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The Continuity of Change

The Ancient Wisdom of the I Ching and the Science of Enduring Transformation

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Free Sample · Chapter One

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CHAPTER ONE

The Book of Changes and the Nature of Continuity

Hexagram 32 · Heng · Duration

Thunder and wind: what truly lasts is not what stands still, but what keeps its direction while moving.

Among the sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching, one is named Heng, which means Duration. It is built from two trigrams: Thunder above and Wind below. At first glance this seems a strange image for something that lasts. Thunder is sudden and loud; wind is restless and penetrating. Neither one stays in place. If the ancient authors had wanted a picture of permanence, they might have chosen Mountain doubled, or Earth doubled—images of mass and stillness. Instead, for the hexagram of Duration, they chose two of the most mobile forces in nature.

The choice was deliberate. The traditional commentary on Heng explains that thunder and wind are constant companions; where one moves, the other follows. Their endurance does not lie in staying still. It lies in their steady, reliable relationship within ceaseless movement. The judgment attached to the hexagram promises success and freedom from blame to those who persevere, and then adds a phrase that at first seems out of place in a hexagram about lasting: it is favorable to have somewhere to go. Duration, in the I Ching's understanding, is not the absence of motion. It is motion that keeps its direction.

The image commentary drives the point home. Seeing thunder and wind, it says, the noble person stands firm and does not change

course. Notice what is held constant here. It is not the person's position, which may move a great deal. It is the person's direction—the orientation of the life, the purpose that guides the movement. Everything else may change. That one thing must not.

This hexagram, more than any other, captures the theme of this book. The things that last are not the things that never move. They are the things that keep their direction while moving. To understand how such a view of the world came to be written down, and why it has proven so durable, we need to look at the Book of Changes itself.

A Book Older Than Its Commentaries

The I Ching is one of the oldest books in continuous use anywhere in the world. Its exact origins are uncertain, and the story of how it came to be has two versions: a traditional account handed down in China for more than two thousand years, and a modern account pieced together by historians and archaeologists. Both are worth knowing, because each tells us something about the book's nature.

According to tradition, the eight basic trigrams—the three-line figures from which the hexagrams are built—were discovered by the legendary sage-king Fu Xi, who observed the patterns of heaven above and earth below, the markings of birds and beasts, and the forms of his own body, and distilled them into eight symbols. Much later, King Wen, the father of the Zhou dynasty's founder, is said to have doubled the trigrams into sixty-four hexagrams and written the judgments for each while he was held captive by the last king of the preceding Shang dynasty. His son, the Duke of Zhou, is said to have written the statements attached to each individual line. Finally, Confucius was traditionally credited with writing the Ten Wings, the philosophical commentaries that transformed the text into a work of wisdom literature. The Analects records Confucius wishing for a few more years so that he might study the Changes by the age of fifty and so be free of great faults—though an early variant of the text reads the

word for Changes as a word meaning also, and scholars still debate whether the saying refers to the book at all.

Modern scholarship tells a more gradual and anonymous story. The core text—the hexagrams with their judgments and line statements, often called the Zhou Yi or Changes of Zhou—appears to have taken shape during the Western Zhou period, around the ninth century before the common era, as a manual for divination. It likely drew on older practices of interpreting cracks in heated bones and shells and of sorting stalks of the yarrow plant. The Ten Wings, rather than being the work of Confucius himself, appear to have been composed by many hands over several centuries, from the Warring States period into the early Han dynasty, by scholars who saw in the old divination manual a profound statement about the order of the cosmos.

For the purposes of this book, the important point is not which account is correct in its details. The important point is that both accounts describe a process of growth by layers. The trigrams came first, then the hexagrams, then the judgments, then the line statements, then the commentaries, and then, over the following two thousand years, commentaries on the commentaries. At every stage, something new was added, and at every stage, what was already there was preserved and reinterpreted. The Book of Changes did not appear all at once as a finished object. It became itself through change.

This history matters because it shows the book practicing what it teaches. A text that claims continuity is maintained through transformation has itself been continuously transformed for three thousand years—and has remained recognizably the same book throughout.

The Building Blocks

To understand how the I Ching describes change, we must understand its basic vocabulary. That vocabulary is remarkably simple. It consists of only two marks.

The first is a solid line, which represents yang. The second is a broken line—a line with a gap in the middle—which represents yin. Every figure in the I Ching is built from these two marks and nothing else.

