

## SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEAS IN I-CHING: HISTORICAL CONTEXT, POWER AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

### СУСПІЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНІ ІДЕЇ У РОБОТІ «І-ЦЗІН»: ІСТОРИЧНИЙ КОНТЕКСТ, ВЛАДА ТА ІНТЕЛЕКТУАЛЬНА ТРАДИЦІЯ

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"I Ching" ("Book of Changes", "Zhouyi") is an ancient Chinese book, which reveals the philosophical and magical interpretation of the structure of the world, as well as the foundations of change in society and the state. In the intellectual tradition, "I Ching" took a prominent place among the major Confucian books ("Five Classics" / "Wujing"). It is studied that "I Ching" has become an integral part of cultural and political processes in China and the corresponding changes in society and public administration.

The scientific discourse that has developed and continues to develop around "I Ching" is considered, in particular, the researches made by representatives of different cultures and Chinese scholars are analyzed. It was found that Chinese scholars, starting from the XX century, often aimed to convey certain ideas and interpretations of "I Ching" to non-Chinese audiences, whose interest began to grow rapidly at this time. The main approaches in intellectual thought to find out the answer to the question about the probable author or authors of "I Ching" are studied. Part of the commentary discourse on "I Ching", which developed within the Confucian tradition, as well as in the aspect of translating the book into European languages, is analyzed.

The role of "I Ching" as an important component in the education system, aimed at forming an educated political elite and skilled Chinese government officials from its inception to the present day, is analyzed. It was found that the popularity of "I Ching" and interest in it among cultural and political elites was due to the fact that the book contained certain tools for forecasting the development of social processes, as well as explaining how to act in different circumstances in the best way. It is noted that with the change of historical epochs and ruling dynasties in China there was also a change in the tools of forecasting the socio-political environment, which was accompanied by transformations in the intellectual tradition and was reflected in the "I Ching".

It is studied that the ideas in "I Ching" and their interpretations, which over time became an integral part of the book, were an effective tool for legitimizing existing practices of management of socio-political processes in ancient China, and their predictive nature and focus on understanding the future served the purpose of constituting the directions of transformation and development of state institutions.

**Key words:** I Ching, political forecasting, legitimation, trigrams and hexagrams, political elite, Confucianism.

«І-цзін» («Книга змін», «Чжоу І») стародавня китайська книга, у якій розкривається філософсько-магічне тлумачення будови світу, а також підвалини змін у суспільстві та державі. В інтелектуальній традиції «І-цзін» зайняла поважне місце з-поміж головних конфуціанських книг («Конфуціанське П'ятикнижжя» / «У Цзін»). Досліджено, що «І-цзін» стала невід'ємною складовою культурних і політичних процесів у Китаї і відповідних змін у суспільстві та державному управлінні.

Розглянуто науковий дискурс, що склався та продовжує розвиватись навколо «І-цзін», зокрема, проаналізовано праці, що були створені представниками різних культур та власне китайськими дослідниками. З'ясовано, що останні, починаючи з ХХ ст., нерідко мали за мету донести певні ідеї та інтерпретації «І-цзін» для не китайської аудиторії, зацікавленість якої почала стрімко зростати у цей час. Досліджено основні підходи в інтелектуальній думці щодо з'ясування відповіді на питання про ймовірного автора чи авторів «І-цзін». Проаналізовано частину коментаторського дискурсу стосовно «І-цзін», що склався у межах конфуціанської традиції, а також в аспекті перекладу книги на європейські мови.

Проаналізовано роль «І-цзін» як важливої складової у системі освіти, що мала на меті формувати освічену політичну еліту та кваліфікованих державних чиновників Китаю, починаючи з часів появи роботи і до сучасного періоду. З'ясовано, що популярність «І-цзін» та інтерес до неї з середовища культурно-політичних еліт був зумовлений тим, що книга містила певні засоби для побудови прогнозів стосовно розвитку суспільних процесів, а також пояснення як діяти за різних обставин в оптимальний спосіб. Відзначено, що зі зміною історичних епох та правлячих династій у Китаї відбувалась також зміна інструментів прогнозування соціально-політичного середовища, що супроводжувалось трансформаціями в інтелектуальній традиції та відображено в «І-цзін».

