claws 爪; (2) true, reliable (because of the reliable character of the ant's weather prophecies); (3) a guarantee of reliability, a hostage; (4) any captive of war; (5) the moral meaning 'sincere' is a derivative of (2).

This is mere speculation. Here are some examples from the *Changes*:

9 有孚攣如 14 厥孚交如  
17 有孚在道，孚于嘉  
20 有孚顛如 49 未占有孚  
64 有孚于飲酒。濡其首。

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Plopper, *Chinese Religion seen through the Proverbs*, p. 130. For ant-omens, see also George Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>2)</sup> See below, p. 16.

- § 9. 'If there are *fu* closely following one another.'
- § 14. 'These *fu* are hooked on to one another.'
- § 17. If there is a *fu* on the path. . . . a *fu* on the shelf. (架).
- § 20. If there is a fine *fu*.
- § 49. A *fu* before one has taken the omens.
- § 64. cf. § 5. If there is a *fu* in the wine one is drinking,  
Wet its head.

All the above may well refer to *fu* 'ant'. But § 6

有孚啞。惕中吉。<sup>1)</sup>

'If a *fu* laughs, this means good luck in the midst of fear,' is headed 訟 'disputes', and the disputes in question were likely enough to concern the distribution of war-booty. If the reading I have followed is right, it is certain that 孚 here stands for 俘, prisoner of war, as in the Oracle Bones. Section 8 is called 比 to pair'. The *Erh Ya* gives 蚘 蜉 as the name of a large kind of ant, and in this section of the *Changes* we find the characters 比 and 孚 jostling one another. 有孚比之 'If there are *fu* pair them.' This rhymes with the preceding 不寧方來 'People will come from the unsubjected lands'. Here again *fu* may will stand for 俘 'prisoner'. The line:

解而拇，朋至斯孚 (rhyme?)

of § 40 is enigmatic. It may refer to the well-known practice of removing the thumbs of prisoners of war. 而 is probably corrupt. It may stand for 大. The passage certainly requires further investigation.

The subject of § 57 is 巽 'sun', which is taken to mean 'to obey'. It is, however, obvious from the contexts in which it occurs that the word is a noun, not a verb. Thus:

巽在壯下，用史巫紛若

can only mean 'If there is a *sun* under the bed, you must have plentiful recourse to recorders and wizards.' The appearance of a *sun* is evidently an omen. One is reminded of the Ode *The Seventh Month*,<sup>2)</sup> where the creeping of the cricket under the bed is the sign that the time has come to shut up the house for the winter.

<sup>1)</sup> Variant from the *Chou I K'ao I*, Huang Ch'ing Ching Chieh Hsü Pien, 382. Usual reading 室.

<sup>2)</sup> No. 154.

§ 5 is headed 需, which is taken in the sense of 'to wait patiently'. But here again the context demands a noun, not a verb.

需于郊... 需于沙...  
 需于泥。致寇至。〇<sup>2</sup>  
 需于血。出自穴。〇  
 需于酒食。入于穴。〇<sup>1</sup>  
 有不速之客。三人來。〇

A *ju* in the outskirts...

A *ju* in the sand...

A *ju* in the mud, brings the foeman along.

A *ju* in blood,<sup>1)</sup> if it comes out of a hole...

A *ju* in wine or food, if it enters a hole, means that three uninvited guests will come. Now 蠕 means a 'crawling thing', and it is certain that we have here to do with some form of insect or worm.

#### Birds.

For the importance of birds as omens such words as 'auspice', 'augur' are in themselves sufficient evidence. They figure frequently in the *Changes*.

§ 7. 田有禽,利執言

'If in the field there are birds,<sup>2)</sup> it is favourable for initiating a parley.'

§ 36 deals with 明夷 'damage to the eye', according to one of the traditional interpretations.

But, as Li Ching-ch'ih has convincingly shown,<sup>3)</sup> there is not the slightest doubt that *ming-i*<sup>4)</sup> is the name of a bird.

明夷于飛,垂其翼。〇  
 君子于行三日不食。〇

'When the *ming-i* in its flight, droops its wings, that means that my lord on his journey for three days will have no food.'

明夷于南狩。得其大首。〇

<sup>1)</sup> Particularly, no doubt, of the sacrificial victim.

<sup>2)</sup> The word may, however, mean game in general, not birds. The subject of the section is war.

<sup>3)</sup> *Ku Shih Pien* III, 212.

<sup>4)</sup> Ming 明 may be for the cognate 鳴 'singing'.

'When (one sees) a *ming-i* while hunting in the south, (that means) one will capture a big head of game.'

