

Poem 243 Knowing the seeds

屢 執 一 若
引 迷 指 是
也 不 便 有
不 悟 回 緣
走 者 首 人

If a person can see the seeds
one finger suffices to turn around
Whereas one who persists in error
is repeatedly seduced
and does not walk from it

Zhuge Liang Shenshu
LiSe / Lotti Heyboer-Voûte

神數

Shenshu

(Zhuge Liang Shenshu)

A poetic Chinese oracle
for the common people
384 beautiful poems
with easy to understand
predictions and advice

Poem 062 A quiet message
The moon in a deep pool
A reflection in a mirror
It is nothing real
A quiet message

translation: LiSe / Lotti Heyboer-Voûte

神數
Shen Shu

諸葛亮 神數
Zhuge Liang Shenshu

The Spirit Numbers of Zhuge Liang

LiSe
Lotti Heyboer-Voûte

www.yijing.nl
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Foreword

I've studied the Lingqijing much more than the Shenshu, but the Shenshu has a similar energy. Indeed, the author of the Shenshu appears to have also liked the Lingqijing, enough to steal more than a few poems from it (eg, trigraph #10 and Shenshu #126, which was the first one that sprung out at me before I saw the very useful list of correlations at the end of this book). I love the way both oracles join in the long tradition of Chinese nature poetry. So I read them as poetry books just as much as oracles.

These essentially Daoist oracles don't trouble the reader with subtleties, rather they give a straight and often basic poetic image. The poetry is simple-hearted and quite quaint. You find yourself situated – on enquiring about some matter in your life, or, more usually with no pressing question just a sense of an 'atmosphere' you don't understand – in a world of the Chinese past that is glistening with the morning dew or

lit by the evening rays, and you can look around and place what is vaguely troubling you in this context. Or simply get a joyful omen confirming, perhaps, what you deeply think already but hadn't dared yet trust wholeheartedly. Or a bad omen rightly stalling your advance.

In general the bad omens in the Shenshu don't seem to be as dire as they can be in the Lingqijing or Yijing. The 384 poems are mostly auspicious with a scattering of mournful moments (gazing sadly over a fence at sunset in #137, no answer in sight), or night worries, few outright disasters (#331 might be the worst it gets, but even that seems more aggravating than truly disastrous). This is curious for an oracle and perhaps indicates that the author was overly optimistic or didn't witness many catastrophes. Overall the tone is one of friendly advice and thoughts from a traveller on the road.

Communion with the poetry is often instant, requiring little tortuous interpretation. This is how it should actually be with all oracles, even the Yijing, but the Shenshu seems to achieve it well. Whether it proves a good guide is another matter, you'll have to suck it and see. As with all oracles, our personal problems are in the end, after they've passed, only an excuse to get to know an interesting book in a unique fashion and learn what it really has to say.

Some of the images used as oracles are quite inspired, such as "The flight of wild geese can end in a broken formation" in #209. I live next to large reservoirs and the geese fly in low over my roof as if coming in to land at a water-bird Heathrow, and I'm always interested to see, when their chevron breaks at the last moment, what exactly caused it. Usually wingtips touching. But I'd not really considered it as potential oracular image stock before.

LiSe, Lotti Heyboer, has been working on these translations for some while now. Not a small task. She has been at pains to get the right sort of 'feel', while also being fairly literal. Now she's effectively opening up this much-ignored oracle to an English-speaking audience. There isn't much available in English on the Shenshu. The late Steve Moore wrote a monograph discussing the main books in 2012, which I published on my Yijing Dao site: "Lost (and Found) in Translation: The Shenshu". The attributed author of the Shenshu is the military strategist Zhuge Liang, which was one of Steve's long-term research topics, so while he didn't think Zhuge was its actual author it nonetheless drew him to study the text. I think he would have been as delighted to see Lotti's translation as I am.

S J Marshall



Long ago I found a copy of the I Ching, or Yijing as it is written nowadays. It intrigued me, so much so that I decided to look deeper into it. Chinese characters have a very wide

range of meanings. It became a challenge to find out what the Chinese text really said.

It took years of struggling with dictionaries, making inquiries, searching in books and on the internet, finding others who translated, and discussing the Yijing. My website can be found at www.yijing.nl, as a never-ending progress of change and improvement, very much in accord with its name, Book of Changes.

Then another Chinese oracle came on my path, the Shenshu. It is a poetic oracle

for common people, but all poems have an essential meaning. When I started to use it, I was amazed by its accuracy and depth. Shenshu is like the little sister to big brother Yijing. Usually I consult them both for a question.

For more than 40 years there was an extraordinary artist in my life, Anton Heyboer. Together with 3 other women I shared his self-constructed house and terrain. Anton's works can be found in museums around the world, MoMa and several other big museums in the USA, Tate Gallery in the UK, Ohara Museum of Art in Japan, and in several other countries.

He was like a zen master, with a completely original view on life and the world. Not easy to understand, but it turned out that the Yi spoke the same language he did. I used the Yi as a manual to understand him.

In return many of his words found their way into my commentaries to the lines of the hexagrams in the Yijing, but also into my explanations of the Shenshu poems.

Photographs of our house and the nature-park across the road form the background of the pages. They seem to fit together with the Shenshu, especially the bare winter-trees and the crude wooden structures of the house. I published the Shenshu in two versions. Hardcover with photographs, and paperback without, so everyone can choose.

The book in front of you is the result.

The explanations of the poems are in the second section of the book. I think it is better to read the poem and to try to understand it, and only read the explanation when the poem is not clear.

Every Chinese character resembles a painting or landscape, its meanings can even oppose each other, like two different features in one landscape, e.g waves and clouds.

Where other translations are important, I put them below the poem, so you can find out which one makes more sense to you. An oracle should be able to answer very different questions, mundane or spiritual, small or

important. The many ways to translate a character give a poem a wider meaning than one single translation can render.

The age of the Shenshu is unknown. Many poems resemble poetry from around 1700, but most poems of the Shenshu seem to be made especially for an oracle, and often give advice. The maker of the Shenshu may have borrowed poems from earlier times, but I don't think that applies to all of them.

Example of a poem (007)

件 隨 任 有 勿 君
 件 時 驅 平 誤 須
 咸 變 馳 路 疑 悟
 宜 易

Ruler be aware
 Do not lapse in doubts
 The road is level
 Allow your horse to gallop
 Always change with ease
 And everything fits right

How can an oracle give an answer

Logic is a great tool to solve problems or to create something. But it has its limits. The biggest one is, that logic cannot leave its prison of logic. It cannot jump to an 'unthinkable' solution, and often that is what you need. When rational thinking has come to the end of its road, you need another way. You need to stop your rational brain.