Досліджено, що ідеї в «І-цзін» та відповідні їх інтерпретації, які з часом ставали невід'ємною частиною самої книги, були ефективним інструментом легітимації існуючих практик управління соціально-політичними процесами у Стародавньому Китаї, а їх прогнозний характер та орієнтація на розуміння майбутнього слугували завданням щодо конститування напрямів трансформації та розвитку державних інституцій.

**Ключові слова:** «І-цзін», політичне прогнозування, легітимація, триграми та гексаграми, політична еліта, конфуціанство.

**Introduction and main issues.** Since its inception, “I Ching” has had a significant impact on the development of socio-political processes in China and neighboring countries, especially those belonging to the Confucian cultural region, namely Korea and Japan, as well as other Asian countries. National discourse on the interpretation of “I Ching” has developed in many of these states. The book is very popular in the modern world in different cultural regions, as evidenced by the large number of its translations with relevant comments and explanations of researchers, ranging from those adapted to mass culture and ending with purely scientific researches focused on academic space.

The title of the book “I Ching” consists of two hieroglyphs – “yi” and “jing” There are several basic approaches to the possible translation of hieroglyphs and the title of the book. Within the first approach, “yi” translates as “changes”, and “jing” as “basis”, “classic book” or “canon”. Hence the names “Book of Changes”, “Canon of Change” or “Classic Book of Changes”. Due to the fact that throughout history there has been a use of another title of the book – “Zhou Yi”, in which the hieroglyph “Zhou” can mean “circle” or the name of the Zhou dynasty (according to various sources it was during: 1122-221 BC, 1027-221 BC, 1046-256 BC), thus, the title of the book can be translated as “Changes in a circle” or “Zhou Changes”. Scientific sources also discuss the date of writing the book, at the same time, according to the approach that different parts of the text could have appeared in different periods – they indicate the XII–XI centuries. B.C. and V–II centuries. B.C. [1].

“I Ching” tells about the changes that occur continuously in the life of man, society and the state. Interestingly, along with the changes discussed in the book, the content of “I Ching” has changed throughout Chinese history, from its inception to the present. In this regard, the understanding and interpretation of the book itself was gradually transformed by the cultural and political elites of China, as well as the use of the ideas set out in it in socio-political management.

**Analysis of recent publications on the topic.** An important basis for the study of political ideas in the work “I Ching” are the works of J. Adler and X. Zhu, K. Anthony, H. Wilhelm, V. Mair, Yu. Shuckij in which the emphasis is placed on the political, historical and cultural foundations of the emergence of the “I Ching”, as well as changes in the text itself throughout history. The analysis of the “I Ching” from the point of view of its inclusion in the philosophical discourse was carried out in the publications of K. Hamaliia, S. Kapranov and B. Olshyn. Yi Suhn-Gyohng and A. Luk’yanov made efforts to study the integration of the “I Ching” into the Confucian intellectual tradition. The works of researchers Li Yang, W. Sherrill and Wen Kuan

Chu contain references to the practical aspects of the application of knowledge from the I Ching in the state policy of ancient China. The history of translations of the “I Ching” in Europe is covered in the article by Yu. Zynoviiva.

The analysis of the source base shows that the “I Ching” as a book with political content requires further research. The analysis of socio-political ideas in the “I Ching” through an integrative approach, taking into account new research on history, transformation of institutions of power and focusing on changes in the intellectual thought of ancient China remains relevant.

**Purpose and objectives of the article.** This scientific research aims to reveal the socio-political ideas in the “I Ching” as an influential text in the Confucian intellectual tradition. According to the purpose, the following tasks can be distinguished: 1) to analyze the historical context and the basis for the emergence of ideas that eventually became formalized in the I Ching; 2) to consider the existing versions of the authorship of the text; 3) to clarify the role of the “I Ching” as a tool for legitimizing state power; 4) to investigate the links between the political and religious spheres of life of ancient Chinese society in the context of the formation of methods of predicting the future; 5) to determine the peculiarities of the influence of the “I Ching” on the formation of the dominant discourse in the intellectual thought of ancient China.