§ 53 is remarkable for the fact that it preserves the original rhymed omen text almost intact, with very little interpolation of the later divination-formulae. It concerns the skimming of wild-geese 鴻漸. Why should 漸 'skimming' be of importance as an omen? Possibly for a reason bound up with the Chinese language. The word 漸 *tsiäm* is phonetically closely akin to 占 *t'siäm*, 'to take omens.'

鴻漸于干...  
 鴻漸于磐。飲食衎衎。  
 鴻漸于陸。夫征不復。  
 鴻漸于木。或得其桷。  
 鴻漸于陵。婦三歲不孕。  
 終莫之勝。

'When the wild-geese skims the bank...

When the wild-geese skims the rock-ledge, you may eat and drink in peace.

When the wild-geese skims the land, the absent husband will not return, the pregnant wife will not rear the child.

When the wild-geese skims the tree or gets a flatbranch (?)

When the wild-geese skims the mound, the wife for three years will not be pregnant and in the end will succumb (to her delivery?).'

We may compare the Ode *Chiu yü*. (No. 159):

鴻飛遵渚。公歸無所。  
 鴻飛遵陸。公歸不復。

'When the wild-geese in its plight follows the islands, (It means that) my lord has nowhere to go.

When the wild-geese in its flight follows the land, (It means that) my lord will not return.'

See also the Ode 鴻雁 in the *Hsiao Ya* (No. 181). It is easy to see how the formula of folk-poetry (so often exemplified in the *Odes*) in which a series of statements concerning natural phenomena, trees, birds, etc., are correlated to a series of statements concerning a human situation<sup>1)</sup> grew up out of the omen-formula. The *Odes* themselves, however, are not folk-poetry but a highly sophisticated arrangement of folk-poetry, and it is seldom that the omen-formula appears in so

<sup>1)</sup> e. g. Ode 5, The Grasshoppers.



unadulterated a form as in the above text. The correlation between absent lovers and wild-geese has of course remained as a stock theme in Chinese poetry down to the present day.

Li Ching-ch'ih has also dealt in the same place with § 61 and the 'cranes singing in the dark'. But the whole section is very obscure and, I think, corrupt. Particularly intriguing is the 'noise of wings mounting in the sky' of the last clause.

Considering the importance of the willow in folk-lore it is not surprising to find in the *Changes* a willow-omen (§ 28):

枯楊生稊。老夫得其女妻。○  
枯楊生華。老婦得其士夫。○

'When the rotten willow bears sprouts, the old husband will get a lady-wife; when the rotten willow bears flowers, the old wife will get a lord and husband.'

In the same section there are mutilated references to house-beams and rafters. It is well known that the sagging, warping, cracking, etc., of beams is regarded as ominous in many parts of the world. For its significance in Assyria, see Hastings, *Enc. of Ethics*, IV, 785 a. Finding objects in one's food is lucky or unlucky in various parts of Europe. Compare the practice of secreting small objects in the Christmas pudding. In § 21 we read:

噬乾臄得金矢。噬乾肉得黃金

'If in biting the gristle of dried meat you come on a metal arrow-head. . .

If in biting the soft flesh of dried meat you come on a bit of gold. . .'

It is hard to resist the conclusion that the section refers to omens from objects found in food. But parts of it seem rather to deal with the feeding behaviour of sacrificial animals. I shall return to these points in a more complete study of the *Changes*, which I hope to undertake later.

§ 54 deals, as has partly been recognized, with wedding-omens. It also refers to a particular wedding,<sup>1)</sup> that of the Yin Emperor Ti Yi (beginning of 12th century B. C.), at which the bridesmaid's sleeves were better than those of the bride — naturally, an ominous state of affairs. It naturally, also, brings bad luck if the bride is late (歸妹愆期). Also, if the basket the bride receives contains no fruits<sup>2)</sup> or the sacrificial sheep, when the bridegroom stabs it, does not bleed.

<sup>1)</sup> See Ku Chieh-kang in *Ku Shih Pien* III, 5 seq.

<sup>2)</sup> Or better 'presents' 貺, the reading quoted in *T'so Chuan*, Hsi Kung 15th year.

§ 4 is headed 蒙. The *Êrh Ya* in its section on plants gives the equation 蒙 (*mêng*) = 王女. The commentary says 蒙 = 唐 = 女羅 *nü-lo*, i. e. the dodder (*cuscuta*), an epiphyte which grows on bushes.

Now parasitic and epiphyte plants play a very important rôle in primitive thought, owing to the fact that they seem to be 自感造化之氣而生<sup>1)</sup> 'spontaneously engendered by Nature's breath.' 'All parasitic plants are esteemed in a certain sense holy,' says a writer on Swiss folk lore, quoted by Sir James Frazer.<sup>2)</sup> The dodder figures largely in the beliefs of the Thongas. Junod<sup>3)</sup> mentions the use of the dodder for augury, and a riddle 'The thing of which the stem is invisible, what is it?' Answer, 'The dodder.'

