Movement, Mediation, and Transformation: *Yijing* and Qiaoyiology

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Developed by Jun Ye, Qiaoyiology (or Qiaoyixue) is a theoretical framework for studying cross-cultural encounters from the perspective of people's movement and their creative transformations. Since 2011, Qiaoyiology has attracted tremendous attention from scholars around the world. Yet, critics draw attention to the ambitious meaning of "yi" (change) in Qiaoyiology, arguing that it is too broad to cover everything on this earth. In this article, I will defend Jun Ye's adoption of the concept of "yi" from the *Yijing*. My argument is two-fold. First, I argue that the concept of yi in the *Yijing* includes three inter-connected perspectives: the process cosmology, the philosophy of symbolic form, and the practice of decision making. Second, I contend that these three inter-connected perspectives of yi helps us understand the complexity of our 21st globalized world from three angles: (1) the material condition for people's movement, (2) the complex web of mediating networks that allows global-local interaction to take place, and (3) the creative transformation in cross-cultural encounters that take place every minute in our everyday life.

Keywords: Change, process cosmology, Qiaoyiology, *Yijing*, symbolic form, 21st century world

Developed by Jun Ye, Qiaoyiology (or Qiaoyixue) is a theoretical framework for studying cross-cultural encounters from the perspective of the movement of people and the creative transformation in their minds. Since publicly presented in 2011, Qiaoyiology has attracted tremendous attention from scholars within and outside China. Over the last twelve years, Ye has written three books explaining the meanings of Qiaoyiology (Ye, 2014, 2022, 2023). This year, an edited volume was published to assess the significance of Qiaoyiology in different fields of study, highlighting its contribution to understanding the global movement of peoples and ideas (Gu & Li, 2023).

Theoretically Qiaoyiology is based on two core concepts: "qiao" (侨 the networks of movement, migration, and mediation) and "yi" (易 the changes, exchanges, and transformation resulted from cross-cultural encounters) (Ye, 2014, pp. 20–21). Together, qiao and yi highlight the importance of the local, national, and global networks that lead to people's movement across the globe. They emphasize that there must be a material condition—including transportation facilities, circulation routes, communicative links, human connections—for cross-cultural encounters to take place (Ye, 2014, pp. 3–17). For Jun Ye, this complex system of networks facilitates a double change in real life—a change in the physical location of travelers/migrants, and a change in their inner world (e.g., a new understanding of oneself, a deeper appreciation of one's cultural heritage, or a broader perspective of the globe as an organic and unified entity) (Ye, 2014, pp. 31–49).

For many scholars, it is the physical-spiritual combo that makes Qiaoyiology profound. First, Qiaoyiology connects the two sides of our globalized society—the material condition that facilitates cross-cultural encounters, and the intellectual/cultural transformation that arises from these cross-cultural encounters (Ye, 2022, pp. 40–71). A characteristic of Qiaoyiology is that although it puts premium on changes in the inner world of an individual, it connects these inner changes to the complex chains of mediation in our world system—the global cities, the transportation hubs, the information circuits,

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the production lines, the value chains, the communicative platforms etc. As such, Qiaoyiology highlights the global-local interaction—or the "glo-cal" transformation—that characterizes our 21st century world (Ye, 2023, pp. 223–272). Even though our globalized world has been described in different ways—such as "global village," "network society," and "Information Age"—none captures vividly the combined effects of the global-local interactions because they focus primarily on technological advancement and communicative infrastructure, rather than the humanistic implications that Qiaoyiology attempts to explore.

Its splendid achievements notwithstanding, critics have identified shortcomings in Qiaoyiology. For instance, some scholars observe that the yi from the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*) may be too broad a concept to describe the globalized world.[1] For these scholars, while they recognize that there are benefits from borrowing the concept of yi from the *Yijing*—especially the famous three meanings of yi (the constancy of change, the necessary for change, and the ease with which to experience changes in everyday life)—they also find the *Yijing*'s claim of covering everything on this earth unacceptable and unattainable, especially in regard to the complexity of the urban-industrial economy of the 21st century (Gu & Li 2023, pp. 164–176). To these critics, when millions of people are on the move everyday across the globe, it is impossible, if not absurd, to make a claim for knowing everything and covering everything (Gu & Li 2023, pp. 179–192).