When three lines are stacked on top of one another, the result is a trigram. Because each of the three positions can hold either a solid or a broken line, there are exactly eight possible trigrams. Each was given a name and associated with a natural image, a family role, and a set of qualities:

Qian, made of three solid lines, is Heaven. It represents creative strength, initiative, and the father.

Kun, made of three broken lines, is Earth. It represents receptivity, devotion, and the mother.

Zhen, a solid line beneath two broken ones, is Thunder. It represents arousal, movement, and the eldest son.

Kan, a solid line between two broken ones, is Water. It represents danger, depth, and the middle son.

Gen, a solid line above two broken ones, is Mountain. It represents stillness, stopping, and the youngest son.

Xun, a broken line beneath two solid ones, is Wind or Wood. It represents gentleness, penetration, and the eldest daughter.

Li, a broken line between two solid ones, is Fire. It represents clarity, brightness, attachment, and the middle daughter.

Dui, a broken line above two solid ones, is Lake. It represents joy, openness, and the youngest daughter.

These eight figures were understood as a complete set of the basic forces at work in the world. They are not eight separate things but eight phases of one process, arranged in a family—a parent pair and six children—so that each relates to every other.

When two trigrams are stacked, the result is a hexagram, a figure of six lines. Because there are eight possible lower trigrams and eight possible upper trigrams, there are sixty-four hexagrams. Each hexagram has a name, a judgment that describes the situation as a whole, an image that describes the relationship between its two trigrams, and six line statements that describe the situation at each stage or position within it.

The names of the hexagrams cover the whole range of human experience. Some name natural phenomena or objects: The Well, The Cauldron, Thunder, The Lake. Some name social situations: The Family, The Army, Fellowship, The Marrying Maiden. Some name moral or psychological states: Modesty, Enthusiasm, Inner Truth, Youthful Folly. Some name processes: Development, Return, Decrease, Increase, Revolution. Together, the sixty-four hexagrams form something like a map of all the situations in which a human being or a human community might find itself.

Positions and Relationships

The meaning of a hexagram depends not only on which lines it contains but on where they sit. Over the centuries, the commentators developed a detailed grammar of position.

The six lines are read from the bottom up. The bottom line represents the beginning of a situation, its first stirrings, or the lowest rank in a hierarchy. The top line represents the end of a situation, its culmination or excess, or a position beyond the ordinary order. The lines in between represent the stages of development and the ranks of social life. The fifth line, near the top, is traditionally the place of the ruler; the second line, near the bottom, is the place of the official who serves the ruler.

The lines also relate to one another. The first line corresponds to the fourth, the second to the fifth, and the third to the sixth. When corresponding lines are of opposite kinds—one yin and one

yang—they are said to respond to each other, and the relationship is harmonious. When they are of the same kind, the relationship is strained. Lines that sit next to each other also influence one another.

In addition, each position has its own nature. The odd-numbered positions—first, third, and fifth—are considered yang positions, and the even-numbered positions are considered yin positions. A yang line in a yang position, or a yin line in a yin position, is said to be correct, in its proper place. A line in the wrong position is not necessarily bad, but it signals tension.

This grammar can become intricate, and generations of scholars devoted their lives to working out its implications. But its basic lesson is simple and deeply relevant to the theme of this book. The same element—a solid line or a broken line—means different things depending on its position and its relationships. Strength at the beginning of a situation is not the same as strength at its end. Yielding in a subordinate position is not the same as yielding in a position of command. Nothing in the I Ching has meaning in isolation. Everything has meaning in context, and context is always shifting.

The Moving Line

The single most important feature of the I Ching, for the purposes of this book, is the moving line.

When the I Ching is consulted in the traditional way, the lines of a hexagram are generated one at a time by a process of counting yarrow stalks or tossing coins. Each process yields one of four numbers. Two of these numbers produce ordinary lines—a young yang line or a young yin line—which are stable. The other two produce what are called old lines: an old yang line, associated with the number nine, and an old yin line, associated with the number six. Old lines are lines that have reached their extreme. And according to the logic of yin and yang, anything that reaches its extreme turns into its

opposite. An old yang line is about to become yin; an old yin line is about to become yang.

These are the moving lines. When a hexagram contains one or more moving lines, the reader consults not only the original hexagram but also the line statements for each moving line, and then the second hexagram that results when all the moving lines have changed. The first hexagram describes the present situation. The moving lines describe the points of active transformation within it. The second hexagram describes the situation toward which the present is moving.

