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Blofeld compiled this 1963 translation of the Book of Changes (Yi Jing) intending to present primarily the divinatory aspects of the I Ching in the notes and explanatory chapters. In his efforts he had the assistance of several learned native Chinese I Ching scholars. As useful as it is informative, the book includes not only the text and commentaries for all 64 hexagrams (with changing lines), but as well the background of the Book of Change, its symbolical basis, method of divination and guide to interpretation; and a variety of tables and diagrams for assisting interpretation.

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55 of 55 people found the following review helpful.

A sympathetic and inspired translation

By richard hunn

It is good to see this book back in print. Though less bulky (228 pages) than the Wilhelm Yi-Ching translation, Blofeld's text has merits of its own, not least the fact that it is primarily intended as a guide to divination. To say the least, this is something the Wilhelm edition never was that clear about, the chaotic presentation of the number symbolism/tables etc. There was the strange division of the text (in fact a 'doubled' text), and much that appears in the middle section (the 'Tso Chuan' etc.) would have placed the whole text in better context, if it had been discussed at the beginning. Of course, everyone is indebted to Wilhelm. Nobody who likes the Yi Ching is going to ignore his valued contribution. However, for reasons outlined above, Blofeld expressed certain misgivings about the Wilhelm text, feeling that it did not make certain things clear - when it comes to the divination process, also questioning the readings of certain line texts.

Some of the (site) files list Blofeld as a mere editor, but he has presented us with a fresh translation of the main text. His translation was vetted by a number of Chinese scholars, well versed in the peculiar idioms, imagery and line symbolism of the Yi Ching. Moreover, Blofeld's translation is supported by a brilliant introduction - outlining the background philosophy behind the Yi-Ching, and the way in which a wise Chinese scholar-sage would go about using it. Blofeld lived in pre-Communist China for many years, having 'run away' from England after graduating from Cambridge - effectively 'going native' - something few 'white men' of good social standing did, in his day and age. He knew his Chinese language from living in the country (he married into a Chinese family), and made frequent visits to Taoist (and Buddhist) temples in remote parts of China. His travels even took him to Tibet. For all his merits, Wilhelm was as Christian

missionary, and late in life, his impressions of China seemed to sour. However sympathetic to the spirit of China, Wilhelm's 'feeling tone' remained very much that of a European. Blofeld, by contrast, took to China like a fish in water. He assimilated the spirit of Chinese philosophy and lived it - without reservation. Albeit brief, Blofeld's introduction makes engaging and fascinating reading, because distilled within its pages, are the quitesential elements of a way of living, thinking and feeling.

There is a strong Taoist flavour in Blofeld's account, a sense of sublime totalities, whereas Wilhelm's translation is very much coloured by Confucian thinking. Of course, Blofeld respected the Confucian tradition - very much part of China (in his day), and he would have been the first to point out that an equal amount of Confucian thought found its way into the Yi-Ching. Confucian glosses are present in the basic core text of the Yi Ching, but besides those, Blofeld has left aside the greater bulk of Confucian commentary material, focusing, instead, on the main text symbolism, giving better emphasis to the divination process itself.

Chinese never quite translates into 'black and white' English anyway, and this even more unlikely, given the peculiar idioms and sayings not as obscure as they often seem, having an organic relationship in the 'kua' patterns of each respective hexagram. Symbolism of the Yi Ching (usum ad delphi). Even so, the line texts have an organic relationship determined by the 'kua' symbolism of each hexagram. Needless to say, some lines/line texts have given rise to a diversity of interpretations. In many cases, the brief notes appended to lines in Blofeld's text prove to be illuminating. Along with the introduction - explaining how the oracle ought to be used, the set of charts and tables at the end of Blofeld's text are quite helpful. This book is worth reading, just for the introduction, basically presenting the Yi-Ching as way of living with the cosmic flow - a mirror of the Tao itself.

Blofeld's text has a good feel to it. As he observes, while many religious systems seek to locate the truth in the infinite, a timeless context, the Yi-Ching seeks to find the truth or meaning in the flux, the tide of events and affairs. Fortune telling doesn't really come into it. The Yi Ching teaches that the universe unfolds according to immutable laws; the difference between the sage and the fool, is that the former seeks to align himself with those laws, whereas the fool opposes them. Being able to 'read off' certain things from the flow, or sense the seeds of things to come, is therefore the province of the sage.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

An enthusiastic I Ching

By Brian Donohue

I have always admired John Blofeld's work, and for many years I used his I Ching as my primary resource with the oracle. It is an energetic, enthusiastic, and enjoyable translation, and Blofeld's sense of joy in using the oracle communicates itself through his pages, even amid the scholarship and prosaic detail of translation issues. Clearly, Blofeld's work could probably use a fresh setting and an updated voice, as Wilhelm's has received at the hands of Carol Anthony and Hanna Moog: Blofeld buys whole cloth the Confucian additions, emendations, and overlays that have been crusted onto the oracle's original text, and understanding of the oracle's purpose and practical ability as a personal insight guide (rather than a mere fortune-telling instrument) could be improved upon or expanded. But what Blofeld brought to the I Ching in the mid '60's was a fresh energy and a simple, intentionally "unliterary" voice, which was much needed at the time and which still has value. If you love the I Ching, then Blofeld's translation should have a place on your I Ching bookshelf.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Still the best version of the I Ching in English

By Seregil

I have six different translations of the I Ching. Wilhelm's is THE great encyclopedia of this ancient Chinese phenomenon when one wants to learn all about it in great depth. The I Ching or Book of Changes.

For everyday meditation and divination, Blofeld's version I Ching: The Book of Change (Compass) is still

the best for me. Faithful to its most ancient sources, and translated directly from the ancient Chinese, it is as pure and simple as a Zen garden, using the clear imagery of the original Chinese; however, it still has many unobtrusive footnotes with helpful suggestions and background from the author. It doesn't overwrite, re-interpret or "modernize" the original texts, allowing the questioner to read the original meaning and images as they were and let the questioner decide what they symbolize in his/her particular situation. I've been amazed at how often the simple ancient imagery (oxcarts, sacrificial bowls, arrows, etc.) is more meaningful to me in answering my questions than the updated "interpretations" found in other versions which leave out the imagery.

A good secondary volume to Blofeld's is Browne's *I Ching The I Ching or Book of Changes: A Guide to Life's Turning Points*, which interprets much of the I Ching text through the eyes of Buddhism, frequently emphasizing the abnegation of the ego and the virtues of non-action, humility and equanimity - and it does omit a lot of the original imagery; nevertheless, it can be of help in interpreting the Blofeld text and is warmer and more personal in tone.

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