In this article, I will defend Jun Ye's adoption of the concept of yi from the *Yijing*. My argument is two-fold. First, I argue that the concept of yi in the *Yijing* includes three inter-connected perspectives: the process cosmology, the philosophy of symbolic form, and the practice of decision making. To support my argument, I will explain how these three interconnected perspectives are expressed in the "Ten Wings" of the *Yijing*—a seven pieces of commentarial writings composed during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). Second, I contend that these three inter-connected perspectives of yi helps us understand the complexity of our 21st globalized world, especially in three aspects: (1) the material condition for the movement of people, (2) the complex web of mediating networks that allows global-local interaction to take place, and (3) the creative transformation in cross-cultural encounters that take place every minute in our everyday life. Only when we understand that our 21st century world is driven by movement, mediation, and transformation, we will see the reason why we must coexist and collaborate in an increasingly complicated and conflictual world.

The *Yijing* Text

A canonized Confucian classic, the *Yijing* is a composite text consisting of three distinct layers. Its first layer is comprised by the 8 trigrams and 64 hexagrams allegedly created by the mythical figure, Xi Fu. Its second layer are the hexagram statements and line statements allegedly written by King Wen and the Duke of Zhou during the 11th century BCE. Its third layer incorporates seven pieces of writings composed from 5th to 2nd century BCE. Divided into ten segments (hence, the name "Ten Wings"), the authors of these writings used the hexagrams to discuss cosmic patterns, the relations between humanity and nature, and the complexity of human life.[2] By 135 BCE, these three textual layers were combined to form what we now call the *Yijing* (Nylan 2001, pp. 202–52; Redmond & Hon 2014, pp. 1–157; Smith 2012, pp. 1–47).

Despite its diverse textual body, underlying the *Yijing* is the notion that the cosmos is an organismic process without beginning or end. As a process, the cosmos resembles a great flow in which "all of the parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic whole" and all the parts "interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating process" (Tu, 1985, p. 35). As such, there are three characteristics of this great flow: continuity, wholeness, and dynamism. It is continuous because it never stops in renewing itself. It is holistic because it includes everything in the universe and permeates in all aspects of life. It is dynamic because it is full of motion and movement, generating energy and strength all the time (Tu 1985, pp. 38–39). In this cosmic flow, there is no distinction between the following: the natural realm and the human realm,

[1] The *Yijing* (*Book of Changes* or *Classic of Changes*) is also known as the *Zhouyi* (*Zhou Changes*). While one can argue that the *Zhouyi* is different from the *Yijing* because it connotes the different layers of the original text before it was canonized as a Confucian classic after 135 BCE, in this article I use *Yijing* to refer to the text that comprises of the images of 64 hexagrams, the hexagram line statements, and the "Ten Wings."

[2] The "Ten Wings" are: (1-2) *Tuan* (彖 Commentary to the Judgments); (3-4) *Xiang* (象 Commentary to the Images); (5) *Wenyan* (文言 Words of the Text); (6-7) *Xici* (系辞 Appended Statements, also known as *Dazhuan* [*The Great Treatise*]); (8) *Shuogua* (说卦 Explanation of the Trigrams); (9) *Xugua* (序卦 Hexagrams in Sequence); (10) *Zagua* (杂卦 Hexagrams in Irregular Order). Most of these pieces of writings appeared during the Warring States period (481–221 BCE), except that the *Xugua* and the *Zagua* may have appeared in the first century BCE. For the dates of the "Ten Wings", see Zhu (1986, volume 1, 39–51). As for the roles of the "Ten Wings" in transforming the *Yijing*, see Redmond and Hon (2014, 140–157).

an observing subject and an observed object, and the inner world and the outer world. Everything is part of a totality, a group dance that never stops.

To the *Yijing* authors, the unfolding of the universe is vividly portrayed in the 8 trigrams and 64 hexagrams. For instance, they see the 8 trigrams (☰, ☱, ☲, ☳, ☴, ☵, ☶, ☷) as graphic representations of the mixing of the yin and yang cosmic forces (or qi, energy). With different combinations of a straight line (—) representing the yang cosmic force, and a broken line (– –) representing the yin cosmic force, a trigram symbolizes the cosmos' constant renewal and its creation of the myriad things.

