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The Role of *Zhouyi* in shaping Modern China's Nation Memory

(Section LJRHSS-A: History)

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores modern China's national memory through the lens of the *Zhouyi*. Traditional Chinese historiography often regards ancient China as a golden age. In the 20th-century, the Doubting Antiquity School, led by Gu Jiegang, questioned this perspective, advocating for reevaluating ancient Chinese texts. During this period, many scholars revisited these ancient texts. This paper finds that 20th-century Yi-ology exhibited a tendency toward "telling China's story well," as scholars used the *Zhouyi* to reconstruct a new ancient historical discourse. This discourse, while based on ancient history, served 20th-century China to reshape modern China's national memory. The paper introduces the 20th-century research achievements in *Zhouyi* studies. It examines the original significance of Yi during the Zhou Dynasty, which is crucial for understanding why *Zhouyi* has consistently been regarded as a Chinese canon. Finally, it argues that the *Zhouyi* has played a significant role in shaping China's national identity by reconstructing national memory through the 20th-century discourse.

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I. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, Chinese society has harboured a vision of early China, perceiving the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties as a "golden age." This perception is rooted in the belief that the Yellow Emperor era initiated civilization and became the ancestral origin of the Han Chinese. The Xia dynasty, founded by Yu the Great (大禹) following his success in flood control, marked the beginning of China's hereditary dynastic system. In contrast, the Zhou dynasty claimed descent from the Xia. This framework established the traditional

narrative of ancient Chinese history. Since the Han dynasty historian Sima Qian (司馬遷, ca. 145 BCE–86 BCE) formalized this historical system, the majority of Chinese scholars have adhered to the notion of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors (*Sanhuang wudi* 三皇五帝) and the golden era of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, as shaped by Confucian ideals, believing that antiquity aligns with an ideal culture.

However, since the 1920s, Gu Jiegang (顧頡剛, 1893–1980), the founder of the Doubting Antiquity School (*yigu xuepai* 疑古學派), initiated a critical reassessment of Confucian classics, challenging this traditional perspective and destabilizing long-held beliefs regarding ancient history. The Doubting Antiquity School effectively overturned the historical consensus that had persisted for over two millennia. Imagine being a 60-year-old scholar in China in 1925, confronted with claims that the five emperors documented in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) are fictitious, that Yu the Great is unrelated to the Xia Dynasty and that the Confucian texts you have devoted your life to are mere historical sources rather than "classics." Having experienced the events of the Eight-Nation Alliance (Baguo lianjun 八國聯軍) and the 1911 Revolution (Xinhai geming 辛亥革命), while your parents faced the aftermath of the Opium Wars, and amidst persistent civil unrest and Japanese aggression, you concluded that China's principal weaknesses were military and political in nature. Yet, scholars like Gu Jiegang are now questioning the very foundations of Chinese civilization. How should one respond?

In the early 20th-Century, Chinese historiography was characterized by scepticism, interpretation, and belief regarding antiquity.¹ Scholars faced a

¹ This saying originated from Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 in 1937. See Feng Youlan: "Preface of Feng 馮序," in *Critique of Ancient*

pivotal question: how should ancient China be perceived? Was it genuinely illustrious or fundamentally flawed? This article examines the *Zhouyi*, posing the central question: How did 20th-century scholars interpret the *Zhouyi*? Did they employ it to challenge the notion of a "prosperous age" or to reconstruct their conception of early China? Few ancient historians can accurately depict the true history of early China; narratives are often constructed based on belief. In my view, this discourse shaped the scholarly landscape of early 20th-century China. The integrity of this discourse concerning early Chinese history is secondary; the primary concern is the motivation behind its construction. In the tumultuous 20th-Century, China required not a factual account of its early history, but rather a restoration of national identity and memory. From this perspective, the *Zhouyi* encapsulates not only the objective truth of early China, which historians ought pursue, but also represents the efforts of 20th-century scholars to explore this historical period. Their work included subjective reconstructions of historical narratives to formulate a discourse on early China.

The discourse surrounding early China was intricately linked to the Chinese academic landscape of the 20th-Century, during a "new" intellectual resurgence. In the waning decades of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), diplomatic failures and internal political challenges prompted Chinese intellectuals to reevaluate politics, society, the economy, and ideology. The New Culture Movement (1915–1925) further catalyzed transformative changes in Chinese culture. In this "new" wave, it is pertinent to examine our relationship with millennia-old historical materials and classics, particularly in how we interpret these elements in the "New Era." A century later, China continues to promote a New Era, emphasizing the importance of "telling China's story well" (*jiang hao zhongguo gushi* 講好中國故事). Through the lens of *Zhouyi*, we can pose critical questions: How did 20th-century

History 古史辨, ed. Luo Genze 羅根澤 (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2003), 6: 1b. Cf. Zhang Jinghua 張京華, *The School of Gushibian and China's Modern Academic Trend* 古史辨派與中國現代學術走向 (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2009), 19 – 22.

scholars utilize *Zhouyi* to construct their version of early China? How did it enable them to shape memories of early China? And how did they employ *Zhouyi* to narrate early China's story effectively?

At the dawn of the 20th-Century, as nation-states emerged globally, the Chinese populace grappled with reconciling modern nation-building with the traditional multiethnic framework.² Establishing a new nation required reinterpreting the past from a fresh perspective. Despite cultural critiques, the Chinese chose to shape historical discourse, integrating their country into the global cultural milieu, seeking to restore its erstwhile golden age, and effectively narrating China's story. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* conceptualizes the nation as an imagined community.

