



**He, Yixin 何益鑫, *Research on the Historical Narratives of Zhouyi's Hexagram and Line Statements* 《周易》卦爻辭歷史敘事研究**

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One of the essential concepts of traditional Chinese *Yi* 易 studies' interpretation of the *Zhouyi* 周易 (*Book of Changes*) is the correspondence hypothesis between the hexagram and line images (*guà yáo xiàng* 卦爻象) and hexagram and line statements (*guà yáo cí* 卦爻辭), as articulated by the Qing 清 Confucian scholar WANG Fuzhi 王夫之. According to this view, successive generations of *Yi* academics have been forced to consider the same question: how did the sages of high Chinese antiquity, who inspected the hexagram and line images, derive appropriate statements from them for all sixty-four hexagrams and their lines? Thus in traditional *Yi* studies, numerous paradigms for interpreting the *Zhouyi* have been established. HE Yixin 何益鑫, a contemporary Chinese scholar, notes in his book under review here that over the millennia and centuries, these paradigms have frequently shifted with the ultimate goal of developing a better understanding of the hexagram and line statements. When existing paradigms failed to comprehend *Zhouyi's* hexagram and line statements adequately, new paradigms had to be established. Questions arose concerning the criteria important for interpreting the *Zhouyi*, which had been established as one of the Five Classics (*wujīng* 五經) during the Western Han 漢 period. Yet, regarding the textual interpretation, the difficulty has always been that the principles guiding the various interpretations lack consistent interpretative validity. Thus, methodological deficiencies *per se* must result in the rejection of traditional attempts to decipher *Zhouyi's* textual system. In other words, an ideal interpretative methodology must provide a systematic interpretation of the *Zhouyi* in a consistent way that has not been provided so far. HE Yixin's work delves into the potential of such a revision. He develops a three-tiered exploration strategy consisting of investigation, annotation, and argumentation: investigating

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*Zhouyi*'s historical narratives will result in assuring the research's specificity and accuracy; annotating *Zhouyi*'s hexagram and line statements will result in the research's general interpretative validity; arguing for his ideas, HE Yixin connects his research to the history of traditional *Yi* studies (623–625).

The first part of the book, entitled “Upper Part: Examining *Zhouyi*'s Historical Events,” is divided into thirteen sections. The Introduction opens with an outline of the controversies in traditional *Yi* studies about *Zhouyi*'s nature. In Appendix I, HE Yixin concentrates on the study of the faction of doubting antiquity (*yigǔ pài* 疑古派). He argues that the deconstructionist method based on historicism has left current Chinese *Yi* studies in a problem due to the absence of decisive standards (351). Additionally, he contends that *Zhouyi*'s hexagram and line statements originated as a collection of organized historical accounts. As far as the narrative form is concerned, within a hexagram, the first up to the sixth line, according to HE Yixin, describe continuous historical narratives in a chronological manner. In addition, the historical events of every single hexagram contribute to a greater narrative of the whole *Zhouyi* and echo and complement one another. As far as the narrative period is concerned, *Zhouyi*'s historical narratives begin with the initial stage of King Wen's 文 reign, continue through King Wu's 武 reign, and end with the return of state authority from the Duke of Zhou 周 to King Cheng 成. *Zhouyi* thus outlines the main events surrounding the turn of Shang 商 and Zhou, focusing mainly on King Wen's life experiences (17). As far as the process of composition is concerned, King Wen created the *Zhouyi* during his imprisonment in Youli 羑裡 and continued to supplement it until his death. After King Cheng gained sovereignty over the state, the Duke of Zhou supplied the incomplete *Zhouyi* manuscript with historical events from King Wen's latter reign and afterward (64).

