



## The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture

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positioning of contemporary Shinto is inseparable from conscious, competitive jostling in a huge general marketplace.

In any case, however, Nelson's study ought strongly to encourage the ongoing process (at least in academia) of de-exoticizing Japan. To be quite specific, another major country that is obsessed at the popular level with cultural self identity, with the invention of tradition, with the potential irruption of the supernatural into everyday high-tech life, and with festival entertainment (which are among the main motives that make the postwar marketing of Shinto successful in Japan) is the United States. One keenly looks forward, then to the very significant (although perhaps initially counterintuitive) contribution Nelson's studies of Shinto will make to the progress of an increasingly deep mutual spiritual recognition and sympathy between contemporary Japan and the U.S.

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*The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture.* By WAI-MING NG. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. xx, 277 pp. \$63.00 (cloth), \$29.95 (paper).

The *I Ching* (Book of Changes) is a Chinese classic that circulated throughout East Asia. Starting out as a divination guide of obscure, ancient origins, it gained stature among educated Chinese of the late Chou and early Han dynasties, thus attracting extensive commentary to supplement its relatively meager core text. The appeal of the *I Ching* was twofold: It served as both a profound guide to the workings of the cosmos and as a divination manual. During the Sung dynasty (960–1279), neo-Confucians successfully appropriated the *I Ching* as a key text in the new Confucian "tradition" (i.e., *tao-t'ung*) they were busy creating. It is and has been a highly flexible text, employed to support a range of arguments so wide as sometimes to include both of the opposing sides of a contested issue. Not surprisingly, therefore, a common rhetorical strategy throughout East Asia was to mine the text for passages that might lend support to one's views. And a rich mine it was.

*The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* is the first book-length study to take early-modern Japanese uses of the *I Ching* as its focus. Characterizing each chapter as "a bold attempt to address new topics by drawing on many rarely-used materials" (p. xviii), Ng bases his work on the reading of primary sources from a wide sampling of Tokugawa Japanese cultural forms, including political thought, economic thought, religion, natural science, medicine, military affairs, and popular culture. The drawback to the book's impressive breadth is that the analysis of any single instance of *I Ching* use tends to be superficial. *The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* is a survey of *I Ching*-related discourse in early modern Japan.

The ultimate point of the book, according to Ng, is to shed new light on the intellectual and cultural history of early modern and modern Japan, as well as on Sino-Japanese cultural relations during these times. Significantly, the epilogue opens with a frank admission of the difficulty of this task: "I have gotten lost, every now and then, in a mountain of primary sources and have struggled to find my way out" (p. 206). Ng is indeed correct to identify the issue of perspective as the main practical problem with the book, his "mountain of primary sources" being both its strength and its weakness.

Does *The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* succeed in shedding interesting or useful new light on Japanese history and Sino-Japanese relations? It does, but only

in limited, piecemeal fashion. Indeed, Ng himself points out that the “secondary materials I have used provide only some background information, and my investigations at this stage are only preliminary” (p. 210). Not surprisingly, the book reads like a summary of research in progress. The author has done a superb job of describing the broad contours of *I Ching*-related discourse. Useful insights sometimes accompany this description, for example, that the *I Ching* helped facilitate the spread of western science in Japan. Overall, however, the book is much less successful at demonstrating what Tokugawa *I Ching* discourse tells us about Japanese or Sino-Japanese history beyond the assertion that the *I Ching* was influential.

Ng argues that the *I Ching* was so popular among Tokugawa Japanese that it “saturated Japanese thought and culture” (p. 210). His support for this argument, however, has one problematic feature, namely, that throughout the book there is a tendency to regard talk of *yin-yang*/five phases (J. *inyō-gogyō*) as evidence of *I Ching* or Chinese influence. But *yin-yang*/five phases rhetoric and thought had been present in Japan for so long as to have become naturalized well before the Tokugawa period. Tokugawa-period talk of *yin-yang*/five phases did not necessarily require or indicate significant use of the *I Ching*, direct *I Ching* influence, or especially strong Chinese influence. In most of the passages Ng cites, the *I Ching* is at least mentioned along with *yin-yang*/five phases. It is not always obvious, however, that the writer in question is relying significantly on the *I Ching*. Examples include Hakuin’s discussion of heaven and hell (p. 127) and Gidayūbuji Nemotodayū’s discussion of music (p. 200). Indeed, Ng sometimes brings in terms like “*I Ching* related concepts” (p. 201) to maintain a link between talk of *yin-yang*/five phases and alleged *I Ching* influence. I raise this complaint not to disagree with Ng’s argument of extensive, hitherto neglected *I Ching* influence on Tokugawa culture but to point out a weakness in the process of supporting it.

*The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* is an original work based on solid scholarship. It makes a strong case that students of Tokugawa culture should take a closer look at the role of the *I Ching* and suggests possible avenues for their doing so. The limitations discussed above notwithstanding, it is a useful first look at an important topic.

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*Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950.*  
 By GREGORY M. PFLUGFELDER. Berkeley: University of California Press,  
 2000. xi, 399 pp. \$45.00.

*Cartographies of Desire*, an important new book by Gregory Pflugfelder, examines the representation of male-male sexuality in Japanese discourse. The scope of the projects is impressive. Pflugfelder considers documents from three different historical eras: the Edo period, the Meiji period, and, in a departure from standard Japanese periodization, the “early twentieth century” (1900–1950). Moreover, he divides his attention equally among three distinct realms of discourse: popular discourse, legal discourse, and medicoscientific discourse. These variations in historical period and discursive milieu are essential to Pflugfelder’s larger agenda. In accordance with the “constructivist” approach toward interpreting sexuality, he adheres to the principle “that desire, sexual or otherwise, is not a constant or a given, but is shaped in crucial