For instance, Stefan Tanaka posits that during the early Meiji period, Japanese elites crafted a Westernized image of Japan through historical narratives, positioning it among modern civilizations.³ Dipesh Chakrabarty contends that the history taught in modern India is a construct of European historiography, which dismisses ancient Indian texts as "mythology," a concept emerging from Europe.⁴ Prasenjit Duara suggests that nations construct a unified, evolving identity, creating an artificial unity; a shared historical understanding is crucial for nation-building.⁵

The conception of the Chinese nation and state was thus visualized as a regenerative process rooted in collective memory. *Zhouyi* played a pivotal role in this reawakening, serving a maieutic function to rediscover a collective identity. It was the material chosen by scholars of

² Wang Ke 王柯, *From a Country under Heaven to a Nation-state* 從天下國家到民族國家: 歷史中國的認知與實踐 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2020), 252 – 289.

³ Stefan Tanaka, "Imaging History: Inscripting Belief in the Nation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53.1 (1994): 24–44.

⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations*, 37 (1992): 1–26.

⁵ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 27.

the time to reconstruct the illustrious history of the Zhou Dynasty.

II. ZHOUYI STUDIES IN THE 20TH-CENTURY

Zhouyi holds a significant place as a classic of the Chinese nation. From the perspective of the Han people (*Huaxia minzu* 華夏民族), *Zhouyi* was initially a divinatory text. Over time, with various annotations and notes traditionally attributed to Confucius, it evolved into a philosophical work. Since 135 BCE, *Zhouyi* has become a canonical classic and a foundational element of Chinese culture. As a classic, it constitutes an integral part of both the cultural heritage and the collective memory of the Han people. Such texts are meant for active circulation and communication, undergoing a rigorous selection process to preserve Confucius's notes and secure their place in collective memory. This canonisation process sanctifies the text, conferring a sacred status upon it and its subjects. Initially, the term "canon" was religious, signifying a text's sanctity and immutability. Canonization also refers to the transformation of Christian martyrs into saints,⁶ whose stories are eternally remembered. Regardless of original intent, a canonized work is meant for perpetual preservation. Once sanctified, individuals, particularly Confucian scholars, were obligated to transmit *Zhouyi* verbatim, without alteration.⁷

During the Qing Dynasty, the status of Confucian classics remained elevated. Chen Yinke (陳寅恪, 1890–1969) observed that scholars of the time focused on textual criticism, primarily studying Confucian classics rather than history.⁸ Lü Simian (呂思勉, 1884–1957) noted that "Textual studies flourished in the Qing Dynasty, with the study of

Confucian classics at their core. Scholars typically began with these classics before exploring other disciplines."⁹ In the early 20th-century, the establishment of modern disciplines during the Republic of China era marked a shift,¹⁰ as historiography and historical research advanced.¹¹ Confucian classics lost their authoritative status in this period of reevaluation. Progressive thought in the late Qing and early Republic periods embraced the notion of evolutionary historical development,¹² suggesting national progress was hindered by archaic traditions.¹³ Historians sought to illustrate historical evolution and advocated for dispelling mystical debates (*xuanxue* 玄學). The hexagrams and individual lines in *Zhouyi*, with their esoteric language and divinatory practices, were scrutinized. Scholars in the Doubting Antiquity Movement proposed separating the classics from biographies, suggesting that *Zhouyi*'s original nature as a divinatory text be distinguished from the later Confucian commentary. The commentary, known as "Ten Wings" (*shi Yi* 十翼) in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220), was intended as a supplement to the *Yijing* (易經).

⁹ Lü Simian 呂思勉, *Collected Writings in Learning of Lü Simian* 呂思勉論學叢稿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 400.

¹⁰ On the establishment of modern disciplines during the Republic of China, see Luo Zhitian 羅志田, *Ten Essays on Modern Chinese Historiography* 近代中國史學十論 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2003), 1–23.

¹¹ See Liu Lung-hsin 劉龍心, *Academics and Institutions: The Disciplinary System and the Establishment of Modern Chinese Historiography* 學術與制度: 學科體制與現代中國史學的建立 (Taipei: Yuanliu, 2002); Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow, "Making History Modern: The Transformation of Chinese Historiography, 1895–1937," in *Transforming History: The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-century China*, ed. Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011), 1–45.

¹² Yan Fu's 嚴復 translation of Thomas H. Huxley's book *Evolution and Ethics* can be regarded as an initial attempt to introduce the theory of evolution into China. With Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 publication of new historiography (*xin shixue* 新史學) in 1902, the concept of evolutionary history began to take root in China. See Wang Zhongjiang 王中江, *The Rise of Evolutionism in China: A New Universal Worldview* 進化主義在中國的興起: 一個新的全能式世界觀 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2010)

¹³ Wang Dongjie 王東杰, *History, Voice and Academic: The Extension and Changes of Modern Chinese Culture* 歷史·聲音·學問: 近代中國文化的脈延與異變 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2018), 59–99.

⁶ Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 100.

⁷ On the etymology of "canon", see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 2000), 94–97.

⁸ Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, *Writings from the Golden Moon House*, vol. 2 金明館叢稿二編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), 238–239.

In the 1920s, Gu Jiegang, the founder of the Doubting Antiquity School, critically examined Confucian classics, challenging traditional beliefs about ancient history. The school's reevaluation of *Zhouyi* significantly impacted Chinese cultural identity by questioning its canonical status. From Fuxi's (伏羲) creation of trigrams, later developed into hexagrams by King Wen (周文王, ca. 1152 BCE–1056 BCE), to Confucius' *Yizhuan* (易傳), these ideas had been cherished for millennia.¹⁴ Although Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修) questioned Confucius' *Yizhuan* in *Dialogues with the Master* (*Yi tongzi wen* 易童子問) during the Song dynasty, it did not gain traction. In the Qing dynasty, Cui Shu's (崔述, 1740–1816) *An Analysis of Credibility* (*Kaoxin lu* 考信錄) argued that *Yizhuan* was not authored by Confucius, providing detailed reasons for his doubts.