§ 4, then, under the heading 'Dodder' says 見金夫不有躬 'I saw the golden husband; but he had no body.'<sup>4)</sup> For the gold colour of the dodder, see *T'u Shu* XX, 169, under *t'u-ssu* 菟絲, which as we know again from the *Êrh Ya* is another synonym for *Nü-lo*.

It seems that we have here the Thongan riddle or paradox. Twice in § 4 the *mêng* is called 童蒙 *t'ung-mêng*. *T'ung* means 'a boy before puberty', 'a bull that has not yet grown its horns.' As applied to *mêng* the term refers to the 'incompleteness' of the epiphyte. It is found again in the name which the *Êrh Ya* (section on trees) gives to the mistletoe 宛童 'twisty boy'. It figures in other plant names; for example 童梁, a species of tare.

The epiphyte, then, which has no roots of its own, is mysteriously nurtured by Heaven, and is therefore in touch with the secrets of Heaven. Hence its importance in rites of divination. But it must be approached with caution. If it is to retain its power 'it must be knocked off the tree,'<sup>5)</sup> not cut with a knife. Hence the phrase (near the end of § 4) 擊蒙 'knocking the dodder;' whereas 發蒙 perhaps refers to the alternative method<sup>6)</sup> of pulling the parasite entirely clear of the tree which harbours it. The opening formula

匪我求童蒙,童蒙求我

<sup>1)</sup> *T'u Shu* XX, 180, section on the mistletoe.

<sup>2)</sup> *Golden Bough* VIII, 82.

<sup>3)</sup> *The Life of a S. African Tribe* 2nd. edit. 1927, p. 179, II, 537.

<sup>4)</sup> Legge, 'When she sees a man of wealth, she will not keep her person from him'.

<sup>5)</sup> See Grimm, op. cit., p. 1675, speaking of the mistletoe. For the connection between dodder and mistletoe, cf. Turner's *Herbal* (quoted in Murray's Dictionary: Dodder groweth out of herbes and small bushes as mistletoe groweth out of trees).

<sup>6)</sup> *ibidem*, p. 1748, 'radicitus'.

'It was not I who sought the stripling dodder; the stripling dodder sought me' is clearly a spell for averting the evil consequences of tampering with the holy plant.

Ritual and divination are closely bound up together. An omen generally points to the necessity for a rite. A rite cannot be performed unless the omens are favourable.

§ 25, perhaps the most interesting passage in the *Book*, deals with the scape-goat ritual, so familiar to us owing to its prevalence among the Semites, and still practised in many parts of the world as a means of ejecting pestilence. Have we any evidence that such a rite was ever known in China? Certainly we have. In the *Yüeh Ling*, last month, we read

命有司大難...出土牛以送寒氣

'The officials are ordered to perform the great demon-expulsion and to put out clay bulls in order to send away the cold-spirit.' I take 出 to mean 'cast out', 'put out of the village', which is its natural meaning. The commentators take it in the sense of 'produce', a meaning quite foreign to this character. Here we have a survival of the use of bulls as scape-goats. For a similar use of clay-figures in Africa, see J. Driberg, *The Lango*, p. 113. Here is the text from the *Book of Changes*

无妄之災。或繫之牛。○  
 行人之得。邑人之災。○  
 无妄之疾。勿藥有喜。○

The pest *wu-wang*,  
 If you tie it to a bull,  
 The passers-by will get  
 The village people's pest.  
 The disease *wu-wang*  
 Needs no medicine for its cure.

*The Golden Bough* devotes of course a very long section to rites of the scape-goat kind. How does one tie a disease to a bull? By attaching to it objects (such as herbs or the like) which symbolize the disease. 'They take a goat or a buffalo, tie some grain, cloves and red lead in a yellow-cloth on its back and turn it out of the village,' quotes Sir James Frazer. The suggestion that passers-by will pick

up the disease and so disburden the villagers of it seems to us callous; but it is constantly found in connection with such rites. See for example Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion IV*, 738 a.

*Wu-wang* is of course the name of the disease as well as the name of the spirit which cause it. We may guess that this spirit was feminine, which is the rule for disease-demons in China as elsewhere.

My interpretation of this passage will probably strike those not acquainted with existing translations as obvious and inevitable. I would therefore at this point like to quote the traditional interpretation, as embodied in Legge's translation: 'As in the case of an ox that has been tied up. A passer by finds it, while the people in the neighbourhood have the calamity (of being accused and apprehended). Let him not use medicine, and he will have occasion for joy.'