In order to study the formulated theme of the research, the following methods were used: historical – to analyze the historical context and the basis of the book “I Ching”; institutional – to study the role of “I Ching” in the formation of institutions of statehood of ancient China and the corresponding transformations of these institutions; structural and functional – to highlight the functions of “I Ching” as a political text in the processes of legitimation of imperial power and the formation of the bureaucracy; comparative – to determine the common and specific characteristics in the practice of socio-political forecasts in ancient China, as reflected in the “I Ching”; systematic approach – to study the impact of “I Ching” on the processes of interaction between the political and educational systems of ancient China.

**Results.** Researchers studying “I Ching” will have to work diligently and painstakingly to identify the most relevant studies on the subject. The vast majority of “I Ching” studies available to Western culture, as well as translations of these works, began to appear in the twentieth century. Many scholars point out that “I Ching” is one of the most difficult books to work with. At the same time, a thorough study of “I Ching” requires knowledge of Chinese, because even for the Chinese people, studying a book can be a difficult task, because the original sources are written in ancient Chinese [2, p. xii]. It should be noted

that in the modern period the processes of cooperation between Chinese scholars and their foreign colleagues have begun, which has already resulted in a number of collective studies of “I Ching”, as well as relevant translations of this book from Chinese to other languages. In the Ukrainian-speaking space there are also translations of “I Ching” and some studies of this work made by Ukrainian researchers [3–5].

The book “I Ching” has stood the test of time and has survived to the present day. The book “An Anthology of I Ching” and the article by B. Olshin mention when Emperor Qin in order to continue the policy of unification of China in 213 BC issued an order to burn all books that contradicted official state doctrine, including the works of Confucius and his commentaries on “I Ching”, the book “I Ching” was not affected [2, p. 1; 6, p. 28]. The authors of the “An Anthology of I Ching” argue that the book’s survival has become possible because it contains great intrinsic value and its truth is self-evident, and everyone just keeps accepting things that they intuitively know are right.

Over time, “I Ching” became such a popular and influential book, an organic part of culture, that in almost every modern Chinese and Japanese community appeared “scholarly man” to whom people began to turn on the interpretation of the text [7, p. 6]. In this regard, there is also a discussion about the likely influence of the interests of political elites on changes in the text of the book throughout Chinese history.

The question of the probable author or authors of the book remains relevant to this day, as does the discussion of the date the work was created. In scientific discourse, there are many variants of “I Ching” that differ from each other, which may indicate changes and additions to the text of the book made by different authors over time. Scholars from different countries are thoroughly studying the existing versions of the book “I Ching”, based on the identification of their structural components, probable authors and the relevant periods of time in history, when this or that addition was made to the text. One can find the opinion expressed by *Pi Si-zhuy* in the XIX century that the text of “I Ching” was written by *Confucius*. At the same time, in the book “The Analects” (Lun Yu) Confucius says that he did not study “I Ching” and heard about this book in old age. In contrast, “I Ching” states that Confucius knew the text well. Shuckij Yu. K. shares the opinion of other researchers who believe that the authorship of “I Ching” does not belong to Confucius [8, p. 69]. In general, the search for answers to the question of authorship of “I Ching” brings us to a wide range of interrelated topics on various aspects of work, namely: 1) what can be considered historical truth or later constructed myths; 2) how the dominant discourse was formed in the intellectual tradition of Ancient China; 3) what was the state influence on

the formation and functioning of the institutional basis for the development of this intellectual tradition; etc.

Initially, the set of tools set out in “I Ching” was seen as a way of divination, and later was organically incorporated into existing practices of education and management of socio-political processes of Ancient China, which were constantly changing. The explanation and interpretation of the nature of change in the world, society and state is carried out in “I Ching” with the help of *trigrams* and *hexagrams*, which are graphic symbols consisting of lines of two types – whole and interrupted. In turn, these lines are symbols of the concepts of “*yin*” and “*yang*”, which will be discussed below. The trigram consists of three lines, which can be interrupted in the middle, on the basis of which eight possible combinations are formed. A hexagram consists of two trigrams (six lines), resulting in sixty-four different combinations.

