

East Asia

THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE *YIJING*: COMMENTARY ON THE *SCRIPTURE OF CHANGE*.

Translated and edited by Joseph A. Adler. Translations from the Asian Classics. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. Pp. viii+387. Hardback, \$65.00.

Adler, professor emeritus of Asian and Religious Studies at Kenyon College, is a leading connoisseur of Chinese Neo-Confucianism and a master translator. With this annotated translation of Zhū Xī's (1130–1200) *Zhōuyì běnyì* 周易本義 (The Original Meaning of the Zhōu [Dynasty] Changes [i.e., the *Yijing* 易經]), Adler navigates in familiar waters. Starting with his doctoral thesis “Divination and Philosophy: Chu His’s Understanding of the *I Ching*” at UC Santa Barbara (1984), he became intimately conversant with the scholarship of this Neo-Confucian giant. Zhū penned the *Zhōuyì běnyì*—a commentary of the *Yijing*—in 1188, two years after he coauthored the shorter *Yìxué qǐméng* 易學啓蒙 (Introduction to the Study of the Changes), translated by Adler in 2002; an even earlier commentary written in 1177 is not extant. Alongside the somewhat lesser influential *Yīchuān yìzhuàn* 伊川易傳 (Yīchuān’s Commentary on the Changes) by Chéng Yí (1033–1107), the *Zhōuyì běnyì* later became the standard reference on the *Yijing* in the civil service examination system. Zhū emphasizes the *Yijing*’s key purpose as a divination manual that would provide self-cultivational “access to the minds of those sages [traced back by Zhū to Fúxī himself], who had first intuited and put into practice the Way of Heaven.” Adler’s succinct introduction (1–38) nicely prepares the reader for the superbly crafted annotated translation, in which he attempts to stay true to Zhū’s “hermeneutic principle,” namely that the meaning of the *Yijing* is uncovered through personal encounter and not extensive interpretative mediation. Hence, in his rendering, Adler tries to preserve the “jumbled, fragmentary, cryptic, and exceedingly obscure” character of the *Yijing*. As ever—being aware that this goes mostly against editorial policy—it would have been nice to add the corresponding original text. A highly recommended book.

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