The preceding section is called 'Returning', and it is possible that it deals with the return of the Scape-goat; but the text is fragmentary and obscure.

It is not surprising to find that sacrifice, which figures largely in the Honan oracle-bones, is often referred to in the *Book of Changes*. In antiquity everything connected with the sacrificial animal, not only its behaviour before the performance of the rite, and above all its attitude towards the food provided for it, but also the appearance and condition of the sacrificial meat after the rite was regarded as ominous. I suggest that the sacrificial animal was identified<sup>1)</sup> with the ancestor to whom it was sacrificed, and such terms as 母庚 the mother whose birthday was on the 7th day of the week<sup>2)</sup> indicated not only the spirit of a dead parent but also the animal sacrificed in order to get into communication with that spirit.

§ 18 is headed 蠱, and when we find such expressions as 幹父之蠱 'stem-father's maggots,' 幹母之蠱 'stem-mother's maggots,' phrases which have completely baffled interpreters of the *Changes*, it is surely obvious that the maggots referred to are those which appeared in the flesh of animals sacrificed to the spirits of dead parents, who after their death were, for reasons of taboo, only known by the name of the day upon which they were born, 幹 being merely a fuller way of writing 干 'stem', 'day of the week'.

§ 20 is headed 觀 *kuan*, a root which corresponds closely to the Latin *templ-*, as in the words *con-templ-are*, *templ-um*. It means to watch, in the special sense

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Takata, *Gakko Hatsubon VII*, 19.

<sup>2)</sup> The ancient Chinese had, of course, a ten day week, the signs denoting the days being called the 10 stems 十干.

of watching for natural signs. Hence *kuan* means an observatory, a place where the portents of heaven are watched. Later, it becomes the general name for Taoist 'temples'.

Here *kuan* figures in the sense 'to observe heaven,' but also 'to observe the sacrificial animal,' which is indeed the link between man and heaven. 觀國之光 clearly means 'to observe national lights,' i. e. comets, shooting-stars and the like which were regarded as portents affecting the destiny of the nation. References to such portents are innumerable in Chinese as in Classical literature. Compare, for example, the mysterious 'light' seen when the Han Emperor Kuang Wu was born.<sup>1)</sup>

Then we have 觀我生<sup>2)</sup> 進退 'observing whether my sacrificial animals advance or retreat.'

Two other kinds of *kuan* are mentioned. 闚觀 'peeping inspection' and 童觀 'stripling inspection'. Concerning the first I have no suggestion to offer. But it seems difficult to disassociate the latter with such expressions a 童謠 'stripplings' songs,' i. e., inspired utterances of young boys whose 'mouths seemed to speak of themselves.'<sup>3)</sup> The importance that the Chinese attached to such utterances and to the 'untaught knowledge'<sup>4)</sup> that these young people displayed must have struck every reader of Chinese history. Now among many primitive people the initiation of boys into the tribe is accompanied by beatings, whippings and other tortures which (sometimes with drugs as an accessory) produce a state of stupor. The utterances of initiates when in this state are regarded as inspired. Such rites are based on psychological factors permanent in mankind and constantly tend to recrudescence. Compare, for example, the tortures inflicted on new apprentices by the trade-guilds of the Hanseatic towns.

The word for 'youth', 'stripling', 'young man approaching puberty' in many languages perpetuates the memory of this custom. Among the Kona in the Sudan initiation candidates are called 'children of the whippers' i. e. those that are whipped. I suspect that the English word stripling has the same origin. I suggest also that *κόρος* youth is derived from *κείρειν* 'to cut', just as, for example, *τόνος* from *τείνειν*. The Jews, moreover, called confirmation candidates Bar Onshin 'children of punishment'.<sup>5)</sup> When therefore we find that the character 童 has in

<sup>1)</sup> *Lun Hêng* III, 12.

<sup>2)</sup> For 牲, etymologically the same word. See Karlgren, *Analytic Dict.* No. 874.

<sup>3)</sup> *Lun Hêng* XXII, 16.

<sup>4)</sup> *Lun Hêng* XXVI, 8.

<sup>5)</sup> Jewish Encyclopaedia II, 509, under *Bar-mizwah*.

the Seal form not 立 but 辛, composed of 𠂔 which is defined as 擻 'to stab, to beat', and 亠 (=) which fulfils in the earliest Chinese writing the functions<sup>1)</sup> of the later significative 示 'connected with religion', it seems that 童 originally means 'those who are beaten as a religious ceremony.' Thus the word contains a memory of times when the Chinese, like other primitive peoples, conducted violent initiation ceremonies. 撞, it will be observed, still means 'to strike', and 鐘 ('bell') is 'metal which is struck'.