Figure 1. A Diagram of the Eight Trigrams

Similarly, a hexagram is also a symbol of the unfolding of the universe. For example, a hexagram can be divided into two trigrams: the lower trigram (lines 1–3) and the upper trigram (lines 4–6). With two trigrams, a hexagram symbolizes the interaction of two sets of yin-yang configuration, demonstrating the multiple ways in which the yin and yang forces interact and transform each other. Or, one takes the lower two lines of a hexagram as representing the earth (di 地), the middle two lines as representing humankind (ren), and the top two lines as representing heaven (tian 天). Then, we have a trigram within a hexagram. Known as the "three potencies" (san cai 三才), the relation of heaven, earth, and humankind highlights the co-dependence between the natural realm (tian and di) and the human realm (ren).

Allegedly developed by Xi Fu, the trigrams and hexagrams can be seen as coded messages from a supernatural power. But they can also be understood as a man-made system of signs that helps users understand the fluidity and complexity of the cosmic flow (more about the symbolism of trigrams and hexagrams later).

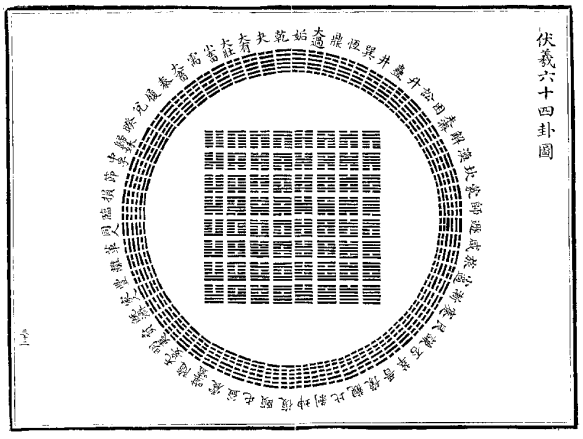

Figure 2. A Diagram of the 64 Hexagrams (according to Xi Fu)

Process Cosmology

With trigrams and hexagrams as symbols of the flow of the universe. the starting point of *Yijing* is the acceptance of human finitude. On the one hand, the "three potencies" highlight the limits of human beings in shaping the natural environment. On the other, they empower human beings to pursue their goals if they are willing to adapt to the natural environment. For instance, in the *Xici* (one of the "Ten Wings"), the authors point out that in the oracles there were encouraging words such as "auspicious" (ji 吉) and "without blame" (wujiu 无咎), and stern warnings against "calamity" (xiong 凶), "blame" (jiu 咎), "regret" (hui 悔) and "remorse" (lin 吝) (*Xici* I: 3, 7). These contrasting prognostications highlight the harsh reality of human existence. In some incidents, the wind of luck is on our side; whatever we do seems to go well. But in other incidents, we are clearly out of luck: no matter how hard we try, we are doomed to failure.

To elucidate what they mean by the harsh reality of human existence, the *Xici* authors identify the period when hexagrams were used in divination. They write:

> The Changes came into use in the period of middle antiquity. Those who composed the Changes had fear and anxiety. (*Xici* II: 7; Wilhelm-Baynes: 345, with modifications)

Here, the *Xici* authors link the popularity of hexagram divination to the momentous transition when the mandate of heaven (tianming 天 命)—the power to rule China—was abruptly passed from the Shang family to the Zhou family. To highlight the importance of divination in assuaging human fear, the *Xici* authors coin two terms—fear (you 憂) and anxiety (huan 患)—to describe the different states of human

apprehension of uncertainty. To further clarify what fear and anxiety mean, the *Xici* authors write:

The time at which the Change came to the fore was that in which the house of Yin [Shang] came to an end and the way of the house of Zhou (周) was rising, that is, the time when King Wen and the tyrant Zhou (紂) were pitted against each other. This is why the hexagram statements of the book so frequently warn against danger. He who is conscious of danger creates peace for himself, he who takes things lightly creates his own downfall. (*Xici* II:11; Wilhelm-Baynes: 352, with modifications)

Directly linking the popularity of hexagram divination to the epic battle between the last ruler of Shang (King Zhou) and the first ruler of Zhou (King Wen 文王), the *Xici* authors see hexagrams as stern warnings against danger and downfall. In these warnings, hexagrams provoked fear by reminding readers—typically, those involved in government—of the disastrous consequences of bad decisions and reckless moves (such as the tyrant Zhou's brutality that led to the downfall of the Shang). They also instilled anxiety by calling attention to the vulnerability of human beings and the randomness in human fate (such as the sudden fall of the Shang and the unexpected rise of the Zhou). Whether provoking fear or instilling anxiety, the effect of hexagram divination is the same. It forces readers to reflect on their arrogance, complacency, and self-indulgence. It shocks them to look for ways to come to terms with contingency and uncertainty.

