

Li Jingchi's Viewpoint and Evaluation on the Nature of the Ancient Text of Zhouyi

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ABSTRACT

This paper sorts out Mr. Li Jingchi's viewpoints on the nature of the ancient text of Zhouyi and makes a preliminary evaluation. Regarding the nature of the ancient text of Zhouyi, Li Jingchi believes that it is a divination book containing philosophical thoughts. This viewpoint, on the basis of affirming that the ancient text of Zhouyi is a divination book, reasonably discusses the philosophical thoughts contained in it. It appropriately reconciles the contradiction between divination and philosophical connotations in the opposition between them.

KEYWORDS

Li Jingchi; Nature of the ancient text of Zhouyi; Divination; Philosophical connotations

1 Introduction

Li Jingchi (1902 - 1975) was a famous expert in the study of Zhouyi in modern times. His courtesy name was Shengdong, and he was from Kaiping, Guangdong. In his early years, he studied at the Union Theological Seminary in Guangzhou. In the mid - 1920s, he went to the Institute of Sinology of Yenching University for further studies, studying under Mr. Chen Yuan, Xu Dishan, Gu Jiegang and others. After the Anti - Japanese War, he was employed by Lingnan University in Guangzhou, serving as associate professor, professor and other positions. In 1953, he transferred to South China Normal College as a professor in the Chinese Department, retired in 1965, and passed away in 1975. His academic works include "Exploring the Origin of Zhouyi", "General Meaning of Zhouyi", "Collation and Interpretation of Zhouyi", "General Theory of Zhouyi", "Rhyming Reading of Zhouyi", "Interpretation of Examples in Zhouyi" and so on. Li Jingchi was the only scholar among the "Doubters of Ancient History" school who devoted his whole life to the study of Zhouyi and had profound and unique insights into the formation of the ancient text of Zhouyi. This paper intends to explore Li Jingchi's viewpoints on the nature of the ancient text of Zhouyi in the context of the development of academic history, summarize his viewpoints on the nature of the compilation of the ancient text of Zhouyi, and discuss the reasonable and inappropriate aspects of his viewpoints. Comments and corrections from experts are welcome.

2 A Divination Book Containing Philosophical Thoughts

In Mr. Li Jingchi's view, Zhouyi is a divination book. After the hexagram and line statements were selected, arranged, analyzed and organized by the compiler, it became a divination book containing the compiler's thoughts. Moreover, since it preserves a large number of historical materials of the Zhou nationality, it can also be regarded as a historical book. Li Jingchi said: "A good historical book must have 'meaning' (historical significance) in its written records - what the ancients called 'Tao', which we call philosophical thought. We have a similar view on Zhouyi. The compiler selected and compiled a large number of divination statements into such a divination book. From summing up historical experience, the compiler could draw some lessons, and he had his own views on politics, society, economy, culture, etc., which served as the guiding ideology for compiling Zhouyi."^[1] That is to say, after being compiled by the compiler, the hexagram and line statements contain the compiler's philosophical thoughts. Below, we discuss the philosophical thoughts reflected by the compiler in Zhouyi.

First, it contains political thoughts. "The hexagram 'Bi' talks about the intimacy between superiors and subordinates, inside and outside, and opposes associating with bad people. The hexagram 'Guan' talks about politics, emphasizing that observation should be extensive and opposing stupidity and one - sidedness. The hexagram 'Lin' is representative in talking about political theories, and the hexagram 'Dui' talks about diplomatic relations." The compiler's political theory advocates the combination of rule by virtue and rule by people. For rule by virtue, it is necessary to adopt lenient and persuasive policies and not oppress the working people. For rule by people, it means that rulers should be personally involved in political affairs, be good at governing, and not seek pleasure and comfort. In short, rulers must have both virtue and ability to govern the country well. Li Jingchi emphasized that the compiler's political thought was aimed at the political corruption at that time.