Interpretation of the multifaceted aspects of the world order, including social processes, in “I Ching” is carried out using the terms “*yin*” and “*yang*”, which denote the general duality of the world structure and are reflected in the existence of dark and light, female and male, passive and active, etc. Accordingly, in the world there is an interaction, interpenetration and transformation between “*yin*” and “*yang*”, which are constantly changing each other, because each of these basic principles simultaneously contains the inner potential for the deployment of the other. The interaction between “*yin*” and “*yang*” reveals the energy that causes the general movement in the world: “Their interaction was seen to drive the rotation of seasons: The yang energy, manifested in the light of the sun, increases each month after the winter solstice to the summer solstice; at this point, in which Yang reaches its limit, and can no longer advance, the Yin force begins to advance, continuing to its maximum point at the winter solstice” [7, p. 3].

The study of the book of “I Ching” involves the finding out of various meaningful components in its structure, which, according to scientists, were probably created at different times. Within this approach, the text in “I Ching” is multi-layered and reflects the influences of different time periods in the socio-political life of Ancient China. Accordingly, “I Ching” reflects the dynamics of these changes also in terms of ways to predict the future: initially there was a system of divination practices with the help of turtle shells, and later the system of making predictions with the help of yarrow stalks gained more influence. These two key approaches were actually formalized in the form of *hexagrams* in “I Ching”, which gave impetus to the design of the book and the emergence of a broad ideological discourse with comments and interpretations of the text. In the modern form in “I Ching” it is conditionally possible to allocate two parts: the first is actually 64 *hexagrams*, which come

from the practice of foretelling the future; the second is the interpretations and commentaries on hexagrams.

For a long time, “I Ching” was known only within the Confucian cultural region and was available mainly to cultural and political elites, that is, to a fairly small circle of people who had access to knowledge and education. It is known that translations of “I Ching” into Latin began to appear due to the activities of Jesuit missionaries in China in the XVIII century. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the translation of 1736 made by Regis and the book of Haupt in 1753 [8, p. 28]. A detailed review of translations of “I Ching” into European languages can be found in Yu. K. Shuckij’s study “Chinese classic “Book of Changes”, as well as in the article by Yu. Zynoviiva “Translations of the “Book of Changes” in Europe (XVIII–XXI centuries): a review of the dynamics” [4]. It should be noted that the discourse on translations of “I Ching” into different languages of the world has already been formed and continues to develop in the scientific publications. It should be borne in mind that publications in foreign languages are carried out using different versions of the original source in Chinese and reflects the specifics of work in the field of scientific translation of philosophical texts.

At first glance, to analyze “I Ching” in terms of its socio-political ideas about the practice of public administration, the optimal form of government or political regime, etc., is quite difficult, because, unlike European philosophical and political thought, in “I Ching” we do not find such transparently formulated recommendations, explanations, justifications or interpretations in the field of politics. At the same time, we understand that hexagrams, which successively change each other, immerse the reader (researcher) in various situations that appear to be interconnected and interdependent, as well as generally cover the theme of multifaceted processes in society. Relevant situations are described using language with an extremely high degree of abstraction and metaphor, which makes this description a very effective tool for use in politics and public administration. It was mentioned above that the reader of “I Ching” in Ancient China was not an ordinary person, but at least had access to knowledge, hence the high probability of belonging to religious and political elites. The text “I Ching” is evidence that to understand its ideas and meanings, prior thorough training and a general staying in the intellectual environment was necessary, which in ancient states was traditionally close to cultural and political elites. Therefore, “I Ching” since its inception has become an integral part of the educational process of officials and political elite of Ancient China (used at the Imperial Academy), and later this practice became widespread in the Confucian region, for instance, in Japan [9, p. 18; 10, p. 8].

In terms of forecasting, the importance of “I Ching” for use in current political processes as systematic

advice and guidance has been significant. The text of this book was used by diviners who developed forecasts for the future for decision-making in the system of public administration of Ancient China. Thus, Li Yang gives the following example, mentioning King Wu of Zhou (11th century B.C.), when an important decision had to be made, a five-vote system was used: “one vote was from the emperor, one from the administrative representative, one from the civilian representative and the remaining two were from the diviners. If the emperor and the civilian voted against it, the motion could still be passed and it would still be considered to turn out good results” [11, p. in]. It should be noted that the construction of a forecast for the future in ancient China was considered an important source of knowledge, as it has always been tested in practice. The procedure included the following: the prediction was written down on a piece of silk cloth so that the soothsayer could compare in a year his predictions with what would actually happen in reality [11, p. in]. The “An Anthology of I Ching” also mentions that the “I Ching” was used to make predictions for rulers [2, p. 1]. Thus, “I Ching” has traditionally had a purely practical significance as a set of techniques for divination and prediction of the future, which was very relevant in public life, political decision-making, management of socio-political processes and public relations in Ancient China.

