

MORE FREE WEB APPS - THE I-CHING
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A Brief History of the I-Ching

Divination in China dates roughly to the early Shang dynasty, around 1675 B.C. At that time, perhaps the most popular form of divination was the casting of animal bones into a fire, letting them burn, and after they had cooled, studying the fine cracks that formed in the bones. The cracks were interpreted.

The I-Ching or "Book of Changes" known as the "Changes of Chou" was originally known as the oracle of the people of Chou, written down as early as 1070 B.C. Historians have placed the origin of this oracle as early as the 8th century B.C. In other words, the I-Ching oracle is ancient.

And the I-Ching as legend is timeless and it is said that Fu Hsi, perhaps the greatest emperor of China, originally discovered the eight fundamental trigrams that make up the I-Ching hexagrams. Throughout Chinese history the I-Ching has been studied and used by the great sages, philosophers like Confucius, who wrote exhaustive commentaries on the work.

The word "I-Ching" or "Yi Jing" (the more modern Pinyin transliteration) literally means something like "regular change" or the "change that does not change," that is: change we can count on taking place - persistent change. In this regard, the I-Ching is looked upon as a reflection in miniature of the physical and spiritual world we live in. The I-Ching reflects how our inner and outer world moves and changes.

The Hexagrams

The I-Ching consists of 64 hexagrams, each consisting of six lines placed one above the other, and read from the bottom upward. Each line may either be solid or broken (have a gap in the center) and the total number of combinations total sixty four. Solid lines are considered masculine and Yang in nature, while broken lines are feminine or Yin in nature.

In invoking the I-Ching as an oracle, various methods are used to decide whether each of the six lines is yang (solid) or yin (broken), the most traditional method being the use of yarrow stalks in a somewhat complex method of dividing and re-dividing a group of stalks to arrive at a determination for each line. There are many other methods as well, perhaps the most popular being to throw three coins and see how many come up heads and how many tails. Two or more heads make the line solid or yang, and two or more tails make it broken or yin. Regardless of

methods, the result is to perform the task six times and build up from the bottom to the top six lines to form a hexagram.

While the hexagrams are each made up of six lines, some of these lines can be what are called "moving" or 'changing' lines. In other words, each of the six lines may be static or moving. By moving we mean that line is in the process of changing into its opposition, as in a yang (solid line) becomes a yin (broken) line and vice versa. How are these determined?

Using the coin method, if two out of the three coins are heads, then the resulting line is a static (unchanging) solid or yang line. However, if all three coins are heads, then the resulting solid or yang line is moving or changing into its opposite. The same is true for the yin or broken lines.

Therefore, you have in some cases two hexagrams to consider, the first hexagram that was cast and a second hexagram that results by changing any moving line into its opposite. When using the hexagrams as an oracle, it is traditional to examine the first hexagram as the response to your questions, and then look at the second hexagram (if there is one) as what will come of the situation, that is: how it will change even further. Keep in mind that some hexagrams have no moving/changing lines and there will be no second hexagram. The first hexagram is all the answer this is to the question.

As for displaying the hexagrams, although there have been several ways to display a hexagram (such as in a circle, etc.), by far the most common and traditional method is to arrange the six lines stacked one upon the other and that is the method used here. Let's recap and look toward how these lines might be interpreted.

Enjoy!

Michael