This structure is the heart of the I Ching's teaching about change. Every situation is pictured as a configuration in motion. Some elements of it are stable for now; others are at the point of turning. The reader is shown not a frozen photograph but a moment within a process: where things stand, where they are about to change, and where they are headed.

Several features of this design deserve emphasis.

First, the change is partial. In most cases, only some of the six lines move. The others remain as they are. The new hexagram therefore shares much of the structure of the old one. Change and continuity are present at the same time, in the same figure.

Second, the change is intelligible. Lines do not move at random; they move because they have reached their extreme. The transformation follows a rule that can be understood.

Third, the change is directional. The second hexagram is not simply different from the first; it is where the first is going. The reader is invited to understand not only what is happening but what is coming, and to act accordingly.

Fourth, the change is never final. The second hexagram is itself a configuration of lines, any of which may move in its turn. There is no

last hexagram, no state of rest at the end of the process. Every situation is on its way to another.

The Sequence of the Hexagrams

The received text of the I Ching arranges the sixty-four hexagrams in a particular order, traditionally attributed to King Wen. This order is not random. Almost every hexagram is paired with a neighbor that is its mirror image—the same figure turned upside down. In the few cases where turning a hexagram upside down produces the same figure, it is paired instead with the hexagram in which every line has been changed to its opposite.

The effect is that the sequence moves forward by pairs of complementary situations. Peace is followed by Standstill. Decrease is followed by Increase. Revolution is followed by The Cauldron, the vessel in which the new order is cooked. Each situation is set beside the situation that is its reversal, so that the reader can never forget that every condition contains the seed of its opposite.

One of the Ten Wings, called the Sequence of the Hexagrams, offers an explanation of why each hexagram follows the one before it. Its reasoning is sometimes strained, but its intention is clear: to show that the sixty-four situations form a continuous chain, each growing out of its predecessor. The world described by the I Ching is not a collection of separate states but a single unfolding story.

The sequence begins with Qian, the Creative, and Kun, the Receptive—pure yang and pure yin, heaven and earth, the two forces from which everything else arises. It ends with Ji Ji, After Completion, and Wei Ji, Before Completion. The last pair is deeply significant, and we will return to it in the Conclusion of this book. For now it is enough to note that the Book of Changes does not end with completion. It ends with a hexagram whose name means that the work is not yet finished.

The Three Meanings of Yi

The title of the book in Chinese is Yijing, or in the older spelling I Ching. Jing means classic or scripture. Yi means change. But Han-dynasty scholars, writing around the beginning of the common era, observed that the single word Yi carries more than one meaning, and they built a famous interpretation on that observation. The great commentator Zheng Xuan, who lived in the second century, recorded the teaching that Yi has three meanings at once.

The first meaning is change, or transformation. Everything in the world is in motion. Day becomes night, the seasons turn, the young grow old, the powerful fall and the humble rise. No situation, person, or system stays fixed.

The second meaning is the unchanging. Beneath all the motion, there are patterns that do not themselves change. Day always becomes night; the seasons always follow the same order; extremes always turn into their opposites. The laws by which things change are constant even though the things themselves are not. Heaven is above and earth is below; the relationships among the basic forces remain stable.

The third meaning is simplicity, or ease. The patterns that govern change are not hopelessly complicated. They can be expressed with two kinds of line, eight trigrams, and sixty-four hexagrams. They are simple enough to be understood and to be lived by. One of the Ten Wings says that the Creative knows through ease and the Receptive accomplishes through simplicity, and that by means of ease and simplicity the principles of the whole world can be grasped.

The genius of this formula is that it refuses to separate the three meanings. It does not say that the world contains some things that change and other things that do not. It says that change and constancy are two aspects of the same reality, and that the pattern uniting them is simple. To understand the world is to see the

unchanging in the changing, and to see that this unity is not mysterious but plain.

This is the claim that this book will test against biology, psychology, history, and the life of institutions. In domain after domain, we will find the same structure: constant change at one level producing stable patterns at another, with the relationship between the two following principles that can be stated simply.

Change as the Medium of Order

There is a common way of thinking about order and change that runs as follows. Order is the normal condition of things. Change is a disturbance of that order. When change happens, order is disrupted, and the task is to restore it—to return things to how they were, or to establish a new order that will then remain stable. Order is the resting state; change is the interruption.