It is like standing on a mountain. On one side all rivers flow to the east, on the other side they all flow to the west. Rivers of logic, but for stepping from one source to the other you have to stop your thread of thinking and enter another one. A different river.

So you sleep over it. Or you throw 50 different ideas up into the air. After the tenth they tend to lose logic. Who knows, one of them might trigger something. Or you find a way to confuse or leave your logic like looking at tealeaves. Or casting coins for an oracle-answer.

The weird thing is that it often applies directly to your question... You'll have to ask universe about that.

Interpretation of a poem (244)

海 萬 清 月
天 里 光 兒
一 無 可 東
碧 雲 挹 升

The moon child rises in the east
Clear light subtly appears
No clouds in the vast space
Sea and sky one blue expanse

To interpret a poem, the meanings of all images have to be contemplated.

The moon low on the horizon: a hint of good feelings, maybe love, maybe a woman.
Rising: beginnings, a good start.

Clear light: pure, insight, no trouble.

No clouds: nothing is in the way.

Sea and sky are one: harmony, smooth relations, no need to question anything.

Consulting the Shenshu

The way of consulting consisted of counting the strokes of three characters, often a name or else a description of the situation or question.

Another way consists of casting numbered coins. Put the coins, numbered from 0 to 9, in a bag or other container, and grab one. Write down the number. Put it back. Repeat this two times. Now you have a 3-digit number. If it is higher than 384, subtract 384. If it is still higher, subtract again 384.

Or gather three different kinds of pebbles or coins. Three colors, or three values, and write numbers on them: 4 numbered from 0 to 3, 9 from 0-8, and 5 from 0-5. Grab one of each kind, in this sequence. Now you have a number between 1 and 385. Got 000? Start over, or give it your own special meaning.

Or when a number catches your attention, then use it for finding a poem. Subtracting 384 like above if it is higher than 384.

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Any mention of 'he' can be read as 'she' as well. Chinese does not specify gender unless emphasized. I use 'he' because of the Shenshu's age.

I added titles to the poems for recognition, the original has none.

The small stars * indicate, that the poem has a story. They can be found in between the commentaries.

001 The list of candidates

秋 馬 預 天
高 嘶 定 門
聽 芳 奪 一
鹿 草 標 掛
鳴 地 人 榜

A list of names hangs at the palace gate
The schedule of the competing people
Neighing horses and fragrant meadows
Autumn at its height
I hear the belling of the deer

天門 *Gate of the Heavenly Palace, palace gate,
middle of the forehead, heart.*

002 The earth has spirits *

尊 興 甚 地
主 邦 威 有
庇 輔 靈 神
民 國

The earth has spirits
Very solemn and dignified gods
They rejuvenate the country
and assist the state
They respect the ruler and protect the people

003 The flowers of Cháng'ān

驟 急 春 長
然 早 風 安
生 加 中 花
色 鞭 馬 不
疾 疾 蹄 可
及

The flowers of Chang'an cannot be surpassed
Swift horse's hooves in the spring breeze
Eager and early I use the whip
Suddenly adding color

色 *color; significance.*

004 Autumn chrysanthemum

春花嬌媚
不禁雨打風飄
秋菊幽芳
反耐霜雪傲

Flowers in spring sweet and charming
Cannot endure being hit by rain
or ruffled by wind
Autumn chrysanthemums with their
mysterious fragrance
Proudly fight and endure frost and snow

005 Dragon and tiger

春雷震
夏風巽
臥龍起
猛虎驚
風雲會合
救濟蒼生

Spring thunderclaps
Gentle summer wind
The crouching dragon rises
The ferocious tiger startles
Wind and clouds gather
Relieving the peasants

雷 *thunder: roar of the dragon.*
風 *wind: movement of the tiger.*

006 The one wonderful road

非玄非奧
非淺非深
一個妙道
著意搜尋

Not abstruse nor mysterious
Not shallow nor deep
The one wonderful road
Take pains to search for it

道 *road or dao.*

007 Change with changes

君須悟
勿誤疑
有平路
任驅馳
隨時變易
件件咸宜

Ruler be aware
Do not lapse in doubts
The road is level
Allow your horse to gallop
Always change with ease
And everything fits right

驅馳 *drive gallop: run about busily.*

008 Unknown is scary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 此 | 雁 | 眾 | 虎 |
| 際 | 來 | 人 | 戀 |
| 聲 | 嘹 | 目 | 高 |
| 名 | 嘖 | 下 | 山 |
| 達 | 黃 | 尚 | 別 |
| 帝 | 花 | 狐 | 有 |
| 畿 | 發 | 疑 | 機 |

The tiger loves high mountains
for his own reasons
The people are rather suspicious
The wild geese come with loud honking
and the Chrysanthemums open up
At this time fame arrives at the capital

黃花 *chrysanthemums open; slang: hit the jackpot.*

機 *loom, machine, chance, occasion, crucial point. 'Tiger has his own loom.'*

009 The Feng-bird appears *

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 休 | 好 | 庭 | 貴 |
| 聽 | 將 | 前 | 客 |
| 旁 | 短 | 枯 | 相 |
| 人 | 事 | 木 | 逢 |
| 說 | 求 | 鳳 | 更 |
| 是 | 長 | 來 | 可 |
| 非 | 事 | 儀 | 期 |

Meeting with honored guests
and more can be expected
On the withered tree in the front hall
a Feng appears
A good handle on short matters
brings about lasting matters
Stop listening to outsiders
telling you right and wrong

鳳 *Feng: male Phoenix-like bird, fabulous bird of good omen, especially marriage*

010 Good omens

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 交 | 朝 | 好 | 雲 | 高 | 嘹 |
| 加 | 雲 | 音 | 程 | 飛 | 嘖 |
| 有 | 暮 | 遂 | 北 | 羽 | 征 |
| 憑 | 雨 | 聞 | 進 | 翼 | 鴻 |
| | | | | 更 | 獨 |
| | | | | 糾 | 出 |
| | | | | 紛 | 群 |

Loud honking a lone wild goose
breaks away from the flock
Winging itself high
it resolves its confusion
Cloud formations come in from the north:
Good tidings and satisfying news
Clouds at dawn and rain at dusk:
Occurring on the same day it is evident

011 No tracks or traces

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 交 | 朝 | 好 | 雲 | 高 | 嘹 |
| 加 | 雲 | 音 | 程 | 飛 | 嘖 |
| 有 | 暮 | 遂 | 北 | 羽 | 征 |
| 憑 | 雨 | 聞 | 進 | 翼 | 鴻 |
| | | | | 更 | 獨 |
| | | | | 糾 | 出 |
| | | | | 紛 | 群 |

