

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Yinyang

The concept of yinyang lies at the heart of Chinese thought and culture. The relationship between these two opposing, yet mutually dependent, forces is symbolized in the familiar black and white symbol that has become an icon in popular culture across the world. The real significance of yinyang is, however, more complex and subtle. This brilliant and comprehensive analysis by one of the leading authorities in the field captures the richness and multiplicity of the meanings and applications of yinyang, including its visual presentations. Through a vast range of historical and textual sources, the book examines the scope and role of yinyang, the philosophical significance of its various layers of meanings, and its relation to numerous schools and traditions within Chinese (and Western) philosophy. By putting yinyang on a secure and clear philosophical footing, the book roots the concept in the original Chinese idiom, distancing it from Western assumptions, frameworks, and terms, yet also seeking to connect its analysis to shared cross-cultural philosophical concerns. In this way, the book not only illuminates a particular way of thinking, but also shows how yinyang thought has manifested itself concretely in a wide range of cultural practices, ranging from divination to medicine, and from the art of war to the art of sex.

Robin R. Wang is Daum Professor in the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Professor of Philosophy, and Director of Asian Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. She is the editor of *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization* (2004) and *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period to the Song Dynasty* (2003).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

New Approaches to Asian History 11

This dynamic new series publishes books on the milestones in Asian history, those that have come to define particular periods or to mark turning points in the political, cultural, and social evolution of the region. The books in this series are intended as introductions for students to be used in the classroom. They are written by scholars whose credentials are well established in their particular fields and who have, in many cases, taught the subject across a number of years.

Books in the Series

- 1 Judith M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora*
- 2 Diana Lary, *China's Republic*
- 3 Peter A. Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb*
- 4 Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India*
- 5 Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*
- 6 Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937–1945*
- 7 Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*
- 8 Thomas David DuBois, *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia*
- 9 Susan L. Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*
- 10 Tirthankar Roy, *India in the World Economy: From Antiquity to the Present*
- 11 Robin R. Wang, *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Yinyang

*The Way of Heaven and Earth
in Chinese Thought and Culture*

Robin R. Wang

Loyola Marymount University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521165136

© Robin R. Wang 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2012

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Wang, Robin.

Yinyang : the way of heaven and earth in Chinese thought and culture /

Robin R. Wang, Loyola Marymount University.

pages cm. – (New approaches to Asian history ; 11)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-00015-5 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-16513-6 (paperback)

1. Yin-yang. 2. Philosophy, Chinese. I. Title.

B127.Y56W36 2012

181'.11–dc23 2012012610

ISBN 978-1-107-00015-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-16513-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To Kelly & Mindy

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

千里之行, 始于足下.-----道德經

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Figures</i>	<i>page x</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. Yinyang Cosmology: <i>Dao</i> , <i>Qi</i> , <i>Yi</i> , and <i>Taiji</i>	41
3. Yinyang Matrix: Organizing the World	83
4. Yinyang Strategy: Efficacy in the World	120
5. Yinyang Body: Cultivation and Transformation	163
6. Yinyang Symbol: Knowing Through Visual Presentation	201
<i>Bibliography</i>	227
<i>Index</i>	239

Figures

1.1	The earliest six Chinese characters found in Shangdong Dawenkou culture	page 23
2.1	The <i>fiji</i> Hexagram	69
2.2	Zhou Dunyi's <i>Taijitu</i>	75
3.1	Image of Fuxi and Nüwa from Xinjiang Turfan Tang Dynasty tomb	102
3.2	Map of Beijing City in 1562	114
3.3	Diagram of part of the Guqin	116
3.4	“Mountain Scene in the Spring Mist” by contemporary artist Dai Bole 戴伯樂	118
4.1	Statue of Charioteer found in the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang (259 B.C.E.–210 B.C.E.) (Xi'an)	154
5.1	Coat of Arms designed by Nobel Prize winner Niels Bohr (1885–1962)	172
6.1	<i>Hetu</i> and <i>Luoshu</i>	207
6.2	<i>Horse Diagram</i> and <i>Tortoise Diagram</i>	209
6.3	The Fu Xi arrangement of the eight Trigrams	213
6.4	The King Wen arrangement of the eight Trigrams	214
6.5a	Zhou Dunyi's <i>Taijitu</i>	218
6.5b	Chen Tuan's <i>Wujitu</i>	219
6.6	River diagram of the Spontaneity of Heaven and Earth	220
6.7	Ancient <i>Taijitu</i> , Zhang Huang 章潢 (1527–1608), Ming Dynasty	225