I would suggest then that 童觀 means 'observation (of omens) by boys who have not reached the age of puberty', and perhaps originally 'observation by initiation-candidates' during their period of trial and seclusion.

Section 27 continues the theme of 'observing'.

舍爾靈龜。觀我彙頤。

This gnomic rhyme is only intelligible if we put it into the mouth of the sacrificial victim: 'Discard your holy tortoises and observe my pendulous jaw' i. e. my dewlap.

§ 52 is headed 艮 i. e. 齧 'gnawing', and evidently deals with omen-taking according to the way in which rats, mice or the like have deals with the body of the sacrificial victim when exposed as a 'bait' to the ancestral spirit.

艮其背不獲其身。  
行其庭不見其人。

'If they have gnawed its back, but not possessed themselves of the body, It means that you will go to a man's house, but not find him at home.'

艮其腓。不拯其隨(髓)。  
其心不悅。

'If they gnaw the calf of the leg, but don't pull out the marrow, their (i. e. the ancestors') hearts do not rejoice.'

君子思。不出其位。

If, while the lord is observing them, they do not move from their appointed place... 思 'to think' is composed of 'heart' and 囟 'head' (numerative of ani-

<sup>1)</sup> E. g., 人 'man'; 天 'heaven'. The lower part of the character, abbreviated from 重 *d'c i'wong* is of course onomatopaeic, reproducing the heavy thud of beating.

mals). Perhaps it means originally 'to observe sacrificial animals'. Compare the element 田 in 獸, and the cognate word 伺 'to observe'; also 思次 'observation-post'.

Tsêng Tzū, in *Analects* XIV, 28, is made to quote this same proverbial saying, giving to it<sup>1)</sup> a moral, not a ritual meaning: i. e. 'The morally superior man in his thoughts does not depart from his sphere.'

§ 29 is called 習坎. The traditional interpretation tells us, (rightly, I think) that 習 is for 摺. This last character is etymologically the same as 攢 and means 'to pile one thing on another', 'to fold', 'to duplicate'. Applied to 坎 'pit' this can only mean 'double' and imply one hole opening out of another. In the *Li Ki* (XXIV) we read 祭月於坎 'we sacrifice to the moon in the pit'. Offerings to the moon are still placed by Balkan peasants in holes in the ground.<sup>2)</sup> If there were any doubt that § 29 deals with a magic rite it would be dispelled by the concluding rhyme-triplet:

係用徽纆。寘于叢棘。  
三歲不得。

'Bind with a thread of three strands and of two strands,  
Put it in a bramble thicket  
And for three years you shall not get.<sup>3)</sup>

The use of thread made of several distinctive strands in connection with magic (for example, to tie lockets, amulets and charms) is well known. Compare the Sumerian incantation: 'White wool, black wool, a double thread the spindle was spinning; a wondrous thread, a mighty thread, a variegated thread,<sup>4)</sup> a thread that does away with the curse.'<sup>5)</sup>

Fragmentary though the text is, some idea of the nature of the ritual in question may be gathered from the lines that precede:

入于坎窞，勿用  
樽酒簋贰，用缶。納約自牖。  
坎不盈。底(～祗，禋)既平。

<sup>1)</sup> As frequently happens in Confucian texts. cf. *infra*.

<sup>2)</sup> From Miss P. Kemp's forthcoming work on healing-ritual in the Balkans.

<sup>3)</sup> i. e., get the pest or disaster against which the rite is directed.

<sup>4)</sup> Like that of the Japanese *tamadasuki*.

<sup>5)</sup> Gadd, *Sumerian Reading Book*, p. 151.

'Enter into the arcana of the pit. *No use.*

Goblet wine bowl, fill from earthenware crock.

Let in by a rope from the window

Before the pit is filled,

The bottom already levelled.'

The expression 坎 窞 'arcana of the pit' explains why it is called 'double'.

§ 32 is particularly interesting in that it explains a passage in the *Analects* of Confucius that has hitherto remained completely obscure:

不恆其德或承之羞

'If you do not stabilize your »virtue»,

Disgrace will overtake you.'