No tracks and no traces
Far and near the seeking is equally difficult
From level earth rise wind and waves
Like laughing turning into weeping

平地起風波 *level earth raising wind and waves: an unexpected incident.*



012 No fish to catch

莫收意神
下卻悠黯
鉤線悠黯

Such gloomy spirit
Such melancholy thoughts
Gather the line back in
No fish down there to catch

莫下鉤 *litt.*: nothing below hook

013 Making a name

三利前得
五名程意
月終去宜
團有有緣逢
圓望緣婦

When you are proud of yourself
it is right to meet a woman
From now on the future is fated
Making yourself a name is finally promising
In a few months when the moon is full

得意 *achieve your aims; be proud of yourself.*
團圓 *full (moon); reunion.*
月 *moon, feelings, romance.*

014 Lack of skills

人 巧 孤 鼎
事 中 舟 沸
轉 卻 要 起
蹉 藏 渡 風
跎 拙 河 波

Wind and waves build up
like in a boiling kettle
A lonely boat needs to cross the river
Clever inside but hiding a lack of skills
Human affairs turn into a waste of time

鼎沸起風波 *a boiling kettle raises wind and waves; noisy confusion causes disturbance.*

015 Some color returning

一 天 故 意
點 邊 人 在
梅 雁 千 閑
花 足 里 中
春 傳 自 信
色 消 徘 未
回 息 徊 來

You want to stay relaxed
when a letter is not yet coming
But your love who left is far away
and you pace back and forth
A message from beyond the horizon
brings news
A hint of plum blossoms
and spring scenery returns

春色 *spring scenery, cheerful look.*

016 Together

事 功 門 事 心
有 交 外 知 和
終 加 好 同 同
施

Hearts together in harmony
Matters together in expertise
Outdoors it is easy to carry things out
Everything comes together
The work gets done

交 *join, friendly.*

017 Jade and pearls

寸 藏 徘 欲
心 玉 徊 行
千 懷 不 還
里 珠 已 止

Desires flare up and then again stop
Wavering endlessly
Hiding jade and cherishing pearls
Your heart too small to match
all your conjectures

寸心 *one inch heart: feelings.* 千里 *Thousand miles: a long distance or a vast expanse.*
寸心千里 *small heart vast space.*

379 The eastwind

暢 大 花 東
飲 家 自 風
三 喝 開 來
杯 彩

The east wind is coming
The flowers open up
All of us are cheering
And drink our fill with several cups

喝采 *drink with happy faces; cheer, acclaim.*
三 *three, more than two, several, many,*
repeatedly.

380 Eat sparse drink water

反 膏 樂 疏
使 梁 在 食
心 嗅 其 飲
朦 味 中 水

In simple and plain food
One takes delight
The smell and taste of rich food
on the other hand
Will obscure the heart

疏食飲水 *sparse eat drink water:*
simple and plain food.
膏梁 *fat and millet: rich food.*

381 From plowing to harvesting

穀 西 大 黃
米 成 力 牛
盈 時 開 辟
倉 候 疆 土

Yellow oxen open up the earth,
Vigorously expand the boundaries;
At the time of harvest
Millet and rice will fill up the granaries



382 The dragon-snake

蛇可化龍
頭角將出
平地一聲雷轟
方顯龍蛇有力

A snake can change into a dragon
On the head horns will emerge
A thunderous spectacular sound
on the earth
A powerful dragon-snake appears

平地一聲雷轟 'calm earth one sound thunder
rumble': have a great spectacular succes.
龍蛇 dragon snake; flourish in calligraphy;
eminent person.

383 The nine peaks of Huashan

九華山頂
紫氣騰騰
巽盡一舟
取去前行

On the nine peaks of Huashan
Purple qi is soaring
Choose the last boat
Take off and move forward

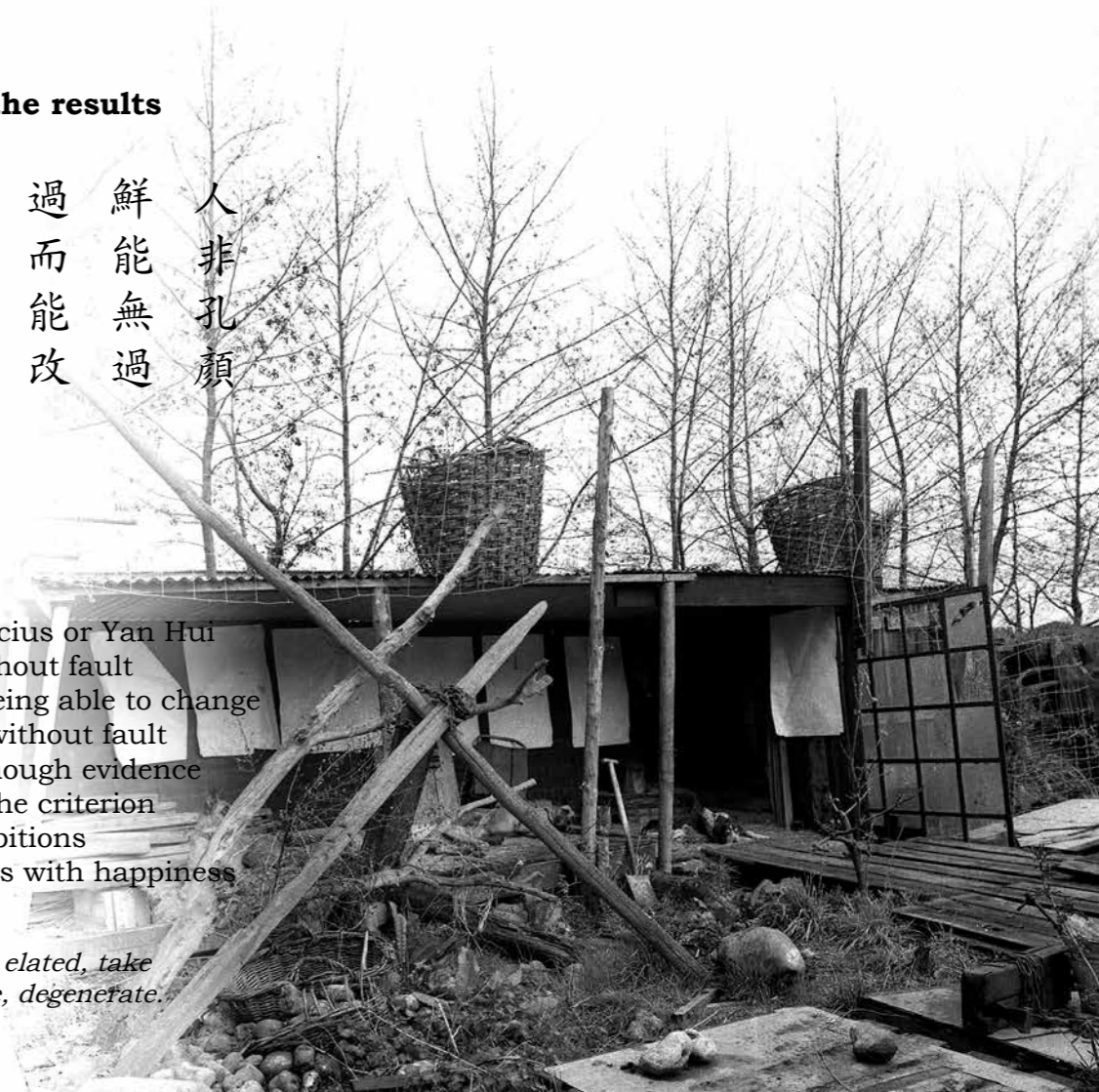
紫氣 purple qi: auspicious atmosphere.

