

六德 *liu de* Guodian Manuscript and reading patterns in Zhou Yi hexagrams

§§§

生民【斯必有夫婦 父子 君臣此】¹六位也

«As long as there have been human beings, there have necessarily been husbands and wives [夫婦], fathers and sons [父子], rulers and ministers [君臣]. These are the six positions [六位 *liu wei*]»

This is stated in strips 7-8 of 六德 *liu de*, Guodian Manuscript²

My intent here is to play a superimposition between ‘六位 *liu wei*’ theory in Liu De manuscript and its shape onto some hexagrams reading techniques.

Six positions in LiuDe and in Yijing

The theory of ‘six positions’ [六位 *liu wei*] as it is applied in some hexagram analysis, is not only organized by line relations and interactions as these of matching positions [當位 *dang wei*] and correspondance [應 *ying*] but also by representing different social/political order and rank, as those of 爵位 *jue wei* -the ranks of the nobility- well represented in the following passage of 易乾鑿度 *yi qian zuo du*, one of the most important of the eight Apocrypha of the Changes:

The first line is the Officer of Chief Grade [元士],
 the second is the Great Officer [大夫],
 the third is the Three Dukes [三公],
 the fourth is the Feudal Lord [諸侯],
 the fifth is the Son of Heaven [天子], and
 the top line is the Ancestral Shrine [宗廟].
 All these six are that whereby yin and yang advance and retreat,
 that whereby prince and ministers ascend and descend, and
 that whereby the ten thousand men make images and standards.

Liu De Guodian manuscript does not treat any reading ‘technique’ but instead, «the central aim of these texts (referring generally to Guodian manuscripts) is to describe the way to rule a state; and, their basic premise is to promote Confucius's idea of "administering with virtue," emphasizing that for those

1 this translations by C. H. Ashton [2009]; the text in in thick brackets, his emendation based on a passage on strip 42 that seems to parallel this one.

2 Synthetic informations on bamboo manuscripts available at [Chinaknowledge web-page](#); focused on Guodian at the [Chinese University of Honk Kong](#) (with a downloadable sheet of all Guodian strips transcriptions). In Appendices section I, the reader will find the copy of the manuscript and the transliteration from 郭店楚墓竹簡 [1998]

in government, it is the education of the way that is put first»³.

Liu De Guodian manuscript, specifically, make use of the above categories as husbands and wives [夫婦], fathers and sons [父子], rulers and ministers [君臣] suggesting «that the way to rule the populace lies in observing the natural order of human relationships. It discusses these relationships and their complexity [...] linking the six virtues (zhi 智 ‘wisdom’, xin 信 ‘faithfulness’, sheng 聖 ‘sagacity’, ren 仁 ‘humaneness’, yi 義 ‘appropriateness’, zhong 忠 ‘fidelity’) with the different status of the social person (husband, wife; father, son; ruler, minister) and their duties in society (lead 率, follow 從; instruct 教, learn 學; direct 使, serve 事).»⁴

The ‘string’ husband/wife<->father/son<->ruler/minister -found in many other texts with also more philosophical implications- is well ruled in the 序卦 *xu gua* too, towards government aims:

有天地, 然后有萬物; 有萬物, 然后有男女; 有男女, 然后有夫婦; 有夫婦, 然后有父子; 有父子, 然后有君臣; 有君臣, 然后有上下; 有上下, 然后禮義有所錯。

«There is [the relationship of] heaven and earth, and then there are the ten thousand things; there are the ten thousand things, and then there is the [relationship of] male and female; there is [the relationship of] male and female, and then there is [the relationship of] husband and wife; there is [the relationship of] husband and wife, and then there is [the relationship of] father and son; there is [the relationship of] father and son, and then there is [the relationship of] ruler and minister; there is [the relationship of] ruler and minister, and then there is the [the relationship of] the high and the low; there is the [the relationship of] the high and the low, and then ritual and duty intersect.»⁵

Placing and discerning, seem reasonable foundations of administrative techniques.