The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms

To the authors of *Xici*, it did not matter whether danger and downfall happened in the political realm or in one's body. The truth of the matter is that human beings have little control of their fate. At the same time, the *Xici*'s authors also sought to console nervous readers, assuring them that if they learnt to read hexagrams properly, they will discern the pattern behind incessant changes. They write:

The Changes is a book from which one may not hold aloof. Its dao (i.e., pattern) is forever changing—alternating, movement without rest, flowing through the six empty places (of a hexagram); rising and sinking without fixed law, firm and yielding transform each other. They cannot be confined within a rule; it is only change that is at work here. They move inward and outward according to fixed rhythms. Without and within, they teach caution. They also show care and sorrow and their causes. Though you have no teacher, approach them as you would your parents. (*Xici* II: 7; Wilhlem-Baynes: 348–49, with modifications)

Seen in this light, the 64 hexagrams are no longer oracles. They become symbols of the constant movements in the universe and the ceaseless changes in one's life. More important, they point to the intricate networks of factors or forces—from near to far away, from simple to complicated, from visible to invisible—that shape movements and changes.

Take, for example, hexagram Qian (乾 ䷀ The Creative #1). The line statements depict the six yang lines as a dragon in various positions—a "hidden dragon" in line one at the bottom, an "emerging dragon" in line two, a "wavering dragon" in line four, a "flying dragon" in line five, and an "arrogant dragon" in line six at the top. In addition, the line statements suggest a correspondence between the dragon's position and a proper course of action: the "hidden dragon" should avoid taking aggressive action, the "emerging dragon" and the "flying dragon" should seek help from "a great man", the "wavering dragon" should take flight over the depths despite the danger and apparent risks, and the "arrogant dragon" will regret being stubborn and excessively confident. But, as a hexagram, Qian is ambiguous. On the one hand, in five of its six lines, the tone seems to be upbeat, projecting an impression of an incessant progress from a hidden dragon to an emerging dragon, a wavering dragon and finally a flying dragon. On the other hand, the progression is abruptly cut short by the downfall of an arrogant dragon. Like a Greek tragedy, the rapid fall of the arrogant dragon suggests hubris, highlighting the danger of excessive human pride in making strenuous efforts to pull oneself up.

In *Tuan* (彖 another piece of the "Ten Wings"), the authors emphasize the importance of mounting of the six dragons of hexagram Qian in a timely fashion (shi cheng liu long 时成六龙). By mounting of the six dragons in a timely fashion, the *Tuan*'s authors mean two things. First, they view the six lines of Qian as constantly changing their positions. Even if one strictly follows the incremental progress from a hidden dragon (the first line) to an emerging dragon (the second line) to a flying dragon (the fifth line), upon reaching the top (an arrogant dragon), one must go back down to a hidden dragon and to start all over again. Second, the *Tuan*'s authors suggest readers choose a dragon most suitable to them, such as to assume the position of a hidden dragon when starting a new business or beginning a new career, to act like an emerging dragon after receiving recognition from peers or bosses, to be like a wavering dragon when making crucial transition in career or location, to be like a flying dragon when everything

seems to be flourishing, and last but not least, to avoid becoming an arrogant dragon when everything looks perfect but a decline is imminent.

In short, the *Tuan*'s authors urge readers to view Qian metaphorically as a spatial-temporal grid to reflect on their surroundings, to look for alternatives, and to anticipate dangers and pitfalls. As such, Qian becomes a symbol of the ever-changing universe. It is particularly helpful when we are at a critical juncture of our lives. At that moment—one may say, the *Yijing* moment—we feel especially vulnerable and fragile, because we are reminded of the confluence of factors that shape our lives and the dangers of making a wrong decision. On the other hand, Qian also suggest that we act decisively to "mount the six dragons in a timely manner". Once we mount the six dragons, we become part of the great flow of the universe. We may be a hidden dragon or an arrogant dragon when we enter the great flow, but as we are swept along by the current, we should find our position, our rhythm, our trajectory. In the end, the key point is not when and how we enter the great flow of the universe, but what we become and what we achieve after we join the great flow (Ames 2015; Cheng 2020).