384 All about the results

人非孔顏
鮮能無過
過而能改
仍復無過
開花不足憑
結果方為準
放開懷抱意欣欣

People are not Confucius or Yan Hui
Few can be without fault
Making faults and yet being able to change
One is as before without fault
Blossoms are not enough evidence
Bearing fruit is the criterion
Release ambitions
and embrace intentions with happiness

開花 'blossom': feel elated, take
a turn for the worse, degenerate.



INDEX OF SYMBOLS

ANIMAL of zodiac (ie Dragon or rabbit) can mean a person born in that year, month, day or hour.

ARROW. Male authority and power, direction and goal, reward.

BLACK (-BLUE). Delving into the depth of something, flowing, dormant, conserving, immortality, stability, knowledge, trust, adaptability, spontaneity, power, career, will, emotional protection, calmness vs. lack of will. Color of boys. Winter.

BIRDS. Singing: thoughts of love. Cuckoo: unsubstantial.

BUILDING. High: material or social success. Ascend ~: strive for further improvement.

CRANE. Longevity, wisdom. Among clouds: nobility. Astride a ~: ambition.

DEER. longevity and riches as deer were believed to live to a great age.

DOG. Auspicious, upcoming fortune, understanding human spirit, obeying the superior, damned, cursed.

DRAGON. Male vigor, fertility, ultimate abundance, prosperity, good fortune, symbol of the natural world, symbol of the

Emperor, adaptability and transformation. Pair: eternity, yin-yang. With phoenix (yang and yin): husband and wife, Emperor and Empress, animal and bird kingdoms (entire natural world). Crouching/resting dragon: unnoticed talent. Flying dragon: ascend the throne. Ride the dragon: find distinguished husband for daughter. Tigers and dragons: courage and (benign) rulership.

DUCKS. Married bliss.

FISH. Abundance, wealth.

FLUTE: leisure, romance, sex. Sound: unreal.

FOX. Can turn into a cunning woman. Fox raccoon: bewitching woman.

GOLD. Completeness, wealth, metal, God consciousness.

GOOSE. Married bliss, resourcefulness, delivery of matrimonial messages.

GREEN (-BLUE). Generating, striving, balancing, calming, healing, benevolence, health, sensitivity, patience vs. anger.

HARE see Rabbit.

HORSE. Swift and perseverance.

“Looking at the flowers while riding a horse”: smug, to take a cursory look at something.

LEOPARD. Bravery, martial ferocity.

MAGPIE. Attract joy connected with unity of people, stability, celebrations, happy occasions, great happiness. Chattering: auspicious omen.

MIRROR. Harmony, makes spirits visible, keeps evil at bay.

MOON. Light in the dark, insight, woman, romance, love. Full: complete success of the event; shining example. Coming back: times improve. New: bad time, no success. In the mountains: unsubstantial. Fish for moontoad: romance or sex.

MULBERRY TREE: sunset; old age; West PEACH. Blossom: luck. Fruit: stay young, immortality.

PHOENIX or FENG. Virtue, duty, correct behaviour, humanity, reliability (the Five Human Qualities), strength, resilience, good fortune, opportunity, luck.

PIG. Tolerance, optimism.

PINE TREE: longevity, steadfastness, self-discipline, endurance.

PURPLE. Luck and fame, money, recognition, propriety, creativity, joy vs. over-excitation.

RABBIT. Companion of the lunar deity

Cháng'é. Hope, longevity, fertility.

RED. Traditional bridal color, expansive, blooming, dynamic, enthusiastic, reach upwards, celebration, happiness, vitality, long life, good luck.

ROOSTER, cockerel. fearsome, wise, courageous, benevolent and loyal.

SHEEP. The male principle, yang. Golden sheep: docility and satisfaction, respect for parents, peace, harmony and protection. ‘The Golden Sheep of Ghost’ is one of the characters in ‘Journey to the West’ and one of the 28 mansions in ‘Vermillion bird of the south’ (see poem 271)

SNAKE. Woman, supernatural power, cunning.


SUN. Sunset: end of day, old age.

SWALLOW good luck for the household, sound of women’s voice, brotherly affection.

TIGER. Courage, strength. Tiger wolf: robber.

TORTOISE, TURTLE. Longevity, immortality. The ‘Ao’ turtle is tied up with creation myth.

WATER, WAVES. Reflection in water: illusion. Great waves; turns and twists of a piece of writing. See also wind.



WIND. Atmosphere, trend, rumor.
Eastwind: from where the sun rises, start
of things, good (versus evil). Wind and
waves: disturbance, crisis. Wind and frost:
vicissitudes of life or travel. Spring breeze:
happy smiles, pleasant atmosphere. Cool
(clear) breeze; remain poor and clean at
retirement. Fast like the wind: the road runs
smoothly. Wind thing (Fengwu): atmosphere,
scenery typical of a place; the law (core,
secret) of things. Wind and clouds: high
position; precarious situation. Western wind:
mood of the west (sunset when birds find
their nests, end of day or things). Wind and
moon: beautiful scenery, romance. Arousing
or growing wind: make trouble.

WINTER. Cold ~: closing years of one's life.

YELLOW. Nourishing, stabilizing, clarity,
ripening, grounded, reliability, sunbeam,
warmth, royalty, good faith, empathy vs.
anxiety, spoiled, withered.