In the opening passage of the 處方 *chu fang* chapter of the Lushi Chunqiu, we read: «In all governing, roles must first be determined. If the ruler, the minister, the father, the son, the husband and the wife are all in an **appropriate position**, those below will not overstep their rank and those above will not act carelessly.»⁶

We can slowly draw a first sketch onto hexagrams positions, asking firstly, which could be ‘appropriate position’?

Taking from 基義 *ji yi* chapter of Dong Zhongshu’s 春秋繁露 *chun qiu fan lu* :

«[...] the ruler is yang and the minister is yin; the father is yang and the son is yin; the husband is yang and the wife is yin [...]»

I can infer such a stack -represented in the next page- with the necessary help of another ‘wei’ technique - 比爻 *bi yao* one.

3 Qian Xun [2000]; for a wide debate about the ‘confucian’ nature of Guodian Manuscripts see *ibid.* and in Liu Rui [2019]

4 D. Meyer [2021]

5 This and following translation in Li Rui [2019]

6 I take the liberty to remember the reader, that my proposals here are nothing but exploratory. So I feel comfortable to seek argument focused on my plans more than a philological line. Even if, sometime, different ideas, arise from common roots.

比爻 *bi yao* views

RULER	—
MINISTER	--
FATHER	—
SON	--
HUSBAND	—
WIFE	--

In this sequence all the yin/yang attributes are out of ‘matching positions’, as in 未濟 *wei ji* hexagram. But here, as in Wei Ji, this is not a complication. This is a representation of a specific interaction where, in Liu De manuscript: «there are those who lead others and those who follow others; there are those who employ others and those who serve others; there are those who instruct and those who learn. These are the six duties.»

This could be compared to a specific feature in 比爻 *bi yao* relationship I can recognize, where: «In any pair of lines that are associated or neighbouring, the lower line **supports** the upper line while the upper line **mounts** the lower.

The lower line is believed to ‘support’ (承) the upper line.

There is a particular emphasis on the idea of a yin line supporting a yang line which represents a submissive attitude on the part of the humble vis-a-vis the honourable.

When the upper line of an adjacent pair of lines is a yang line, it is referred to as ‘mounting’ (乘) the yin line (the yin supporting the yang line).»⁷

Inner and outer relations

An important passage is devoted in Liu De to the proper distinctions (resonating with the above 序卦 *xu gua* commentary) that figure out metaphorical extension of the relationship between father and son onto the relationship between ruler and minister:

男女辨生焉 父子親 生焉 君臣義 生焉

«Once the proper distinction between male and female is made, then affection will arise between father and son; (once affection has arisen between father and son), rightness will arise between ruler and minister.»

7 B. Nielsen [2003]

Keeping on the intriguing argumentations of Ashton: «one of the main differences between the natural father-son relationship and the ruler-minister relationship is that the former is given while the latter is chosen. In the progressive stages involved in developing the proper (male) human relationships, it is necessary to first develop the feeling of intimacy between father and son before one can hope to develop the proper feeling of rightness between ruler and minister. [...] One creates the external feeling by building on the foundation of the internal feeling. By first learning the correct sense of respect toward one's biological kin, one establishes the necessary foundation upon which the more tenuous form of respect toward a political superior can develop. Thus, the ruler-minister relationship is, in essence, an adaptation of the father-son relationship».

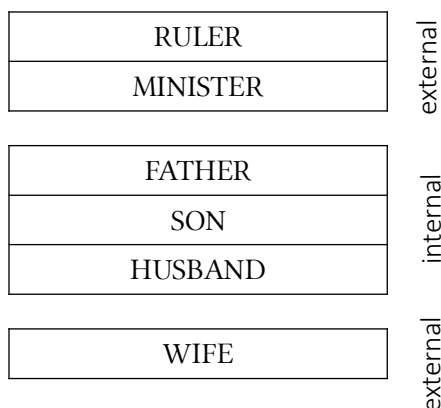
Another Guodian manuscript, 性自命出 *xing zi ming chu*, puts it more clear: «Within the family, affection covers up righteousness. Outside the family, righteousness covers up affection» (strips 30/31) and with the comment of Kwan Leung Wong “ ‘within the family’ (internal) indicates applying the methods of beneficence to deal with domestic affairs. “outside the family” (external) signifies applying the methods of righteousness to deal with official business”⁸

These connections between one couple and the other work together with a ‘spacial’ interaction via internal/external sides, again stated in Liu De manuscript (strips 26/27):

[...] 內立父子夫也 外立君臣婦也

«The internal positions are father, son and husband. The external positions are ruler, minister and wife.»