Second, it contains thoughts on personal cultivation. Li Jingchi believed that due to the political corruption at that

time, the words about behavioral cultivation were aimed at the nobles. Regarding behavioral cultivation, some hexagrams talk about it specifically, and some mention it incidentally. "Those that talk about it partially, such as 'Lv' says that behavior should be pure, thoughts should be open - minded, not impetuous, but should be taken seriously and considered repeatedly and comprehensively; 'Ge' says not to get angry and show off power; 'Huan' says that one should not only be good oneself but also make the masses good; 'Jie' says to abide by social norms and live frugally; 'Xiao Guo' talks about the methods and attitudes of criticism."^[1] "Those that are discussed in the whole hexagram, such as 'Qian' discusses what humility is, 'Yu' talks about how to think, 'Wu Wang' warns against doing evil and having wild thoughts."^[1]

Third, it contains simple dialectical viewpoints. There are three groups of hexagrams in Zhouyi: "Tai" and "Pi", "Sun" and "Yi", "Ji Ji" and "Wei Ji". These three pairs of hexagrams, different from other hexagrams which are organized by one type of things, contain scientific thinking and simple dialectical viewpoints. Among them, "Tai" and "Pi" are opposite, and the line statement "There is no flat land that does not become a slope, no departure that does not return" is a theory of opposite transformation, meaning that "in nature, a flat land will become a slope; when traveling, going will lead to returning"^[1]. "Sun" and "Yi" are opposite. "The hexagram 'Sun' says that if two of three people traveling together have a conflict, no matter which side the third person helps, he will always neglect one side; a person walking always wants to find a companion; the whole hexagram 'Yi' talks about the rise and fall of the Zhou royal family."^[1] At the same time, "Sun" also talks about the dialectical theory of handling specific situations specifically. "Ji Ji" and "Wei Ji", "which describe the coalition forces of Yin and Zhou attacking Guifang. At that time, Yin was strong and Zhou was weak, and it also mentions that Zhou destroyed Yin, which shows that Yin changed from strong to perished, and Zhou changed from weak to strong."^[1] Li Jingchi said: "From the hexagram and line statements, we can see that the compiler of Yi had a certain understanding of material production, social life, scientific knowledge, etc. Its characteristic is that it contains simple dialectical viewpoints."^[1] Fourth, it contains scientific knowledge. "The earliest developed sciences in our country were astronomy and medicine. The compiler of Yi would naturally hear about astronomical and medical knowledge from other officials, so he incorporated them into Yi; but he did not talk about science, but adopted its scientific spirit and analyzed things."^[8] Li Jingchi said: "The hexagram 'Zhen' talks about thunder and lightning, which is astronomical knowledge; the hexagram 'Gen' talks about health, which is medical knowledge. These two hexagrams are connected, which was intentionally arranged by the compiler." In addition to the above four points, Zhouyi also contains thoughts such as agricultural production experience, military knowledge, criticism of political villains, analysis of diplomatic issues, and sympathy for women. Li Jingchi emphasized that the hexagram and line statements did contain the compiler's philosophical thoughts, and we should analyze its thoughts from the content of the hexagram and line statements, not from the arrangement order of the hexagrams or the positions of the six lines in the hexagrams.

3 Evaluation

Regarding the nature of Zhouyi, scholars of all dynasties have debated. The focus of the debate is whether Zhouyi is a divination work or a philosophical work. In the handed - down documents, the earliest quotations and uses of Zhouyi are in Zuo Zhuan and Guo Yu. There are about 19 quotations from Zhouyi in Zuo Zhuan, 12 of which are about divination. There are 3 quotations from Zhouyi in Guo Yu, 2 of which are about divination. This shows that Zuo Zhuan and Guo Yu basically used Zhouyi from the perspective of divination, and people in the Spring and Autumn Period mostly regarded Zhouyi as a book for divination. In the Warring States Period, except for the Legalists, all other schools regarded Zhouyi as a philosophical work. In fact, in the pre - Qin period, those who interpreted Zhouyi were already divided into two schools: one school thought that Zhouyi was a pure divination book, and the other school thought that Zhouyi was not only a divination book but also contained ideological connotations. During the period of the unified autocratic monarchy in the Western Han Dynasty, Zhouyi was listed as the first of the Five Classics. As the national ideology, Confucian classics had authority, sacredness and non - criticizability. In the era of Confucian classics, Zhouyi had a glorious history of "Three Sages and Three Ages", and few scholars refuted it. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Wang Bi and Han Kangbo interpreted Zhouyi with Laozi and Zhuangzi's metaphysics, and the interpretation of Zhouyi with philosophical connotations emerged. Until the rise of Neo - Confucianism in the Song Dynasty, it was also a period of highly developed Neo - Confucianism in the study of Zhouyi. The basic characteristic of the study of Zhouyi in the Song Dynasty was to explore the philosophy contained in Zhouyi, to clarify the connotations of Zhouyi, and to highly philosophize the principles of Zhouyi^[1]. Therefore, during the period of autocratic monarchy, scholars generally regarded Zhouyi as a book containing philosophical connotations.

