

Xinran writes of the life of a woman who grew up and was educated in the United States, and returned to China after it was “liberated,” to help the communist cause. The author notes her extreme devotion and utter disappointment. She writes of a policeman who had inside information about decisions made at the top. The policeman spoke of how local officials acted according to their own whims, sometimes based on cruelty and jealousy, while “following instructions from above.”

In the concluding chapter of *China Witness*, Xinran talks to Chinese students who offer their help and want to tell about their own parents and grandparents. Her ending thought in the book is the song “Dyed with my Blood” and the appropriateness of China’s flag being red.

China Witness is interesting and instructive, easy to read, and presents a side of Chinese history not available in other books. It gives the reader a unique human side to the past. It is recommended for high school students, undergraduate, and even graduate students in the US, who unfortunately know so little of a nation that will have more influence on our future than any other, and one that does not fit it into the mold of multiculturalism and political correctness. ■

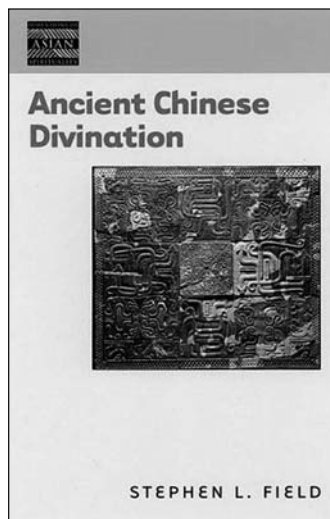
JOHN F. COPPER is the Stanley J. Buckman Distinguished Professor of International Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. He is the author of more than twenty-five books on China, Taiwan, and Asian Affairs. In 1997, Dr. Copper was recipient of the International Communications Award. Professor Copper’s most recent books include *Playing with Fire: The Looming War with China over Taiwan* (2006) and *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province*, fifth edition (2009).

ANCIENT CHINESE DIVINATION

BY STEPHEN L. FIELD

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS, 2008
142 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0824832766, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Diana Marston-Wood



This compact volume, part of the *Dimensions of Asian Spirituality* series, provides an excellent introduction to Chinese divination and does so without unnecessary complexity. Stephen Field points out that any study of Chinese culture should focus on divination, since it influenced the fields of “medicine, science, government, and most importantly, philosophy and religion.” (xiii) For many, it is the applicability of divination to religion that is of greatest interest. I have found that American students

struggle with the syncretism of Chinese religions and with the absence of monotheism. This book suggests that a more effective approach to understanding Chinese religion begins with a focus on divination (the art of foretelling the future through occult knowledge), instead of the standard textbook delineation of discrete schools of thought, e.g., Daoism.

Stephen Field argues that Chinese thinkers studied the natural world to “learn how to pattern their personal and societal lives.” (xiii) The three important entities for determining a path of action were humans, the state, and the cosmos. The Chinese saw all three as integrated, and the objective was to determine what these interrelated parts suggested for human behavior. Thus, Chinese religion evolved from this need to seek divine guidance from the universe using their cosmology. Within this study of divination, Field devotes three chapters to the evolution of the Chinese view of the universe throughout ancient times, the important role that divination played in that view, and the coherent system of thought that developed by the time of the Han dynasty. The final four chapters explore the types of divination that grew from the ancient traditions.

In Field’s crisp treatment of “Chinese Correlative Cosmology” he explores the evolution of the concepts of *qi*, *yin*, *yang*, and the various approaches to categorizing *qi*. One of the most significant became the “elemental designations” of *qi* to be found in water, metal, fire, earth, and wood. Included in this section is an explanation of the *ba gua* and the increasingly complex aspects of Chinese cosmology that are shown

