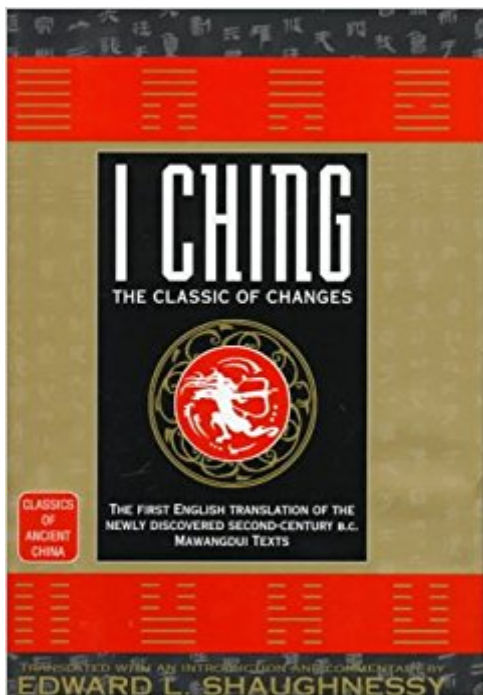


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I Ching (Classics Of Ancient China)



Synopsis

For more than two thousand years, the oracular, enigmatic pronouncements of the I Ching (Classic of Changes) have intrigued and inspired readers. In the West, scholars have long regarded the volume as one of the seminal texts of Chinese culture, comparable to the Bible or the Upanishads, and readers everywhere have turned to the hexagrams, line statements, and commentaries for guidance on every imaginable life situation. Given the enduring importance of this work, it was a momentous event when a significantly different I Ching text was unearthed in Mawangdui, China, in 1973--the first new manuscript of the work to appear in two thousand years. Now translated into English for the first time by one of West's leading scholars of the I Ching, the Mawangdui text brings welcome clarity, accessibility, and novelty to this beloved classic. Like the received version, the Mawangdui I Ching and its commentaries begin with a central core of sixty-four hexagrams, but in an important departure, the hexagrams in the newly discovered text are arranged in a systematic and logical way and, in many cases, are assigned different names. The line statements that accompany the hexagrams frequently differ from the received text. In addition, the Mawangdui version contains five new commentaries that had been lost for more than two thousand years, including the surprising discovery of a commentary that quotes Confucius extensively on how he had come to change his earlier, negative, views about the importance of the I Ching. The new material, the logical arrangement of the hexagrams, the more Taoist tone of the "Appended Judgments", the illuminating introduction and notes by Edward L. Shaughnessy and, above all, the lucid purity of his translation, make the Mawangdui I Ching a treasure. Readers who wish to use the hexagrams for divination will find this version more intriguing than even the previous text; scholars will derive new insights from the Mawangdui commentaries and from the "Appended Judgments," one of the most sophisticated and subtle essays in all of Chinese philosophy; admirers of world literature will cherish this volume as a work of timeless artistry.

Book Information

Series: Classics of Ancient China

Hardcover: 361 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books; 1st edition (January 21, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345362438

ISBN-13: 978-0345362438

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.8 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #740,282 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #107 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > New Age & Spirituality > Divination > I Ching](#) #1674 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Eastern Religions & Sacred Texts](#) #24064 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy](#)

Customer Reviews

What are the most widely read and commented upon works in history? The Bible? The Vedas? The Quran? How about the I Ching? Every major thinker in Chinese history has had something to say about it. Passed down from generation to generation, it has been admired, studied, and put into practice. In 1973, archaeologists unearthed a number of silk manuscripts dating back to 168 B.C. Included in the find was a version of the I Ching and four commentaries previously lost. The text itself differed in places from the accepted version, especially in the arrangement of the hexagrams. Scholar Edward Shaughnessy has translated the entire text, along with the four commentaries and an additional commentary (the Appended Statements) that traditionally accompanies the text. The newly discovered commentaries offer a variety of interesting opinions, one of which appears to be Taoist, while another has Confucius explaining what the I Ching means to him. Shaughnessy includes the Chinese text of both the received version and the excavated version, although, unfortunately, the notes are buried in the back, making it difficult to follow the subtle differences.

--Brian Bruya

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Chinese

Wonderful book. Seller very attentive. The order arrived quickly. The book is a beautiful one and contrary to my expectations it was a dual language book. I love it.

the first translation of Mawangdui manuscript

Read this if you have a PhD in Chinese studies. Then it might be interesting. Especially because the chinese text is printed along side the translation for those who want to do their own translating. The text comes from a dig in China, and is much younger than the traditional I Ching, with hexagrams in different order, etc. There is some new material not seen before, so there is value.

A lot has happened in Chinese language scholarship in recent decades. (Would that I had more than a poor layman's appreciation of such endeavors!) Obvious are the changes in the transliterations into English. Gone is "Tao te Ching" for the now correct "Dao De Ching." (How I loved those t's pronounced like d's and their exotic appearance in print, now reduced to quaint nostalgia.) Also changed is the I Ching, now properly known as Yijing, the "Classic of Changes" (formerly the "Book of Changes"). Note however that the publishers of this very fine volume have insisted on "I Ching" being in the title lest the uninitiated not realize that this book is about that enormously popular work of divination now at least 3,000 years old. As such the Yijing is one of the most venerable of all human writings and is of inestimable value for that reason alone. The occasion for this book and for Professor Shaughnessy's translation and commentary is the discovery in 1973 of the Mawangdui manuscript which shed new light on the text of the Yijing. That manuscript dates from the second century B.C. However the original of the Yijing goes back to the days before works were written down. Ni, Hua Ching in his book *The Book of Changes and the Unchanging Truth* (1983) notes that "an ancient by the name of Fu Shi developed a line system to express the principle of appropriateness." Some time later around 1181 B.C. "the feudal lord, King Wen of the Shang Dynasty...provided a written explanation of these lines and hexagrams." (p. iii in the work cited) Note well the use of the word "appropriateness." Although the Yijing is known primarily in the West as a book of divination, it is really a book about how one should behave and what one should expect in the face of the inevitable changes that dominate our lives. It is therefore in one sense a book of advice, advice to the high and the low, but especially to heads of state. It might be contrasted and compared to the *Dao De Ching* and to various volumes of advice from Sun Tzu's *The Art of Warfare* to Machiavelli's *The Prince*. This particular book is not a popular work on the classic. Instead it is a meticulous scholar's work that presents the new textual discovery to the reader with both the Chinese characters and Shaughnessy's translation appearing on facing pages, noting omissions and puzzlements in the manuscript, etc. His commentary addresses the origins and development of the Yijing including the earlier commentaries by Confucius and others. This is a book for scholars and the most devoted students of the Yijing as well as Chinese history and culture. I should also note that this is not a book about how to use the Yijing for fortune telling. There are many books that work well for that purpose including James Legge's *I Ching: Book of Changes* from 1964, which I have used. I might also mention Edward Albertson's *I Ching for the Millions* first published in 1969. One of the most respected books widely available is *The I Ching or Book of Changes* by C.F. Baynes and R. Wilhelm which was also first published in the sixties. Today no

doubt there is an I Ching for "Dummies" or an "Idiots" guide that will work well for divination.

If you're interested in a translation of the MWD-text, and a comparison with the traditional received text, then you will like this book. From a sinological point of view it is interesting material, however, the book isn't written for diviners. It has no explanations of the symbols of the I Ching, not of the trigrams nor of the text. Shaughnessy told me he has never used the I Ching himself, but is purely interested in the old text and history of the book. And this translation shows this interest well.

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