The moral words, such as virtue, justice, etc., have, as I have pointed out, a slightly different colouring in the earlier stages of human society. 德 in early Chinese<sup>1)</sup> means not virtue in the sense of moral rectitude, but rather, so to speak, the stock of credit that a man has at the bank of fortune. Such a stock is built up by the correct carrying out of ritual, and above all by the securing of favourable omens. If for example I consult the tortoise and get a favourable response, that is my *té*. It is my potential good luck. But it remains like an uncashed cheque unless I take the right steps to convert it into a *fu* 福, a material blessing. Like an uncashed cheque, a *té* is a dangerous thing to leave about. It may fall into other hands, be put to someone else's account. Moreover, an omen is regarded as in itself a momentary, evanescent thing. Like silver-prints, it requires 'fixing'. Otherwise it will refer only to the moment at which it was secured. Omen-takers all over the world are careful both to 'fix' and to secure for themselves their *té*, their *virtus*.<sup>2)</sup> Omen-objects, which have given a favourable result, are nailed to trees, buried, locked up.<sup>3)</sup> I think it is some 'stabilizing' rite of this kind that the term *héng* 恆 implies. Let us now turn to *Analects* XIII, 22:

»The people of the south have a saying, 'It takes *héng* to make even a sooth-sayer or medicine-man.' It's quite true. 'If you do not stabilize your virtue, disgrace will overtake you.'»

<sup>1)</sup> Abundant examples will be found in the *Tso Chuan* and *Kuo Yü*. Cognate with *té* (*tək*) is 直 to plant (*d'ʔək*). In the oldest script they share a common character 𠄎; see Takata, Kochūhen, under 德. The analogy between the omen that will fulfil itself in good luck and the seed that will bring plenty is obvious enough.

<sup>2)</sup> The Latin word also has this same sense of 'potential power'.

<sup>3)</sup> e. g. in the Balkans, Miss Kemp, op. cit. I would suggest that the Honan oracle-records were not, as has often been assumed, merely thrown away, but were deliberately buried for ritual reasons.



Confucius adds 不占而已矣, which has completely baffled his interpreters.<sup>1)</sup> Surely the meaning is 'It is not enough merely to get an omen,' one must also *hêng* 'stabilize it'. And if such a rule applies even to inferior arts like those of the diviner and medicine-man, Confucius asks, how much the more does it apply to the seeker after *té* in the moral sense? Surely he too must 'make constant' his initial striving!

What sort of rite does the term *hêng* imply, and what is the history of the character 恆? In the old script it consists of the moon 月 between two lines.<sup>2)</sup> The primary meaning is the crescent moon, as in *Ode* 166 月之恆. But the usual meaning is 'continuing from one point to another' and so 'stable, fixed, perpetual'. I suggest, then, that *hêng* was originally a rite performed at the first appearance of the new moon and directed towards making a favourable condition of affairs last 'all through' the lunar month. A good omen was required for a single act, such as making a sacrifice. But for permanent undertakings it was indispensable that the omen should be 恆吉,<sup>3)</sup> not only auspicious, but favourable 'all through' the period for which it was required. We have some evidence that the typical stabilizing rite consisted in drawing concentric circles or a spiral round the omen-objects. In common practice the element *hêng* is often written 亘, in old script a spiral or two concentric circles between two lines. Throughout the ancient world new foundations whether of camps, cities or villages, were 'stabilized' by drawing spirals or circles round them. As in ancient Germany so to-day in the Balkans a circular furrow is ploughed round new settlements. The Romans galloped the maze-dance, Troica, round the walls of new cities. On the Oracle Bones we constantly find 卜 亘 'The tortoise was consulted with regard to the rite 亘.' (e. g. *T'ieh-yün Ts'ang Kuei* I, fol. 6 b.) It should be mentioned that some modern interpreters of the Bones take the second character in such combinations as the name of the diviner. This theory involves great difficulties.

§ 35 is headed 晉. I suggest that this stands for 摺 'to insert'.

康侯用錫馬蕃庶。  
晝日三接  
受茲介福。于其王母。

<sup>1)</sup> Soothill, in what is perhaps now the standard translation, says, 'This is an acknowledged crux interpretum' and translates 'All because he did not calculate beforehand.'

<sup>2)</sup> For these two lines, meaning 'connected with religion', see above, p. 19.

<sup>3)</sup> cf. *Book of History*, the *Lo Kao*, 'Ordinance concerning the foundation of the Capital at Lo.'

It has already been recognized by Ku Chieh-kang<sup>1)</sup> that K'ang hou is a proper name and refers to the brother<sup>2)</sup> of the first Chou emperor; Ku, however, regards the second line as unintelligible. I would translate:

'The lord of K'ang caused his gift-horses to multiply exceedingly. He coupled (the stallion with the mares) three times in a morning. He received this »delimitated» 介 blessing from his royal mother.'

The commentators tell us that 介 simply means great. This is what they invariably say when a word belongs to the old ritual vocabulary, the clue to which had been lost. I suggest that 介 denotes the magic which renders spaces intact by 'bordering' them with protective signs. Such is the purpose of border-patterns (spirals, key-patterns) on early works of art. A *chieh fu* 介福 is a blessing which has been either directly or symbolically 'bordered' in this way.

