

i_ching_boc manual
version 0.6.00

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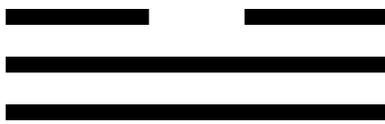
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THE I CHING SYSTEM

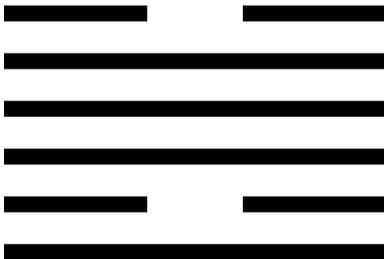
The base principles of the I Ching, representing the primal forces of the universe, are yin (the receptive, female) and yang (the creative, male): yin is represented by a broken line; yang is represented by a solid line. These root symbols are added— one on top of another —to create the symbols used in the I Ching.



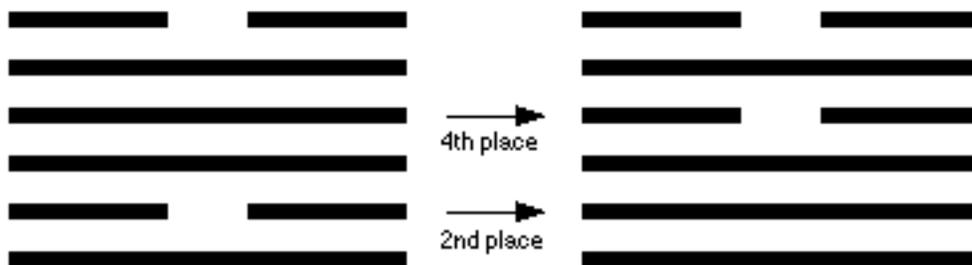
There are eight primary symbols (trigrams), representing the basic elements of life. Each of them contain 3 lines (yin or yang) stacked upon each other (the bottom line is first). This trigram to the left represents “The Joyous Lake”. Though the trigrams are named after aspects in nature tied to aspects of personality, they are also associated with other things (e.g. animals, parts of the body, family members).



There are sixty-four main symbols (hexagrams), each with six lines (an upper and a lower trigram) representing the conditions life meets in the world. Each hexagram has a name, description, judgement and volumes of commentary collected over the centuries. This hexagram to the left represents “Revolution (Molting)”, its upper trigram being “the Joyous Lake”, its lower trigram being “the Clinging Fire”.



For a given Hexagram, any of its lines may be “stable” or “changing”: if a line is changing, then the hexagram is changed into a new hexagram by changing the line into its opposite (yin into yang, yang into yin) for the new hexagram. Below, the second & fourth lines are changing, the derived hexagram is “Waiting” (Abysmal Water trigram over that of Creative Heaven).



A hexagram's various lines, when changed to transform it, are given meanings: for example the first line may represent the toe (the first part of the body to move), the sixth line may represent the end of a process for better or worse. These transformations have commentary and associated meanings collected over the centuries by various commentators on the I Ching.

The program `i_ching_boc` displays "hexagram chains" which are simply a given set of hexagrams one after the other with the associated transitions between them.

History of the I Ching

The Chinese have one of the oldest philosophical traditions in the human world: the I Ching is part of that. One can imagine prehistoric "Chinese" first contemplating a basic duality in natural forces (yin/yang), applying that principle to envision generalized qualities in nature (trigrams), and then describing and sorting out conditions in life through them (hexagrams). It seems likely that such a process began long before the first known references to the I Ching were attributed to the 12th century B.C.

The legendary emperor Fu Hsi (24th century BC) is said to have discovered the trigrams on the back of a tortoise. The main body of the work has traditionally been attributed to Wen Wang (12th century BC), sage and father of the founder of the Chou dynasty, and it contains a discussion of the divinatory system used by Chou dynasty wizards¹.

Though the I Ching was used for divination, its influence also grew due to its fluid cosmology which includes humans and nature in a single system. Though it may seem contrived, simplex or parochial, the I Ching has proven useful, expandable and portable as a mental tool. Over the centuries it has received much commentary, first from Chinese sources, later from sources world wide when translated into foreign languages.

¹ From the Encyclopedia Britannica

Divination

So far as I can see, no method of divination explained in any book has shown any evidence— save for circumstantial —of synchronicity with any object except the mind contemplating it. Such synchronicity of mind and method is common thought, hence any prophetic tendency in a divination perhaps belongs to the person whose mind it is that contemplates it no matter what is being done: the media is not the message. In any event, the program `i_ching_boc` makes no claims, nor endorses no evidence, towards its use in any divinatory procedure.

The Program `i_ching_boc` (herein referred to as BOC)

BOC allows one to display and transform the hexagrams of the I Ching, to retrieve and store meanings for them under various categories.

Help for the program is contained within the program under its Help menu.