Decision Making

In the "Ten Wings", different authors offer different strategies for individuals to find their roles in the great flow of the universe. For instance, the authors of *Shuogua* (說卦) suggest that a person should focus on the 8 trigrams as symbols of the unfolding of the universe, such as Gen ☶ representing mountain, Li ☲ representing fire, Kan ☵ representing water, and Zheng ☳ representing thunder. Like the "Five Agents" (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth), the eight trigrams graphically denote the basic elements of the universe that produce the myriad things. The *Shuogua*'s authors also propose that we think of the 8 trigrams as symbols of directions, strategically placed in the east-south-west-north grid. With the cosmic grand scheme in mind, the authors of *Shuohua* urge us to find solace in the rises and falls in human life.

Whereas the *Shuogua*'s authors focus on the 8 trigrams, the *Xugua*'s (序卦) authors pay special attention to the sequence of the 64 hexagrams. In rationalizing the hexagram sequences, the *Xugua*'s authors match the order of hexagrams with key moments of human evolution, beginning with the construction of a primitive community to the establishment of a patrilineal family structure based on gender distinctions and matrimony. Later, the patrilineal family structure is further expanded into a complex socio-political system based on the distinctions between kings and officials, and rulers and ruled. While this process of development seems inevitable, occasionally the *Xugua*'s authors call attention to challenges and obstacles in maintaining a stable community. They identify moments where the socio-political order is corrupt (Kui 睽 #38 and Jian 蹇 #39) or disintegrated (Huan 渙 #59). Because of the danger of corruption and disintegration, the *Xugua*'s authors emphasize the need for renewing the socio-political order by replacing corrupt leaders (Ge 革 #49) and re-structuring the entire system (Ding 鼎 #50). Nevertheless, occasional interruptions do not interfere with or slow down the steady progress of humankind. Based on this epic saga, the *Xugua*'s authors place the fortune and misfortune of individuals in the longue durée of human evolution. Accidents, irritant behaviors, unexpected occurrences, and unplanned actions are absorbed and rationalized in the onward march of humankind.

If one just reads the *Shuogua* and *Xugua*, divination does not seem to have a role in decision making. One makes decisions based on either the confluence of cosmic forces or the longue durée of human evolution. But in the *Xici*, divination is important. In fact, an extended passage is devoted to discussing how to perform divination with 50 yarrow stalks (*Xici* I: 8, more about it later). In addition, the *Xici*'s authors identify divination as one of four ways to use the hexagrams: (1) to use the hexagram statements and line statements as warnings against danger and downfall; (2) to use the changes in trigrams and hexagrams to understand the ceaseless changes in the natural realm and the human realm; (3) to use hexagram images to enhance rulers' authority; (4) to use divination to provoke inquirers to think more deeply about their choices (*Xici* I: 9). Based on these four-fold uses of hexagrams, the *Xici*'s authors highlight the broad appeal of the *Yijing*. It can be a book of "wisdom" (zhi 智) for those who are interested in pondering the causes and patterns of change; it can be a book of "kindness" (ren 仁) for those who are interested in improving the political order; it can be a book about "everyday life" (riyong 日用) for those who just want to live, overcome obstacles, and make fewer mistakes (*Xici* I: 4). These three approaches—the cosmological, the political, and the existential—formed the bases for *Yijing* commentators to philosophize change. Over the two thousand years after the canonization of the *Yijing* in 135 BCE, commentators developed three distinct views toward change—the cosmology of change, the representation of change, and the morality of

change.

Meanings of *Yi* in the 21st Century

In our times, in responding to the rapid movement of people, capital, and products in the globalized economy, we can render yi of the *Yijing* into movement, mediation, and transformation to support Qiaoyiology. First, if we take yi to mean movement, we affirm the goal of Qiaoyiology as a theoretical framework for understanding the complexity and creativity of our globalized world. As a theoretical framework that aims to inspire thoughts, Qiaoyiology is not intended to be comprehensive and thorough in describing all activities related to the movement of people and their cultural/spiritual transformation. Rather, it highlights the fact that people and resources are moving constantly around the world via different channels. In this sense, yi of Qiaoyiology means *constant change*, or the constant flow of forces and materials that make today's world robust.