These statements are certainly odds if I try to model them onto the stack above, where the process move throughtout WIFE^{external} > HUSBAND^{internal} > SON^{internal} > FATHER^{internal} > MINISTER^{external} > RULER^{external} or in the hexagram shape in the following page.



The figure above is very similar to what (‘is said’) Lin Li (1120-1190) created and called 包體 *bao ti* or enveloping/containing trigrams, where «the three outer lines (n. 1, 2, and 6 or nos. 1, 5, and 6) of a hexagram constitute a trigram which contains another trigram made up of the inner lines (n. 3, 4, and 5

8 Wong [2006]; similar argument is hold by Constance A. Cook [2019] adds: «Two other levels of Dao are distinguished among the six positions (strip 47), others and self; it could be followed to govern the people and/or be a guide for self-cultivation. Therefore Dao had public and private spheres of practice»

or nos. 2, 3, and 4), the same as one of the interlocking trigrams (互體 *hu ti*).»⁹

My ignorance in Chinese language, impedes me to deepen this ‘technique’ in mother-tongue texts available. Where I can draw from is the work of Harmen Mesker, that presents a synthesis of 包體 *bao ti* in his Duch book “[De I Tjing stap voor stap](#)”.

I present here an automatic (because of my ignorance of Duch too) revised translation of a dedicated passage :

“Lin himself says about the baoti:

“To envelop’ means that ‘it’ is capable of giving life, of giving birth; "enveloping" and "giving life" is actually one meaning.”

Mesker gives it also an alternative shape: The two baoti trigrams protect the nuclear trigrams and at the same time represent obstacles to self-expression of *hu ti*, from showing themselves in maturity, because they are not yet mature/not yet fully grown.»

I’d like to imagine a sort of counterclockwise analysis, resonant with Liu De arguments, where the ‘external’ patterns -while verifying their balance- are to be brought back to an internal stage of maturation (or immaturity), because, quoting again Ashton: «one creates the external (feeling) by building on the foundation of the internal (feeling)»

The Warring States 禮記 *lijì* has an intriguing take on internal and external positioning, discussing: “two terms, 外心 *wai xin* (externalize what is in mind) and 內心 *nei xin* (concentrate on mind). According to Sun Xidan’s commentary, 外心 *wai xin* signifies to externalize the emotions from the mind, while 內心 *nei xin* means to concentrate on one’s emotions in the mind.”¹⁰

Now, loving the Yijing prompt of 往來 *wanglai*, the infinite stream of coming and going, I feel that to what flows out from internal corresponds that which enters from external.

And what enters, could be such to grow what is ‘not yet fully grown’, as per in another LiuDe passage, be music or ritual or their co-ordinates law-and-punishments, with their aims to cultivate one’s mind and restrict one’s behaviours, when appropriate, they become not obstacles but practices.

Practices that offer structure and help.

“Everything is about me”, sings James Blake, the 外心 *wai xin*, the 內心 *nei xin*.

9 Nielsen [2003]

10 Kwan Leung Wong [2006]

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六
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三七