Within the framework of political and anthropological research, the connections between the religious and political spheres of life in ancient states and primitive societies are traditionally studied. In this context, religious figures often made predictions about the development of the political sphere and its legitimation in general through cultural and religious traditions. The above-mentioned practices of divination of the future using shells of turtles and yarrow stalks, which originated before the writing of the text “I Ching” and at the same time served as a basis for its formation, could probably be interpreted as somewhat outdated compared to the projected potential of “I Ching” since its inception. At the same time, predicting the future by using two different techniques, according to Shuckij Yu. K., was due to the fact that the *shancy* used an animalistic oracle, and *chzhouscy* – plant oracle [8, p. 71]. Wilhelm G. cites the example of the above-mentioned King Wu of Zhou, who used both the shells of turtles and yarrow stalks before striking a final blow to the Shang dynasty: “The tortoise prophecy was unfavorable, while that of the yarrow stalks was favorable. He is said to have obeyed the yarrow stalks, with the result that we know. This tradition mirrors the change from one era to another: the tortoise oracle was still supporting the Shang world to which it owed its great spread, while the yarrow stalks were already open to the new era ... . Nevertheless, for along time

in the early Chou period yarrow stalks and tortoise were both consulted equally, and the tortoise oracle did not begin to disappear until later" [12, p. 122].

The transformation of the dominant discourse in the practices of predicting the future development of society and exerting influences on this development can also be studied in the context of changes in the political elites of Ancient China. Thus, new political elites may be interested in creating new texts to legitimize the political sphere and public policy, as well as for use in the public education system. In fact, these processes are associated with the design of "I Ching" as a book and its distribution in the country. Olshin B. notes that when the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BC) was replaced by the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC), the latter significantly improved the trigrams and presented them together with the relevant interpretations in the form "Chou I" ("The Changes of Chou") [6, p. 28]. To some extent, "I Ching" legitimized the existing system of social relations of Ancient China with the appropriate hierarchy and social groups. The book "The Original Meaning of the Yijing..." states that the upper and lower *trigrams* roughly reflect the social hierarchy, such as the relationship between ruler and subordinate [10, p. 3]. Since the development of society has determined changes in the social hierarchy, it seems reasonable thesis that the content of "I Ching" has changed over time. Also, additions and changes in the text could be determined by the context of political struggle and competition between representatives of various philosophical schools of Confucianism. At the same time, these changes are likely to be quite gradual, as the influence of the social group of people who were professionally engaged in creating predictions for the socio-political sphere remained high. It is worth mentioning that when the dominant tool changed (the transition from turtle shells – to yarrow stalks) in forecasting, the political influence of this group did not diminish.

The commentary discourse on "I Ching" is very broad, much of which is the Confucian school's own commentary. Cosmological ideas of early Confucian texts originate from "I Ching". They say that the sages of the past, based on natural patterns, began to create human culture by writing guidelines and practical advices for future generations in the form of text [13, p. 82]. Within the Confucian tradition "I Ching" was considered the "head of all classics" and the "source of great philosophy" [11, p. in]. The authors of the book "The Original Meaning of the Yijing ..." claim that only in the XX century began to appear studies in which scholars got under way to discuss the true context of the emergence of "I Ching", because since the *Han dynasty* this context was overshadowed by adding The "Ten Wings", which created a moralized "Confucian" view of "I Ching" that eventually influenced future gene-

rations of scholars who interpreted the text [10, p. 8]. In general, Confucian principles of organization of public relations are correlated with the guidelines of "I Ching" in many aspects: the definition of social roles, compassion for people, responsibility [14, p. 38]. Considerable attention in numerous comments to "I Ching" is also paid to the concept of "noble man" and the analysis of the rules of his actions in different situations. In the future, the rise of Confucianism was associated with the actual inclusion of the discourse of "I Ching" in their own, its development and rethinking: "... Confucianism identifies itself with the system of Change in essence, absolutely, ontologically, integrates into Change and grows out of it. It is here that Confucianism returns to the spiritual core of Taoist culture and becomes its organism. In the system of change, Confucianism acquires unchanging characteristics and remains the philosophy of spiritual creativity and life of the Chinese ethnic group and the space of the Celestial Empire for as long as the traditions of the Tao culture are preserved in the Celestial Empire" [15, p. 271].