The Doubting Antiquity School raised critical questions in Yi-ology: Did Fuxi create the eight trigrams? Did King Wen formulate the sixty-four hexagrams? Are the hexagrams and line statements related to King Wen and the Duke of Zhou? When was *Zhouyi* composed? Did Confucius study *Zhouyi* or author the “Ten Wings”? These inquiries, once irrelevant in traditional Yi-ology, became unavoidable in the 20th-century. To objectively understand *Zhouyi*, the Doubting Antiquity School proposed a new research direction, treating *Zhouyi* as historical material reflecting ancient social history. They advocated separating classics from biographies, viewing hexagrams and lines in *Zhouyi* as historical records of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

Gu Jiegang approached *Zhouyi* from a historian's perspective, suggesting hexagram and line statements are narrative accounts. For example, he interpreted “lost sheep at Yi” (*sang yang yu Yi* 喪羊於易) and “lost cattle at Yi” (*sang niu yu Yi* 喪牛於易) as referring to the Yin ancestor, Wang Hai's (王亥) experiences at Yi. The terms “no regret” (*wuhui* 無悔) and “ominous” (*xiong* 凶) were seen as narrative elements used for divination. Another case is “Jizi's calling

pheasant” (*Jizi ming Yi* 箕子明夷), where Gu interpreted “Jizi” as a historical figure from the late Shang dynasty, rather than separate entities “Ji” and “Zi” as traditionally viewed.¹⁵ Thus, the *Zhouyi* was stripped of its sanctified status and repositioned as a purely divinatory text.¹⁶

The Doubting Antiquity School regarded *Zhouyi* as historical material, significantly influencing subsequent text studies. Scholars within this school posited that ancient China lacked canonical texts and authoritative classics, viewing traditional classics merely as historical documents. This perspective steered Yi-ology towards a research methodology grounded in truth-seeking. Although the school of historical materialism differs from the Doubting Antiquity School, both share the objective of uncovering the underlying social and economic structures embedded in historical materials.

Guo Moruo (郭沫若), a leading figure in historical materialism, emphasized the historical value of *Zhouyi* in the context of ancient society. His seminal works, “The Historical Background and Intellectual Production of *Zhouyi*” (“*Zhouyi de shidai beijing yu jingshen shengchan*” 周易的時代背景與精神生產) written in 1927, and “The Time of *Zhouyi*'s Compilation” (“*Zhouyi zhi zhizuo shidai*” 周易之制作時代) written in 1935, demonstrate this approach. The former paper utilizes hexagram and line statements from *Zhouyi* to explore the political, economic, and intellectual milieu of the Shang through Zhou dynasties. At the same time, the latter investigates the authorship and dating of the text. Despite differing perspectives, these works illustrate how Guo Moruo employed *Zhouyi* to reconstruct the social history of the Zhou dynasty.

¹⁵ Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, “The Story in *Gua yao ci* of *Zhouyi* 周易卦爻辭中的故事,” in *Critique of Ancient History*, 3: 1–26b.

¹⁶ On Gu Jiegang's Yi-ology research, see Yang Qingzhong 楊慶中, *History of Yi-ology in China's 20th-Century* 二十世紀中國易學史 (Beijing: renmin chubanshe, 2000), 61–67; Zhu Yanmin 朱彥民, *Yi-ology in the Perspective of Historiography* 史學視野下的易學 (Guangzhou: Huanan ligong daxue chubanshe, 2017) 147–151. Many sentences and paragraphs in Zhu Yanmin's work are identical to Yang Qingzhong's argument, yet Yang's work is not cited, which is plagiarism. Attention should be given when referencing Zhu's work.

Guo Moruo analyzed hexagrams such as *Tun* (屯), *Shi* (師), and *Bi* (比), concluding that it was still the Bronze Age, as the hexagram and line statements did not mention “nets” (*wanggu* 網罟), and the mulberry and hemp industries were underdeveloped. He used hexagrams “no illusion” (*wuwang* 無妄), “livestock” (*daxu* 大畜), and “netted” (*li* 離) to highlight the existence of animal husbandry. Hexagrams “travelling” (*lü* 旅) and “shaking” (*zhen* 震) indicated that trade and commerce were advanced, with transportation and monetary systems already in place. Regarding agriculture, Guo noted that only one hexagram and line statement referred to farming, while other mentions of “fields” were unrelated to agriculture. He also identified some stone structures, suggesting that cave dwellings had not been entirely abandoned.

Although Guo acknowledged a degree of speculation in his interpretations, he asserted that *Zhouyi* represented a transitional period from livestock breeding to agriculture, with the nascent development of handicrafts, agriculture, and commerce.

Socially and politically, *Zhouyi* indicates the presence of paired marriage, signalling a transition from group marriage to a gradually emerging patrilineal family system. The text, in a political context, references the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), ruler (*dajun* 大君), the country’s ruler (*guojun* 國君), and the enfeoffed lords (*hou* 侯), each of whom fulfills distinct roles. The phrase “assembling at the outskirts” (*tongren yuye* 同人於野) suggests the existence of a council, whereas the king conducted sacrificial gatherings in the ancestral temple (*heng wang jia you miao* 亨王假有廟). Thus, the basic organizational structure of a state was already in place during this period.

Guo Moruo’s research demonstrates that the hexagram and line statements in *Zhouyi* are historical records reflecting the societal conditions of the time, devoid of any sacred connotations, and purely narrative. Hu Pu’an’s (胡朴安, 1878–1947) 1942 work, *Views on the Ancient History of Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi gushiguan* 周易古史觀), emerged within this academic environment. *Zhouyi* played

a crucial role in early Chinese historical materials, prompting scholars to reassess their perspectives in light of newfound historical evidence.¹⁷

If *Zhouyi* is not considered a classic, it reverts to being a book of divination. Based on the discovery of Shang oracle bones, Rong Zhaozu (容肇祖, 1897–1994) argued that these findings provided substantial evidence for the divinatory origins of *Zhouyi*. He asserted, “The most enigmatic aspects of *Zhouyi* can be resolved. The divinatory *Zhouyi* was not a mystical creation of ancient emperors; the later philosophical *Zhouyi* was merely an added branch.”¹⁸ Similarly, Li Jingchi (李鏡池), a student of Gu Jiegang, stated, “We believe that *Zhouyi* is a book of divination. Its origin and purpose lie in divination.”¹⁹ The inherent nature of *Zhouyi* is thus unequivocally divinatory, reaffirming its status as a book of divination²⁰.