As Manuel Castells has argued, our current world system can be described as a "network society" in which people in different parts of the world are connected through transportation and communication networks (Castells 2010, pp. xvii-xliv). Thus, the essence of "network society" is movement, whereby people in different parts of the world make their lives better based on a global division of labor. "The points of connections in this global architecture of networks," Castells writes, "are the points that attract wealth, power, culture, innovation, and people, innovative or not, to these places" (Castells 2010, p. xxxv). These hubs are the "nodes of the global system" that connect many different forms of networks that make the world a vibrant place (Castells 2010, p. xxxv). Like the 64 hexagrams in the *Yijing* that depict the constant unfolding of the universe, these hubs are the symbols of the confluences of forces that make the world a dynamic system. For this reason, Castells develops the concept of the "space of flow" in which global cities (such as Dubai, Hong Kong, London, New York, and Singapore) are critical circuits that connect different forces and resources, and channel them for production, distribution, and consumption (Castells 2010, p. xxxii).

Second, if we take yi to mean mediation, we emphasize that Qiaoyiology should be understood as a framework for finding out how the reality is represented, redeployed, and reinvented. In other words, we present Qiaoyiology as a "system of signifiers" offering a perspective on today's world. We acknowledge that there may be other perspectives, or even better perspectives, to understand today's world. But Qiaoyiology helps us see the world from the perspective of movement and mobility. More importantly, Qiaoyiology views movement and mobility as the results of complex mediation, especially mediation through local, national, regional, and global networks. In this sense, yi of Qiaoyiology means *mediated change*. That is, a change that takes place within a complex web of networks involving multiple players and forces.

This understanding of yi as *mediated change* is based on the recent theories of global communication. With the rapid advancement of media technology, the world is no longer round but "flat" according to Thomas Friedman, because we view the world through the screen of a computer or a mobile phone (Friedman 2007). Thus, the globalized world is also a heavily mediated world via different forms of technological connections and media platforms. In our times, what Marshall McLuhan said decades ago becomes true. Indeed, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan & Fiore, 2001). That means that our perception of the world is largely shaped by the media platforms that we use—such as newspaper, TV, internet, or wechat groups. In the *Yijing,* the 64 hexagrams are the symbols of the confluence of forces in this world. In Qiaoyiology, we can use the hexagrams to draw attention to the structure of power that shape our life. In each occasion of interaction, there is often a separation between the powerful from the powerless, the center from the periphery. Yet, like the dynamic transformation of hexagrams, Qiaoyiology shows the possibility of change in each occasion of encounter. In interaction, the giver and the receiver must engage in a dialogue; the powerful and the powerless must interact to make a deal.

Third, if we take yi to mean transformation, we drive home the point that Qiaoyiology is about global-local interactions. According to Manuel Castills's concept of "network society," there is a dual process in global communication. Hence, one prime characteristic of today's globalized world is that there are flows and reverse flows, or the push and the pull. "The key spatial feature of the network society," Castills writes, "is the networked connection between the local and the global. The global architecture of global networks connects places selectively, according to their relative value for the network" (Castells, 2010, p. xxxv). Translated into the language of the *Yijing,* this glo-cal interaction is explicitly represented in hexagram images. For instance, each line of a hexagram represents a player or a force in the global chain of production,

circulation and consumption. Whereas a trigram can be understood as a confluence of national or regional resources in the global market, a hexagram represents a complex system of correspondence or collaboration whereby international, national, and local forces interact and intermix. In the end, the world of the *Yijing* hexagrams is full of dynamic interchanges and creative transformations, where the low can become high, and the peripheral can become the center.

Together, when we take yi to mean movement, mediation, and transformation as outlined above, Qiaoyiology is directly relevant to readers today. As the world becomes increasingly complex and divisive, readers are struggling to make sense of the uncertain world. Like the *Yijing* which often shines during times of difficult transition, Qiaoyiology will help readers to come to terms with crises and challenges of our globalized world, even it has become increasingly contentious and conflictual.

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