

LESSON I

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H. Garrison Smith together with the  
first text supplied from my  
Hypomnema copy p. 74.

What is the Yi King? The title means "The Book of Changes".





The earliest information that we have about the Yi King is that it consisted originally of the Trigrams of Fu-Hsi, about 3322 B.C. We shall learn, in due course, what these are. But all philosophy must derive from the contemplation of the origin of things, and all sound philosophy must begin with the conception of Zero, for if we begin with any other conception, we have an unbalanced condition, and therefore one which cannot be original, as otherwise the question that recurs is: - "How did this come to be?". To our Chinese Brethren, with that overmastering passion for equilibrium, which is manifest in every minutest detail of the very manner of their daily life, such consideration is evidently paramount.

In the Brahmin philosophy, the Rishis explained the Universe by saying that God created it. The question instantly arose: - "Who created God?" To answer this it was necessary to make God self-sustaining, and therefore they proceeded to analyse His attributions. In the end it was found that any positive attributions not only implied limitations, but led directly back to the original mass of ignorance, and they were accordingly forced to conclude by denying all qualities or quantities soever to the supreme God, Parabrahman. In other words, they found themselves obliged to reduce their God to Nothing; the Chinese, being more practical, cut out all the waste work and started with the Nothing of the "Great Extreme", which we may consider as really the equivalent of the Tao. We represent this Tao geometrically by a point. But since this Tao is not only non-existent in respect of all other possible predicates, it turns out on analysis that a thing which is in no way nothing, may just as well be regarded as something. If we say that no eggs are not in the basket, we have merely devised a complicated method of saying that some eggs are in the basket. (Draw an Euler diagram to illustrate this).

Now, in the course of the Hindu analysis, while they were trying to determine the qualities of God, they came across a phenomenon which they called "The pairs of opposites". It is most important to grasp this necessity of thought, - that our attempt to solve the problem philosophically is completely destroyed if we

once admit two sides of an equation which do not cancel out exactly. The Chinese, perceiving that the Tao (in this connection they called it *Thái Ki*) is so purely Nothing that it must be Something, or at least only capable of apprehension by symbolising it as Something, took an original pair of opposites; they called these the *I* or Yao. These lines are called respectively, Yang and Yin, the Yang being an unbroken and the Yin a broken line. These correspond to the masculine and feminine principles of Nature; they may be called the Father and Mother. Tao simply breaks up into Tao and Teh, Shiva and Sakti. We now see how striking is the identity with the Hebrew theology in respect of Tetragrammaton. I have treated this matter at great length in my essay on the Tarot.

We have then a formula of generation and development by this equation:  $+1 + (-1) = 0$ , or rather,  $0 = +1 + (-1)$ . But in order to proceed to any greater complexity, it is not sufficient to take two things one at a time; they remain simply two. We must, therefore, take them two at a time, and so we reach what the Chinese call Hsiang. These are:





- (1) The grand or old Yang 
- (2) The young Yin 
- (3) The young Yang 
- (4) The grand or old Yin 




The Chinese philosophers found that these four combinations were still somewhat impracticable, perhaps rather in the same way as it is impossible to make a magic square of four cells; two x two. The great Fu-Hsi, therefore, decided to consider the combinations of two things taken three at a time, and this set down the basis of the whole of the Yi by his Kwa, or Trigrams. These are, of course, eight in number. (See diagram).

## LESSON 2

At this point uninitiated scholarship began to cause trouble. The attributions of Fu-Hsi were not properly understood, and in B.C. 1185 or thereabouts, King Wăn gave a completely different order and attributions to the Kwa which are very unsatisfactory; he also erected a general system of divination by considering the combinations of two things taken six at a time, by putting each Trigram on the top of each of the others in turn. He thus obtained the 64 figures or Hexagrams of the Yi King. To each Hexagram he supplied a brief comment called Thwan. His son, the Duke of K'ao, wrote a comment on each separate line in each Hexagram. The book by this time had become very generally revered by the scholars, but their ability does not seem to have been equal to their enthusiasm. There are, in particular, a number of commentaries attributed to Confucius, but much of them is almost certainly spurious.





The whole of this trouble has arisen from the failure to maintain the mathematical accuracy of the original conception. The Chinese have always been hampered by their system of ideography; their language has never progressed beyond the agglutinative stage, and they have cultivated a very annoying tendency to be poetic and pictorial. The system of the Yi, rightly considered, is extremely simple and adequate, and turns out, on examination, to be identical with the system of the Holy Qabalah.

Let us return to a consideration of the Kwa. Four of these shew the  and its modifications, four of them the . There is a sort of descending hierarchy which inevitably suggests the Sephiroth. It is most important to check every step in our path by the balance of things. Whenever anything loses balance, it becomes imperfect. The first of the Trigrams,  is the perfect explanation of the masculine idea without any departure from simplicity other than the mere multiplication of the symbol; and it is therefore called Khien which is the Lingam, or Heaven. At the other end of the scale is  which is called the Khwan, that is to say, Yoni, or Earth, and corresponds exactly to Khien.

The first derogation from the perfection of the masculine simplicity is the balanced interference by the  and so we get the symbol Li  meaning the Sun. Corresponding to this is Khan  which is the Moon. These are called also respectively Thai Yang and Thai Yin.

The Sun and the Moon are thus, so to speak, materially potent representatives of the purely spiritual ideas of Lingam and Yoni. This, in fact, gives the key to the book. The Chinese characters meaning Yi King is composed of the characters for the Sun and Moon.

The changes described in this Book of Changes are changes produced by the interplay of the Sun and Moon. Every phenomenon being an act of love under will, we can see how the Chinese regarded this matter; everything that happened was the result of some inter-action of the solar and lunar principles.

There are, however, four more Kwa; but these cannot be balanced as Lingam and Yoni, or as Sun and Moon. They have a definite taint of imperfection, and correspond precisely to the "four elements" of the Qabalistic philosophy. In attributing these, we are considerably helped by the pictorial effect; the Trigram Sun  suggests the atmosphere below the unbreakable abyss of Heaven. Tui, Water,  suggests a wave upon the unbreakable abyss of the sea floor. Kan, Fire  suggests the flickering ascending flames upon the hearth; and Kan  reminds us of the crust of earth upon the molten core.

This is, of course, very vague; but it is very Chinese. Fortunately we are not dependent upon tradition, because when we come to put these eleven figures upon the Tree of Life, we find not only an absolute balance in themselves, but a perfect correspondence with the traditional attributions of the Sephiroth. (See diagram).