In addition, Zhu Xi of the Song Dynasty changed the traditional view. On the nature of Zhouyi, he said: "Zhouyi was originally a divination book, but later people thought it was only for divination. When Wang Bi interpreted it with Laozi and Zhuangzi's thoughts, later people only thought it was about principles and not divination."^[1] Zhu Xi believed that Zhouyi was essentially a divination book, and later people mostly interpreted Zhouyi with connotations, so they thought

that Zhouyi only contained connotations. Zhu Xi boldly jumped out of the traditional barriers, re-examined Zhouyi with a perspective contrary to tradition, to get to the bottom of things and restore the original appearance of Zhouyi. The most representative view put forward by Zhu Xi is that "Zhouyi was written for divination". It was obviously not Zhu Xi who first proposed that Zhouyi was written for divination. As early as in "Hanshu · Yiwenzhi", it was recorded that Zhouyi was a divination book, so it was not burned during the Qin Dynasty's book burning and thus survived. But later interpreters of Zhouyi mostly focused on image - numberology and connotations. "The construction of image - numberology and the deduction of connotations have far exceeded the original meaning of Zhouyi. While constantly bringing forth new ideas, they have also obscured the original appearance of Zhouyi."^[2]

When discussing Zhouyi, scholars of the "Doubters of Ancient History" school extended Zhu Xi's view, emphasizing the need to restore the true face of Zhouyi as a divination book. As Gu Jiegang said in the "Preface to Doubting Ancient History": "For Zhouyi, we destroy its status as a sacred book of Fuxi and Shennong and establish its status as a divination book; for Shi Jing, we destroy its status as a sacred book of King Wen and the Duke of Zhou and establish its status as a collection of songs. But when we say 'establish' here, readers should not misunderstand it as our own creation. Zhouyi was originally for divination, and Shi Jing was originally for songs. We just wash away their original features."^[3] Li Jingchi said: "The view that Zhouyi is a divination book is not our original idea. Zhu Xi said it a long time ago... Zhu Xi's view that Zhouyi is a divination book is correct, which broke the age - old illusion."^[4] All scholars of the "Doubters of Ancient History" school advocated restoring the original appearance of Zhouyi as a divination book on the nature of Zhouyi. In the discussion on Zhouyi in the 1960s, the nature of Zhouyi was a hot topic in that period. Scholars generally had three views: First, Zhouyi is a divination book containing certain philosophical thoughts. Scholars such as Fang Li, Feng Youlan, Shen Diemin, Liu Zehua held this view. Most of the scholars holding this view believed that Zhouyi is essentially a divination book, but the hexagram and line statements contain simple philosophical thoughts, which are simple and not systematic. Second, Zhouyi is not only a divination book but also a philosophical work. The main representatives holding this view are Li Jingchun and Liu Huisun. Mr. Li Jingchun believed: "The era when Zhouyi was written already had the economic and cultural conditions for the emergence of philosophy, and in fact, the philosophy of Zhouyi appeared."^[5] Mr. Li Jingchun agreed that Zhouyi was once used for divination, but more importantly, we should admit that the text of Zhouyi contains many meanings, including philosophical ones. Liu Huisun believed that the order of the sixty - four hexagrams was completely arranged according to the compilers' understanding of the laws of natural changes and the relationships between people in society, that is, the summary of their understanding of the objective world. Mr. Liu Huisun also said: "Zhouyi has long been no longer a book dedicated to divination; divination is only a minor part of Zhouyi. When we study Zhouyi today, we must first remove this layer of camouflage to see the essence of Zhouyi."^[6] In essence, Mr. Li Jingchun and Liu Huisun tended to think that Zhouyi is a philosophical work. Third, Zhouyi is a historical book. The representative scholar holding this view is Ping Xin. Ping Xin believed: "Zhouyi is basically a special historical book written in a cryptic style and in the form of divination. It reflects the ethnic (in a broad sense) contradictions in the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, and also reflects the complex historical events of various states in the Zhou Dynasty centered on the Jin State."^[7] Ping Xin listed internal evidence that Zhouyi used a cryptic style in its text: first, the structure of the hexagram and line statements is strange, often connecting two or three words that seem irrelevant into a statement, which cannot be measured by ordinary literary principles. Second, some hexagram and line statements are written in a humorous way, making people confused when reading, which obviously resulted from the compiler's intention to allude to historical events and deliberately create homophonic puns. Zhouyi not only implied meanings with a cryptic style but also disguised itself in the form of divination. Ping Xin analyzed: "The hexagram and line statements of Zhouyi are neither a book in the Confucian tradition nor a pure divination book; in essence, it is a book about the historical system, a private work belonging to the historical system."