A pestilence may also be 'bordered', so that it does not spread. cf. § 58 介疾有喜 'If you *chieh* the disease, all will be well.' The meaning of 摺 'inserting' will be apparent to anyone who has ever lived on a farm.

§ 38 is headed 睽. 癸 means 'arrows' 矢 'facing in opposite directions' 𠄎, and is the name of the last day in the ancient Chinese 10-day week. On the Oracle Bones it is written 𠄎 and on ancient bronzes often 𠄎, with minor variations. I take this to be a picture of the face of a sun-dial, with the arrows (or rather, their shafts) pointing towards the four points of the compass. Favourable to this theory is the fact that the ordinary character for sun-dial 晷 was pronounced in a way phonologically identical with 癸 (i. e. *kj<sup>w</sup>i*); moreover 葵 means the sun-flower, it is 向日花 'the flower that turns to face the sun' and is therefore in itself a sort of sun-dial or time-keeper. Finally, 揆 means 'to calculate,' 'to measure,' as the sun-dial measures the hours. On the 'sun-dial day', the last day of the decade, omens were taken with regard to the next ten days. The Oracle Bones contain numerous references to this practice. § 35, then, is concerned with omens occurring on this day or seeming to have reference to this day. Why a sun-dial was the symbol of the last day we know no more than why a nail was the symbol of the fourth, or a lance that of the fifth.

The text begins by telling us that a horse lost on this day must not be pursued; it will come back of itself. There is no danger in seeing an 惡人. Now in the Oracle Bones 亞 appears as a place-name, and I take these two characters to mean 'a man of Ya,' and not 'an evil person'. It is in fact a case of omen by

<sup>1)</sup> *Ku Shih Pien*, p. 17.

<sup>2)</sup> Prince of Wei, lord of K'ang. See Chavannes, *Mémoires Historiques*, I, 246.

'*Angang*', chance meeting.<sup>1)</sup> The same theme is continued in the next clause: 'Meeting your master in the lane.' Then follows:

見輿史。其牛掣。其人天且劓。

'To see a wagon being pulled; the ox, one horn up and one horn down;<sup>2)</sup> the man clean-shaven (?) and with his nose cut off.'

So elaborate an omen cannot be typical. It must refer to a particular occasion when someone had this experience. The subsequent omen is 'If you see a pig with mud on its back in the same cart with a Kuei 鬼, first stretch your bow; then loose it.' *Kuei* in current Chinese means 1) a ghost, 2) a foreigner. The second meaning ('foreign devil') is a comparatively modern expression. But it has revived what was, in fact, the earliest meaning of the character. For the 鬼 were the great north-western enemies of the Yin. The Yin Emperor Kao Tsung's three years campaign against them is twice referred to in the *Changes* (§§ 63, 64). I suggest therefore that in the present section 鬼 means not 'ghosts' (Legge, 'He fancies there is a carriage full of ghosts'), but 'a man of Kuei'. Though this Kuei and the word for sun-dial are not quite identical phonologically, I suspect that the significance of seeing a Kuei (Kj<sup>w</sup>ei) is partly determined by the resemblance of this word to *kuei*, the last day of the week. The omen was evidently a bad one, the stretching and then loosening of the bow being a ritual for the expulsion of evil influences; cf. the twanging of bow-strings by night watchmen, several times mentioned in the *Tale of Genji*. 睽 means 'the eyes looking in opposite directions' (like the arrows on the sun-dial). The phrase 睽·孤 occurs twice in a disjointed manner in the text, and is said to mean 'independent'. There is a possibility that the second character should be 狐: 'cross-eyed fox'.

One characteristic of the text, to which I have not as yet alluded, deserves a passing reference. Chinese abounds in reduplicative expressions (similar to the English Ding-dong, to represent the sound of a bell) used in an onomatopoeic or quasi-onomatopoeic way. These words, representing shades of feeling as well as nuances of sound, appearance, etc., could not of course be rendered pictorially, and are often expressed by phonological equivalents that, taken separately, have

<sup>1)</sup> It is still commonly believed by peasants in the remoter parts of Europe that to meet a priest is unlucky, to meet a prostitute, lucky. It is possible that § 13 同人 refers to 'chance meetings' or coincidings.