*

001 The list of candidates

You worked hard for it and still do. Now is the moment to prove your weight and then spread your wings. It may be your first start or it can be an expansion of what you already accomplished, but make sure you really grab this chance. It may be a long time before another comes along, if ever. Life is not generous with new opportunities.

002 The earth has spirits *

Everything you do should honor the earth, and in return, she will offer the same courtesy to you and those around you. Undertakings in harmony with the earth last for long times, because they mimic her power to nurture, to make things grow and prosper, to heal and harmonize. But she is also ruthless when things go against her spirit.

003 The flowers of Chang'an

Everything accomplished started with motivation. Use it, and if you just want to have a nice time, that is fine. It has its own value. But be aware that you will have to add substance in order to really accomplish anything. The success of the superficial is like its cause: superficial and short-lived. It has to be renewed again and again.

004 Autumn chrysanthemum

The choice is yours: go for the joyful beauty of a moment or go for the lasting beauty of something sturdy. Both have their value. You should follow your heart because your own choices are the seat of your destiny, but it is good to have some idea where a choice will bring you. And most of all if it will bring you anywhere worthwhile, so choose wisely.

005 Dragon and tiger

Every new beginning must chase the 'old' which holds it back. The dry winds of the tiger are useful to shatter the autumn leaves and dry the seeds, but spring needs the rains of the dragon. When times change, you need to leave the obsolete and put all your efforts in those new opportunities. Don't miss it by holding on to the old or by waiting too long.

006 The one wonderful road

What you really want is not mysterious. Unless of course you put it deep down, hidden below duties, common sense, wishes or assumptions from others, or buried under your own fears. Dig it out and take a good look! You will never be happy if you discard your higher destiny. Finding it is a duty you have toward yourself and those around you.

007 Change with changes

When everything goes smooth and there are no problems, then move along with it and enjoy the ride. Make use of this space and let others join in. This is the opportunity to move ahead fast, or to enjoy the time of relaxation. You need to grab this opening, or else the opportunity is gone and life is back again to its same old pattern.

008 Unknown is scary

Most people don't examine or evaluate things themselves. They listen to what others say. So if you want to be heard, then advertise. Repeat your message often and loud, make it colorful and strong. No matter how wise or courageous or creative you are, if you don't, you will not be heard. People are apprehensive of what they do not know.

009 A Phoenix appears *

In everything all the details are linked together. And like chains are as strong as their weakest link, the same is true for an enterprise, a marriage, a body, a journey and whatever else you can think of. When the lucky omen of good connections show up, you can be certain of a good outcome. Listen to the Phoenix in your life and your heart.

010 Good omens

Most omens have an origin in nature and her seasons or in life itself. Returning geese refer to loved ones or steadiness. Clouds mean a promise of rain to help the crop. Look around, maybe you did not notice the omens in your life? They can give you rest or make you happy and hopeful. They help you to do the work which makes them come true.

011 No tracks or traces

Denying or procrastinating for a long time makes clarity leave. After a while you cannot discern anything anymore. The facts disappear, memory is hazy, it will get more difficult the longer you postpone. One day disaster will crash down on you, and then it will turn even worse. And the cause of all of this - the first step not taken.

012 No fish to catch

When you feel gloomy or without hope, there is nothing you can accomplish. Recharge your batteries, get rest, find something harmless which lifts your spirits. Or find a remedy if you think something is seriously wrong mentally, physically or socially. For now, that is the only useful way to put in efforts.



Poem 002 The earth has spirits

The earth has spirits
Very solemn and dignified gods
They rejuvenate the country
and assist the state
They respect the ruler and protect the people

The Grand Canal Da Yunhe is a waterway of amazing grandeur and importance. Linking north and south China it provided safe transportation insulated from the threats of storms and pirates on the high seas. It spans 1,100 miles (1,770 kms) making it the longest canal system in the world.

Like the Great Wall it was not all built at the same time as a single project. Boats were pulled by teams of oxen; horses or men along a tow path. The main building phase came during the Sui dynasty when Yangdi commenced the project in 605CE

As many as five million people, including

women and children, were conscripted into the project. All men aged from 15 to 50 were liable to be called up. The majority of the canal was made an impressive 131 feet (40 meters) in width.

Between 604 and 609, Emperor Yang Guang (or Sui Yangdi) of the Sui dynasty completed the project.

Emperor Yangdi (image at left) said:

“地獄未空誓不成佛” - “The yang of the Yu river and the spirits of the earth should not be offended”.

The Grand Canal furthered an indigenous and growing economic market in China's urban centers since the Sui period. It has allowed faster trading and has improved China's economy. The southern portion remains in heavy use to the present day.

Not offending the Earth is always important, and nowadays we can see, more clearly than ever, what happens when we don't honor her.

The grand canal.



Also called the Beijing Hangzhou grand canal', roughly equal in length to the distance between New York and Florida or London and Tangiers.

Poem 009 The Feng-bird

See also poems 038, 124, 142 and 228

貴客相逢更可期
庭前枯木鳳來儀
好將短事求長事
休聽旁人說是非

Meeting with honored guests and more can
be expected

On the withered tree in the front hall
a Feng-bird appears

A good handle on short matters
brings about lasting matters
Stop listening to outsiders
telling you right and wrong

Feng, male phoenix, fabulous bird of good
omen.

The Feng is one of the four SI-LING, the
Holy Animals of Chinese mythology. It is
often referred to as the Red Bird of the South.

The other three are the Black Turtle of the
North, the Azure (or blue-green) Dragon of
the East and the White Tiger of the West.

The Feng represents the fire-element, the
direction south, and the season summer. It
is described as a red bird that resembles a
pheasant with a five-colored plumage and is
covered in flames. But the Chinese phoenix
is not related to the bird that we know in the
Western world that rises from the ashes and
symbolises rebirth.

It is a very big bird. Its body bears inscribed
on it the five cardinal virtues. It has the
breast of a goose, the hindquarters of a stag,
a snake's neck, a fish's tail, a fowl's forehead,
a duck's down, the marks of a dragon, the
back of a tortoise, the face of a swallow, the
beak of a cock, and perches often on the
Wotong tree. Its appearance heralds an age of
universal virtue. The Feng can summon the
flames of desire.

The Feng also symbolises justice and
graciousness. It does not tolerate lies or
the abuse of power, which is why it never
appears to people who engage in such acts.

It is an auspicious bird that appears
alone or in flocks in times when peace and
prosperity are the result of a benevolent
government, and rare treasures would be
found where it stops to rest.