The I Ching reverses this picture. In its view, change is the normal condition of things, and order is the pattern that change follows. There is no resting state to return to. There is only the ongoing process, which may be well ordered or badly ordered, harmonious or discordant, but which never stops.

One of the Ten Wings, the Great Treatise, puts this in a memorable way. It describes the Changes as a book that one must not hold at a distance. Its way, the treatise says, is one of constant shifting: it moves and never settles, circulates through all six positions, rises and falls by no fixed rule, as firm and yielding trade places. It cannot be made into a fixed standard; one can only follow where the change leads.

Yet the same treatise insists that this ceaseless movement has a pattern. It describes how the firm and the yielding displace each other and thereby produce change and transformation; how one yin and one yang together constitute the Way; how the alternation of opposites generates all things. The movement is without rest, but it is

not without order. On the contrary, the order exists only in the movement.

This reversal has profound practical consequences. If order is the resting state and change is the disturbance, then the wise response to change is resistance or repair. But if change is the normal condition and order is its pattern, then the wise response is understanding and alignment. The question is not how to stop things from changing, but how to recognize the pattern of the present change and move with it well.

The martial arts teach the same lesson. A beginner tends to think of a fight as a series of disturbances to be blocked: the opponent attacks, and the defender tries to stop the attack and restore the previous condition. An experienced practitioner thinks differently. The fight is a continuous flow of energy, and the task is to read its direction and move with it—to yield where yielding is called for, to advance where advancing is possible, and to redirect the opponent's force rather than meeting it head-on. The experienced practitioner does not try to freeze the encounter. He tries to understand its pattern and act in accord with it. The I Ching asks the same of anyone facing any changing situation.

Judgment, Image, and the Reading of the Moment

The I Ching offers its guidance through two main kinds of text attached to each hexagram: the judgment and the image.

The judgment speaks to the situation as a whole. It often begins with a word or phrase indicating whether the situation is favorable, and then offers counsel about what kind of action is appropriate. Some judgments counsel boldness; others counsel patience; others warn of danger. The judgments are brief and often enigmatic, but their concern is always practical: given this situation, how should one act?

The image, one of the Ten Wings, describes the relationship between the hexagram's two trigrams as a picture from nature—thunder

beneath the earth, a lake above the mountain, fire over water—and then draws a lesson for the conduct of the noble person. The image is the most reflective part of the book. It invites the reader to contemplate a natural pattern and to see in it a model for human behavior.

Together, the judgment and the image teach a particular skill: the skill of reading the moment. The I Ching does not offer general rules that apply in all circumstances. It does not say always be bold, or always be patient, or always be humble. It says that each situation calls for its own response, and that the first task of wisdom is to see the situation clearly.

This is not relativism. The I Ching has firm values—sincerity, perseverance, modesty, responsiveness, care for others. But it recognizes that the same value must be expressed differently in different circumstances. Perseverance at the beginning of an undertaking may mean pressing forward; perseverance at a time of danger may mean holding still. Modesty in a position of power is different from modesty in a position of weakness. The values are constant. Their expression changes with the situation. Once again, continuity and change are not opposites but partners.

Duration Revisited

We began this chapter with the hexagram Heng, Duration, and we can now see more clearly why it is built from thunder and wind.

The commentaries on Heng make several points about what it means to endure. First, duration is not stagnation. The judgment's statement that it is favorable to have somewhere to go makes clear that lasting requires movement. A person, a marriage, or an institution that stops moving does not endure; it decays.

Second, duration depends on a constant relationship within the movement. Thunder and wind belong together; their partnership is reliable even though neither stays still. In human terms, what

endures is not a fixed set of circumstances but a reliable set of relationships and commitments.

Third, duration requires that some things be held firm. The noble person stands firm and does not change direction. Not everything can be allowed to change. The orientation of the life, its central purpose, must be kept steady so that everything else can move freely.

Fourth, the line statements of Heng warn against two opposite errors. The first line warns against seeking duration too hastily—trying to establish something permanent before its foundations are laid. The top line warns against restlessness—constant agitation that never allows anything to settle. Between these extremes lies the path of true duration: patient, steady movement in a constant direction.