Among the commentary literature on "I Ching" we can single out the studies of Japanese researchers: Togai I., Naito T. and Honda N. [8, p. 72]. Togai I. notes that it is difficult to determine the author's name and the era when "I Ching" was created [8, p. 72]. At the same time, "I Ching" is an extremely important book, as it explains the basics of the world order and provides practical recommendations for self-improvement and building harmonious relationships with the world: "I Ching" originally had two aspects – philosophical and mystical. Noble people in the period of inactivity interpreted it philosophically to critically examine their behavior, and in periods of activity foretold at it to resolve issues that raised doubts" [8, p. 72]. Ito Togai's views on commentary literature in general are interesting: "Ten Wings" refers to different dates and, based on a school, convey the judgments of a particular author. ... This ambiguity [mostly] is not contained in the "I Ching" itself, but each of the authors is based on what he knows. ... When the books of the former three dynasties were burned under Qin, only the "I Ching", as a mantic text, was not burned. ... But in ancient times the main text and comments existed independently of each other and consisted of 12 parts. ... For the first time, the Han commentator Fei placed the text of judgments and images after the corresponding hexagrams. ... Henceforth, the order of the text began to differ among different commentators. But during the Wei and Jin dynasties mysticism was revered, and therefore the traditions of the teachings of Lao Tzu and Zhuang Tzu were used to interpret the books of sages" [8, p. 73].

Another Japanese researcher who studied "I Ching" was Naito T. He noticed that the text in "I Ching" is multilayered, and also argued that from the beginning

there were no hexagrams, but only symbols that included fewer lines, which could be different for different characters: “And this version of the text known now was made shortly before the Qin dynasty, that is to say before 221 BC” [8, p. 75].

In the context of the study of the geographical distribution of the book “I Ching” in the territory of Ancient China, N. Honda pointed out that it was first better known in remote regions of the country [8, p. 75]. Thus, the gradual increase in the popularity of “I Ching” throughout China, and especially in the regions where the centers of state power and political decision-making were concentrated, may be evidence that the book’s ideas began to be seen as a tool for centralizing the state by cultural and political elites, and were supported by them. It should be noted that such a policy could be quite effective, as certain ideological guidelines were not imposed in peripheral regions, but were supported by modifying and formalizing existing opinions and beliefs by the central government. Honda N. also argues about the practices of divination of the future using the shells of turtles and yarrow stalks, noting that yarrow stalks, i.e. the plant oracle won over the animalistic oracle in “I Ching” due to much more simplicity and accessibility [8, p. 75].

**Conclusions.** Analysis of socio-political ideas in the book “I Ching” made it possible to explore their impact on the formation of institutions of statehood in Ancient China and in general – on the Confucian

cultural region. The significance of “I Ching” for the political sphere of Ancient China has traditionally been maintained throughout history by the book’s unchanging potential for socio-political predictions, the techniques of which have changed. The integration of “I Ching” into the cultural sphere has been made possible by a consistent policy of state support in the context of cooperation with the education system and the existence of qualifying examinations based on “I Ching” knowledge, required to hold positions by officials of Ancient China. In this way, the socio-political ideas of “I Ching” influenced the legitimacy of the institutions of state power and received reciprocal support from them. The specifics of the study “I Ching” is that the text of the book has changed throughout history due to changes in political elites, state influences and the competition of intellectual schools (schools of thought) of Ancient China. At the same time, the influence of *I Ching’s* ideas on the institutions of state power, political processes and the cultural sphere of Ancient China gradually but steadily increased, which raised the popularity of the book within the country and became the basis for the formation of significant interest in the world. A large number of translations, interpretations and commentaries of “I Ching”, published especially in the XX century in different languages, and continue to appear in the 21st century, is evidence that the history of “I Ching” is just beginning and attracts the attention of researchers.

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