There were different kinds of Fengs, all of
which had different colours. These were the
Huang, the Luan and the Feng. According to
Kong Yingda the male was called Feng, while
the female bird was called Luan. Sources do
not always agree on the names.

The Feng (representing the female or the
empress) used to ride with the wind, while
the Dragon (representing the male or the
emperor) rode with the clouds. The Feng
was the totem bird of the Shang Dynasty,
because it impregnated the ancestress of the
dynasty.

Some literary sources claim that the
mythical phoenix has its roots in a
prehistoric, possibly ostrich-like bird.



Feng (Phoenix) and Hu (tiger).

013 To achieve a name

Having a lot of yang is not enough to make a name for yourself in this world. You also need the cooperation of your yin, or of a woman at your side. Thinking needs feeling, power needs compassion, focus needs joy, seriousness needs play. Yin is usually less visible, but don't underestimate it!

014 Lack of skills

It is not enough to know the theory, you also need the hands-on skills and experience to deal with real life. It will present you with many unexpected turns and situations. You need to learn to deal with them, but also how to stay free yourself. Until you learn, mishaps and frustrations will follow you.

015 Some color returning

Both love and fear cannot be told how to behave. Mother nature has strong medicine to make things go the way she wants it. The mind cannot always obey her, but your body and soul never got that message, they will react as nature intended them to. Try to find a solution which causes no hurt.

262

016 Together

When heads and hearts and hands trust and collaborate, any enterprise can be tackled and completed. Same goes for your inner whole. Great artists even have another depth to draw from, the universal soul. If they can express it, they speak to everyone. They connect from out the bedrock of life.

017 Jade and pearls

Both speculation and greed have their hazards, in whatever direction you go. On the stock market or with gems or gold, or maybe in the field of love. You will never be sure, never at ease, always hoping for more and afraid of less. Are you biting off more than you can chew?

018 Every thought a worry

Thoughts have a huge power. You should be in charge or else they will be. Try to find a calm place, for your body, your mind, your heart. Going on like this is detrimental for anything which concerns you, like health or relations. Stop doubting yourself, find a way out or try to find help.

019 Smiling from the clouds

It is very difficult to keep some distance from yourself and your life. When you are in the middle of it, there is no overview at all. Try to look from high above, and look with a smile. So many worries will suddenly become relative. The big picture will look very different and so much more beautiful.

020 No footing

You flutter around from one flower to the next and forget about what matters. If you don't pick up your life, the day will come when there is nothing left. Maybe colorful memories, but nothing substantial. Spring does not last forever, winter will eventually catch up with you.

021 The skill to surmount

You went through huge hardships and never gave up, never let them win. You honed your will and wisdom, your vigilance and your carefulness. Nothing will be beyond your abilities now, whatever you set your mind to. Bad times are important for a better future, they teach you the necessary skills.

022 Mutual help

Help can make a big difference, but it should not take things out of your hands. So accept and appreciate help but don't rely on it. It can certainly make the road a lot smoother, and it can make the difference between success and failure. But you are still the one responsible.

023 The moon is bright

When times are good, then enjoy them to the fullest. They will not stay that way, they never do, but that is even more reason to revel in a good time as long as it lasts. And who knows, maybe its fruits will bring you something later as well. Fruits grow and ripen when the season treats them well.

024 Restless

For many worries the solution is discipline. Not a list of to-do's, but the unrelenting way of doing what you should do at this moment. Most are small things, with discipline they will be kept in order. They will extend to big things, and in the end you will feel safe and comfortable in whatever you do.

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025 Seen and unseen

Not everything is visible, and often the hidden things are the more dangerous ones. Always ask yourself if there might be something more than meets the eye. Hidden agendas, invisible obstacles, forgotten safety measures. You'll be surprised at the number of ghosts behind appearances.

026 Phases of life

Most things happen just once. Don't try to hold on to them or get them back. Live your life the way it happens to you, each of its parts, each in its own right. A time of dawn, a time of sunset, a time of achieving and a time of letting go. Live each phase in your life in its own way, as it should be.

027 A real person

Most people don't like it when someone speaks his mind without any regard for social conventions. It takes those who want more from life than an easy path from birth to death to appreciate harsh truths. They see them as teachers instead of troublemakers. Humanity needs them to stay healthy.

028 Ambitions fulfilled

When you hear about a self-made man, it is usually someone who started at a young age and was unstoppable. Not one with long years of study, or dependent on family or friends. When your ambitions are that strong, you don't have the patience to wait. You go ahead and do it yourself.

029 The edge of Heaven

Your heart and mind have been built since your birth, and before that by your heredity, your ancestors. To change a settled mind is difficult, but if you manage to, the reward is huge. Suddenly you have talents, wishes, opportunities, and much more you could not anticipate. A wide world in front of you.

030 Buying spirit

Supporting culture or spirituality is good, but being part of it is better. Go to the temple or practice zen or paint or sing, do whatever makes your spirit rich. But if you don't have the opportunity to participate, then contribute in other ways. It will help others to find an entrance to spirit.

031 A good companion

It can be good to enter into a new venture. The old is safe but maybe just that - old. When a friend gives you a new outlook on things, or even offers to help, then grab this opportunity. If your current road is not satisfying, then try your hand in other fields. Now is the time.

032 Sunset

Life moves like a pendulum. Every swing causes its opposite, very high will call up very low. Nothing comes without a price. See the down times as challenges. If you only value the good things, the sum total might disappoint you, especially when you grow older and make up the balance.

033 The way of the clouds

After enough experiences of storms and high waves, one learns the movements of wind and water, clouds and rain. Then one can fill a high position and give advice to others. Experience and hardship are the best masters of all and the most dependable sources of knowledge and skill.

034 Raise your head

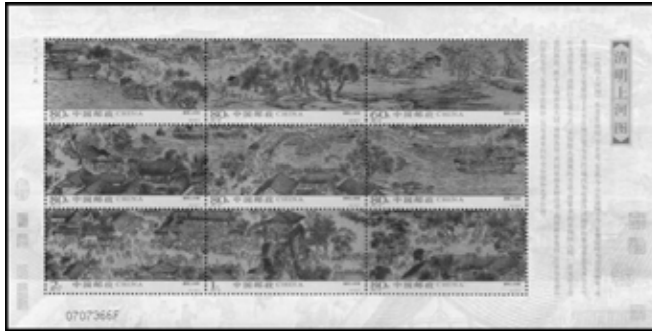
Things are improving again. There are times when everything is moving down, and other times, like now, when they make an upward swing again. The coming time is still open and undefined, don't make decisions yet but give it the opportunity to show its possibilities.