In the 1950s, Li Jingchi, a dedicated scholar of the *Zhouyi*, embraced Marx’s theory of historical materialism, positing that the Western Zhou

¹⁷ The discovery of the oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty, Dunhuang 敦煌 documents, bamboo and wooden slips in the northwest from the Han through Jin Dynasties, and cabinet (*neige* 內閣) records of the Ming through Qing Dynasties in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have all provided new materials for historical research. As Wang Guowei 王國維 stated, “This era is an era of discovery, incomparable to any since ancient times.” See Wang Guowei 王國維, “Scholarship on Recent Discoveries of the Last Twenty or Thirty Years 最近二三十年中中國新發見之學問,” in *The Critical Review* 學衡, no. 45 (1925). Also see Zhang Yue 張越, *Between the Old and the New, East and West: Chinese Historiography in the May Fourth Period* 新舊中西之間: 五四時期的中國史學 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2007), 89–102.

¹⁸ Rong Zhaozu 容肇祖, “Origin of Divination 占卜的源流,” in *Critique of Ancient History*, 3: 155b.

¹⁹ Li Jingchi 李鏡池, “The Inscriptions of *Zhouyi* 周易筮辭考” in *Critique of Ancient History*, 3: 119b.

²⁰ The Chinese academic circle virtually exclusively regarded Li Jingchi as part of the school of doubting antiquity, mainly because Li was a student of Gu Jiegang. Unlike other antiquarian scholars of the school, Li Jingchi devoted his entire life to researching *Yi* studies; scholars of the doubting antiquity school all researched a particular aspect of *Yi*-ology. Li Jingchi reconstructed ancient history and illustrated various aspects of Zhou Dynasty society. Inspired by Gu Jiegang in the early stages and influenced by Guo Moruo later, Li Jingchi interpreted *Zhouyi* with historical materialism. See details Li Cien 李慈恩, *The Study of Li Jingchi’s Yi-ology* 李鏡池易學研究 (Taipei: Hua mu lan chubanshe, 2009).

dynasty represented an enslaved society. He reconstructed ancient history by suggesting that fortune tellers in the Zhou Dynasty compiled the *Zhouyi*, embedding historical realities from primitive to slave societies. Notably, elements such as paired marriage, bride kidnapping, and sororate marriage are evident in the hexagrams and line statements. This period was characterized by slavery, with systems involving prisoners of war, human trafficking, human sacrifice, and social stratification, alongside aristocratic commercial activities and slave persecution. Thus, the *Zhouyi* reflects the inherent struggles of Western Zhou society. Tomohisa Ikeda argues that Li's reconstruction of Western Zhou society was influenced by Guo Moruo's methodologies in *Studies on Ancient Chinese Society (Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu 中國古代社會研究)*.²¹ Despite the oppressive nature of slavery during the Western Zhou, the *Zhouyi* authors addressed internal conflicts and political corruption among the nobility, offering insights into governance and conduct.²² Li's work employs the *Yi* as a tool for historical critique, preserving scarce historical data from the Western Zhou era. Its significant value lies in its documentation of events, such as King Tai of Zhou's migration to Qishan 岐山, the Battle of Muye 牧野, the Duke of Zhou's eastern expeditions, and the royal family's eastward relocation.

Hu Pu'an similarly used the *Yi* to recount history. His *Views on the Ancient History of Zhouyi* departed from traditional philosophical interpretations, considering it from a purely historical perspective. He proposed that the *Zhouyi* is a historical account of social development, suggesting that if the *Yijing* is ancient history, then *Yizhuan* must also be. However, Hu's work is critiqued for its lack of

chronological coherence, challenging its historical validity. Moreover, his assertion that the original intent behind the *Zhouyi* was historical documentation remains contentious. Nonetheless, he diverged from his contemporaries by denying the *Zhouyi*'s divinatory and philosophical nature.

Gao Heng 高亨 (1900 – 1986), another prominent 20th-century *Yi* scholar, advocated for the separation of classics and commentaries. He contended that the "classic" portion is a divination text originating from the Western Zhou dynasty. In contrast, the *Yizhuan* was written during the Warring States Period and represents a distorted interpretation.²³ Gao emphasized that the primary aim of studying *Yijing* should be historical inquiry rather than divination.²⁴ His approach focused on interpreting hexagram and line statements to uncover their original meanings, moving away from numerological constraints and employing historical data for analyzing ancient scriptures.

The influence of the Doubting Antiquity School prompted *Yi* scholars to explore the *Zhouyi*'s essence through logical analysis. Zhu Bokun's 朱伯崑 (1923 – 2007) work is particularly representative, emphasizing the value of *Yi*-ology in Chinese culture through its integration of intuitive, symbolic, logical, and dialectical thinking.²⁵ Zhu's philosophical interpretation of *Zhouyi* underscores its connection to other Chinese philosophical systems, offering insights into the national characteristics of Chinese philosophy and cultural traditions.

This paper aims to illustrate that 20th-century *Yi*-ology studies shifted focus from viewing *Zhouyi* as a Confucian classic to exploring its historical content, reflecting early Chinese society's fishing, hunting, and farming activities. Although 20th-century discourse did not effectively "tell China's story," the *Zhouyi* encapsulates an evolutionary narrative consistent with ancient Chinese historiography's view of the continuous progress of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou

²¹ Tomohisa Ikeda 池田知久, "Li Jingchi to gendai no 'syuueki' kenkyuu" 李鏡池と現代の「周易」研究, in Miyazawa Seizyun hakase koki kinen ronbunshuukankou kai 宮澤正順博士古稀記念論文集刊行會(ed.), *Touyou: Hikakubunkarosyuu: Miyazawa Seizyun hakase koki kinen 東洋: 比較文化論集: 宮澤正順博士古稀記念* (Tokyo: Seishi shuppan, 2004), 561.