Chapters 1 to 10 contain nine investigations and one chronology. The first nine chapters describe “the historical events surrounding King Wen's early reign,” “the Emperor Yi 乙 of Shang marrying his sister to King Wen,” “the historical anecdotes of Taisi 太姒,” “the conquest of Guifang 鬼方,” “King Wen's accession to the throne,” “King Wen's conquests,” “King Wen's relocation to Feng 豐,” “King Wu's conquests of the Shang,” and “the historical anecdotes of the Duke of Zhou.” Chapter 10 is devoted to King Wen's chronology, spanning the years from 1100 to 1043 BCE. HE Yixin begins all these case studies by searching for lost historical memories hidden in historical records from both excavated and transmitted documents. He then reconstructs these historical scenes using the historical narratives in *Zhouyi*'s hexagrams and lines and relates them to pre-Qin 秦 classics such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). Known historical sources have left such “historical findings” out of their scope, and HE Yixin had to dig deep into the *Zhouyi* to reconstruct them. For instance, HE Yixin deduces that when Emperor Yi married off a woman to King Wen, this was the daughter of the empress dowager, Emperor Yi's younger sister, not his daughter as has traditionally been believed. This princess quickly canceled her marriage to King Wen due to her insatiable desire for wealth (121, 123). Readers interested in the historical narratives of Western scholar S. J. Marshall's book may also find enjoyment and readability in HE Yixin's new book (S. J. Marshall. 2001. *The Mandate of Heaven: Hidden History in the I Ching* [New York: Columbia University Press]). In light of HE Yixin's discussions, this book will also give them a broad and deep grasp of the historical world of the Shang and Zhou.

The second part of the book, entitled “Lower Part: Annotating *Zhouyi*’s Historical Events,” is divided into three sections. “A Brief Discussion of the *Zhouyi*” deals with several fundamental issues relevant to understanding this ancient classic. The earliest literary references to the *Zhouyi* are in the pre-Qin classics *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*The Zuo Traditions*) and *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*). For instance, in the 22nd year of the reign of the Lord Zhuang 莊 in the Spring and Autumn period, “there was a Zhou scribe who obtained an audience with the Prince of Chen to show him the *Zhou Changes*. The Prince of Chen had him divine by milfoil” (Stephen Durrant, Wai-yeet LI, and David Schaberg, trans. *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan— Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* [University of Washington Press, 2016], 195). This quotation from the *Zuozhuan* implies a tight tie between the Zhou royal family and the *Zhouyi*, resulting in a widely accepted interpretation of the title character *zhou* as a dynasty name. The other title character *yi* is the general name of the three ancient divinatory books in the *Zhouli* (ZHENG Xuan 鄭玄 and JIA Gongyan 賈公彥. *Commentaries on the Rites of Zhou* 周禮註疏 [Beijing Daxue Chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2000], 748–749). Han and Tang 唐 Confucian scholars such as ZHENG Xuan and KONG Yingda 孔穎達 interpreted its meaning as “changes” (WANG Bi 王弼, HAN Kangbo 韓康伯, and KONG Yingda. *The Song Edition of Commentaries on the Book of Changes* 宋本周易註疏 [Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 2018], 7–9, 13). GUO Moruo 郭沫若, a modern Chinese scholar, argued that the character *yi* discovered on oracle bones and in bronze inscriptions was a simplified variant of another homophonous character *yi* 益, which represented a vessel overflowing with water (YU Xingwu 于省吾. *Forests of Exegeses of the Oracle Bone Scripts* 甲骨文字詁林 [Zhonghua Shuju, 1996], 2639, 3384). By extension, “overflowing water” could mean changes. Regarding the book title, scholars have unanimously agreed that the *Zhouyi* started as a divinatory book utilized by the Zhou court prognosticators. After their era, it has been viewed as a canonical work encompassing universal changes between heaven and earth. Noteworthy in this section is HE Yixin’s discussion of the character *yi* that he explains as “dynasty transition” (389).

“A Guide to Using *Zhouyi*’s Annotations,” the second section of the “Lower Part,” specifies ten exegetical rules. Here, HE Yixin incorporates the interpretations by traditional scholars of the classical text and his research into *Zhouyi*’s historical narratives. To this goal, he identifies passages in *Zhouyi*’s hexagram and line statements that refer to parallel historical events. Then he quotes from a variety of pre-Qin classics to substantiate the historical events and investigates *Zhouyi*’s passages in which the events described are ambiguous. Additionally, he highlights disputed punctuation, annotations, variant characters (*yìwén* 異文), and thought-provoking remarks of traditional scholars. Finally, in the conclusion of each hexagram, he summarizes the historical events of the hexagram and line statements and the gist of the hexagram’s philosophical significance (395–396). The following section is a comprehensive and extensive annotation of each of the sixty-four hexagrams from the viewpoint of a historical narrative. By and large, HE Yixin’s documentary and exegetical efforts warrant using the “Lower Part: Annotating *Zhouyi*’s Historical Events” as a commentary by interested readers. Notably, his historical perspective would result in extended interpretations of *Zhouyi*’s hexagram and line statements. For instance, the hexagram Dazhuang’s 大壯 hexagram statement contains the term *lizhen* 利貞. HE Yixin firstly annotates it as “be advantageous to divine” along with the traditional exegeses (509).

