

Bio

Geoffrey Redmond is an independent scholar in New York with advanced degrees in science and literature interested in esotericism in the scientific era. Recent publications include *Teaching the I Ching* with Hon Tze-ki Oxford UP 2014 and *The I Ching: A Critical Translation of the Ancient Text*. Bloomsbury Academic 2017.

Title

The I Ching and Esotericism: East and West

Abstract

The counter-culture that arose in the West in the 1960ies and 70ies profoundly altered the reception of divination and other been previously disdained esoteric beliefs and practices. A wide variety of philosophical and esoteric texts became newly available in translation. Particularly popular and influential has been the *I Ching* (*Yijing* 易經, *Zhouyi* 周易) in the attractive and relatively lucid translation of Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes. Unnoticed by most readers, however, was the use of psychological and Christian language that concealed much of the otherness of the Chinese original. In translation it was easy to use for divination; many reported it to be helpful in personal decision-making.

Particularly influential was the adulatory “Foreword” of Carl F. Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist who incorporated mystical ideas into his psychotherapeutic system. Jung conceived *I Ching* as a way to access the unconscious mind, thus bringing it into Western concepts of consciousness and endorsing it as a healing method applicable within psychotherapy.

The esteem of Chinese for this 3,000 year old classic gave it legitimacy as more than a hippie affectation, justifying it as a source of wisdom outside Western traditions. Although some sinologists dismissed the work as unintelligible, it was its new, youthful admirers who secured its place as a classic of world literature.

The *Changes* was influential in twentieth century English literature, for example in the works of Aleister Crowley, the Ezra Pound, Philip K. Dick, Alan Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, among others. Western views of the *I Ching* have, unexpectedly, been influential in China. As fewer are able to read the archaic Chinese of the *I Ching*, more are coming to know it through modern sources, including back translations from works in Western language. In this we discover interactions and influences in both directions between a 3,000 year old Chinese classic and modern Western psychology.