These four lessons will recur throughout this book. They apply to the body, which endures through constant renewal guided by a stable pattern. They apply to the self, which endures through growth guided by lasting values. They apply to institutions, which endure through adaptation guided by a constant mission. They apply to civilizations, which endure through reform guided by a living tradition.

A Living Text

There is one final reason why the I Ching is the right place to begin this book. It is not only a theory of continuity through change; it is a demonstration of it.

Consider what the book has passed through. It survived the fall of the Zhou dynasty and the centuries of warfare that followed. It survived the unification of China under the Qin, whose first emperor is remembered for ordering the burning of books. It was transformed by the scholars of the Han, reinterpreted by the philosopher Wang Bi in the third century, reorganized by the Neo-Confucian thinkers of the Song dynasty, and argued over by scholars of every subsequent era. It traveled to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, where it shaped philosophy, government, medicine, and the martial arts. In the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries it reached Europe, where it fascinated the mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who saw in its arrangement of solid and broken lines a parallel to the binary arithmetic he had developed. In the twentieth century it was translated into German by Richard Wilhelm and from German into English, with a foreword by the psychologist Carl Jung, and it became one of the most widely read Chinese books in the Western world.

At every stage, the book was read differently. Han scholars read it as a key to the correlations between heaven and human affairs. Wang Bi read it as a guide to the underlying principles behind the images. Song scholars read it as a source of metaphysics and moral cultivation. Leibniz read it as mathematics. Jung read it as psychology. Modern scholars read it as a historical document of early Chinese culture. Martial artists read it as the philosophy of movement.

None of these readings is the only correct one, and none has displaced the others. Each has added a layer, and the book has grown richer with each. The I Ching has remained continuous for three thousand years not by being preserved under glass, but by being opened, argued with, and reinterpreted in every generation. It is a living text, and its life is the life of change.

How the Book Was Consulted

Although this book reads the I Ching as philosophy, it is worth understanding how the text was traditionally consulted, because the method itself expresses the book's view of change.

The oldest method that survives in detail uses fifty stalks of the yarrow plant. The procedure is described in the Great Treatise. One stalk is set aside at the start and takes no further part; the remaining forty-nine are divided at random into two piles, and then counted off in groups of four through a sequence of steps. The remainders produced by three rounds of this counting yield one of four numbers:

six, seven, eight, or nine. Seven produces a young yang line and eight a young yin line; these are stable. Nine produces an old yang line and six an old yin line; these are moving lines, about to change into their opposites. The process is repeated six times, building the hexagram from the bottom up. The full procedure is slow, often taking many minutes, and was traditionally performed with care and ceremony.

A simpler method, which became common in later centuries, uses three coins. One face of each coin is assigned the value three and the other the value two. The three coins are tossed together, and their values are added, producing a total of six, seven, eight, or nine, with the same meanings as in the yarrow method. Six tosses produce a complete hexagram.

The two methods produce different probabilities. With the coins, each of the moving lines, six and nine, appears one time in eight, and each of the stable lines, seven and eight, three times in eight. With the yarrow stalks, the probabilities are unequal: an old yin line appears only one time in sixteen and an old yang line three times in sixteen, while a young yang line appears five times in sixteen and a young yin line seven times in sixteen. The yarrow method, in other words, builds an asymmetry into the system: yang tends to move more readily than yin, and the yielding lines tend to remain stable. Whether or not the ancient authors designed this deliberately, it gives the traditional method a texture that the coin method lacks.

The important point is not the arithmetic but the structure. Every consultation produces a configuration in which some lines are stable and some are moving. It never produces a frozen state. Even the method of consulting the I Ching enacts its teaching: the present is always shown as a moment within a process, with the seeds of the next situation already visible.

Consultation as Reflection

Many readers today, including many in China, approach the question of divination with skepticism, and this book does not ask anyone to believe that the fall of coins or the counting of stalks reveals hidden truths. It is worth noting, however, that the Chinese tradition itself contained a strand of thought that valued the I Ching chiefly as a guide to reflection rather than as a means of prediction.

The philosopher Xunzi, who lived in the third century before the common era and was one of the great early interpreters of Confucian thought, remarked that those who are good at the Changes do not divine. His meaning, as later scholars understood it, was that a person who has truly absorbed the principles of the book no longer needs to consult it in each particular case. He has learned to see the patterns of change directly. The book has done its work by training his judgment.