035 Just this sandbank

You can worry and think and expect and fear... But what if you take just this one step you need to take right now? And then the next, and so on. Before you know it, you can look back and see that you covered a lot of ground. It will be much better than still worrying. The hardest part is starting.

036 Spring desires *

There are times when everything comes together. The environment is wonderful, you can be proud of achievements, the future looks bright. Enjoy those moments, they give you the energy to go on and start a great future. Remind yourself of them, again and again, they will always inspire you.



Nine stamps with details of the famous painting of the Yulin garden by Zhang Zeduan.

Poem 036 The emperor's garden

The spring scenery is bright
 The colors of spring all new
 Fresh desires at the waterside
 Spring is bright and splendid
 without limits
 I love the Qionglin banquet

上林苑

Shanglin yuan

‘Garden of the higher forest’

The emperors had gardens for recreation. They hunted there and entertained scholars, poets and painters at elaborate banquets. Every year, in the Yulin Garden, the graduates of the Imperial Examinations were invited to the Qionglin banquet.

The gardens were huge. The Shanglin Yuan garden was surrounded by a wall of approximately 150 kilometers in length.

Qiong: ‘beautiful jade’, lin: ‘forest’.

The eight largest rivers of central Shaanxi all run through the garden. The Kunming Pond alone covered an area of some 150 hectares itself. The emperor's exotica included a black rhinoceros, a white elephant, talking birds, and tropical forests.



Painters painted the gardens and poets made long poems on ‘scrolls’.



Ming Dynasty scroll attributed to Qiu Ying (c. 1494-1552) which illustrates the Shanglin poem.



Shanglin Park poem by Sima Xiangru (137 BCE)

Poem 363 Riding the Jade Hare

The white jade (female) hare or rabbit resides on the light side of the moon. She is the one who pounds the ingredients for the potion of immortality. She is closely associated with the medical profession, frequently shown carrying a mortar and pestle. Every time at new moon, the black tortoise, who lives on the dark side, devours or hides her.

Chang'e lives on the moon since she stole the potion of immortality from a famous archer, and is now keeper of the turtle (or tortoise).

In front of her palace stands the sweet scented Osmanthus or Laurel tree. The immortals perceive the scent at every new moon.

The hare is a symbol of love and fertility. The turtle symbolizes the nuptial chamber.



A Tang dynasty (618-906 AD) era mirror depicting the moon goddess Chang'e with the moon rabbit (a doe) with her pestle, the Osmanthus tree and the tortoise.
www.owlcation.com

Poem 370 Narrow and wide roads

過羊腸
入康莊
五陵裘馬
當思故鄉

After passing narrow winding roads
You enter a broad and open one
Wuling and furs and horses
It makes you remember
where you came from

'Wuling' or '5 mounds':

1. The combined names of Changling, Anling, Yangling, Maoling and Pingling are all located in the north of Lishui, near Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province. It is the seat of the five emperors' tombs in the Western Han Dynasty.

2. Refers to the Western Han Dynasty Gaozu, Huidi. The cemetery of Emperor Jing, Wudi and Zhaodi.

3. Refers to the cemetery of Gaozu, Taizong, Gaozong, Zhongzong and Ruizong in the Tang Dynasty, all near Chang'an.

Five Barrows, named for the tumuli of five Han emperors, had become in the Tang a fashionable residential area just outside Chang'an.



Five Mounds/barrows, horse and furs in a poem by Du Fu:

同學少年多不賤、
五陵衣馬自輕肥。

The young men I once studied with
are now most not of low degree;
By Five Barrows their horses are plump
and the mantles they wear are light.



Dahuting Tomb mural, cavalry and chariots, Eastern Han

The rest of the line echoes a famous passage in the Analects (V.25) in which the disciple Zilu, responding to a request from Confucius that he state his wishes, said: "I wish for horse and carriage and to be mantled in light furs, then to share them with my friends; and even if they were to ruin them, I would not be distressed."

(Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Volume 4)

See poem 240 for information about the poet Du Fu

373 When peace shows cracks

Before disaster strikes, your intuition tells you. The signs are tiny, so you have to strain your ears and eyes. Refrain from anything which might set it off, stay away from risks, be careful with words, avoid impulsivity. Find out where you are vulnerable. This is not the time to build up anything lasting.

374 The dragon gate *

It would be great when every success could be accompanied by fireworks. Alas, daily reality is not like that. You get something done, finally - and nothing happens. You're satisfied but in silence. Then make it happen yourself, jump around, sing or dance, phone a friend and brag. Enjoy!

375 The ancient pine tree

When something has been made in harmony with Heaven and Earth, with the best materials and with all the time it needed to grow in its own pace, it will be beautiful, strong, proud and last long. It will survive its maker and make his memory linger through ages to come.

376 Fate has been decided

Reject what is below your ethics. Don't grovel for the sake of good relations, either business or family. Rebuff gossip, flattery or jealousy. All these things pull you down until your life is without any real value. Whatever the circumstances, everyone's worth is decided by their integrity.

377 Sacrificing a pig

Sacrificing your surplus is no sacrifice. Give what you need yourself. It will be a loss, but only then your gift is a genuine one. Similar attracts similar. Your truth attracts the truth of gods, spirits and people. Don't discount your own spirit, it will find inspiration and it will ascend to great heights.

378 Thinking at night

In the day one thing comes after the other, and thinking happens in that same way. At night you can linger on a thought, find the overview, the bigger picture. Many things only become clear at night, when nothing disturbs your mind. Make use of this, every evening opening your mind for the night.

379 The east wind

When the signs of a better time are arriving, then embrace them. After this you can start working on the things which should or can be done in this new time, but for the moment it is important that you welcome it. Every change should be freely celebrated in order to anchor it to positive expectations.

380 Eat sparse drink water

Give everything the value it deserves. Cherish honest food, care for your body's health, don't violate the boundaries of your existence and treat all things and creatures with respect. Your body, mind and surroundings will respond with self-respect and strength.

381 From plowing to harvesting

Earth is not in a hurry. She lets the seasons go by and does what each season allows. Each seed gets the time it needs to develop and grow and make its own seeds. If you work like she does, or work along with her in the same pace, she will award you with a balanced life and a plentiful harvest.

382 The dragon-snake

Even when you seem like nothing, there is a core inside with more power than you realize. Recover and start anew, leave all your faults and mistakes behind, and find a new beginning. Let this core be your guide at every step, and you will grow beyond anyone's expectations, including your own.