²² Li Jingchi 李鏡池, *A General Meaning of Zhouyi 周易通義*, in *Complete Works of Zhongyi of Li Jingchi 李鏡池周易著作全集* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019), 434–435.

²³ Gao Heng 高亨, *A Modern Commentary of the Zhouyi 周易大傳今注* (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1979), 1–2.

²⁴ Gao Heng 高亨, *A Modern Commentary of the Zhouyi*, 4.

²⁵ See Zhu Bokun, *History of the Philosophical Aspects of the Study of the Changes 易學哲學史*, 4 vols (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1996).

dynasties. The transformation from primitive society to statehood, depicted through mythology and legends such as Fuxi, Shennong神農, and the Yellow Emperor黃帝, is mirrored in the *Zhouyi*, highlighting class emergence, economic advancement, and social relations.

With the emergence of many discoveries rewriting ancient Chinese history in Chinese archaeology in the 1970s, the unearthed *Zhouyi* naturally attracted the attention of scholars. To comprehensively introduce the unearthed *Zhouyi* or *Yijing*, it was apparent that another article or book was needed. I wish to point out in this article that the unearthed *Zhouyi* or *Yijing* can also “telling China’s story well”. Influenced by traditional Confucianism for a long time, the transmitted *Zhouyi* has naturally become a classic, and in comparison, the unearthed *Zhouyi* or *Yijing* can better demonstrate the excellence of Chinese culture and the original nature of *Yi* itself. For Chinese scholars, archaeological discoveries after the 1970s can strengthen the national pride that has been undermined by the Disputing Antiquity Movement since the 1920s. As Diana Lary puts it: “The beauty of archaeology is that, besides providing incontrovertible evidence, it creates physical sites as visible proof of the past glory of contemporary people.”²⁶ Archaeology in China, like the rest of the world, has been used to serve nationalism, which is conducive to the establishment of 20th-century discourses. Robert Bagley’s statement is typical: “Marxist ideas entered Chinese archaeology after 1949, but their influence was felt chiefly in Neolithic archaeology; in the archaeology of later periods, the Marxist demand for a universal history was outweighed by the demand for a local history that could be a source of national pride.”²⁷ Scholars generally assert that Chinese archaeology serves nationalist purposes, a view that is also shared by many

Chinese scholars. From 1996 to 2000, the Chinese government launched the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project (Xia Shang Zhou *Duandai Gongcheng* 夏商周斷代工程), Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1933 – 2019), the director of the Chronology Project, said that ever since Sima Qian pronounced himself unable to reconstruct China’s chronology before 842 B.C., and thanks to modern archaeological discoveries, the purpose of this project is to use archaeological methods to rebuild China’s political chronology.²⁸ Li’s proposal to “walking out of the age of doubting antiquity” (zouchu Yigu shidai 走出疑古時代), demonstrates that scholars have regarded archaeology in China over the last few decades as a powerful tool to counter the influence of the Doubting Antiquity School, although some scholars, including Chinese ones, have questioned the project.²⁹ Ideas similar to “walk out of the age of doubting antiquity” are not the first time Li Xueqin has put them forward. As early as 1928, Gu Jiegang’s classmate Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896 – 1950) advocated reconstruction, and Gu himself revised his original method early on, and the sources provided by contemporary archaeology was regarded as credible and usable to reconstruct ancient Chinese history³⁰.

The development of modern Chinese archaeology, exemplified by the 1928 excavation of YinXu 殷墟 (the Wastes of Yin),³¹ successfully validated the Shang dynasty as the first Chinese dynasty, confirming the accuracy of the “Basic Annals of

²⁶ Diana Lary, “The Tomb of the King of Nanyue – The Contemporary Agenda of History,” *Modern China* 22.1 (1996): 8.

²⁷ Robert Bagley, “Shang Archaeology,” in Michael Loewe & Edward Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 132. Also see Tang Jigen 唐際根, “Archaeology, Historical Tendencies, and Nationalism 考古學·證史傾向·民族主義,” *Xia-Shang-Zhou Archaeology* 三代考古, 2004: 1–8.

²⁸ Li Xueqin, “The Nature, Content, and Purpose of Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project 夏商周斷代工程的性質、內容和目的,” in his *Rewriting the History of Academic* 重寫學術史 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001): 81–84

²⁹ For examples of questioned the project, see: Jiang Zu-di 蔣祖棣, “Question on Studies of Western Zhou Dates 西周年代研究之疑問,” *Chinese Studies* 漢學研究通訊, 84(2002): 1–4; Zhang Lidong 張立東, “Face-to-face Dialogue: A Trip to the United States for the ‘Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project’ 面對面的對話——「夏商周斷代工程」的美國之旅,” *China Cultural Relics News* 中國文物報, 4 May, 2002.

³⁰ Fu Sinian went from supporting Gu Jiegang’s work of doubting antiquities to advocating the reconstruction of ancient history, see Tu Cheng-sheng 杜正勝, “The Historiographical Revolution of Fu Sinian 傅斯年的史學革命,” in his *New Road for Historical Studies* 新史學之路 (Taipei: Sanmin, 2004), 92–101.

³¹ See Li Chi, *Anyang* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1977).

the Yin" ("Yin benji" 殷本紀) in the *Records of the Grand Historian*. In 1959, Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 (1888 – 1976) conducted fieldwork in Dengfeng 登封 and Yanshi 偃師 to locate the capital or remnants of the Xia dynasty.³² These archaeological endeavours have significantly contributed to reconstructing China's ancient history. Following the Disputing Antiquity Movement, the trend of "interpreting antiquity" emerged, underscoring the necessity of archaeological evidence in rewriting ancient Chinese history.

