

THE YIJING: A GUIDE. By Joseph A. Adler. Guides to Sacred Texts. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 206. Hardback, \$110.00; Paperback, \$26.99.

This volume essentially seeks to give readers a comprehensive overview of the *Yijing* 易經. Asserting from the outset that the *Yijing* is “a repository of wisdom much deeper than *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (by Dale Carnegie),” Adler seeks to move away from the somewhat popular claim that the *Yijing* can be likened to a self-help book. Adler argues that, at its core, the *Yijing* “constructs a worldview encompassing the role of human beings in an ultimately meaningful cosmos.” This volume places the *Yijing* within the context of divination. Stating that the source of the divination response can be a “spiritual being (god or ancestor or an impersonal metaphysical reality, such as the Dao,” Adler is careful to state that while the text “is often understood as “fortune-telling,” although the common image of peering into a crystal ball and seeing the future is an oversimplification.” On top of situating the *Yijing* within the broader field of divination, this volume has two interconnected goals: to trace the history of the *Yijing* and to elucidate the contents of the text itself. The volume thus examines the history of the *Yijing* from early history to early modern, and finally to contemporary interpretations in both China and the West. However, although the historical background

of the *Yijing* is useful, indeed being able to offer a useful summary of multiple intellectual traditions while simultaneously describing the relationship these traditions had to the *Yijing* is no small feat, the greatest strength of this volume is debatably how it addresses the content of the *Yijing* itself. The *Yijing* has long been something of an infamous ground for scholarly misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Adler has successfully managed to address the core content of the *Yijing*. Herein, one finds an excellent explanation of the multi-layered structure of the text, acknowledging the two distinct ways in which the text can be referred to: the basic text “consisting of the divinatory core of the hexagrams, hexagram statements, and line statements, compiled during the Zhou dynasty” as well as the “basic text and the Ten Wings; this is called the *Yijing*, because only after the appendices were added was it called a *jing* 經, usually translated as ‘classic.’” This book is very much aimed at those new to the field of Chinese religion. It not only offers an excellent introduction to the *Yijing* itself and would prevent new students from adopting misunderstandings pertaining to the text, it also gives the reader a strong introduction to the wider religious landscape that the *Yijing* has historically shaped and been shaped by.

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