383 The nine peaks of Huashan

When everything is sizzling with energy, and many others have already answered to it, then go on your way as well, before you are too late. Pick your own road, don't copy another, and use this momentum. Let this wind fill your sails and bring you to new unexplored places.

384 The fruit

Nobody can be as perfect as Confucius or his favorite pupil Yan Hui. You will always make mistakes or even serious faults. What matters is if you correct them. Looking good is worthless when it doesn't produce anything substantial, and what you do can only have value if the base is sound.

Poem 374 The dragon gate



Carp can be transformations of dragons, or carp can sometimes change into dragons. According to tradition, a carp that could leap the falls of the Yellow River at Dragon Gate would be transformed into a dragon and fly off into the sky. This motif symbolizes success in the civil service examinations.

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Dragon Gate, at the border of Shanxi and Shaanxi, is where the river flows through a cleft in the Longmen mountains, supposedly made by Yu the Great.

The imperial examination was a civil service examination system in Imperial China designed to select the best potential candidates to serve as administrative officials. With the avowed purpose of testing and selecting candidates for merit, the examination system markedly influenced various aspects of society and culture in Imperial China.

The first instance tantamount to an idea of imperial examination is mentioned in the Shang shu, long before a whole bureaucracy of testing was developed. The text describes Emperor Yao's intent of examining abilities of his successor.

As he grew old in age, the Emperor Yao perceived that he would not live long enough to see the end of the flood. Therefore, he began to seek a successor, someone worthy enough and capable enough to rescue the



people from this great calamity. Yao wished to find the most talented and worthy person in the kingdom.

Yao decided that in order to recruit a replacement for the highest of the civil service offices, that of emperor himself, it would only be prudent to instigate a series of tests.

The tests included marrying Shun to his two daughters, to see whether Shun could maintain family harmony at home,

and ended by sending him down from the mountains to the plains below where Shun had to face fierce winds, thunder, and rain during the course of some test of unexplained mystery. Candidate Shun successfully passed this series of imperial examinations and was recruited as emperor, serving, it is said, as co-emperor, until the death of Yao.

(According to another story, Shun imprisoned Yao until he gave over the reign of the state.)

The story of how Yao chose Shun by seeking and testing for the most virtuous and meritorious person in the whole empire became a mainstay of Confucian discourse, with Yao and Shun being glorified as epitomes of virtue.

Shun is also credited with a universal gathering of his nobles and subjecting them to imperial examination every 3 years, in order to decide about promotions, demotions, or retaining of the current status in the governance structure.

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神 shén, 數 shù

Shen: spirit, deity, essence, soul, magical.
Shu means number, but also fate. When the gods or spirits ‘count’ you, call your number, they contemplate your fate. Oracles are a means to learn about your fate and use their advice in order to avert a bad one or change it for the better.

Shenshu is one of the Chinese predictive arts. The Tongshu, a yearly almanac, appears to be the Shenshu’s natural home.

The first two poems start with Heaven and Earth, but the Shenshu has nothing to do with the Yijing, even though the number of poems is equal to the number of lines in the Yi.

It made me wonder if originally there might have been 365 poems - one poem for every day in the almanac.

The poems necessary to increase the total to 384 were ‘borrowed’ from the Lingqijing. I found 19.

Shenshu and Ling Qi Jing

Almost all borrowed poems were added at the end.

This is a list of the poems which are identical in the Shenshu and the Lingqijing.

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Shen - LQJ | Shen - LQJ |
| 126 - 132 | 340 - 232 |
| 327 - 111 | 342 - 334 |
| 328 - 212 | 346 - 434 |
| 329 - 224 | (1 diff. char.) |
| 331 - 444 | 347 - 130 |
| 332 - 000 | 348 - 240 |
| 333 - 334 | 349 - 310 |
| 334 - 020 | 350 - 001 |
| 335 - 004 | 351 - 023 |
| 339 - 212 | |

The Zhugeliang Shenshu has nothing to do with acupuncture or pressure points or Taiyi Shenshu, Tieban Shenshu, or Heluo Zhenshu.

Cast online at www.yijing.nl
More at www.shenshu.nl

The age of the Shenshu

Poem 256 may be an indication of the Shenshu’s age. It is about 燕薊, Yan and Ji. This place and city often occur in a collection of Tang poetry from 1705.

Many poems have the structure of the representative form of ‘shi’ poetry composed during the Tang dynasty.

It is possible that the author ‘borrowed’ them, so the age of the Shenshu as a whole is still unknown.

The poems of the Shenshu were probably made by more than one poet.

Many of the poems have the number of lines and characters of the time of Li Bai (Tang dynasty), but it isn’t any proof of their age, they may have been collected later.

Many poems rhyme:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 065 | 298 |
| Rù ér yì | Jiào dào jiào dào |
| chū ér nán | tiān jiāng míngliào |
| yānyān dào zàisān | hébù shēn shou shū méi |
| jiāojiā yì bùkān | fan zuò pénghāo dào lao |

Poetry and grammar

A key attribute of Chinese poetry is that it is concise, each character places a thought, an impression, an image. There is no need for formal grammar and the small words like in, the as well as ‘verbs’ are generally missed out. Emphasis is put on use of rhythm and sometimes in a balanced form of the characters so that it looks visually pleasing on the paper. The reader assembles the series of impressions into a whole piece in a very direct way. (chinasage.info/poetry.htm)

I think commas and dots also disrupt the imagery in the translation of poetry, so I don’t use them either. The message is conveyed by the images themselves, not by connecting them logically.

My mother tongue is not English but Dutch, so my English is anyway a bit quirky.

At www.biroco.com/yijing/reviews.htm a good review by Steve Moore: “Lost (and Found) in Translation: The Shenshu”.

諸葛亮 神數
Zhuge Liang Shenshu

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Zhuge Liang (181–234) was a Chinese
politician, military strategist, writer, engineer
and inventor.

He served as the Imperial Chancellor (or
Prime Minister) and regent of the state of Shu
Han during the Three Kingdoms period.

He is recognised as the most accomplished
strategist of his era.

His reputation as an intelligent and
learned scholar grew even while he was
living in relative seclusion, earning him the
nickname “Wolong” or “Fulong” (both mean
“Crouching Dragon”).

His name – even his surname alone – has
become synonymous with loyalty, intelligence
and strategy in Chinese culture.

Zhuge Liang is probably not the author of
the Shenshu.

挨一
挨十
拳一
拳十
變一
變十
諸一
諸十
葛一
葛十

Receive one blow and learn a lesson
Receive ten blows and become
Zhuge
(proverb)

ZHUGE LIANG SHENSHU

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