The unearthed *Zhouyi* exemplifies the text's diversity. The Mawangdui 馬王堆 *Yijing*, discovered in 1973, markedly differs from the transmitted *Zhouyi*. The sequence of the sixty-four hexagrams in the transmitted version lacks discernible logic, apart from grouping pairs of hexagrams that share invertible characteristics or, in specific cases, by converting all lines to their opposites.³³ The 1977 excavation of a Han tomb in Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui 安徽 Province, revealed a *Zhouyi* containing 2009 words of divination not present in the current version.³⁴ The 1993 discovery of the Qun tomb in Wangjiatai 王家台, Hubei 湖北 Province, revealed the *Gui cang* 歸藏, which shares many similarities with the *Zhouyi*. This finding provides valuable insights into the original meanings of the hexagram names and the transmission of the *Gui cang*.³⁵ In 2003, Volume 3 of the Shanghai Museum strips included a manuscript of the *Zhouyi*, representing the earliest known version, dating to the late Warring States period.³⁶ This manuscript includes hexagram names, statements, and line statements with notable differences from the current *Zhouyi*.

³² Xu Xusheng, "Preliminary Report on the Investigation of Xia Yuxi 1959年夏豫西調查"夏墟"的初步報告," *Archaeology* 考古, 11(1959): 592–600.

³³ See Liao Mingchun 廖名春, *Collected Writings on Zhongyi Cloth Texts* 帛書周易論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 4–15.

³⁴ See Han Ziqiang 韓自強, *Study on Fuyang Han Zhongyi* 阜陽漢簡周易研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003).

³⁵ Liao Mingchun 廖名春, "A Glance at the Qin Scripts of Wangjiatai *Gui cang* 王家台秦簡歸藏管窺," *Studies of Zhongyi* 周易研究, 2(2001): 13.

³⁶ Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, *Shanghai Museum Bamboo Slips* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003) vol. 3, 13–70 (plates), 133–215 (transcription).

Other bamboo and silk materials from Chu 楚, such as those from Wangshan 望山, Baoshan 包山, and Tianxingguan 天星觀, are related to milfoil divination and date to the mid-Warring States Period. The 2,000-year-old *Zhouyi* is not immutable; the unearthed versions and manuscripts reveal the diversity of ancient China. From a historiographical perspective, contemporary archaeological discoveries have enriched discussions surrounding the Doubting Antiquity School. Given that the *Zhouyi* is not merely a classic, how does its content reflect the nature of early Chinese society?

In 1997, Edward L. Shaughnessy published a monograph entitled *I Ching: The Classic of Changes, The First English Translation of the Newly Discovered Second-Century B.C. Mawangdui Texts*, translating the Mawangdui *Yijing*, and later published *Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yi Jing (I Ching) and Related Texts* in 2013, which includes detailed research and English translations of the Shanghai Museum's *Zhouyi*, Wangjiatai's *Gui cang*, and Fuyang's *Zhouyi*. In 2022, Shaughnessy examined the origin and development of the Yi through the lenses of "context" and "text," culminating in "The Origin and Early Development of Zhou Changes." This work synthesizes his extensive research on the *Zhouyi*, analyzing its transmission and early manuscripts, linking them to the philosophy of divination in early China. He provides an in-depth analysis of turtle-shell and milfoil divination, hexagrams, and lines, concluding with the significant theme of the transition from divination to philosophy.

Shaughnessy's scholarship advances the study of the *Zhouyi* from the twentieth-century to a new level, utilizing both excavated and transmitted documents to illustrate the evolution of the early *Zhouyi*. He emphasizes the "unfinished" nature of the *Zhouyi*, and his analysis of the "Ten Wings" elucidates how the *Zhouyi* was transformed into a Confucian classic. As a Western scholar, Shaughnessy approaches early Chinese studies without patriotic biases, yet his research significantly contributes to the understanding of early Chinese classics. His works, translated into

Chinese, are influencing the Chinese academic sphere. From the perspective of "telling China's story well," his comparative analysis of archaeological discoveries and traditional documents enhances the portrayal of early China as a "golden age." It is important to note that Shaughnessy remains faithful to the materials he examines, providing an objective discourse that plays a crucial role in contemporary narratives about early China—mainly because he offers insights from a Western perspective.³⁷

The *Zhouyi* has garnered interest among Western scholars, and the global study of the *I Ching* has become a prominent topic. Richard Smith explores the evolution of the *Zhouyi* across various Chinese historical periods, noting that modern Chinese Yi-ology now emphasizes the scientific and psychological aspects of the *Zhouyi*.³⁸ Without the challenges posed by the Doubting Antiquity School, such diverse explorations of Yi-ology might not have emerged.

III. THE CLASSIC AND COMMENTARY OF YIJING IN THE ZHOU DYNASTY

The discourse on the *Zhouyi*, as developed by 20th-century Yi scholars, was significantly shaped by the sociopolitical context of the time, with the objective of effectively "telling China's story well." This initiative was a response to the unprecedented challenges faced by Qing Dynasty China since the 19th-century, which necessitated a reevaluation of its ancient history and culture. The question remains: what was the significance of the *Zhouyi* during the Zhou dynasty? Given that the

Yijing is fundamentally a divination book, why does it hold such a prestigious position among Chinese classics? Much like early Chinese history, definitive answers to these questions remain elusive. The "classic" aspect of the *Zhouyi* pertains to the divination practices of the early Zhou Dynasty, while the "commentary" consists of later interpretations and additions. The *Records of the Grand Historian* attributed the *Yizhuan* to Confucius, a view that persisted until the Song Dynasty. Ouyang Xiu's "Dialogues with the Master" first cast doubt on this attribution, followed by Yuan dynasty scholars Zhao Rumei 趙汝楛 and Wang Shenzi 王申子, who also questioned Confucius' authorship. Qing dynasty scholar Cui Shu provided more compelling evidence, ultimately negating the traditional view of Confucius' authorship. Regardless of its authorship, scholars generally agree that the *Yizhuan* was composed between the Warring States Period and the Qin through the Han dynasties, indicating a gap of 600 to 700 years between the *Yijing* and the *Yizhuan*. The evolution from divination records to philosophical discourse marked a pivotal shift in the historical narrative of early China.