The program uses a database which, by default, is stored in either BOC's own Folder (which it was downloaded within). To work, the program relies on its database. You may copy BOC databases with the Finder and open any BOC database you have access to from within the program.

the database: Default Data

The default text used in BOC has been taken, derived or joined from two sources (with one exception taken from Hindu scripture). These sources are as follows;

- 1) "The I Ching" by Richard Wilhelm (translated by C.F. Baynes)
New York, Pantheon, 1961 (second edition)
This is the most often referred to I Ching book in my part of the world.
- 2) "The Portable Dragon: the Western Man's Guide to the I Ching"
by R. G. H. SIU
Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1968

I have sometimes used those books descriptions pretty much as they stood, or combined them in some fashion or given my own expression to what I could make of them. No one but myself is responsible for what has finally been entered as text into BOC's default database Tables and I in no way consider said text to be authoritative.

In addition, I have "de-gender-ized" said text where the original seemed provincial or prejudiced, meaning I've tried to remove the mostly male connotations in the text (e.g. "the great man" is sometimes replaced by "a great person", "he" is replaced by "one"). This procedure is not meant to be "politically correct". Rather, I think it follows the spirit of the I Ching when removed from local considerations. "Male" and "Female" forces may run the universe (I have no idea), but that in no way implies that their unfoldment (as expressed in the hexagrams) is a mostly male consideration; on the contrary, by the I Ching's own spirit, I think the two forces are assumed to play out in some way together in most every field of being.

As a final note, I understand no language other than English and have no access to I Ching information in any other language (such as that of its origin in China). This is indeed a flaw, since I would think the Chinese language system holds philosophical keys which reveal the I Ching's meanings more clearly, expansively and specifically. There is nothing I can do about that except open up the BOC database for others to store text in their native script: in this regard, input from those familiar with said languages might prove useful because— at that point —programming technicalities require linguistic skill (to know if what is being done is correct and

not gibberish (for example, accessing, storing, decoding and displaying simplified Chinese Unicode characters).

the database: Adding Tables, databases

You must First Copy an Existing Hexagram or Trigram Table into a New Table in the database, Then you may Edit the New copy of the old Table. Default Tables can not be edited. When editing, most fields in a record can Neither be blank Nor contain only spaces: if such is the case, an edit will not be recorded. Otherwise, one is free to change a record's text to whatever one wishes. BOC will manipulate the hexagrams as usual, using the text you have entered when presenting information about hexagrams, their transitions and trigrams.

Currently, you can open another BOC database from within the program, but the program won't copy an existing one (nor create a blank one): to copy a BOC database, use the Finder.

There is one omission in the current version: no way to copy Tables from one BOC database to another. This is a serious problem if one needs to expand databases and share them and if one wants to do so, contact me and I will try to rectify the problem (not going to do it if no one is interested).

the database Structure

BOC uses RealBasic's RealSQLdatabase engine which is based on the SQLite engine. You may be able to access BOC's database with another SQL front end, however it is not recommended that you alter or edit BOC's database in another SQL front end because BOC expects its database's Default Tables to be there and it expects All Table Columns to be exactly as they have been structured within BOC (e.g. column names and types must exactly correspond to expectations). Currently there is minimal checking to see if a database opened in BOC conforms to it's database specifications and any database opened in BOC that doesn't so conform will probably cause the program to crash (e.g. perhaps a table column will be missing

when BOC tries to read it, or the table column will contain an incorrect data type or a value some program procedure chokes on).

There are a few tables in BOC's database which are not used yet: Comments and Dictionary. Comments are expected to be used to add commentary to a given hexagram and its transitions (as the traditional I Ching has likewise added commentary over the centuries). Dictionary entries are not yet so clearly defined: originally I'd added the table to account for word usage peculiar to the traditional I Ching texts (e.g. what is the traditional Chinese cultural context for the word "West" when used in statements such as "It furthers one to go to the West"), but perhaps the Dictionary Table will be used for more general translation situations. There is no guarantee that either table will ever be used.

i_ching_boc Boolean system

The i ching is a finite boolean system. Let yin = 0, yang = 1. Then, the lines of a hexagram represent the digits of a boolean (base 2) number as follows:

- Line 6 = 32's column, yang = 1, yin = 0;
- Line 5 = 16's column, yang = 1, yin = 0;
- Line 4 = 8's column, yang = 1, yin = 0;
- Line 3 = 4's column, yang = 1, yin = 0;
- Line 2 = 2's column, yang = 1, yin = 0;
- Line 1 = 1's column; yang = 1, yin = 0.

A hexagram becomes a boolean number between zero and sixty-three, for instance,  = $100110_{\text{base } 2} = 38$ (base 10).

Similarly, the transformation from one hexagram to the next by flipping any of its lines (from yin to yang or vica versa) become a boolean number between zero and sixty-three ($0 \leq n_{\text{base } 2} \leq 111111$). If a line is changing, it's corresponding column in the boolean number is one; if a line is stable, it's corresponding column number is zero.

