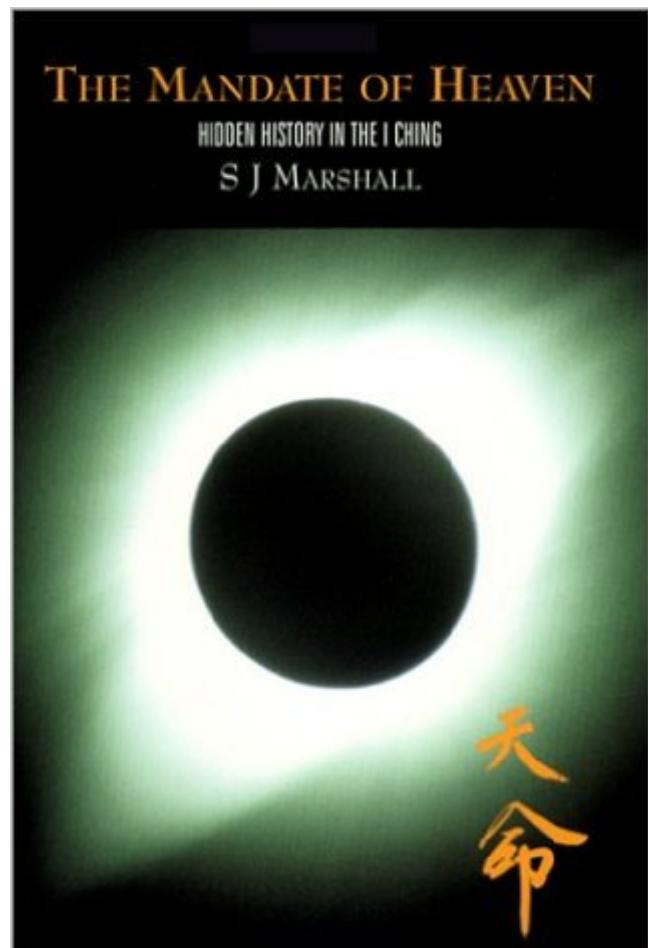


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The Mandate Of Heaven: Hidden History In The I Ching



Synopsis

The mysteries of the ancient Chinese text known as the I Ching continue to fascinate scholars and enthusiasts alike. While sinologists rely on historical criticism to explain the meaning of the work, those who use it for divination tend to accept without question the traditional account of its origin and purpose. Whereas modern scholars are generally dismissive of the book's reputed mystical significance, traditionalists often resent academic research into the oracle because it seems irreverent or iconoclastic. In *The Mandate of Heaven*, S. J. Marshall sets out to reconcile these opposing approaches. He plumbs the book's numerous, hidden historical references, reading them against other sources, and discovers that the oracle has far more narrative integrity and basis in historical fact than anyone has previously appreciated. *The Mandate of Heaven* focuses on the story of the I Ching's origins. The book is attributed to King Wen, who died before he could succeed in overthrowing the tyrannical Shang dynasty. His son, King Wu, eventually triumphed over the Shang and established the Zhou dynasty as the legitimate royal house. According to the tradition, these events are in some ways alluded to in the earliest layer of commentary in the I Ching, but no sound historical basis has been discovered to substantiate this claim. Consequently, since the 1930s sinologists have discounted the value of this tradition. Marshall uncovers an account of Wu's conquest in an important, previously overlooked passage that tells of a solar eclipse believed by the King to have been an omen from Heaven to immediately march against the Shang. Marshall is able to match this account with a scientifically verified solar eclipse that took place on June 20, 1070 B.C., just one of his many historical readings that show how the earliest layer of the I Ching has preserved a hidden history that has remained undetected for three millennia.

Book Information

Paperback: 260 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (September 11, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231122993

ASIN: B003V1WFQC

Product Dimensions: 1 x 5.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,161,811 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #158 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > New Age & Spirituality > Divination > I Ching](#) #754 in [Books > Literature & Fiction >](#)

Customer Reviews

I don't know where to even begin here so I'll begin at the beginning. The author advances a hypothesis that the I Ching contains a historic record that points to a total eclipse that served as an omen that plays an important part of the overthrow of the Shang dynasty. This theory, if correct leads us to a more accurate dating of the Zhouyi and its authorship both of which have been disputed for centuries. Marshall sets off to move his theory to a concrete state through a tortuous route using many sources. Half of the total pages are devoted to footnotes, appendices, indexes and a glossary of terms. No one can say the author neglected his research. Still I am uneasy with certain aspects of the book. Marshall is an amateur Sinologist swimming in a pool of well educated and highly revered professionals. In an effort to further his theories he appears (to me) to expect the reader to sweep aside the well accepted translations almost brutally. "The judgement of this hexagram is misunderstood and mistranslated in Wilhelm/Baynes. The famous 'Be not sad, be like the sun at midday, means nothing of the sort in original Chinese." To accept this as truth we must also believe translations from some well known men of letters also misunderstood what they devoted much time and study to. I for one am not prepared to cast such works aside and label the authors as failing in their task in favor of the author's enthusiasm for his own findings. The hexagram here , number fifty five, is the locus of Marshall's theory. In the Harvard-Yenching version of the Zhouyi this particular hexagram is comprised of less than one hundred characters some of which are single words, some combine to comprise a single word. I am not saying that Marshall's theory is entirely incorrect.

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