The *Yizhuan*, shaped by numerous Confucian scholars, is imbued with Confucian thought. Confucius frequently engaged with the Yi, reportedly breaking the cords of the bamboo strips multiple times (*weibian sanjue* 韋編三絕). His students documented, elaborated, and supplemented his teachings, which became the *Yizhuan* during the early to middle Warring States period. Despite its current status, the *Zhouyi* was not highly esteemed during the Zhou Dynasty. *The Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經) and *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), both Confucian classics, do not mention the Yi. "Zhou" in *Zhouyi* refers to the Western Zhou dynasty, and the "king" is likely the King of Zhou. However, in the Eastern Zhou dynasty, a new era, ancient texts such as *The Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo Zhuan* 左傳) and *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語) frequently referenced the *Zhouyi*. In the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), it is mentioned alongside *Lian shan* and *Gui cang* as the "three changes" (*sanYi* 三易), yet *Zhouyi* attained a unique status.

³⁷ Chinese scholar Li Ling 李零 once said an American scholar told Li Ling that Shaughnessy's work is intended for a Chinese audience. Shaughnessy responded that he was "making China my academic centre." See Li Ling 李零, *Xueshu "ke suo wo" – Yichang weirao Wu Hong xinzuo de taolun* 學術 "科索沃"—一場圍繞巫鴻新作的討論, *Brush Notes from Daitu Studio* 何枝可依: 待兔軒讀書記 (Beijing: Sanlian shuju, 2009), 171; Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Arousals and Images: Essays on Ancient Chinese Cultural History* 興與象: 中國古代文化史論文集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guiji chubanshe, 2012), 338.

³⁸ Richard Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World* *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: The Yijing (I Ching or Classic of Changes) and Its Evolution in China* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 208–217.

The "three changes" share both similarities and differences, including divination methods and the number of hexagrams, utilizing Yin and yang lines (*Yin yang yao* 陰陽爻). However, the first hexagram and the order of hexagrams differ among them. The discovery of the *Gui cang* at Wangjiatai in 1993 confirms hexagram name correspondences among them. Notably, *Lian shan* and *Gui cang* contain more legendary figures than the *Zhouyi*. *Gui cang* includes figures like King Wu 周武王 and King Mu of Zhou 周穆王, suggesting *Lian shan* is not necessarily the *Yi* of the Xia Dynasty, nor is *Gui cang* the *Yi* of the Shang Dynasty. It is likely that the "three changes" existed in parallel and were used simultaneously for divination.³⁹

Confucius' preference for the *Zhouyi* over *Lian shan* and *Gui cang* is attributed to *Zhouyi*'s perceived completeness. The Mawangdui *Yi*, unearthed in 1973, includes a chapter titled "Essentials" (*yao* 要), where Confucius' student Zi Gong 子貢 inquires about Confucius' later studies of the *Yi*. Confucius valued it for preserving ancient teachings amidst the loss of many ancient texts.⁴⁰ His belief in divination is evident, as he claimed a 70% success rate in divination, using it frequently during his travels and lectures. Evidence suggests *Gui cang* continued to circulate during and beyond Confucius' time. The Qin Dynasty bamboo slip *Gui cang* from Wangjiatai represents a version from the late Warring States Period, and a transmitted version may have persisted into the Han Dynasty.⁴¹ Han dynasty scholar Huan Tan 桓譚 cited over 4000 words from the *Gui cang* in his "New Discussions" (*Xinlun* 新論), likely from the original text. Scholars have validated *Gui cang* as a genuine

pre-Qin text by comparing transmitted and abridged versions.⁴²

I have no intention of judging the reasons why Confucius chose the *Zhouyi* and abandoned the other two *Yi*- at least during Confucius' time, the *Gui cang* could still be read. What is interesting is that the *Zhouyi* became the foremost of the three *Yi* because of Confucius' decision, which directly led his disciples and later Confucian scholars to tirelessly interpret the *Zhouyi*.

Irrespective of whether *Yizhuan* was authored by Confucius, its connections to Confucius and Confucianism are indisputable. In his later years, Confucius engaged with the *Yi* and elevated the *Zhouyi* to a Confucian classic, as its principles were not fully represented in other Confucian texts. *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of Documents*, *The Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記), *The Classic of Music* (*Yue jing* 樂經), and *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun qiu* 春秋) each represent specialized disciplines. In contrast, *Yi*-ology is comprehensive and all-encompassing, which explains why, according to the "Treatise on Classic Writings" in the *Historical Records of the Han* (*Hanshu* · *Yiwenzhi* 漢書·藝文志), "*Yi* is the original" (*Yi wei zhi yuan* 《易》為之原), thereby attaining the apex of classical texts. Furthermore, while other classics were intended for human audiences, the *Zhouyi* addresses universal truths that transcend the human realm⁴³. During Confucius' era, he maintained a belief in celestial order, yet he translated the "Tao" revealed by the heavens into teachings for humanity. Recent research by Edward Shaughnessy indicates that by the time Confucius referenced *Zhouyi* in *The Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), a philosophical shift had already occurred. Shaughnessy asserts that Confucius was undoubtedly aware of the divinatory nature of the *Zhouyi*; however, this nature was insufficient for Confucius, as it involved moral considerations,

³⁹ Li Ling, *Supplements of Chinese Magicians and Immortals* 中國方術續考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 234–245.

⁴⁰ Some scholars have suggested that the elimination of *Lian shan* and *Gui cang* is related to the differences in the hexagonal order. See Gao Huaimin 高懷民, *History of Yi of Pre-Qin China* 先秦易學史 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2007), 130–135.

⁴¹ Li Jiahao's 李家浩 analysis from the perspective of taboo names (*bihuizi* 避諱字) strongly proves this theory. See Li Jiahao 李家浩, "Research on Yi Divination of Wangjiatai and *Gui cang* 王家臺秦簡「易占」為《歸藏》考," *Traditional Culture and Modernization* 傳統文化與現代化, no. 1 (1997): 50.