It may be convenient to consider a hexagram number and its transition number as an ordered pair, or consider the transition numbers as implicit between any two hexagrams.

There are two operations on Hexagrams currently in i_ching_boc:

1) "Adding" two hexagrams produces a unique transformation number between them. 2) A hexagram "times" a transformation number produces a unique hexagram. 2a) A transformation number can be placed either before or after a hexagram: if it is before, the prior hexagram is the result; if it is after, the next hexagram is produced. Programatically, these operations are carried out with conditional loops in a straight forward way.

One can generalize this sort of thing (e.g. base 3, base 4, base n). Instead of duality, one can work with "n-ality" requiring n root symbols. The number of such symbols in a stack can be flexible (3 & 6 in the I Ching's trigrams & hexagrams).

Algebraically, I believe the two operations are functions (produce unique results) which are "onto" (their range) but not "one-to-one" (uniqueness from domain to range). Neither operation appears commutative. Associativity is alright for Hex + Hex. At present, I've personally gone no further with this sort of thought and, no doubt, this analysis is "trivial" (or trivially incorrect, for all I know) to anyone in the discipline.

Given the above,

Let H be a hexagram number, ($0 \leq H \leq 63$)

Let T a transformation number, ($0 \leq H \leq 63$)

then a "Hex chain" containing n hexagrams can be described as follows:

$H_1 T_1 H_2 T_2 \dots H_{n-1} T_{n-1} H_n T_n$, where $T_n = 0$.

There are two basic operations on hex-chains. Changing some hexagram or transition number in the chain.

Changing a hexagram number involves a choice between the following:

- 1) changing its transition number and that of its predecessor
(to coincide with its neighboring hexagrams);
- 2) Changing the chain's other hexagram numbers by...
 - 2a) Changing them all
 - 2b) Changing some, then change the transition number of...

2b1) the hexagram prior to the last changed hexagram
to match it (if moving backwards)

2b2) the last hexagram changed (if moving forwards)
to match the its next hexagram.

Changing a transition number involves a choice between the following:

- 1) Change the next hexagram and its transition number to match that of its next hexagram.
- 2) Change as many hexagrams as you like, keeping the original transition numbers (then change the final changed hexagram's transition number to match its next hexagram).

Concerning these two basic operations, currently BOC uses the first (simpler) choice for each operation's alternatives.

Does the I Ching Make Sense?

Apart from cosmological concerns, I consider this as a literary question. In other words, if you build a chain of hexagrams, do the explanations and transition text flow as would a story (or explanatory narrative) or do they seem contrived or ambiguous. For hexagrams to describe human reality correctly at some simple level, their textual accompaniments should also explain a situation as would be generally observable in common experience. So— for instance —if one goes from hexagram “The Army” to “Peace” one would expect commentary suggesting the transition. What

one gets from BOC's default database for the transition between these two hexagrams is the following which leaves me somewhat unsatisfied at first reading...

“six in the 1st place:

An army must set forth in proper order, with righteous cause and proper method. If the order is not good, misfortune threatens.

six in the 3rd place:

Perchance the army carries corpses in the wagon. Divided command. Misfortune.”

In the above, one could imagine—for instance—that great bloodshed and leadership disintegration lead to a general turning away from warfare within the ranks, but this seems a stretch as a generalization of the transformation from “Army” to “Peace”. However, considering that the Army is not a vehicle of peace unless it holds the threat of physical recourse, perhaps these transition lines' readings aren't so farfetched as a generalization.

Can one can come up with other equally judicious sets of text to go with the hexagrams and their transitions? Can an automated selection of words from lists can fill in the set of text, creating curious combinations? That is one reason for the database, to provide a vehicle to test out such things experimentally.

programing notes:

The I Ching is a fairly straight forward thing to code. Compared to other “mind maps” it's structure is clearly defined (see boolean system above) and it's options are a closed finite system.

One major programing consideration is presenting the information about hexagrams in an pleasing and easy to digest manor. Towards that goal, BOC currently offers three views of data (main display (with associated text window), hex chain window and printed output.

Further enhancements are suggested. (1) The incorporation of the Chinese symbols for hexagrams with a breakdown of what the “picture words” mean. (2) More control over the display's presentation and placement of information by the user. (3) More control over the automatic generation of text from user selectable choices.

I wouldn't be surprised if all the above is much ado about nothing; perhaps the I Ching is an old relic which should be passed over lightly. Personally, I don't use it much in my daily life, but I've enjoyed writing the program. In the past I've found it useful for gathering ideas (e.g. for writing a story or considering a personal situation). No doubt others, wiser than myself in these matters, would have more to say on this subject.

Note:

This is initial release of the software. Most likely it contains bugs, though I fix or work around all I see. Please let me know about bugs, if it is no trouble to you and I will try to fix them.

Contact

Always happy to hear from anyone about stuff, whether the feedback be positive, negative or neutral.

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