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

My research on the work of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.E.) in 2004 first awakened my interest in yinyang. I was investigating what appears to be a puzzling contradiction: on the one hand, yinyang seems to be an intriguing and valuable conceptual resource in ancient Chinese thought for a balanced account of gender equality; on the other hand, no one can deny the fact that the inhumane treatment of women throughout Chinese history has often been rationalized in the name of yinyang. These two conflicting observations are reflected in divisions within scholarly circles. Some scholars claim that the concept of yinyang can be a primary source for understanding Chinese gender identity and that it has much to offer to contemporary feminist thought. On the other hand, arguments have been given that the denigration and abuse of women in ancient China is a direct result of the idea of yinyang. This puzzle and the theoretical discussions around it led me to wonder what yinyang thought really meant in early Chinese texts, and why Chinese have for thousands of years continued to approach the world through the lens of yinyang. How can we understand the power of a way of thought that is both very simple and almost infinite in its applicability?

This project has been a transformative journey for me, and many minds, hearts, and hands have contributed to its development from those initial questions. I particularly wish to thank the following individuals for their intellectual insights and generosity in assisting me in this journey. At an early stage in its development I benefited much from discussions with Roger Ames, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Livia Kohn, Ronnie Littlejohn, Lisa Raphals, Weimin Sun, Bryan Van Norden, Zhihe Wang, Verner Worm, Wenyu Xie, Brook Ziporyn, and my dear colleagues in China: Su Yongli, Wu Genyou, Ding Weixiang, Zhang Xianglong, Gan Jianmin, Wan Junren, Zhang Zailin, Li Zhonggui, Lu Xichen, and Chen Xia. I owe a particular debt to Martin Schönfeld and Tao Jiang, who have always provided me with inspirational support. Li Ming has been a troubleshooter for me in resolving some obscure difficulties in my research. Special heartfelt

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00015-5 - Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture

Robin R. Wang

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

thanks also to Hans-Georg Moeller for his constant encouragement and constructive suggestions throughout the process. I am also grateful to Kelly James Clark and Tom Plate for reading through the whole manuscript.

I have been able to test out much of this material with a variety of audiences. Nzazi Malonga (Master Zi) and Nisha Rodrigo gave me a platform to deliver a series of public lectures on yinyang at the InFocus Wellness Institute in Santa Monica. I also presented parts of this material to a group of physicians at Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center and to a general audience at the Bower Museum. Finally, students in my upper division philosophy course on yinyang in Spring 2011 allowed me to test out draft versions of several chapters. The manuscript has benefited from feedback from these audiences, as well as presentations at academic conferences around the world.

I also want to thank Marigold Acland, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for her trust in me and her valuable guidance at each step of the way.

The research for this book was made possible by generous support from Loyola Marymount University, my intellectual home for many years. The Summer Research Grants, Rain Research Assistants, First Book Subvention Grant, and finally the Daum Professorship Award all supplied me with the time and resources to finish this project and lead a productive scholarly life.

This book would not have been brought into the world without the masterful editorial assistance of Franklin Perkins. Our years of collaboration are a perfect illustration of how a total interplay of yin and yang can generate human creativity, cognitive power, and a flourishing life. I will always be grateful for this *yuanfen*.