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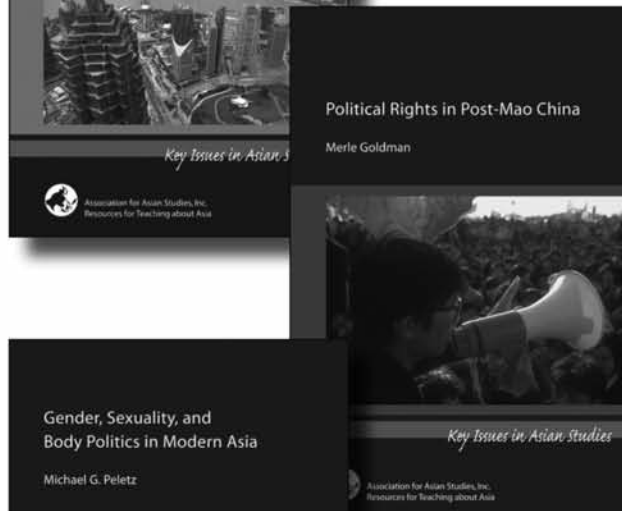
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Gender, Sexuality, and Body Politics in Modern Asia Michael G. Peletz

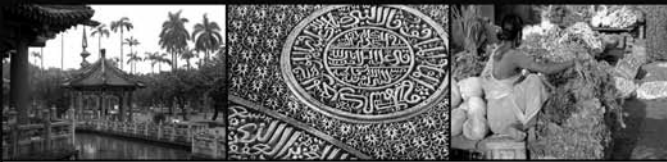
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Formed in 1941, AAS is a scholarly, non-political, and non-profit professional association open to all persons interested in Asia and the study of Asia.

This volume provides an excellent pathway toward a clearer understanding of the critical elements of Daoism and a framework for comprehending the ways that Confucianism, Daoism, and eventually Buddhism, interacted within an evolving Chinese culture.

through the many combinations of the trigrams into hexagrams. (A ba gua represents the eight trigrams. Each one contains a pattern of solid and broken lines.) These aspects of Chinese cosmology are familiar to those who teach China's indigenous religion, Daoism, and often we start with these concepts. The beauty of Field's approach is that he does not start with an "ism," but instead with the evolution of a cosmology which allows one to determine the relationships of humans within the cosmos.

In the development of a Chinese cosmology, Field's study demonstrates how archeological evidence (reading cracked bones, and milfoil stalk manipulation, which involves casting or throwing milfoil (yarrow) stalks, then interpreting the resulting pattern) has contributed to the evolution of a Chinese worldview. He emphasizes the importance of the *Zhouyi (Yijing)*, widely accepted by the time of the Han dynasty as the most significant of the divinatory texts. It contains verbal predictions and extensive commentaries based on the meanings of the trigrams and hexagrams.

In approaching categories of divination, Field first deals with *feng shui*, "currently the most popular form of Chinese divination being studied and practiced in the West."^(xiv) This siting of tombs, homes, and businesses (on both the exterior and interior) is based on many factors, among them are the proper relationships of water flow, mountains, and compass directions. The rules of feng shui can be divined by using a compass, which allows one to determine the most auspicious siting for all types of human habitation. Numerology is another form of divination that emphasizes counting various objects: milfoil stalks, coins, and bamboo sticks. Augury is the interpretation of portentous signs that might be found in the human face, as well as in the position and movement of the heavenly bodies. Sortilege, or choosing lots, is widely used in Daoist and Buddhist temples today.

For teachers of secondary and undergraduate students who must introduce their students to the essentials of Chinese religion, I highly recommend Field's concise introduction to divination. This volume provides an excellent pathway toward a clearer understanding of the critical elements of Daoism and a framework for comprehending the ways that Confucianism, Daoism, and eventually Buddhism, interacted within an evolving Chinese culture. Many Westerners characterize divination as superstitious and primitive, simply fortune telling. But for those wishing to understand Chinese religion, this book helps one appreciate how divination contributed to the overall framework of Daoism, as well as how techniques of divination continue to play a role in religious practice. ■

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