From the above, we can see that in academic circles, there has always been an opposition between divination and connotations in views on the nature of Zhouyi from ancient times to the present. The unearthed silk books from Mawangdui showed people Confucius' understanding of Zhouyi. The chapter "Yao" says: The master loved Zhouyi when he was old. When he was at home, it was on his mat; when he traveled, it was in his bag. Zigong said: 'Master, you taught your disciples in the past: those who lack virtue tend to rely on gods and spirits; those who are short of wisdom and strategy rely heavily on divination. I thought this was correct. Judging from this, I think it is a trivial matter. Why do you love it so much when you are old?'

Confucius loved Zhouyi when he was old and couldn't put it down. Zigong thought this was contrary to the teacher's usual teaching that "those who lack virtue tend to rely on gods and spirits; those who are short of wisdom and strategy rely heavily on divination". Confucius then said that he did not contradict his previous words. He thought that Zhouyi contained "the legacy of the ancients", and for Yi, "I do not value its use, but I enjoy its words."^[7] Zigong then asked Confucius whether he believed in divination:

Zigong said: "Master, do you also believe in its divination?" The master said: "I have divined a hundred times, and seventy were accurate. Only in the divination of Liangshan in the Zhou Dynasty, I also had to follow the majority."

The master said: "I put divination and prayer after other things in Zhouyi; I observe its virtue and righteousness. Those who understand the mysterious assistance can reach the numbers; those who understand the numbers can reach virtue; those who are benevolent can practice righteousness. Those who understand the mysterious assistance but not the numbers are witches. Those who understand the numbers but not virtue are historians. The divination of historians and witches is not enough to rely on. In later generations, those who doubt me may do so because of Zhouyi? I seek its virtue, and I share the same path with historians and witches but have different destinations. A gentleman seeks happiness through virtue, so he rarely offers sacrifices; he seeks good luck through benevolence and righteousness, so he rarely practices divination. Should prayer, witchcraft and divination be put after other things?"

From the above quotations, it can be seen that Confucius' approach to Zhouyi was different from that of witches and historians. He put divination in a secondary position and focused on observing its moral and righteous thoughts. "Divining a hundred times and seventy being accurate" shows that Confucius admitted that Zhouyi had a divination function and had actually practiced it. "Yizhuan" is generally recognized as a classic Confucian interpretation of Zhouyi. "Xici" says: "Zhouyi has four ways of sages: those who speak value its words; those who act value its changes; those who make utensils value its images; those who divine value its divination." The ancient text of Zhouyi contains four aspects of the sages' ways, one of which is to value divination for divination purposes. Although "Yizhuan" interprets Zhouyi from the perspective of connotations, it does not deny the divination function of Zhouyi. Therefore, Confucius and the author of "Yizhuan" still admitted that Zhouyi is a divination book. The unearthed documents have solved many controversial issues in academic circles. Therefore, we can determine that Zhouyi was originally used for divination, which is consistent with Li Jingchi's view. In the later circulation, scholars represented by Confucius no longer limited themselves to the single function of divination, but saw the philosophical thoughts contained in the hexagram and line statements, so they "observed its virtue and righteousness". Li Jingchi believed that Zhouyi was originally a divination book, and the compiler added simple philosophical thoughts in the process of compilation, so Zhouyi is a divination book containing philosophical thoughts. Li Jingchi's judgment on the nature of Zhouyi is accurate, which appropriately integrates divination and philosophy in their opposition.

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