⁴² See Edward Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yi Jing (I Ching) and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 142–143.

⁴³ Yu Ying-shih 余英時, *On the Boundary between Heaven and Human: Origin of Ancient Chinese Thought* 論天人之際: 中國古代思想起源試探 (Taipei: Linking Publishing Company, 2014), 160.

aligning with Confucius' statements in Mawangdui's "Essentials."⁴⁴ *Yizhuan's* interpretation of *Yijing* signifies a departure from the Confucian era's focus on the mundane to an era of pure philosophy. It was *Yizhuan* that transformed divination into philosophical discourse.

IV. ZHOUYI AND THE MEMORY OF THE CHINESE NATION

In the context of national identity, classical texts serve as crucial vessels for preserving the collective consciousness of a nation. Due to their canonical and sacred nature, nations actively disseminate and perpetuate these classics. Since the Qin dynasty's literary policies, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty established Confucian texts as "statutory classics,"⁴⁵ a move that positioned education as a primary avenue to political power in imperial China. As analyzed by Mark Edward Lewis, this development resulted in a division within the literature. Nevertheless, Confucian classics have consistently constituted the intellectual framework of Chinese scholars.⁴⁶ One effective method of propagating these classics was their integration into the competitive examinations of imperial China. During the Han Dynasty, the *Zhouyi* was recognized as one of the Five Classics, alongside *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of Documents*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. The process by which *Zhouyi* attained its classical status is intricate and beyond the scope of this article. However, it is evident that Confucian culture, as emphasized in the contemporary "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing* 中華民族偉大復興), presents certain incongruities with *Zhouyi*. The "Analects" do not document Confucius engaging with *Yi*; the "Lu Analects" (*Lulun* 魯論) record *Yi* 易 as *Yi* 亦;⁴⁷ Mencius frequently asserted that *The Book of Songs* and

The Book of Documents were inferior to *Yi*, and *Xunzi* 荀子 did not refer to *Yi*. Notably, *Yi* was spared during the Qin dynasty book burnings, unlike *The Book of Songs* and *The Book of Documents*. In the aftermath, Confucian scholars, deprived of texts, were compelled to integrate diverse ideologies into *Yi*.⁴⁸ Honda Shigeyuki, in *Shina Kyōgaku shiron* 支那經學史論, demonstrated that *Yi* did not emerge during the eras of Confucius and Mencius.⁴⁹ Despite *Yi's* occasional discordance with Confucian culture, following the Han Dynasty, the study of the Classics attained an exclusive royal status. *Yi* naturally became a pivotal classic in China's collective memory.

It is certain that after Confucius's endorsement, *Zhouyi* became an integral part of Chinese cultural heritage. How this classic evolved into a symbol of national identity during the Zhou Dynasty and subsequent generations warrants examination. Across civilizations, classical texts and their interpretations are intertwined; interpretative works proliferate as the original texts are transmitted to future generations. This dynamic is evidenced by 20th-century *Yi* scholars who continued to interpret *Zhouyi*, an immutable text due to its canonization by figures like Confucius. The incentive to annotate a classic, coupled with its inviolable nature, renders the initial exegesis definitive. Such texts possess enduring authority within their cultural systems, immune to revision or replacement. Consequently, *Zhouyi* has achieved sanctification.

It is essential to acknowledge the inclusion of "three changes," encompassing *Lian shan* and *Gui cang*. It is plausible that *Gui cang* persisted into the Han Dynasty. However, as *Zhouyi* solidified its status within China's collective memory, elements such as *Gui cang* were inevitably obscured. This obscuration does not signify a permanent loss; rather, it serves to reinforce the linear conceptualization of the "three changes":

⁴⁴ Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Origin and Early Development of Zhou Changes* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2022), 453–454.

⁴⁵ Zhou Yutong 周予同, *Selections of Zhou Yutong's Studies of History of Classics* 周予同經學史論著選集 (Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), 650.

⁴⁶ Mark E. Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: The State University of New York, 1999), 364–365.

⁴⁷ In "Lu Analects", the character *Yi* 易 was written as the homophonous *Yi* 亦, which is a clerical error.

⁴⁸ Qian Mu 錢穆, "Research of *Yijing*《易經》研究," *Collected Essays on the Chinese Intellectual and Academic History*, vol. 1 中國學術思想史論叢(一) (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), 170–71.

⁴⁹ Honda Shigeyuki 本田成之, *Shina Kyōgaku shiron* 支那經學史論 (Kyoto: Koubundou, 1927), 120.

Lian shan of the Xia dynasty, *Gui cang* of the Shang dynasty, and *Zhouyi* of the Zhou dynasty. This narrative is reflected in *The Three Character Classic* (*Sanzijing* 三字經) by Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296) during the Song Dynasty, an ancient educational text that ensured subsequent generations recognized the "three changes." The ancient era, culminating in *Zhouyi*'s classical designation during Confucius's time and its statutory status in the Han Dynasty, represented a golden age that endures to the present.

In the 20th-century, scholars restored *Zhouyi* from a historiographical perspective, unveiling the social history of the Zhou Dynasty. This discourse aligned with China's 20th-century environmental needs and significantly shaped Chinese national identity. During this period, academic endeavours constituted a "national project" to reconstruct the image of "ancient China" globally. The Zhou—and even the Xia and Shang—dynasties represented ideal epochs, with *Zhouyi* affirming China's historical evolution and perfect society. History thus transcends past narratives, resonating with present circumstances. In the 1990s, the People's Republic of China articulated the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," with the China Dream (*Zhongguo meng* 中國夢) closely linked to this goal, perpetuating traditional Confucian values and ethics. The historiographical evolution of *Zhouyi*, both in antiquity and contemporary times, has become a significant and enduring collective memory of the Chinese nation, meriting dissemination for millennia.