<sup>2)</sup> So the *Shuo Wen*, which is however a source that must be used with great caution.

a quite different meaning. Thus under the heading 坎 we get the expression 坎坎, a reduplicate which is generally admitted to have a quite different meaning from 坎 by itself. Such phrases, which seem to be quoted from songs similar to the *Odes*, are considered relevant by the omen-taker because of their similarity in sound and therefore in graphic expression to the word which heads the section. The arrangement of the *Changes* is therefore, as regards such phrases, in a sense a lexicographical one. For this reason certain European scholars have reached the erroneous conclusion that the whole book is nothing more than a dictionary.<sup>1)</sup>

The question remains to be answered, how and when did the *Book of Changes* come into existence? It has been shown to contain references which go down to the closing years of the Yin and possibly the opening years of the Chou dynasty. The beliefs which it embodies are however as dateless in China as in Europe. We cannot say when, either in China or the West it was first thought unlucky to stumble; nor can we say when men first used scape-goats to expel pestilence. Nor can we say exactly when the original 'omen-text' was first cut up and mutilated by the insertion of interpretations drawn from another sphere of divination. But the work has always been known as the *Chou I* 'Changes of the Chou dynasty', and we shall be quite safe in saying that it reached something like its present form during the first half of the Chou period, say between 1000 and 600 B. C.

The *Changes*, as we have them, show an amalgamation of four different divining techniques. 1) What is called by anthropologists 'peasant interpretation', the use of natural phenomena, chances, feelings, etc., as omens. 2) Divination by plant-stalks, through a 'score' of odds and evens arrived at by the shuffling and counting<sup>2)</sup> of such stalks. The 64 hexagrams merely represent the scores of odd and even arrived at as a result of this process. The number six (six sides of a square) suggest that this technique in its turn was derived from dice-throwing. 3) Divination by marks on the heated carapace of the tortoise. The vocabulary of the interpolated clauses is largely based on that of tortoise divination, as we know it from the Oracle Records of Ho-nan. 4) Divining-tablets, representing objects of omen. The character 卦 'hexagram' means 'tablets for divining'. Di-

<sup>1)</sup> This theory was revived by Conrady, whose paper on the subject was published posthumously by Dr. Erkes in *Asia Major*, Vol. VII.

<sup>2)</sup> The process is lucidly described by Richard Wilhelm in his *I Ging*. The method of applying the results so obtained to the text of the *Changes* has varied greatly at different periods.

vinging-tablets of various materials continued to be used throughout the historic period in China.

The interpretation of the *Changes* (which even in the 3rd century B. C.<sup>1</sup>) could still be classified as a book of divination) as an ethical and cosmological treatise is embodied in the ten (or strictly speaking seven) appendices usually printed with it. Here we see at work on a large scale and as applied to a whole book the process that transformed individual words such as 義 and 德 from a purely ritual, auguristic into a moral meaning. As regards the *Changes*, the process may have begun as early as the fourth century,<sup>2</sup>) and a species of cosmological interpretation may have begun even earlier. But this process was certainly not complete until well into the Han dynasty.

Two further questions present themselves:

1) Why was it called *Changes*?

2) On what principle were the 64 sections allotted to the 64 'scores' (hexagrams)?

1) I do not find it easy to accept the current explanation that the 'change' referred to is the 'passing' from one hexagram to another. This passing is in early literature always called 之 'going to'. I do not think that the question has been satisfactorily solved.

2) If we accept that 乾 'means' Heaven, that 坤 'means' Earth, etc., the second question answers itself; for obviously 6 unbroken lines are a fitting symbol for the paramount superiority of the one, just as 6 broken lines aptly symbolize the inferiority of the other. But I suggest that 乾 has only come to mean Heaven because of its association with § 1 of the *Changes*. The fundamental meaning, judging by early forms, seems to be 'dry', as the *sun* dries the *grass* in the morning. Such is the meaning of the character in the *Book of Odes*. The case of 坤 is the same; but the history of this character is so complicated that I must reserve it for a subsequent paper.

Several different principles could naturally be adopted in the arrangement of a series of patterns composed of two sorts of line. The text was probably cut up and shuffled a good many times before it reached its present order.

I have dealt in the foregoing pages with such parts of the omen-text as are most completely and intelligibly preserved. I have formed provisional theories with

<sup>1</sup>) At the time of the Burning of the Books.

<sup>2</sup>) As is well known, the passage in which Confucius is made to appear as a student of the *Changes* (*Analects*, VII, 16) has probably been tampered with. In the Lu version of the *Analects* the word does not appear in the sentence at all. There is no evidence that the Confucians took the book under their wing till much later.

regard to many other passages where the context is so slender that certainty is impossible. To substantiate such hypotheses some sort of outside evidence will be necessary. It has naturally occurred to me to seek it in the Honan Oracle Bones. But here one is at once brought up against a serious difficulty. Hundreds of characters which occur on the bones still remain to be identified. Familiar rites and activities such as hunting, war, sacrifice, etc., have of course been recognised; but anyone who believes, as I do, that the early Chinese had much more in common with other primitive peoples than has been suspected, must be convinced that the content of the oracle records is in reality far richer and more varied than has hitherto appeared.