古亦其德焉國德也天不德也德也天乃不乃予奉子而奉國

三八

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三九

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四七

天不德也德也天不德也德也天乃不乃予奉子而奉國

四八

五十四年五月五日



……生。古(故)曰，民之父母新(親)民易，叟(使)民相新(親)也難(難)〔二九〕。四九

【注釋】

- 〔一〕 裘按：「晝」疑當讀為「就」。「壹」當讀為「矣」，參看《性命自命出》篇注三六。下二句同。
- 〔二〕 依上文，此處「晝」後脫「壹」字。
- 〔三〕 裘按：疑「晝」即「寢」之省寫。
- 〔四〕 裘按：「陸」下所加疑非一般重文號，而是表示此字當讀作「土地」二字的。此文當讀為「任土地」。
- 〔五〕 卡，並非見於《字彙補》之「卡」字，或疑即一般認為「弁」字異體之「卞」字之所從出，在此疑讀為「變」。下文「夫婦卡生言」「男女不卡」之「卡」則疑當讀為「辨」。
- 〔六〕 裘按：「由」上原當有「不」字，已殘去。
- 〔七〕 裘按：疑七號、八號簡本相次。本篇下文有「生民斯必有夫婦、父子、君臣」之語，疑此處「生民……六立(位)也」一句本作「生民斯必有夫婦、父子、君臣，此六位也」。
- 〔八〕 裘按：「事人」下殘去「者」字，「□者」上殘去「又(有)」字。
- 〔九〕 裘按：此處所言之職，依次為夫婦之職、君臣之職、父子之職，參看下文自明。言父子之職的文字中，關鍵的二字尚不能確識，待考。
- 〔一〇〕 裘按：「此」下所缺二字當是「六職」。
- 〔一一〕 裘按：依上下文例，此句「謂之」下本應有「臣」字，當為書手所抄脫。
- 〔一二〕 裘按：「壹」讀為「矣」，參看注一。下文「壹」字同。
- 〔一三〕 裘按：「不」下之字與《說文》「緜」字古文形近。「變」从「緜」聲，故釋此字為「緜」，讀為「變」。
- 〔一四〕 裘按：此句「多」下脫「也」字。「此」上一字从「日」从「金」，亦見殘簡一一號。
- 〔一五〕 裘按：疑「道采」即以上一篇的篇名，「止」即此篇至此完了之意。「采」也有可能當釋「柞」或「葉」，待考。
- 〔一六〕 裘按：「布實丈」當讀為「布絰，杖」。「實」「絰」古音相近。《禮記·檀弓上》：「絰也者，實也。」據《儀禮·喪服》，服父及君之喪，「斬衰裳，直絰，杖……」。簡文作「布絰」，與《喪服》不同。
- 〔一七〕 裘，簡文同《說文》「衰」字古文。裘按：「戊黜實」當讀為「杜麻絰」。「弟」上一字不識（《尊德義》篇有以之為聲旁的从「心」之字），但可知其在此必當讀為「昆弟」之「昆」。此字尚見於下文，不再注。據《儀禮·喪服》，服昆弟之喪，「疏衰裳齊，杜麻絰……」，與簡文合。
- 〔一八〕 婁，妻。簡文與《說文》古文「妻」字形近。裘按：據《儀禮·喪服》，妻與昆弟之服皆有「疏衰裳齊，杜麻絰」。
- 〔一九〕 裘按：《禮記·大傳》：「四世而總，服之窮也。五世祖免，殺同姓也。」《儀禮·喪服》：「朋友皆在他邦，祖免，歸則已。」或疑簡文「祖字」之「字」為「免」之

誤寫。

〔二〇〕 毘，即《說文》古文「絕」字變之異體。

〔二一〕 裘按：「𠄎」似當與《性自命出》篇二四號簡「𠄎（瑟）𠄎（瑟）𠄎」之𠄎為一字，在此疑當讀為「殺」，「瑟」「殺」皆山母字，韻亦相近。殺，省減。下句亦有此字。

〔二二〕 𠄎，即𠄎，與《說文》古文「𠄎」字作𠄎者同。裘按：疑「𠄎」當讀為「治」，「𠄎」當讀為「仁」，下句同。參看《性自命出》篇注四七。

〔二三〕 𠄎，疑即《說文》作「𠄎」的「更」字。

〔二四〕 裘按：此句似當讀為「求養親之志」。「志」从「之」聲。其下有表示重文或合文之符號，故可讀為「之志」。

〔二五〕 裘按：「𠄎」字下文屢見，疑即《說文》「斷」字古文「𠄎」。

〔二六〕 裘按：疑「其𠄎之也六」當作一句讀，「𠄎」當讀為「釋」或「釋」。

〔二七〕 裘按：疑「迴」當讀為「通」，下同。

〔二八〕 與之𠄎，猶言與之同歸於盡。

〔二九〕 裘按：此簡不知當屬何篇，姑附於此。