However, because he believes this term shows that Dazhuang's hexagram statement is an authentic record of King Wen's conquest divination throughout his life (22), the phrase *lizhen* is also explained as "be advantageous to conquer" (511). Readers should use caution when dealing with such interpretations.

This new book has already earned many critical comments from China's academic community. HE Yixin's interpretation of the *Zhouyi* as a series of ancient historical narratives inevitably undermines its status as a Chinese philosophical classic. Additionally, his interpretation of the hexagram and line statements departs significantly from the general explanations offered by conventional *Yi* academics. Thus, this book obviously will create a conflict with traditional *Yi* studies. One of the most urgent questions scholars will ask concerns a problem: how can readers be convinced that a certain hexagram and line statement alludes to a specific historical event from antiquity? Following HE Yixin's approach, how do readers respond to philosophical interpretations of classical *Yi* studies? Since HE Yixin maintains that *Zhouyi's* hexagram and line statements are a sequence of systematic historical narratives, how should their relationships to the hexagram and line images be understood? Concerning the final question, readers may look at the hexagram Ding 鼎 that has been excavated from a tomb that dates back to the transition period between the two Zhou dynasties. It contains the earliest occurrence of a hexagram with line images and statements (JIA Lianxiang 賈連翔. *Collected Annotations of the Unearthed Numerical Hexagrams' Texts* 出土數字卦文獻輯釋 [Zhongxi Shuju 中西書局, 2020], 202–203). The symbols for the sixty-four hexagrams are widely believed to predate their texts. Thus, how did the historical narratives hidden in *Zhouyi's* hexagram and line statements combine with the hexagram and line images to form complete texts during the Western Zhou dynasty? According to HE Yixin, the so-called "destruction" of traditional *Yi* studies has been essentially finished since the mid-20th century by the faction of doubting antiquity. As a result, he maintains a historical perspective in this book while abandoning the deconstructionist approach. His comprehensive interpretations based on definitive interpretative principles reshape the internal system of *Zhouyi's* hexagram and line statements. Furthermore, HE Yixin has just completed the first two parts of his three-tiered exploration strategy in this book, with the third portion remaining unfinished. This argumentative part will examine the origins of the multiple *Yizhuan* 易傳 (*Commentaries on the Classic of Changes*) lineages, the evolution of the *Yi* tradition, and the history of pre-Qin *Yi* studies (625).

In addition to the critiques from China's academic circles, it is necessary to further analyze HE Yixin's new book in the context of Western textual philology, especially the historical-critical method. The "Upper Part: Examining *Zhouyi's* Historical Events" pertains to the "higher criticism," which now takes the form of source, form, redaction, rhetorical, and social-scientific criticism. Source criticism, for instance, is concerned with the author's background: when, where, for whom, on what basis, and why the text was written. Form criticism examines oral traditions in written texts, which include stories, anecdotes, and miracle stories. Additionally, form critics are interested in the subtle evolution of a form through time in gradually shifting settings (Clare K. Rothschild. 2010. "Historical Criticism." In *Methods for Luke*, edited by Joel B. Green [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press], 10, 15, 21). Their academic interest correlates with how the historical narratives presented in verses are ultimately hidden in *Zhouyi's* hexagram and line statements, which is considered by HE Yixin's

investigation. Besides, the “Lower Part: Annotating *Zhouyi*’s Historical Events” pertains to the “lower criticism” in part, which is now known as textual criticism. HE Yixin’s documentary and exegetical efforts in this part resemble the process of making a critical edition. Comparing the Chinese and Western research methodologies helps to reveal significant similarities. Predictably, various relevant methods could be customized for this research field and enhance the effectiveness of eliciting meaning from a premodern classical text. This book provides a foundation for examining the evolution of the *Yi* tradition in later dynasties. In the third part of HE Yixin’s three-tiered exploration, he would need to employ more parallel Western methods to make his intriguing hypothesis plausible to his readers.

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