This view has been influential among readers who approach the I Ching as philosophy. It suggests that the deepest use of the book is not to ask it what will happen, but to learn from it how to see what is happening. A person who has studied the sixty-four hexagrams has, in effect, studied sixty-four kinds of situation, and the counsel appropriate to each. Faced with a new situation, such a person can ask: which of these does this resemble? Where are the moving lines? What does the time call for?

Even readers who consult the book in the traditional way often report that its value lies less in the answer than in the reflection the answer provokes. The hexagram that appears becomes an occasion to look at one's situation from a new angle—to ask whether it really is a time of Waiting, or of Breakthrough, or of Retreat, and what follows if it is. In this sense, consultation and philosophy converge. Both aim at the same thing: a clearer view of the moment within the process.

Correlative Thinking

Scholars of Chinese thought sometimes describe the intellectual world of the I Ching as one of correlative thinking—a way of understanding the world by noticing correspondences among different domains. The trigram Heaven corresponds to the father, to the head, to the horse, to strength, to the northwest in one arrangement and the south in another. The trigram Water corresponds to the middle son, to the ear, to the pig, to danger, to the north. These correspondences link the cosmos, the family, the body, the animal world, and the moral life into a single web.

To a modern scientific mind, many of these correspondences may seem arbitrary. Why should Water correspond to the ear, or Thunder to the foot? The specific links often reflect associations that made sense within ancient Chinese culture and are difficult to reconstruct today. But the underlying intuition is not arbitrary at all. It is the intuition that the same patterns recur at different scales and in different domains—that the dynamic of a family resembles the dynamic of the seasons, that the course of a life resembles the course of a day, that the rise and fall of a dynasty resembles the waxing and waning of the moon.

This intuition is precisely what this book relies on. When we say that the body, the self, the family, the tradition, the institution, and the civilization all maintain their continuity through change, we are making a correlative claim: that a single pattern appears in many domains. The difference is that modern science allows us to test such claims more rigorously than the ancient authors could. Where the I Ching asserted correspondences on the basis of observation and analogy, we can now examine the evidence of biology, psychology, history, and ecology. The remarkable thing is how often that evidence confirms the ancient intuition.

Continuity Snapshot: The Book That Escaped the Fire

In 213 before the common era, according to the great historian Sima Qian, the First Emperor of Qin, who had recently unified China after centuries of war, approved a proposal from his chancellor Li Si to suppress the books of the rival philosophical schools. Histories of the former states and the classics of poetry and documents were to be gathered and burned. The aim was to break the hold of the past on the present and to ensure that the new empire would be governed by its own laws rather than by appeals to ancient precedent.

Certain categories of books, however, were exempted. Works on medicine, on agriculture and forestry, and on divination were allowed to survive. The Book of Changes, as a manual of divination, fell into this protected category.

The irony is striking. The book that has done more than any other to shape Chinese philosophical thought survived the most famous attempt in Chinese history to erase philosophical thought—because it was classified as a practical tool. Its humble origin as a divination manual, which later scholars sometimes treated as an embarrassment, turned out to be the very thing that preserved it.

The Qin dynasty itself lasted only fifteen years. The Han dynasty that followed restored the classics and placed the Book of Changes at the head of them. A text that had been spared because it was considered merely useful became the most revered of all.

The episode illustrates a principle that will recur throughout this book. What enables something to endure is often not what we expect. The I Ching survived the fire not because it was protected as a treasure but because it was flexible enough to be several things at once—a manual for daily decisions and a profound philosophy, a tool and a scripture. Its capacity to be read in more than one way was not a weakness. It was the secret of its continuity.

In 1973, archaeologists excavating a tomb at Mawangdui in southern China, sealed in 168 before the common era, found a copy of the Book of Changes written on silk. It is one of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the text. Its hexagrams are arranged in a different order from the received version, and some of its names and wording differ. Yet it is unmistakably the same book. Even in its physical history, the I Ching shows the same pattern: variation in the details, continuity in the whole.

For Reflection

Think of something in your life that has lasted a long time—a friendship, a practice, a commitment, an institution you belong to. What has changed about it over the years? What has stayed constant? Did the changes threaten its continuity, or did they help sustain it?

The hexagram Duration teaches that the noble person stands firm and does not change direction. What is the direction of your own life—the orientation you would want to hold steady through every change of circumstance?

The I Ching describes every situation as having stable lines and moving lines. In your present situation, what seems stable? What seems to be at the point of turning? Where does the movement appear to be heading?

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